

**ROSEMARY HERBERT**

**WHO'D UNIT?**

The background of the cover features a vintage typewriter with a sheet of paper on it. A magnifying glass is positioned over the paper, focusing on a fingerprint. The text 'WHO'D UNIT?' is printed on the paper, with a large question mark below it. The overall color scheme is dark with warm, golden-yellow highlights from the magnifying glass and the paper.

**A WHO'S WHO  
IN CRIME & MYSTERY  
WRITING**

*With a Preface by Dennis Lehane*

WHODUNIT?

# A Who's Who in Crime & Mystery Writing

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WHODUNIT?

A Who's Who  
in  
Crime &  
Mystery Writing

Rosemary Herbert

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To  
Juliet  
With love

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# Preface

Crime fiction is the drunken cousin who crashes your daughter's wedding and accosts you for not inviting him. It's the naked angry guy in the park who shouts soliloquies that don't make sense until you're through the office door and the memos have piled up on your desk. It's the librarian down the street, content with a cup of cocoa and two cats until a dead body drops into her midst and she suddenly shows mettle and acumen that no one ever suspected before. It's the woman in the bus station who asks you for a dollar and whom, you realize (only afterward, unfortunately), really needed it. Crime fiction is the voice that says, "Everything is not all right."

Crime fiction, in recent decades, could be likened to the ghetto undergoing gentrification. It's the neighborhood you used to drive through with a shudder but where you now wish you'd bought real estate just before the dot-commers discovered it. For a few years now it's even been fashionable to use the term "renaissance" when discussing the state of it. I'd argue a better term is urban renewal, because much like urban renewal what often gets lost in the giddy "discovery" of a place that was always there are the names of those in the community who kept it alive for all those years while others drove through it. Quickly. Accompanied by those shudders.

This is not to say the genre has entirely lost its identity as a literary ghetto—it's crime fiction, after all, and it probably needs the ghetto more than the ghetto needs it (or, put another way, dress up a mechanic in a tuxedo and he still retains his identity as long as his fingernails show traces of grease)—only that the literary landscape has continued to grow and expand to the point where what once lay at its farthest reaches, unknown to most, unkempt to all, and almost lunar in its loneliness, has now been incorporated into the fold if by nothing other than the necessities of urban sprawl.

And who goes there?

Characters. And when I say characters I don't mean Metaphors Named Steve. I mean people. People

who seem akin to those we've come across in the human race as opposed to those we've come across only in books.

Within the pages of this marvelous reference tome, you will have a chance to meet the writers, the characters, the motifs and archetypes that make crime fiction the vivid, even vivacious, art form that it has become. There has long been a dearth in reference material on crime novels, a dearth that turned the process of discovering the writers you might like into a search fraught with red herrings, wrong turns, and a multitude of, well, mysterious entanglements.

No longer. Rosemary Herbert has gone to great pains to compile a compendium of not only the elder statesmen and stateswomen who make up the mental Rushmore of crime fiction history, but also the new blood—the people who are writing now and writing well and, one hopes, will stand the test of time. So you will meet, of course, Dame Agatha Christie with her corkscrew plots and mammoth cast of characters, her sterling silver tea sets and antique daggers. And you may find yourself introduced to the icy Patricia Highsmith with her graveyard wit and her strangely enchanting misanthropy. And you could be forgiven, and quite possibly commended, for seeing how favorably their company could be shared with the classy, sumptuous plots of Elizabeth George, Anne Perry, Elizabeth Peters or Minette Walters, or the chillier, more mordant genius of Val McDermid or Patricia Cornwell. You'll find Lew Archer ambling along the darkened streets for a chance meeting with compatriot, Philip Marlowe, and see how similar streets have been visited in more recent days by the slightly more tortured brilliance of Harry Bosch.

