

By Teresa L. Jacobsen

CRIMINAL MOTIVES don't change significantly over the centuries, as this month's titles prove. Much to our dismay, contemporary maladies pepper the past with startling frequency. Consider the child trafficking rings of 1827 in Sara Fraser's vivid *Suffer the Children*. Or the con artists Ann Parker hangs out to dry in her 1880-set *Mercury's Rise*.

Small presses are bringing out great titles: Red Hen, North Star Press, and John F. Blair have offerings that deserve greater exposure. I was enticed by Marcos Villatoro's latest entry in his Romilia Chacón series, *Blood Daughters*, and debut novels by Susan Koefod (*Washed Up*) and Stuart Dill (*Murder on Music Row*). Give these new books a spin.

Speaking of spins, you can find heroines quick on their feet in the cozy department. Joelle Charbonneau is back in the roller rink with *Skating Over the Line*, and Ella Barwick debuts with a ballroom dancing title, *Quickstep to Murder*. The paso doble might be popular with the *Dancing with the Stars* folks, but it's not so cozy when applied to real bullfighting. See if you aren't mesmerized by Jason Webster's debut, *Or the Bull Kills You*.

BOUCHERCON CALLS If you can't get to St. Louis this month for mystery's biggest love fest, be sure to travel vicariously via their ambitious website and blog (www.bouchercon2011.com), where you can see the Anthony Award nominees and read some great interviews with the Best First Novel nominees.

I got to thinking about community reads recently when I noticed that Jacqueline Winspear is bringing her Maisie Dobbs title *The Mapping of Love and Death* to Walnut Creek, CA, (www.WalnutCreekReads.org) for their 2011 One City, One Book program this month. Santa Monica's Citywide Reads will be featuring Raymond Chandler in the spring of 2012. Curious about how crime fiction has fared generally in the community read selection process, I looked at the "Local/Community Resources" on the Library of Congress Center for the Book site (www.read.gov/resources). Well, no one's ever going to catch up with Ray Bradbury or Harper Lee at this point, but a number of surprisingly diverse mystery titles have been featured at large and small libraries across the land. My point? This website is an interesting launching point for titles that could work for your library on a small (mystery book group) or large (community event) scale.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

Coel, Margaret. *The Perfect Suspect*:

A Catherine McLeod Mystery.

Berkley Prime Crime. Sept. 2011. c.293p.

ISBN 9780425243480. \$25.95. M

Brace yourself for a second breakneck investigative case featuring Denver newspaper reporter Catherine McLeod (*Blood Memory*). Handsome David Mathews seemed to be a perfect gubernatorial candidate, but his love of women turned out to be his fatal Achilles' heel. We're startled to learn on the very first page that Det. Ryan Beckman killed Mathews in a fit of passion reminis-

cent of Glenn Close's *Fatal Attraction* role. And now she is the lead detective on the investigation! Catherine gets an anonymous tip from a witness to the slaying, and as she pursues the killer, her own life is jeopardized. **VERDICT** "Meeting the deadline" takes on new meaning in this compulsive read. Women as action stars—especially if they have a good dog—make for entertaining reading. This second series from Coel ("Wind River Mysteries") holds great possibilities, what with Catherine's Arapaho background and the myriad news stories still ahead. Consider pairing with Hank Phillippi Ryan or Brad Parks.

Parker, Ann. *Mercury's Rise: A Silver Rush*

Mystery. Poisoned Pen. Nov. 2011. c.364p.

ISBN 9781590589618. \$24.95; pap.

ISBN 9781590589632. \$14.95. M

It's 1880, and Inez Stannert, part owner of the Silver Queen Saloon in Leadville, CO, returns in Parker's excellent historical series (*Leaden Skies*). Inez, a suffer-no-fools



Or the Bull Kills You
 St. Martin's. Sept. 2011.
 c.288p. map. ISBN 9780312581831.

\$24.99. M



Chief Inspector Max Cámara might as well be in the ring himself as he investigates the brutal slaying of Valencia's star bullfighter. When a second, ritualistic death occurs, the pressure escalates.

