

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

November 2005

Vol. 3, No. 11

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

RENDEZVOUS AT KAMAKURA INN, Marshall Browne, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95

Browne's latest thriller is set in Japan where Detective Aoki of the Tokyo police teeters on the brink of a nervous breakdown after he loses face when a major investigation goes wrong. He is sent by his superiors to a remote retreat in the mountains for some r and r. There Aoki discovers that the other guests are not only harboring secrets but are also connected in some way to an unsolved case in Aoki's past. When a sudden snowstorm traps them all and communication is cut off, the murders begin. Sounds like a terrific locked room mystery right? Wrong! This has to be one of my most disappointing reads of the year. Browne, author of the Inspector Anders series as well as *Eye of the Abyss*, is a favorite of mine and I was so looking forward to reading this. But the characters are thinly sketched and the story, so promising, is ultimately flat with not enough red herrings or suspects. This did not engage me. I hope it's just a blip in Browne's career.

LOST SOULS, Michael Collins, Penguin. \$14.00

Set in a small Midwestern town, this harrowing story begins on Halloween night when a local police officer discovers the body of a young child, a victim of what appears to be a hit-and-run accident. The prime suspect is the local high school football hero, who is about to put this town on the map by taking his team to the playoffs, so as the mayor and chief of police conspire to divert attention, it is left up to the police officer to uncover the truth. This is one of the most relentlessly dark stories I have read. It would have been easier if there were well-defined heroes and villains here, but there aren't. Only lost souls. Beautifully written, this story broke my heart. Published a couple of years ago in hardcover in the UK and in the US.

SEVENTY-SEVEN CLOCKS, Christopher Fowler, Bantam Books. \$6.99

An elderly lawyer is discovered dead in a chair in the lobby of the Savoy Hotel. Upon examination it becomes clear that, far from dying a natural death in that stuffiest of hotels, the lawyer was killed by snakebite. In the National Gallery a man defaces a painting. A suspect explodes while being chased onto the subway. A woman is poisoned watching a performance of *Princess Ida* by Gilbert and Sullivan. Peculiar! So who better to investigate than Arthur Bryant and John May of London's Peculiar Crimes Unit. This is the third in the Bryant and May series and I know I've said this before, but do try this series. You won't be disappointed. I've also lamented that this is being published in this country in paperback only. The true first edition is a UK hardcover.

THE FIREMAKER, Peter May, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95

Margaret Campbell, a forensic pathologist from Chicago, arrives in Beijing for six weeks of lecturing at the People's University of Public Security. Almost immediately she has an unpleasant run in with a Chinese police detective, Li Yan, who wants nothing to do with this American scientist. But when Margaret is called in to help after a corpse is found, the two must work together in a hunt for a serial killer who burns his victims to cover up a terrifying truth. This is the first book by May that I've read and I was mightily impressed with this atmospheric thriller.

MAP OF BONES, James Rollins, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95

Intruders dressed as monks enter a cathedral in Cologne, Germany, and gun down worshippers and clergy. What they take is in the altar: the preserved bones of the Three Magi. The Vatican is in turmoil and Lieutenant Rachel Verona of Rome's carabinieri is asked to lead the investigation. Joining her is Grayson Pierce of SIGMA Force and together they unravel the mystery of the bones and set out on a trail that leads them to the Seven Wonders of the World and to the mystical Dragon Court. Sound like Dan Brown? You betcha! It reads like him too. If you couldn't put down *The DaVinci Code*, this is so for you.

ON MY READING LIST

DANCE OF DEATH, John Case, Ballantine. \$25.95

Jack Wilson is a brilliant mathematician and a madman. He is obsessed with the notebooks of the inventor Nicola Tesla, who claimed discovery of a weapon that used harmonic resonance to obliterate the molecular structure of any target. Wilson wants to adapt this weapon and annihilate life as we know it. Since Case's *The Murder Artist* was one of my favorite thrillers of last year, I'm eagerly anticipating this one.