In fact, the more I looked through these entries, the more I was taken by the sense that this genre may not simply be in a state of renewal, so much as exploding. And exploding straight across the globe. How did we ever live, it seems now, without the Edinburgh of Inspector Rebus and his creator, Ian Rankin? Isn't the world so much fuller now that the Italy of Michael Dibdin or the Amsterdam of Janwillem Van De Wetering have been placed on the cultural map? And as much as it's hard to imagine a Los Angeles without Chandler, could you ever consider it again without seeing it to some degree through the hardened-to-pewter eyes and bile-ravaged hearts of James Ellroy's lost-soul policemen? And, please forgive me, but I barely knew where Montana *was* until James Crumley carved it straight through the heart of our country in my personal all-time favorite crime novel, *The Last Good Kiss*. Would Washington, D.C. really exist without George Pelecanos? Sure, but it would be the lesser for it. The same goes for San Francisco without Hammett, Boston without Linda Barnes or Robert B. Parker, Paris without Georges Simenon, Detroit without Loren Estleman, or Chicago without Sara Paretsky. I'm enthralled by the New Jersey of Janet Evanovich, and usually "enthralled" and "New Jersey" are not words I'd ever use together. The Tennessee mountains of Sharyn McCrumb form a strange kinship in my mind with the Louisiana bayous of James Lee Burke because both are rendered so artfully as to become as much a character in the novels as are the people who inhabit them. And then there is the South Florida pack. If the father is John D. MacDonald and the prodigal uncle is Elmore Leonard (late of Detroit and arrived under suspicious circumstances just in time to make everyone a little nervous), then the nutjob of a middle child is Carl Hiassen, who trains his skewed vision on Miami and lets rip with such a colorful burst of humor, rage, gunfire, and hideous anatomical calamity that seems to know no bounds, which is perfectly fitting for a city that doesn't know any either.

And if we'd be nowhere without these novels's sense of place, then we'd be even further lost without their sense of character. How do you remove Stephanie Plum or Spenser or Lew Archer from the rolls without the whole façade crumbling? The answer is: "You can't." The names of crime fiction's great characters are the championship banners hanging from the rafters of the stadium. They remind you that

greatness can be achieved, even if you have to ride out some rebuilding years. And so you could no more have a world without oxygen than you'd choose to live in one without Miss Marple, Easy Rawlins, Ellery Queen, Aurelio Zen, Phillip Marlowe, Kinsey Millhone, Nero Wolfe, Travis & Meyer, Nick & Nora, the cops in the 87th Precinct, Kay Scarpetta, Jules Maigret, Rabbi Small, Sherlock Holmes, or the brutal, brilliant master thief known only as Parker from the brutal, brilliant pulp novels of Richard Stark (aka Donald Westlake).

Crime fiction, some have noted, has taken the place of the social novel, and it's no surprise as to the reason. By being so firmly rooted in a sense of place and a sense of character, all coaxed into being by writers who tell a damn good story first and foremost (if you can't keep 'em awake at the campfire, after all, they're probably going to doze right off into it), the works easily lend themselves to a moral fury that is, at times, easily detectable and worn on the sleeve but just as often floats below the margins of the story itself.

And so we're back to margins. Above them is the world you see. Below them is where our stories live. And within the margins of this book is where you'll find all you need to know to draw your own map and use it to travel the world and meet the people who live the lives your mother wouldn't tell you about. Lives not unlike your own, only slightly edgier, a lot more violent in some cases, often sexy or funny or ribald, lives where injustice and justice wage their battles on fields both small and large, where the sun so often hides behind a cloud, and just when it comes out, that's when a strange figure walks up to you. He may look like that drunken cousin who ruined your wedding. Or he may appear as harmless and forgettable as Tom Ripley. In either case, he doesn't stop for long. He barely stops at all. But he whispers as he passes. He whispers five simple words:

*Everything is not all right.*

Dennis Lehane  
Brighton, Massachusetts  
July 2, 2002

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# Introduction

Who goes there?

That's the question Dennis Lehane asks in his preface to this book.

Who populates the pages of crime and mystery writing?

Who are the characters we willingly follow into the uneasy imaginative territory Lehane so vividly describes? What is it about their personalities, courage—even their human flaws—that makes us want to keep company with them? And who created those characters in the first place? What life experience and expertise informs their work? What are the sources of their themes, regional accents, and even the axes that some grind? Why do some wish to give us a good laugh, while others seem hell-bent on making us shudder?

Dennis and I want to know. And we're sure you do, too.

That's why I put together this volume. In three hundred and eighty essays, it lets readers know whodunit, identifying fictional people who perpetrate and solve crimes in this exciting genre. It answers the question "Who's done it?" too, helping readers get to know the writers, too.