Which way to turn? There are the anti-bullfighting activists, animal breeders, local politicians, and two possible love interests to complicate his life. One question can't be avoided: Where did a gay bullfighter (rumor has it) fit into this macho society? Webster, who lives in Spain and who is married to a flamenco dancer, makes his scenes easy to visualize, uses believable dialog, and plays out the investigation in an assured manner. The author's marvelously structured mystery not only reveals the complex politics behind bullfighting but also introduces us to colorful, tragic, and empathetic characters. The city of Valencia is a character as well, so strong is the sense of place (map included). **VERDICT** With its rapid pace and wonderfully flawed detective, this vibrant novel has tremendous appeal. Conor Fitzgerald would be a good read-alike; it also would appeal to new fans of Zen (Michael Dibdin's Italian cop) thanks to the recent PBS *Masterpiece Mystery!* miniseries starring Rufus Sewell.

type, is headed for a spa vacation in Manitou Springs, looking forward to reuniting with her toddler son and her sister. Unfortunately, one of her traveling companions keels over dead, just after swallowing a bottle of medicine. The new widow, now suspicious of the spa's medical personnel, begs Inez for help. Manitou Springs is touting itself as a health destination for people suffering from tuberculosis, and quackery is rampant. But why would a health resort be killing off its guests? If that's not enough, Inez is startled by her

Teresa L. Jacobsen, retired librarian, was a training coordinator for Solano County Library, and previous to that, a fiction evaluator/reference librarian for Santa Monica Public Library. She has written occasional feature articles for LJ and BookSmack! and reviewed fiction regularly since 2004. She is an unabashed mystery fan who enjoys bringing new readers into the fold

SERIES LINEUP

Albert, Susan Wittig. *The Tale of Castle Cottage: The Cottage Tales of Beatrix Potter.* Berkley: Penguin Group (USA). Sept. 2011. c.320. ISBN 9780425243503. \$24.95. **M**

Beatrix Potter (*The Tale of Oat Cake Crag*) is still weak from influenza, but she's back home in the Lake District. Big changes are afoot in this latest entry in a cozy favorite. Recipes included.

Beaton, M.C. *As the Pig Turns: An Agatha Raisin Mystery.* Minotaur: St. Martin's. Oct. 2011. c.304p. ISBN 9780312387020. \$24.99. **M**

A post-Christmas pig roast goes horribly awry when the "pig" on the spit turns out to be a local policeman. Agatha's agency investigates, of course, in this long-running series (*The Skeleton in the Closet*). [Library marketing.]

Brett, Simon. *Bones Under the Beach Hut: The Feathering Mysteries.* Five Star: Gale Cengage. Nov. 2011. c.272p. ISBN 9781432825683. \$25.95. **M**

Following *The Shooting in the Shop*, this tenth entry in the satiric cozy series involves human remains found at the beach. Amateur sleuths Carole and Jude dig in.

Cleverly, Barbara. *The Blood Royal: A Joe Sandilands Murder Mystery.* Soho Constable. Sept. 2011. c.400p. ISBN 9781569479872. \$25. **M**

Joe Sandilands (*Strange Images of Death*), on his return to London from India,

is placed in charge of the Special Irish Branch of the Criminal Investigation Department. Mix in a suspicious Russian princess and let the drama begin. This is set in 1922, and there's plenty of room for intrigue.

Grabien, Deborah. *Book of Days. Plus One.* (JP Kinkaid Chronicles, Bk. 5.) Sept. 2011. c.310. ISBN 9780984436262. pap. \$17.95. **M**

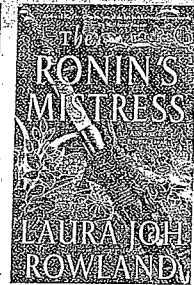
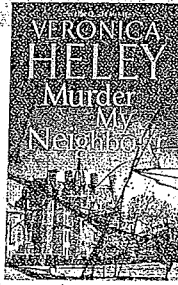
Hot on the heels of *Graceland*, out earlier this year, this entry features Blacklight on tour, but death is accompanying the band. Time to bring in detective Ormand to investigate.

Heley, Veronica. *Murder My Neighbour: An Elsie Quicke Mystery.* Severn House. Sept. 2011. c.240p. ISBN 9780727880505. \$28.95. **M**

Ellie (*Murder by Mistake*) gets involved in a missing-persons case when an elderly neighbor fails to show up at her new retirement home.

Kiely, Tracy. *Murder Most Persuasive: A Mystery.* Minotaur: St. Martin's. Sept. 2011. c.304p. ISBN 9780312699413. \$24.99. **M**

Jane Austen's *Persuasion* gets a contemporary twist in the third installment of Kiely's clever series (*Murder at Longbourn*). Promotional tie-in with the Jane Austen Society of North America.