THE CONJURER'S BIRD, Martin Davies, Shaye Areheart Books. \$24.00

Spanning two time periods, this literary mystery is the story of Joseph Banks, the 18th-century naturalist who is given the elusive bird of Ulieta, and of a present-day conservationist named Fitz, who joins the competitive race to find the bird's only remains, which mysteriously disappeared from Bank's collection many years before. This novel, originally published in the UK, captures my attention because of the reviews comparing it to the books of Arturo Perez-Reverte and because it is about birds, a favorite subject of mine. You didn't know that? But why should you!

THE HOUSE OF PAPER, Carlos Marie Dominguez, Harcourt. \$18.00

Bluma Lennon, distinguished professor of Latin American literature at Cambridge, is immersed in a volume of Emily Dickinson's poetry when she is hit by a car while crossing the street. Several months after her death, a package arrives for her from Argentina – a copy of a Conrad novel, encrusted in cement and inscribed with a mysterious dedication. Bluma's successor in the department (and a former lover) travels to Buenos Aires to track down the sender, one Carlos

Brauer, who turns out to have disappeared. This slim volume is illustrated by Peter Sis and is a tribute to the strange and passionate relationship between people and their books.

***THE LOST PAINTING*, Jonathan Harr, Random House. \$24.95**

I have only recently become a devotee of the artist Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. Reading Dan Brown followed by a trip to Rome did that for me, so I'm delighted that Jonathan Harr (author of *A Civil Action*) has written about the search for a long-lost painting of Caravaggio – *The Taking of Christ*. If you read his previous book, you'll know that in Harr's hands non-fiction can read like the most exciting thriller.

***THE LIGHTHOUSE*, P.D. James, Knopf. \$25.95**

Combe Island off the Cornish coast is now privately owned and offers respite to overstressed men and women in positions of high authority who require serenity and guaranteed security. But that peace is violated when one of the distinguished visitors is found murdered. Commander Adam Dalgliesh is called in to investigate. This was first published in the UK.

***COMRADES IN MIAMI*, Jose Latour, Grove Press. \$23.00**

Colonel Victoria Valiente is one of the most respected officers in the General Directorate of Intelligence in Cuba. During the past decade, however, her husband has convinced her that Castro's regime is corrupt and that they must defect. With the \$2.7 million he steals electronically and salts away in an online bank, the couple sails to Key West. But the FBI is on to them. This espionage novel takes the reader inside the battle of wits between Cuba and the United States.

***THE SYRACUSE CODEX*, Jim Nisbet, Dennis McMillan. \$35.00**

San Francisco frame maker Danny Kestrel investigates the death of art patron Renee Knowles. He runs into crooks convinced that she passed him a secret treasure and eventually finds an antiquarian text that reveals evidence damning a sixth-century Roman empress for intrigues involving her son and some priceless trinkets. Why is this biblio mystery on my reading list? Because Dennis McMillan has convinced me that my literary education is incomplete without at least trying to appreciate this (in Dennis's opinion) very important mystery writer.

***THE KILLING ART*, Jonathan Santlofer, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Kate McKinnon, the NYPD detective turned art historian, is pulled back into the world of art and art history when the paintings of such greats as Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning are slashed, along with the collectors who own them. Santlofer, an artist himself, has created original black-and-white paintings specifically for this story. These images, included in each chapter, are filled with hints the reader can use to follow along with Kate and the NYPD.

***PLOTS WITH GUNS*, Anthony Neil Smith, Editor, Dennis McMillan. \$30.00**

This anthology takes its title from the short-lived e-zine which specialized in crime fiction featuring, well, guns. Smith has taken 24 of the best of these stories including work by Eddie Muller, Jim Nisbet (yes, him again), Robert Skinner, and Sean Doolittle. No need for Dennis McMillan to prod me to put this one on my list.

ORDINARY HEROES, Scott Turow, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$25.00

Retired newspaperman Stewart Dubinsky discovers letters his deceased father wrote during his tour of duty in World War II. These include love letters to a fiancée the family has never heard of. Dubinsky also finds a manuscript his father wrote in prison which tells of his court martial for assisting in the escape of an OSS officer who was a suspected spy. Dubinsky's investigations, at first revelatory, soon turn life altering. This departure for Turow is gathering excellent reviews.