Think of this editor as a host who opens the door to a crowded room. You may recognize some of the company gathered here, but you need a nudge to remind you where you last met a few of them, a quick whisper of what that grande dame in the armchair has been up to lately, an elbow in the ribs telling you to take note of that tough guy lurking in the shadows. Even more urgently, perhaps, you crave an introduction to that sassy newcomer who's lighting up the room.

A good host works hard before the party, mulling over which guests will make the most stimulating mix. Memorability is a must. Many here are already well known, even famous. Others have been on the scene more briefly, but seem unforgettable nonetheless. It's a good crowd, but some guests are not at the soiree. Don't worry. They're not forgotten. They turn up in the context of conversations.

I invite you to get up close and personal with hundreds of characters and authors. More than three hundred are found in entries devoted to individuals (and some pairs) listed under their names in the main body of this volume. Hundreds more (whose names are listed in the index) are mentioned in seventy-two entries on types of characters and authors. Some—such as the Academic Sleuth, Judge, or Great Detective—are admirable figures. We also consort here with those we love to hate—including the Con Artist, Master Criminal, and Femme Fatale. Even pet characters hiss or frolic in our entry on Animals.

Anyone who joins us here knows no single volume can accommodate the population explosion of new talent in the crime and mystery writing genre. Especially during the last two decades of the twentieth century and in the years following the turn of the twenty-first, great numbers of gifted new authors have demonstrated their powers. I have added one hundred and one new entries to represent them here. Some serve up culinary mysteries that are as light and lively as gourmet soufflés while others turn out dark depictions of twisted criminal minds—and there is a wide range of work in between those extremes. Because I've culled from that crowd characters and authors who are all masters of what they do, you might say the mix is exclusive in the best sense of the word.

But what makes a master?

The quality of long-lasting appeal, even of greatness, may seem nebulous—but you know it when you see it. Looking back as a scholar, critic, book review editor and lifelong reader of the genre, I carefully scrutinized those who have already stood the test of time. I found that they vary in many particulars, but they all have one quality in common. Classic or contemporary, their work shines with highly individual personality that arises from—and transcends—their life experience, attitudes, and voices. I sought to include such luminaries here.

Of course there are cases where many must be represented by a few. An editor is haunted by the spectre Dennis describes—“the drunken cousin who crashes your daughter's wedding and accosts you for not inviting him.” Enraged cousins or not, there have to be criteria for inclusion. One is obvious: If several authors or characters are high achievers in a similar area, groundbreakers get their own entries. A good example is Lillian Jackson Braun who here represents represent a legion of writers who make cats major characters in their books. Braun, who is known as the author of “The Cat Who . . .” series is not only one of the earlier authors to use cats as crime solving sidekicks, but she makes actual feline behavior—such as some Siamese cats' taste for eating wool—essential to her work. Marian Babson, is included in this context, too, but not only because her groundbreaking 1992 novel, *Nine Lives to Murder*, remarkably succeeds at making readers believe a human and a cat can trade points of view. Another important factor in including Babson is her production of other series. Carole Nelson Douglas, who writes a series featuring a cat called Midnight Louie is also covered here, thanks to her entire output, not just her cat-related capers. Additional creators of feline characters receive mention in our article on Animals, allowing us to maintain space to represent other major types of characters and authors rather than to profile every cat-loving author individually.

Similarly, to solve a case of too many cooks—and caterers, bakers, candy-makers and others who combine culinary expertise with detective work—I created a new group entry on the Culinary Sleuth. This essay gives attention to a representative group of authors and characters who have come to the fore in the last two decades. The writers and characters included in this and other group entries are also listed in the index under individual names.

Inevitably, some will stew over the selection here. But it must be remembered this is a representative mix. May anyone who feels excluded howl at our door. There's always the promise of a new

edition. For now, this is the company. Dennis noted many of them in his preface. I'll point out some more.

Here's Barbara Neely, who staked out new turf by making her African American sleuth, Blanche White, a domestic worker. Using lively dialogue and cutting internal monologues, Neely endows White with an ironic moniker and an unforgettable attitude—about her employers, racism in America, parenting, sex and more. And then there's Sarah Caudwell, an English barrister whose years working as a tax lawyer in a bank robbed the London courtrooms of one of the world's masters of understatement. She managed to write three novels that raise questions about gender without ever mentioning it directly. Readers never discover if Caudwell's major character, Hilary Tamar, is a man or a woman. There's no doubt about the gender—and sexual preference—of Kate Brannigan, the lesbian lawyer-sleuth created by Val McDermid.

