

GREAT MYSTERIES

VOLUME 2

BY PATRICK SMITH

THE MOST COMMON QUESTION *Bookmarks* readers ask us is, "When are you going to do Vol. II of 'Great Mysteries?'" And so we oblige. Way back in our Nov/Dec 2004 issue, we looked at historical mysteries and police procedurals. This time we look more broadly—and more darkly—at the genre.

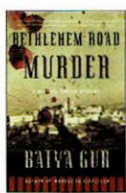
The three categories of mysteries and thrillers detailed here—international, contemporary hardboiled and noir, and psychological—describe different, and often overlapping, subgenres of the larger one. Mystery and crime fiction, in these myriad forms, melds illicit activity, psychological insight, and exotic settings—even the meanest streets of Washington, D.C., can be exotic if George Pelecanos is your guide—into a journey that takes readers into the darkest reaches of the human mind. We meet characters who both exhibit and transcend human weakness: a Chinese detective reconciles his present life with his memories of Mao's Cultural Revolution; a Laotian coroner invokes the spirit world as a way of solving cases; an alcoholic policeman searches for redemption in his Louisiana bayou.

Are list caveats necessary? Our suggestions are certainly not comprehensive, but they will give readers a point of reference from which to decide where to get started and where to go next. As with the best mysteries, under the spell of a skilled writer we often race to turn the last page—to find out what happens and to have an excuse to immediately pick up the author's next work. The books listed below are those kinds of books. Their writers are those kinds of writers.

THE INTERNATIONAL MYSTERY—loosely defined as a police procedural that takes place outside the United States—has gained cachet in the last few years. It might be easy to attribute that leap in popularity to the extraordinary success of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* and a host of derivative efforts. But not so fast, says Laura Hruska, publisher of Soho Crime, an imprint dedicated to books that give readers glimpses into unfamiliar cultures: "I think there is a growing interest in international mysteries because Americans are becoming more interested, year-by-year, in the rest of the world and realizing, perhaps, that our ideas of crime and punishment are not the only valid possibilities. You can learn more about some of these countries in our mystery series than in an academic tome."

Batya Gur

ISRAEL

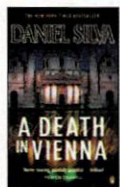


Gur, who died in 2005, brought the mystery genre to prominence in her native Israel with a six-book series set in and around Jerusalem. The books—among them **LITERARY MURDER** (1993), **BETHLEHEM ROAD MURDER** (2004), and the posthumous **MURDER IN JERUSALEM** (2006)—feature detective Michael Ohayon, intuitive, intellectual, and adaptable. Ohayon must solve cases by reconciling his worldview with aspects of society that remain closed to others. Gur's work has been compared to that of P. D. James for its insights into contemporary culture.



Daniel Silva

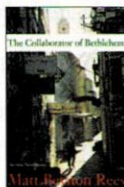
ISRAEL



Silva, an American spy novelist, cut his teeth as a Middle East correspondent. He has two acclaimed series. CIA agent Michael Osbourne, ever haunted by the past, is featured in **THE MARK OF THE ASSASSIN** (1998) and **THE MARCHING SEASON** (1999). More recently, Gabriel Allon, an Israeli Mossad agent working undercover as an art restorer, has captivated a wide audience. Allon fights Palestinian terrorists, uncovers Nazi atrocities, and hunts down bombers of the Israeli Embassy in Rome. See **THE KILL ARTIST** (2000), **THE ENGLISH ASSASSIN** (2002), **THE CONFESSOR** (2003), **A DEATH IN VIENNA** (2004), **PRINCE OF FIRE** (2005), and **THE MESSENGER** (★★★★ Nov/Dec 2006).

Matt Beynon Rees

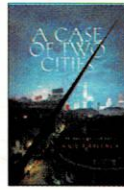
MIDDLE EAST



THE COLLABORATOR OF BETHLEHEM (2007), the first novel in a series by the former *Time* Jerusalem bureau chief, features history teacher Omar Yussef, "a cross between Yasser Arafat and Miss Marple, a reluctant sleuth plunged into a murky West Bank world of swaggering gunmen, cowering priests and defiant refugees" (*San Francisco Chronicle*). At the heart of Yussef's quest to clear a close friend accused of terrorist activity is the conflict between Muslims and Christians and a close examination of the ever-changing political climate in the Middle East.