FIRST MYSTERIES**GRIEVOUS ANGEL, Jane Hill, Wm. Morrow. \$22.95**

Justine Fraser lives a quiet life, working in a bookshop in a small town on the South Coast of England. She rarely thinks about her past: not Marie, her older sister who committed suicide nor the semester she spent at an exclusive New England university. And certainly not Nicky Bennet, the man who broke her heart twice before becoming one of Hollywood's biggest stars. When Nicky disappears and leaves a note which Justine believes is meant for her, she sets off to find answers – a journey to America and the past.

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE**THE OTHER SIDE OF ME, Sidney Sheldon, Warner Books. \$25.95**

A memoir by this best-selling author should be of particular interest to his loyal readers.

NEWS FROM THE UK**GIRL IN A RED TUNIC, Alys Clare, Headline**

Historical mystery set in the time of Richard the Lionheart.

CATCH ME WHEN I FALL, Nicci French, Penguin

Friends and family are left breathless by the boundless energy of Holly Krauss. But her wild behavior leads to reckless mistakes and once her descent begins, Holly can do little to stop it. But is Holly solely responsible for what is happening to her?

NOW YOU SEE ME, Margaret Murphy, Hodder & Stoughton

When Megan Ward disappears, suspicion falls on the stalker seen outside her house. But it's not that simple. Megan herself is a mystery: no photos, no passport, and no friends and family.

THE SMILE OF A GHOST, Phil Rickman, Macmillan

This is the seventh mystery featuring Merrily Watkins, the Anglican priest. A fourteen-year-old boy falls from castle walls in the medieval town of Ludlow, followed by two more deaths. This series is for those of us who adore occult elements in our mysteries.

COLLECTING

Finally, a definitive answer about *All She Was Worth* by **Miyuke Miyabe**. There is a typographical error in the number sequence on the copyright page. All first editions are missing the number 4 in that number line. The number 1 must be present for it to be a first edition. Thanks to *Firsts Magazine* for doing the research on this.

BOOKS FOR YOUR REFERENCE SHELF

I was recently sent a catalog from McFarland & Co., Inc., who publish a fine line of reference books for the mystery fan. Below are just a few. As always, contact your favorite mystery bookshop.

LESBIAN DETECTIVE FICTION: Woman as Author, Subject and Reader, Phyllis M. Betz. \$32 soft cover (not yet published)

A full-length analysis of lesbian detective fiction – its content, characters, and structures.

CRACKING THE HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE: A Critical History from the 1920s to the Present, Lewis D. Moore. \$35 (not yet published)

Covers three main periods, the Early (1927-1955), the Transitional (1964-1977), and the Modern (1979 – present).

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE AT THE CINEMA: A Critical Study of the Film Adaptations, Scott Allen Nollen. \$35 soft cover

The major adaptations of all of Conan Doyle's literary works are fully covered here.

CORNELL WOOLRICH FROM PULP NOIR TO FILM NOIR, Thomas C. Renzi. \$32 soft cover

A detailed analysis of many of Woolrich's novels and short stories; examines films adapted from these works; and shows how Woolrich's techniques and themes influenced the noir genre.

WALTER B. GIBSON AND THE SHADOW, Thomas J. Shimeld. \$29.95 soft cover.

Biography of Gibson covering his years in Philadelphia and his friendships with Harry Houdini, Howard Thurston, Harry Blackstone Sr., and Joseph Dunninger.

THIS AND THAT

***THE NEW ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE NOVELS*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Edited and with notes by Leslie S. Klinger, W.W. Norton. \$49.95**

Following his Edgar Award winning effort examining the 56 short stories of Doyle, scholar Klinger here tackles the four novels. Make no mistake. This is for hardcore Sherlock Holmes fans (do you really want to know exactly where Watson was wounded?) but if that is you, this will be an indispensable addition to your library.

***THE GREAT DETECTIVE AT THE CRUCIBLE OF LIFE: OR, THE ADVENTURE OF THE ROSE OF FIRE*, Thomas Kent Miller, Wildside. \$35 hardcover. \$15.95 paper**

This pastiche details an expedition that H. Rider Haggard's hunter Allan Quartermain makes to Ethiopia in the 1870s. Accompanying him for a variety of reasons are naturalist Thomas Huxley, explorer Richard Burton, Wilkie Collins's Sergeant Cuff, and a young Sherlock Holmes, who is traveling under an alias. This novel blends classic fictional characters with true-life heroes and should be of special interest to Sherlockians.