In fact, the characters in this group make marvelous fodder for gossip. Take Stephanie Plum. The New Jersey bounty hunter may get her man if he's a miscreant she's hauling to a court appearance—but she's not so successful when it comes to nabbing a mate. Linda Barnes's Carlotta Carlyle hob-nobs with a certain male cop, but shares her digs with a female punk. George Pelecanos's Demetri Karras can't quite kick his drug habit.

Some of the authors here collar readers for causes. Nevada Barr stumps for environmental issues. James Lee Burke opines on recovery from alcoholism. John Mortimer prods readers to ponder freedom of speech and more. Some just enjoy waxing eloquent, as Jane Langton does when her professor sleuth Homer Kelly delights in quoting Henry David Thoreau. And some guys grab your ear with wisecracks: Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, and Spenser come to mind.

Here you will meet authors who bring unusual expertise to their writing. Hammett's lonely hours working for the Pinkerton Detective Agency undoubtedly add depth to his portrayals of the Continental Op and Sam Spade, two characters who typify the sleuth as loner. Peter Lovesey brings a love of sports history to his early work including *Wobble to Death* (1970), about a quirky Victorian walking marathon. Patricia Cornwell's saw blood and gore in the Richmond, Virginia, medical examiner's office, and used it in her books about the fictional M.E., Kay Scarpetta.

This book reveals, too, that some writers eschew life experience and rely instead on flights of imagination. H.R.F. Keating and Colin Dexter are two. Keating wrote several books about the beleaguered Indian policeman Inspector Ganesh Ghoté without having visited any part of India. Dexter certainly knows his Oxford milieu well enough, but he counts it a point of pride that he created Chief Inspector Endeavor Morse while knowing absolutely nothing about police work.

Finally, the mix includes a good group of local yokels—authors and characters who seem intimately and very memorably linked to their environs. There's John Harvey, whose mean streets of Nottingham are so well-described that the reader almost feels grit on the hands while turning the pages, and Joan Hess, whose denizens of Maggody, Arkansas make this hillbilly haven one of the quirkiest on the map. Here's Carl Hiaasen, whose Miami is as attention-getting as a neon sign; and Dennis Lehane, whose Irish Catholic, working class Boston neighborhood becomes a kind of group character in his latest work. Another writer who is inseparable from her scene is Patricia Carlon, who uses her intimate knowledge of the remote Australian Outback to make her novels remarkable. Newcomer Alexander McCall Smith places his private eye, Mma Precious Ramotswe, in the brand new No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency at the foot of a hill in Botswana. Smith is the man to meet if you want to get acquainted with a classic author in the making. Literally last, but certainly not least, there's Aurelio Zen, a character who does an imperfect job of solving crimes in Italian venues that are ultimately controlled by the Mafia.

In the end, this representative *Who's Who* celebrates the multi-faceted personality of the genre as a whole. Taken individually, or as a crowd, may the company here, like a room full of people in real life, surprise, puzzle, frighten and delight you—while providing a lifetime of reading enjoyment.

—Rosemary Herbert  
 Newtonville, Massachusetts  
 July 4, 2002

## USE OF THIS VOLUME

This volume is organized alphabetically. Extensive cross-references guide the reader to related articles; these cross-references are of three types:

- 1) Within an entry, the first occurrence of a name, word or phrase that has its own entry is marked with an asterisk (\*).
- 2) When a topic is treated in another entry or a related topic is discussed elsewhere in the volume, the italicized words “see,” or “see also,” direct the reader to the appropriate entry term(s).
- 3) “Blind entries,” or entry terms that have no accompanying text but are terms that readers might expect to find discussed, appear alphabetically in the volume and refer to the entries where the topics are actually treated. Thus the blind entry “Criminal Mastermind” refers readers to “Master Criminal.”

Cross-references, including terms that are marked with asterisks and those used in blind entries, match the entry terms, with the exceptions of plurals and possessives. Therefore the asterisked terms “\*sleuth” and “\*sleuths” will lead the reader to the entry “Sleuth.”