Qiu Xiaolong

CHINA



Qiu is a poet and translator who came to the United States in the 1980s, and his novels evoke a China both old and new—from Party members to Triads gangs—that few Westerners have seen.

Character-driven and atmospheric, particularly in his languid descriptions of quiet meals contrasted with bustling Chinese cities, these books have as much to say about the state of post-Mao China and the Cultural Revolution as they do about the crimes under investigation. Check out the author's Inspector Chen novels (four to date), starting with **DEATH OF A RED HEROINE** (2000), nominated for an Edgar for Best First Novel, and continuing with **A CASE OF TWO CITIES** (2006).

ALSO CONSIDER ...

H. R. F. Keating

INDIA

ALSO CONSIDER ...

Cheryl Bernard

PAKISTAN

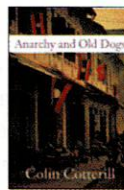
ALSO CONSIDER ...

Akimitsu Tagaki

JAPAN

Colin Cotterill

LAOS



The London-born Cotterill spent four years in Laos, lives in Thailand, and knows the territory well. Set in Laos, his novels feature the aging, sardonic, and conscripted national coroner Dr. Siri Paiboun, who wants nothing more than to retire with a state pension and finish out his life in relative obscurity. That is not to be, of course. In the series' first installment, **THE CORONER'S LUNCH** (2004), Paiboun must solve the murders of a party leader's wife and tortured Vietnamese soldiers discovered floating in a Laotian lake. Paiboun's method is anything but scientific—the spirit world figures prominently—as he attempts to find justice in a politically corrupt world. The Paiboun series includes the Dilys Award-winning **THIRTY-THREE TEETH** (2005) and **DISCO FOR THE DEPARTED** (2006). A fourth, **ANARCHY AND OLD DOGS**, will be published in August 2007.

John Burdett

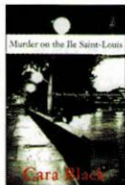
THAILAND



As much noir as international mystery, Burdett's **BANGKOK 8** (★★★★ Sep/Oct 2003) features Thai detective Sonchai Jitplecheep, a man of contradictions in a seedy, seductive city. With the assistance of prospective love interest FBI agent Kimberley Jones and his mother's connections as a prostitute (a storyline developed in **BANGKOK TATTOO** [★★★★ SELECTION Sept/Oct 2005]), Jitplecheep solves the snakebite murders of his former partner and an American soldier. Burdett, a Brit who lives in Hong Kong, masterfully combines his knowledge of the Bangkok underground, Buddhism, and a dark sense of humor in this compelling series, whose third installment is **BANGKOK HAUNTS** (2007).

ALSO CONSIDER ...
Georges Simeon
FRANCE

Cara Black
FRANCE (PARIS)



Although she lives in San Francisco, Black captures all the facets of Paris. Computer analyst and PI Aimée Leduc does her best to keep the Parisian streets clean in a seven-book series. As in the works of John Burdett and Qiu Xiaolong, the settings are atmospheric (in this case, a grimy, even menacing Paris unknown to many) and oddly irresistible, the historical and cultural contexts part of books' appeal. The first in the series is **MURDER IN THE MARAIS** (1999). Black's two most recent installments feature prominent Parisian landmarks in **MURDER IN MONTMARTRE** (2006) and **MURDER ON THE ILE SAINT-LOUIS** (2007).

J. Robert Janes
FRANCE



Janes, a Canadian author, introduces Jean-Louis St. Cyr, a French inspector, and Hermann Kohler, a Gestapo agent—an unlikely pair working together in occupied France to investigate the everyday crimes that occurred during the Vichy government's reign. The series includes nearly a dozen books. Some highlights: **CAROUSEL** (1993), **MANNEQUIN** (1998), **SALAMANDER** (1998), **MAYHEM** (1999), and **BEEKEEPER** (2001).