***SALEM'S LOT*, Stephen King, Doubleday. \$35.00**

An illustrated edition of King's classic novel with fifty pages not in the original edition, two unpublished short stories, and a new introduction by the author.

***THE NO. 1 LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY*, Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon. \$21.95**

The first volume in the beloved best-selling series is available, just in time for the holiday season, in hardcover.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Fiction

Andrews, Sarah, *Dead Dry*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Geologist and investigator Em Hansen helps out the Salt Lake City police when a colleague is murdered.

Churchill, Jill, *Who's Sorry Now*, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. The sixth Depression-era mystery in the author's Grace & Favor series.

Corcoran, Tom, *Air Dance Iguana*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Two men are killed in the same strange way. Florida Keys forensic photographer Alex Rutledge becomes involved when his brother becomes the prime suspect.

Corrigan, John R., *Bad Lie: A Jack Austin Mystery*, Univ. of New England. \$24.95. Fourth golfing mystery featuring PGA pro-turned-sleuth Jack Austin.

Edwards, Martin, *The Cipher Garden*, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. When the body of Warren Howe, landscaper and ladies' man, is found hacked apart, his wife becomes the prime suspect. But she has an alibi. This is Edward's second Lake District mystery after *The Coffin Trail*.

Greeley, Andrew M., *The Bishop in the Old Neighborhood*, Forge. \$24.95. Bishop "Blackie" Ryan investigates the murder of three people in St. Lucy's church.

Hillerman, Tony, *Leaphorn, Chee, and More*, HarperCollins. \$19.95. Three Hillerman novels in one volume: *The Fallen Man*, *The First Eagle*, and *Hunting Badger*.

Krieg, Joyce, *Riding Gain*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Talk show host Shauna J finds herself in the middle of a murder investigation.

Langton, Jane, *Steeplechase*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Homer Kelly and his wife Mary are engaged in a steeplechase, literally: the pursuit of a mysterious lost church.

McNaught, Judith, *Every Breath You Take*, Ballantine. \$25.95. A romantic encounter on the tropical island of Anguilla leads to Kate Donovan's involvement in a murder case.

Patterson, James, *Mary Mary*, Little Brown. \$27.95. Someone is killing the elite of Hollywood. Alex Cross investigates.

Pearce, Michael, *A Dead Man in Istanbul*, Carroll & Graf. \$25.00. Featuring Sandor Seymour, an unobtrusive Special Branch detective who, this time out, travels to Istanbul to investigate the murder of the undersecretary of the British embassy.

Perry, Anne, *A Christmas Guest*, Ballantine. \$16.95. Perry's third Christmas mystery again features Charlotte and Thomas Pitt. This one is set in the windswept Romney Marshes off the English Channel.

Smiley, Patricia, *Cover Your Assets*, Mysterious Press. \$23.95. When her old flame from college is murdered, Tucker Sinclair investigates.

Sprague, Gretchen, *Death By Thunder*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Jane Upton investigates her uncle's death and finds that it is linked with a woman's death eight years earlier.

Streiber, Anne, *Little Town Lies*, Forge. \$23.95. In the East Texas town of Maryvale, arsons and animal mutilations abound. Sally Hopkins knows these to be the signs of a budding serial killer.

Wilson, F. Paul, *Infernal*, Forge. \$25.95. The ninth Repairman Jack novel.

Non-Fiction

Basbanes, Nicholas A., *Every Book Its Reader: The Power of the Printed Word to Stir the World*. HarperCollins. \$29.95. For the bibliophile.

Sally Owen is a book dealer and was the manager of The Mysterious Bookshop in New York City from 1996 to 2002. You can reach her via e-mail: sallyowen@verizon.net.

Or via mail:

Sally Owen

1825 Foster Avenue, Apt. 2J

Brooklyn, NY 11230

Phone: 718-434-1705

Visit www.owenbookseller.com