Real people and characters are alphabetized by last name, the former in bold capitals and the latter in ordinary bold type (e.g., Edgar Allan Poe under **POE, EDGAR ALLAN**, and the Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin under **Dupin, The Chevalier C. Auguste**). Each author is listed by the name under which he or she is best known in the crime and mystery field. Thus “**RHODE, JOHN**” is the entry title for the article about Major Cecil John Charles Street, who produced much of his detective fiction under the Rhode pseudonym. Throughout the volume, any author who is not the primary subject of an entry is also referred to by the name he or she most commonly uses on works in this genre. In the cases of authors who write mysteries under more than one name, the editor has chosen the name she believes is most likely to come to mind for most readers. In the case of Street/Rhode, his second pseudonym, Miles Burton, is mentioned in the context of the Rhode entry. In the case of Frances Fyfield, who first made her name in crime writing under that pseudonym and then wrote additional mysteries under her real name, Frances Hegarty, a blind entry serves to direct readers to the main entry, “**FYFIELD, FRANCES.**”

Authors and characters who are known by last names and nicknames are generally given entry titles under their full names. Thus Oxford chief inspector known throughout most of the books as just “Morse,” is listed under “**Morse, Chief Inspector Endeavor**” since, late in the series, the character was finally endowed by his author with a first name. In the case of the author who is sometimes known as Sapper, blind entries lead from this nickname to the entry for **McNEILE, H(ERMAN) C(YRIL)**. It is important for readers to remember that the index will point them to favorite authors and characters

whose names may not appear as entry titles or as blind entries but who are discussed in the context of other entries.

Every published work cited in this volume is followed by the date of its first publication, placed in parentheses. When the same work was published in two countries during the same year but under different titles, the first title given here is the one published in the author's country of origin. When there are additional variant titles, up to three are placed in parentheses following the first edition's publication year. When a book was originally published in a language other than English, the title of the first edition is listed first, followed (in parentheses) by the publication date and the title(s) of any English edition(s). When it is known how a title may be translated, but no translated edition has been published, this is noted in the body of the entry, not in parentheses.

Abbreviations used in this volume include acronyms for organizations or police and intelligence agencies, as well as for magazines that are frequently cited in these pages. A list of abbreviations follows:

- AHMM* *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*
- IAEP Asociacion Internacionale de Escritores Policianos (International Association of Crime Writers)
- CADS* *Crime and Detective Stories*
- CIA Central Intelligence Agency
- CID Criminal Investigation Department
- CWA Crime Writers Association
- EQMM* *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*
- FBI Federal Bureau of Investigation
- MWA Mystery Writers of America

All entries in this volume are signed by their authors.

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WHODUNIT?

# A Who's Who in Crime & Mystery Writing

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# A

**Abner, Uncle.** One of six detectives created by Melville Davisson \*Post, Uncle Abner is a squire in the western counties of Virginia in the time of Thomas Jefferson. A self-appointed protector and avenger, Uncle Abner harks back to a time when crime was not a social issue but rather a matter of violation of God's order. Nevertheless, he employs the ratiocinative techniques of a nineteenth-century detective in stories that Post crafted to exhibit the criminal mystery as the basis of plot and narrative development. The career of Uncle Abner is related exclusively in short stories that enjoyed success in popular magazines and are collected in *Uncle Abner, Master of Mysteries* (1918). Three additional stories appear in *The Methods of Uncle Abner* (1974). All extant stories were reissued in 1977 in *The Complete Uncle Abner*.

—Donald Yates

**ACADEMIC SLEUTH.** Working in the academic milieu, the academic \*sleuth is a prevalent character type in crime and mystery fiction. By far the greatest number of academic sleuths has come from the ranks of higher education, but they can also be schoolteachers, college librarians, administrators, or students. When engaged in detective work, academic sleuths employ the sharp analytic skills they have developed through their scholarly pursuits, and their efforts are not always confined to on-campus crimes. As Robin Winks points out (introduction, *The Historian as Detective: Essays on Evidence*, 1968), the reasoning processes that facilitate productive academic research closely parallel the reasoning processes necessary for successful detection.

Academic sleuths are most commonly experts in English literature, but nearly all academic disciplines have their representatives. Among the more esoteric fields represented are Sanskrit (Anthony \*Boucher's Professor John Ashwin) and agronomy (Charlotte \*MacLeod's Peter Shandy). Whatever his or her field of expertise, the academic sleuth has a body of information to draw upon to enliven discussion, confound suspects, and guide the investigation. For example, those who are professors of literature employ their esoteric knowledge and familiarity with literary allusions to interpret clues the police find impenetrable.