Rebecca Pawel
SPAIN



Pawel published her first novel, **DEATH OF A NATIONALIST** (2003), at age 24. The book won an Edgar Award for Best First Novel. Pawel, who fixes her gaze on Madrid in 1939, offers an unflinching portrait of the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War through her character Carlos Tejada Alonzo y Leon, a sergeant in the notorious Guardia Civil. Tejada appears in the follow-up novels as well: **LAW OF RETURN** (2004), **THE WATCHER IN THE PINE** (2005), and **THE SUMMER SNOW** (2006).

Janwillem van de Wetering
HOLLAND



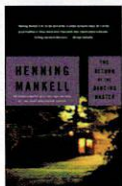
For more than three decades, the prolific Dutchman has entertained readers with his series featuring the complex and idiosyncratic characters Adjutant Grijpstra and Sergeant de Gier. Nearly 20 books into the series (which starts with 1975's **OUTSIDER IN AMSTERDAM**), Van de Wetering has hit many high notes, among them **THE CORPSE ON THE DIKE** (1976), **THE JAPANESE CORPSE** (1977), and **THE MAINE MASSACRE** (1979). More recent titles include **JUST ANOTHER CORPSE AT TWILIGHT** (1994) and **THE HOLLOW-EYED ANGEL** (1996).

ALSO CONSIDER ...
Karin Fossum
NORWAY



Henning Mankell

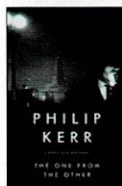
SWEDEN



Swedish writer Mankell's Kurt Wallander series uses harsh settings and horrific murders as a way of examining the current state of Sweden. Mankell won a Gold Dagger for **SIDETRACKED** (1999), in which a serial killer scalps his victims, and a Gumshoe Award for Best European Crime Novel (2004's **THE RETURN OF THE DANCING MASTER**). **THE FIFTH WOMAN** (2000) and **BEFORE THE FROST** (2005) also received critical attention, though the Wallander series is strong across the board.

Philip Kerr

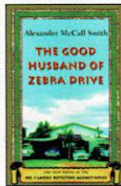
GERMANY



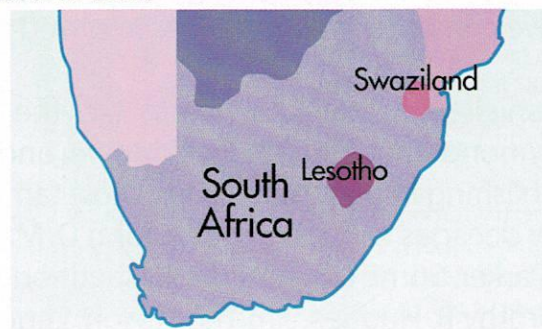
Kerr, a Scotsman now living in London, has written more than a dozen thrillers that focus on such diverse subjects as the Russian mob, near-future dystopia, the Kennedy assassination, and Bigfoot. Kerr made his mark with **BERLIN NOIR**, a trilogy featuring world-weary policeman Bernhard Gunther operating amid the decadence and unremitting violence of Nazi Germany: **MARCH VIOLETS** (1989), **THE PALE CRIMINAL** (1990), and **A GERMAN REQUIEM** (1991). **THE ONE FROM THE OTHER**, a fourth volume published more than 15 years after the close of the trilogy, finds Gunther alone and operating his own detective agency in postwar Germany—and still fighting for his life.

Alexander McCall Smith

SOUTH AFRICA



Smith, born in Zimbabwe, teaches law at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. He returned to Africa to establish a law school in Botswana, South Africa, the site of his best-selling **THE NO. 1 LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY** series. The intelligent, charming, red-bush-tea-drinking Precious Ramotswe takes on cases designed to better a country adapting to modernity: she tracks down missing husbands, investigates the moral character of beauty contestants, and figures out what a pumpkin is doing on her porch. Start with **THE NO. 1 LADIES' DETECTIVE AGENCY** (1999) and continue with **TEARS OF THE GIRAFFE** (2000); other strong entries include **THE FULL CUPBOARD OF LIFE** (★★★★ July/Aug 2004), and **IN THE COMPANY OF CHEERFUL LADIES** (★★★★ July/Aug 2005). **THE GOOD HUSBAND OF ZEBRA DRIVE** (2007) is the latest in the series. Also check out Smith's Isabel Dalhousie series, better known as **THE SUNDAY PHILOSOPHY CLUB**.



Magdalen Nabb

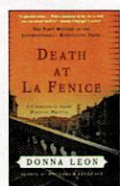
ITALY



If Donna Leon is the queen of Venice, Nabb rules Florence. Three decades after the author moved to Venice on an impulse, her Maresciallo Guarnaccia series totals more than a dozen books. Florence takes on a life of its own in Nabb's writing, and her characters are charming. Guarnaccia, a brawny, Sicilian-born officer, would make a fine dinner companion. The first novel, **DEATH OF AN ENGLISHMAN** (1981), explores a murder just before Christmas. In the most recent, **THE INNOCENT** (2005), a body shows up near the Pitti Palace.

Donna Leon

ITALY



Leon is an American expatriate living in Venice, and her protagonist Commisario Guido Brunetti and the mysteries he must solve capture an authentic, quirky Italian culture. The series started with **DEATH AT LA FENICE** (1992) and has grown to more than a dozen volumes, most recently **SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN** (2007), in which Brunetti takes on the baffling case of a kidnapped 18-month-old baby. Leon's books have started to generate a devoted readership, and most are already in print in the United States, or will be soon.

CONTEMPORARY HARDBOILED NOIR

HARDBOILED FICTION is a catchall term for gritty, bleak portrayals of an America whose calm surface barely conceals a violent energy—criminal, sexual, psychological—threatening to erupt at any moment.

Noir is generally considered a subgenre of the hardboiled story. The primary difference is a shift in the story's focus, from the often heroic, tough-guy detective who sets out to solve crimes to the antiheroes involved in those crimes—suspects, victims, criminals.

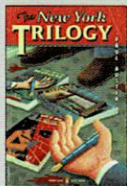
Dashiell Hammett (Sam Spade) was the godfather of the hardboiled novel, followed by Raymond Chandler (Philip Marlowe) and a generation of writers who made their bones publishing in pulp magazines, most famously *Black Mask*. Writers working over the past few decades were their heirs: John D. MacDonald, Sara Paretsky, Sue Grafton, and Robert B. Parker. Some of the earliest practitioners of the noir novel include Cornell Woolrich, Dorothy B. Hughes, Jim Thompson, Lenore Coffee, and David Goodis.

Cross-pollination and variations on the tried-and-true hardboiled and noir themes are the order of the day, from setting to literary style. Today, the heroes (or antiheroes) are more alienated, more down on their luck, and better able to exploit each other with new technologies. Authors intent on exposing our cultural decay will never want for material.

In short, anything can happen in the worst of all possible worlds. Fans of hardboiled and noir fiction can be thankful for that.

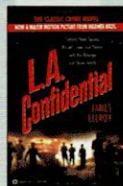


PAUL AUSTER



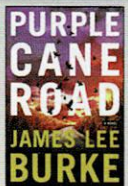
Auster's reputation as a literary writer has been impeccable since the publication of his **NEW YORK TRILOGY** beginning in the mid-1980s. Auster, who has always tiptoed the line between traditional novels and the postmodern, self-reflexive efforts for which he is best known, wowed the literary world with three novellas—**CITY OF GLASS** (1985), **THE LOCKED ROOM** (1986), and **GHOSTS** (1986)—that twisted readers' notions of what crime fiction could be. **MOON PALACE** (1989) and **THE MUSIC OF CHANCE** (1990) also show Auster's debt to noir fiction.