The first professorial sleuth to achieve widespread popularity was Professor Augustus S. F. X. \*Van Dusen. Created by Jacques \*Futrelle, Van Dusen is a master of all known sciences; his brain is so large that he wears size-eight hat. Thanks to his prodigious powers of deduction, Van Dusen is known as the Thinking Machine. A sometime member of the faculty at the fictional Hale

University in New England, Van Dusen makes his debut in *The Chase of the Golden Plate* (1906).

Craig Kennedy was Van Dusen's immediate successor as the preeminent professor-detective. The creation of Arthur B. \*Reeve, Kennedy is a professor of chemistry at a university in New York City that resembles Columbia University. Although proficient in logical deduction, Kennedy triumphs over evildoers largely by his talent for inventing scientific crime-fighting instruments such as a lie detector. Kennedy begins his literary life in *The Poisoned Pen* (1911), and his subsequent detection career focuses exclusively on off-campus crimes.

Of all professor-detectives, Dr. Lancelot \*Priestley holds the distinction of bringing the largest number of criminals to justice. Created by John \*Rhode, Priestley investigates crime off campus beginning with *The Paddington Mystery* (1925). Priestley, a mathematician, is less concerned with the human aspects of crimes than with the puzzles they present. Depending principally on Scotland Yard detectives to provide him with information, Priestley seldom leaves his London home in the course of his ratiocination. Like Van Dusen, he does not suffer fools gladly; a man of independent means, he takes up detection after leaving a major British university following a succession of bitter quarrels with the administration.

Van Dusen, Kennedy, and Priestley are all \*Great Detectives, and all three stand apart from the stream of ordinary life. Egocentric as well as intellectually arrogant, the academic sleuth became an appealing target for satire. Among the most popular of the academic sleuths constructed as a satirical commentary on real-life professors was Gervase \*Fen, an eccentric whose detection is often erratic and inefficient; his efforts are fueled more by his own high opinion of his sleuthing abilities than by any innate brilliance. The creation of Edmund \*Crispin, Fen—a professor of English language and literature at the fictional St. Christopher's College, Oxford—is introduced in *The Case of the Gilded Fly* (1944; *Obsequies at Oxford*). A lean man of about forty, his hair plastered down with water, he owns a red sports car, which he drives badly, wears bizarre clothing, and offers pompous opinions on all forms and genres of literature, whether or not he has any significant familiarity with them. His brilliant mind and elite education are regularly contrasted with the matter-of-fact attitudes of people in nonacademic life. Although he is sometimes shown at St. Christopher's and some of his faculty colleagues appear in his stories, all of the tales are essentially off-campus mysteries.

In recent decades many professor detectives, includ-

ing several women sleuths, have been depicted as appealingly human, even sympathetic figures. Dr. R. V. Davie, the creation of V. C. Clinton-Baddeley, is a wry septuagenarian fellow in classics at the fictional St. Nicholas's College, Cambridge. He first appears in *Death's Bright Dart* (1967). Neither a detecting genius nor oppressively eccentric, Dr. Davie is a more congenial character than most of his colleagues: He is a man with friends who enjoys a wide range of activities and associations. In detection he is curious and astute rather than arrogant and pushy.

Women academics have played a large part in deepening and humanizing the character of the academic sleuth. Amanda \*Cross's Kate \*Fansler first appears in *In the Last Analysis* (1964). She is a serious-minded, thoroughly professional academician who must often juggle the demands of her teaching and research with detection. She leads the reader through the academic world as it is experienced by women: a place of discrimination, small-mindedness, and ambition. Joan Smith's Loretta Lawson is even more avowedly feminist and does not confine her detection to the campus. She works closely with a fellow professor and in *Don't Leave Me This Way* (1990) explores the life of a friend who comes to her for help and is later found murdered. With her close friendships, humane attitudes, and philosophical commitment to improving the life of women, Lawson is the diametric opposite of the earliest academic sleuths.

[See also Eccentrics.]

—John E. Kramer Jr.