JAMES ELLROY



One of the giants of contemporary noir fiction, Ellroy has always been fascinated with the seedier side of Hollywood, and his L.A. Quartet—including **THE BLACK DAHLIA** (1987), **THE BIG NOWHERE** (1988), **L.A. CONFIDENTIAL** (1990), and **WHITE JAZZ** (1992)—brings to life a midcentury city dealing with murder, sex, corruption, and the Red Scare. Need further proof of Ellroy's talents? Ask him. "I am a master of fiction. I am also the greatest crime writer who ever lived," he told Deborah Solomon in *The New York Times* (11/5/06). "I am to the crime novel in specific what Tolstoy is to the Russian novel and what Beethoven is to music."

JAMES LEE BURKE



Burke's Dave Robicheaux has survived a drinking problem and unsavory characters too numerous to count. In nearly two dozen novels, Robicheaux—and the Louisiana bayou he and his family inhabit—has taken on a mythical quality for readers who have followed him since the desperate days of **THE LOST GET-BACK BOOGIE** (1986) and **THE NEON RAIN** (1987). Other notables in the Robicheaux series: **BLACK CHERRY BLUES** (1989), **IN THE ELECTRIC MIST WITH CONFEDERATE DEAD** (1993), **CIMARRON ROSE** (1997), **PURPLE CANE ROAD** (2000), **JOLIE BLON'S BOUNCE** (2002), and **IN THE MOON OF RED PONIES** (★★★★ Sept/Oct 2004). Out soon: **THE TIN ROOF MELTDOWN**. Burke's Billy Bob Holland series, set in Montana, is less hardboiled, though no less compelling.

VICKI HENDRICKS



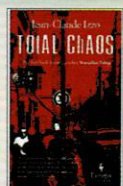
An undiscovered gem, Hendricks has penned five well-received novels set in her native Miami: **MIAMI PURITY** (1995), **IGUANA LOVE** (1999), **VOLUNTARY MADNESS** (2000), **SKY BLUES** (2002), and **CRUEL POETRY** (2007). She uses first-person narration to delve inside the minds of her characters, including the sexual Ramona Romano (**IGUANA LOVE**), who meets the wrong man in Enzo, her diving instructor. She then needs all her resolve to escape from Miami's underbelly in one piece.

CHARLIE HUSTON



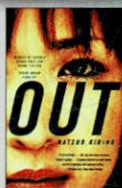
Charlie Huston, one of the most perversely inventive writers in the genre, opens his trilogy with **CAUGHT STEALING** (2004) and an uncomfortable retelling of how the anti-heroic, baseball-obsessed Hank Thompson lost a kidney (hint: fists and blunt objects are involved). The really bad news is that he wasn't the intended target. Things don't improve much from there. The story never lags, and Hank makes an improbable exit (given his tenuous health at the novel's outset) on his way to the equally gritty **SIX BAD THINGS** (2005) and **A DANGEROUS MAN** (2006).

JEAN-CLAUDE IZZO



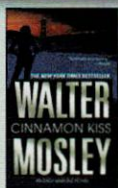
French novelist Izzo, who died in 2000, could easily cross over to the International Mysteries discussion. His breakthrough novel **TOTAL CHAOS**, the first in the Marseilles Trilogy, was translated in America in 2005, though he was on the radar in his native France long before. **TOTAL CHAOS** features Fabio Montale, a Marseilles beat cop working in the city's Arab ghetto and the last remaining lover of a woman whom he knows from a complicated relationship 20 years earlier. Izzo brings to life the racial tension and restless energy of the city and hits all the noir notes on his way to a dazzling finish. **CHOURMO** (2006) and **SOLEA** (2007) complete the series.

NATSUO KIRINO



Kirino's success in Japan has translated to good word of mouth in America. **OUT** (2003), the author's first translated effort, details the ups and downs of a group of friends who work dead-end jobs in a boxed-lunch factory. Given the opportunity, they moonlight as disposal specialists. Kirino's sense of balance with her characters—they are always real and sympathetic, even though some dismember bodies for cash on the side—makes the novel. The author's recent **GROTESQUE** (2007) is a somewhat different book (though serial killing still has its place), and is also worth a look.

WALTER MOSLEY



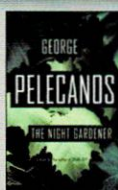
Drawing on the same geography and historical period that served James Ellroy so well in his L.A. Quartet, Walter Mosley introduces Easy Rawlins, a Black PI and World War II veteran living in the Watts section of L.A. Rawlins appears in 10 novels—from **DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS** (1990), in which Mosley's PI hunts a missing Frenchwoman, to **CINNAMON KISS** (★★★★ Nov/Dec 2005). Some highlights in between: **WHITE BUTTERFLY** (1993), **A LITTLE YELLOW DOG** (1996), and **GONE FISHIN'** (1997).

DENNIS LEHANE



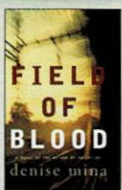
Before **MYSTIC RIVER** (2001), Lehane penned the Patrick Kenzie/Angela Gennaro books, told through Kenzie's voice and evocative of the warts-and-all Boston that Lehane knows and loves. In **A DRINK BEFORE THE WAR** (1994), the first in the five-book series, the two Beantown PIs must find stolen documents. What they discover leads to gang violence and points to political corruption. The rest of the series: **DARKNESS, TAKE MY HAND** (1996), **SACRED** (1997), **GONE, BABY, GONE** (1998), and **PRAYERS FOR RAIN** (1999). **SHUTTER ISLAND** followed **MYSTIC RIVER** in 2003.

GEORGE PELECANOS



George Pelecanos spent years in the service industry (including a stint as a women's shoe salesman), so it is no wonder he has earned a reputation as a writer with a deep understanding of human nature. The author's novels—garish carnivals peopled by shady, violent, and pathetic characters—focus on a Washington, D.C., that writers of more urbane political thrillers ignore. **FIRING OFFENSE** (1992) was the first novel of 14. **HELL TO PAY** (2002) and **SOUL CIRCUS** (★★★★ May/June 2003) both won **LOS ANGELES TIMES** Book Awards. **THE NIGHT GARDENER** (★★★★ Nov/Dec 2006) is his latest.

DENISE MINA



A Scottish crime fiction writer, Mina entered the stage with her award-winning **GARNETHILL** trilogy. In 2005, she introduced Paddy Meehan, a Glasgow cub reporter learning the ropes in the newsrooms of the 1980s and 1990s. Start with **FIELD OF BLOOD** (★★★★ Nov/Dec 2005), which involves Paddy in a grisly murder, and continue with **THE DEAD HOUR** (★★★★ Nov/Dec 2006), in which Paddy accepts a bribe and investigates a domestic crime. Then look forward to three more novels to complete the series.

ALSO CONSIDER ...

- Harlan Coben (*Myron Bolitar*)
- Jere Hoar (*The Hit*, 2003)
- Chuck Palahniuk (various protagonists)
- Jason Starr (various protagonists)
- Andrew Vachss (various protagonists)

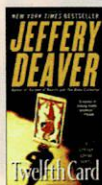
PSYCHOLOGICAL MYSTERIES & THRILLERS

HE WASN'T the first to publish a psychological novel, but Thomas Harris didn't leave the genre the way he found it. Since *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), he has wielded immeasurable influence on a generation of writers.

Psychological mysteries and thrillers focus on the, well, not-quite-right minds of detectives and criminals alike and plumb the depths of human depravity. Edgar Allan Poe might be a good place to begin if we were to trace the genre's origins, and his work holds up surprisingly well a century and a half after his death.

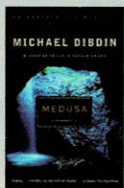
Still, as with the shifting conventions of hardboiled and noir fiction, writers constantly up the ante in psychological fiction. What seemed new 15 years ago—the introduction of Patricia Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta or even the work of Harris himself—shows its age. The best in the business keep up with changing trends, find new ways to captivate, and poke a finger into that undusted cranny that exists in the human mind. After all, what's more frightening than what goes on *in there*?