**ACCIDENTAL SLEUTH.** "Accidental sleuth" is a term applied to the protagonist who is not a detective by avocation or profession, either amateur, private, or official, but who nonetheless assumes the role of \*sleuth. Often a character falls into the role because of his or her proximity to the scene of the crime, whether as a guest in a country house that becomes a murder scene or as an unwilling bystander who observes a criminal act in the mean streets. Accidental sleuths are frequently related to or personally involved in the lives of other characters directly affected by crime. They may assume the role of detective contrary to personal preference, or they may find themselves in the role of accidental sleuth with a mission, as is the case when a mother's determination serves to avenge or prevent a crime against her child where police efforts are failing. Several of Mary Higgins \*Clark's novels feature mothers who find themselves taking this role. There is notable tradition of accidental sleuthing in the Had-I-But-Known school of writing, which generally features female characters whose chance encounters with crime, often in isolated settings, cause them to undertake amateur sleuthing in a way that parallels the official police investigation.

Individual characters whose repeated encounters with crime fill multiple books are generally not considered accidental sleuths. Agatha \*Christie's Miss Jane \*Marple, for instance, is an \*amateur detective: she

comes to be known for her sleuthing abilities and is often called in to help with perplexing crimes in her neighborhood. Characters whose professions regularly cause them to visit crime scenes—primarily journalists, photojournalists, doctors, and lawyers—fall into a closely related category. When these characters use their expertise to guide them in investigating crimes in tandem with, along parallel lines to, or especially in lieu of official investigators, they become \*surrogate detectives.

One of the earliest recognized works in the crime and mystery genre features a character who illustrates how closely related the two categories are. In William \*Godwin's novel *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794; *Caleb Williams; The Adventures of Caleb Williams*), the secretary to Ferdinando Falkland finds that his position enables him first to suspect and then to prove the identity of a murderer. A more classic example of the purely accidental sleuth is Rachel Innes in Mary Roberts \*Rinehart's early novel *The Circular Staircase* (1908). When this character rents a country house for the summer, her natural curiosity draws her into investigating the mysterious occurrences that arise. The unnamed protagonist of Daphne \*du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938) is another accidental sleuth, whose love for her brooding new husband drives her to penetrate the mystery surrounding his deceased first wife.

Writers who use accidental sleuths have an advantage over those who use amateur detectives, for readers may find it easy to identify with a protagonist who is an ordinary citizen caught up in a web of intrigue. The lack of fixed expectations regarding the character's expertise, courage, and personality also allows for greater depth of characterization, more potential surprises, and sometimes a greater sense of jeopardy threatening the protagonist. For instance, in Josephine \*Tey's *Miss Pym Disposes* (1946) the sleuth character develops from an observer into an active participant in the circumstances surrounding the crime. In Tey's *Brat Farrar* (1949; *Come and Kill Me*), the eponymous antihero finds himself investigating the circumstances surrounding the death of the youth he is impersonating in order to inherit the deceased's fortune, transforming him in the reader's eyes from an opportunist adventurer in to a sympathetic character who is himself in jeopardy.

—J. Randolph Cox

**Adler, Irene.** Although she appears in just one story in the Sherlock \*Holmes Canon, Irene Adler is perhaps the most famous woman in detective fiction. The only woman to dupe Holmes, Adler is regarded by the \*Great Detective as "the woman," who "eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex." Born in New Jersey in 1858, Adler is a contralto who has performed at La Scala and held the role of prima donna at the Imperial Opera of Warsaw. When she claims the attention of Holmes in "A Scandal in Bohemia" (*Strand*, July 1891), she has retired from the operatic stage as well as from the embrace of Wilhelm Gottstreich Sigismund von Ormstein, grand

duke of Cassel-Felstein and hereditary king of Bohemia. The Bohemian king engages Holmes to secure a compromising photograph in which he is posed with Adler. Von Ormstein believes that his former paramour will use the photograph to ruin him when he marries another.

Described by Holmes as “the daintiest thing under a bonnet on this planet,” she is seen by the threatened grand duke as having “the face of the most beautiful of women and the mind of the most resolute of men.” Indeed, Adler impulsively disguises herself as a man and tails Holmes to his own door after he literally tries to smoke out the photograph’s secret hiding place. The Great Detective’s scheme involves two uninvited visits to Adler’s *bijou* villa in London. He first gains entry disguised as a loafer who has been injured in a scuffle, and subsequently presents himself as “an amiable and simple-minded clergyman.” But despite Holmes’s cleverness, Adler uses her “woman’s wit” to remain a step ahead of the sleuth, marrying Godfrey Norton and fleeing with her new spouse—and the scandalous photograph—while rising in Holmes’s regard to the point that he prefers to accept her portrait rather than the Bohemian’s showy jeweled ring in payment for his services.

[See also *Femme Fatale*.]

—Rosemary Herbert

**AFRICAN AMERICAN SLEUTH.** In the twentieth century, African Americans began the mass migration that would transform them from a rural to an urban people. Although the African American writers who chronicled this transition examined the impact of crime on the black community, they did not typically write genre mystery fiction. Among those who did was Rudolph Fisher, whose *The Conjure-Man Dies* (1932), a classic mystery novel, features Harlem detective Perry Dart and Dr. John Archer. Twenty-five years later, expatriate Chester Himes, living in France, created Coffin Ed Johnson and Gravedigger Jones, who in policing a ghetto that has become a slum are both more cynical and more brutal than Perry Dart.

By the 1940s, African American police officers as minor characters included Detective Zilgitt in Ellery Queen’s *Cat of Many Tails* (1949) and Officer Connolly in Bart Spicer’s *Blues for the Prince* (1950). But a significant step forward occurred with the publication of “Corollary” in the July 1948 issue of *Ellery Queen’s Mystery Magazine*. Written by African American writer Hughes Allison, the story features Detective Joe Hill.

During the Civil Rights era, other sleuths were created. John Ball’s *In the Heat of the Night* (1965) featured Virgil Tibbs, a Pasadena homicide detective. In marked contrast to George Baxt’s flamboyant homosexual detective Pharoah Love (*A Queer Kind of Death*, 1966) and his successor, the hip Satan Stagg (*Topsy and Evil*, 1968), Tibbs was conservative in dress and behavior. But he brought to his work a compassion rooted in his own struggles.

However, African American sleuths were becoming

more assertive in demanding respect. As hard-boiled “private eyes, they also became more violent. This was linked to the urban milieu in which private eyes such as Ernest Tidyman’s John Shaft, Percy Spurlock Parker’s Bull Benson, and Kenn Davis’s Carver Bascombe functioned. They followed in the footsteps of private eye Toussaint Marcus Moore, created by Ed Lacy in the 1950s.

In the 1990s, a group of African American mystery writers shaped their sleuths within the context of their own culture-based awareness of the social structure. Thus Walter Mosley’s Ezekiel “Easy” Rawlins is a migrant from the South, financially secure, but still painfully aware of the precariousness of being black in 1940s Los Angeles. And although Barbara Neely’s eponymous sleuth in *Blanche on the Lam* (1992) lives in the New South, she too experiences a sense of jeopardy. As a domestic worker, Blanche conducts a murder investigation while dealing with issues of race, class, gender, and oppression.

Perhaps the one thing that sets African American sleuths apart from their European American counterparts is what W. E. B. DuBois once referred to as a “double consciousness.” When the sleuths are fully realized as three-dimensional characters, the writers who create them present them as the products of a society in which they must develop a heightened sense of awareness that sometimes amounts to “cultural paranoia.” This awareness serves them well in encounters not only with criminals but also with police officers and others, who may respond to them based on racial stereotypes.

However, in the tradition of the genre, African American private eyes also have their police contacts. And the client who comes through the door is sometimes white. Sometimes, as with Virginia Kelly, the lesbian investment counselor in Nikki Baker’s *The Lavender House Murder* (1992), the case is one in which the sleuth is intimately involved. But on other occasions private eyes such as Clifford Mason’s Joe Cinquez and Gar Anthony Haywood’s Aaron Gunner turn to their kinship and friendship networks for information and resources. The sidekicks of these sleuths are varied and eccentric. Easy Rawlins has an uneasy relationship with “Mouse,” who is as lethal as he is loyal. Richard Hilary’s New Jersey-based private eye, Ezell “Easy” Barnes, has a sidekick named “Angel,” who is a transvestite. The plot conventions are all there. What is different is how the African American sleuth interprets them.

—Frankie Y. Bailey

**AIRD, CATHERINE**, pseudonym of Kinn Hamilton McIntosh (b. 1930), English author of detective novels and works of local history. Born in Huddersfield, Yorkshire, she is the daughter of Dr. R.A.C. McIntosh, a physician who encouraged his daughter to develop powers of observation. Educated at Waverly School and Greenhead High School, both in Huddersfield, she dreamt of becoming a doctor, but a life-threatening illness struck