JEFFERY DEAVER



Jeffrey Deaver's protagonists include FBI consultants, attorneys, and an American hit man in 1936 Berlin, but his most recognizable characters are Lincoln Rhyme, a quadriplegic forensics expert, and his partner and companion, Amelia Sachs. Of **THE VANISHED MAN** (2003), which introduces a series of murders based on famous magic tricks, Jon Land writes in the *Providence Journal*: "[Deaver] continues to resuscitate a tired genre with this often brilliant and starkly original cat-and-mouse game." The Rhyme novels include **THE BONE COLLECTOR** (1997), **THE COFFIN DANCER** (1998), **THE EMPTY CHAIR** (2000), **THE STONE MONKEY** (2002), **THE TWELFTH CARD** (2005), and **THE COLD MOON** (2006). The recent **SLEEPING DOLL** (2007) introduces special agent Kathryn Dance, an expert in interrogation and kinesics.

MICHAEL DIBDIN



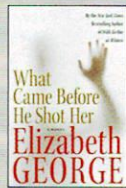
In **RATKING** (1988), Dibdin's first of ten Aurelio Zen novels, the Venetian policeman searches for a wealthy industrialist kidnapped from his country estate. Zen's efforts are thwarted, however, by a culture that forces the detective to rethink his methods. Later installments include **COSÌ FAN TUTTI** (1996), **BLOOD RAIN** (1999), **MEDUSA** (2003), and **BACK TO BOLOGNA** (2005). Dibdin has also published several novels outside the series, including **DIRTY TRICKS** (1991), **THE DYING OF THE LIGHT** (1993), and **DARK SPECTRE** (1995). All are worth a look.

BARRY EISLER



When it rains, it pours. Enter John Rain, Eisler's Japanese-American hit man with a heart (sometimes). Eisler introduces some great locales—Rain effortlessly crisscrosses the globe from Southeast Asia to Brazil—and fast action, much of which takes place between Rain's ears. Eisler has written five volumes to date, including **RAIN FALL** (2002), **HARD RAIN** (2003), **RAIN STORM** (2004), **KILLING RAIN** (2005), and **THE LAST ASSASSIN** (2006).

ELIZABETH GEORGE



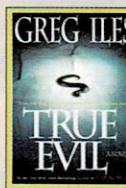
“With her usual aplomb the author transcends the expectations of genre readers and provokes them to think about relationships, love, death, evil, hate, hate crimes, racism, classism, and family,” writes Barbara Lipkien Gershenbaum about **WITH NO ONE AS WITNESS** (2005). That novel and its follow-up, **WHAT CAME BEFORE HE SHOT HER** (★★★ Jan/Feb 2007), are the latest numbers in the Detective Inspector Thomas Lynley series, in which Lynley and his longtime partner Barbara Havers track down their share of serial killers. Other notables include **A SUITABLE VENGEANCE** (1991), **MISSING JOSEPH** (1993), and **IN THE PRESENCE OF THE ENEMY** (1996). The prolific George's nonseries works, including her short fiction, are worth a look as well.

PATRICIA HIGHSMITH



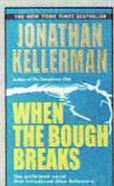
Highsmith, who died in 1995, is best known through the contemporary film adaptation of her novel **THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY**. She also helped pioneer the psychological thriller, cultivating devotees in mystery circles with novels including **STRANGERS ON A TRAIN** (1950), which was filmed by Alfred Hitchcock, **THE BLUNDERER** (1954), **THE TALENTED MR. RIPLEY** (1955), **THIS SWEET SICKNESS** (1960), and **RIPLEY'S GAME** (1974). Highsmith explores the human psyche and psychological disorders, and her work—intense, brooding, and darkly humorous—resonates with a rare authenticity. The five-book Ripley series ended with **RIPLEY UNDER WATER** in 1991.

GREG ILES

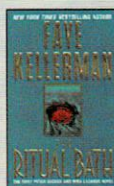


Iles, who has published novels in a variety of genres, achieved critical and popular acclaim with **SPANDAU PHOENIX** (1993), a best-selling thriller about escaped Nazi war criminal Rudolf Hess. Iles sets many of his more contemporary novels in his native Natchez, Mississippi, and rarely fails to offer scathing social commentary on the region. **TRUE EVIL** (2006) cleverly twists the familiar FBI agent–serial killer relationship, while **TURNING ANGEL** (★★★ May/June 2006) takes a close, hard look at a southern town marred by drugs, racial tensions, and murder. **MORTAL FEAR** (1996) and **24 HOURS** (2000) are also worthy of your time.

JONATHAN & FAYE KELLERMAN

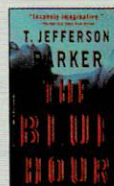


Jonathan Kellerman, Alex Delaware's prolific creator and currently one of the world's best-selling authors, started more than two decades ago with **WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS** (1985), which won both an Edgar and an Anthony for best first novel. Twenty books into the series, and after branching off with a cast of different characters, Kellerman is still going strong.



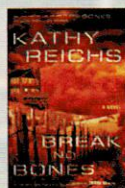
Faye Kellerman has penned a best-selling series featuring husband-and-wife team Peter Decker and Rina Lazarus in novels set in and around L.A. Sixteen volumes to date, the series opened with **THE RITUAL BATH** (1986) and continues, most recently, with **THE BURNT HOUSE** (2007). The Kellermans have collaborated on several books, including **DOUBLE HOMICIDE** (2004) and **CAPITAL CRIMES** (2006).

T. JEFFERSON PARKER



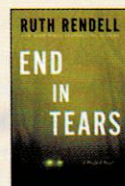
Parker, winner of a drawerful of major mystery awards, including an Edgar and a *Los Angeles Times* Book Award for **SILENT JOE** (2001), has captivated readers for two decades. Character development and intriguing plotlines aren't mutually exclusive, as Parker, who chronicles Southern California life, illustrates. His dozen novels include **LAGUNA HEAT** (1985), **LITTLE SAIGON** (1988), **PACIFIC BEAT** (1991), **SUMMER OF FEAR** (1993), **THE TRIGGERMAN'S DANCE** (1996), **WHERE SERPENTS LIE** (1998), **THE BLUE HOUR** (1999), **RED LIGHT** (2000), **BLACK WATER** (2002), **COLD PURSUIT** (2003), **CALIFORNIA GIRL** (★★★★ Jan/Feb 2005), **THE FALLEN** (★★★★ May/June 2006), and **STORM RUNNERS** (2007).

KATHY REICHS



Reichs, by profession a forensic anthropologist in North Carolina, has undoubtedly benefited from the extraordinary popularity of Patricia Cornwell and Kay Scarpetta. Her recurring character Temperance Brennan, however, has carved out her own niche in the down-and-dirty world of forensic anthropology. The eight-part series includes **DÉJÀ DEAD** (1997), **DEATH DU JOUR** (1999), **DEADLY DECISIONS** (2000), **FATAL VOYAGE** (2001), **GRAVE SECRETS** (2002), **BARE BONES** (2003), **BREAK NO BONES** (2006), and **BONES TO ASHES** (2007).

RUTH RENDELL (AKA BARBARA VINE)



Rendell differs enough from many of the other writers on this list to be remarkable (see Pat Tompkins's take on Rendell in our Nov/Dec 2004 issue). Rendell, who has won three Edgars and four Gold Daggers, among other awards, is most famous for her Chief Inspector Wexford, who deals with the less savory elements of his outwardly idyllic world. The series has run for more than four decades, beginning with **FROM DOON WITH DEATH** (1964) and continuing with the recent **END IN TEARS** (★★★ Nov/Dec 2006).

ALSO CONSIDER ...

- Nicci French (various protagonists)
- P. D. James (Adam Dalgliesh)
- Iris Johansen (Eve Duncan)
- Alex Kava (Maggie O'Dell)
- Fred Leebron (various protagonists)
- Jed Rubenfeld (*The Interpretation of Murder*, 2006) ■