Mayor, Archer. *Tag Man: A Joe Gunther Novel.* Minotaur: St. Martin's. Oct. 2011. c.290p. ISBN 9780312681944. \$25.99. **M**

Every library needs Mayor's police procedural series (*Red Herring*) on its shelves. Joe Gunther and his Vermont Bureau of Investigation team try to figure out who's behind the puzzling "tag man" burglaries.

Rowland, Laura Joh. *The Ronin's Mistress: A Novel of Feudal Japan.* Minotaur: St. Martin's. Sept. 2011. c.324p. ISBN 9780312658526. \$24.99. **M**

Consider the importance of honor in this mystery centered on a case of revenge. Sano (*The Cloud Pavilion*) has only days to figure out why the ronin (lordless samurai) waited so long.

Westerson, Jeri. *Troubled Bones: A Medieval Noir.* Minotaur: St. Martin's. Oct. 2011. c.288p. ISBN 9780312621636. \$25.99. **M**

In his fourth case (after *The Demon's Parchment*) disgraced knight Crispin Guest is off to Canterbury, and would you be surprised to note that Chaucer plays a part, too?

Shaber, Sarah R. Louise's War. Severn House. Sept. 2011. c.208p. ISBN 9780727880406. \$27.95. **M**

Washington, DC, government worker Louise Pearlle might be a naive, young widow, but she's also as determined as a bulldog when it comes to doing the right thing. It's June 1942, and a chance glimpse into a classified file (she works for the Office of Strategic Services) reveals to a horrified Louise that Vichy France is falling and that her dearest friend, Rachel, who is Jewish and lives in Marseille, is in grave danger. How can a file clerk make a difference? Read this gentle espionage novel and find out what people were doing on the home front. Wonderfully drawn details of the World War II era, with special focus on women's roles and the OSS/FBI competition. **VERDICT** A quick read that brings the domestic side of World War II to life. The country girl beats the odds and makes an

Georgian England (no Jane Austen in this realm), Fraser shares long-gone vocabulary and trades in a gritty style. There's no shortage of bad guys in this volatile, highly stratified society. Meanwhile, Potts's overbearing mother and long-suffering sweetheart

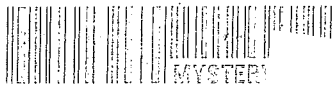


(after *The Drowned Ones*). This tragically authentic police procedural demonstrates that child trafficking isn't a contemporary phenomenon.

Koefod, Susan. *Washed Up.* North Star Pr. Sept. 2011. c.232p. ISBN 9780878394425. pap. \$14.95. **M**

A dead baby has been found on the shores of the Mississippi River by shy 11-year-old Abatha. Deeply traumatized, Abatha has been assigned a social worker, Chris-

tine Ivory, and in turn, Det. Arvo Thorson is waiting for his chance to question the girl. Christine, suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder, and Arvo, a morose alcoholic, grew up together in the Minnesota river town of Somerset Hills and have no use for each other, but the case's urgency soon forces them to work together. Both puzzle over a meddling politician's interest in the case; does her pressure signify more than a media moment for her? Then a cold case similar to this one breaks open the logjam, and all players become more desperate. Abatha is in danger now, and Arvo and Christine must trap the perpetrators posthaste. **VERDICT** A smashing debut with astute observations and gorgeous prose. The finale stretches credibility, but at that point you're totally engrossed. Koefod has crafted a suspenseful thriller with pacing that mimics the river's patterns and holds your interest right to the rapids at the end.



auspicious debut in (Shaw's "mon Shaw Mysteries") new series. Cozy, with a touch of romance; a good YA hand-sell, too.

Trow, M.J. *Dark Entry: An Elizabeth Mystery Featuring Christopher Marlowe. Crème de la Crime: Severn House. Oct. 2011. c.220p. ISBN 9781780290065. \$28.95. M*

Graduating from Cambridge in the late 16th century shouldn't be this dangerous, thinks Christopher (Kit) Marlowe in this promising mystery debut. Kit and his friends have celebration on their minds, but someone is systematically knocking them off. The authorities want to sweep the deaths under the rug and rule them suicides, but Kit engages outside help and learns that poisoning is to blame. The rush to find the motive before yet another victim turns up keeps this Elizabethan period drama fast-paced and unsettling. Marlowe hones his detecting skills and hunts down the villain while diversions such as a traveling theater troupe point to future endeavors for our hero. **VERDICT** There's nothing sedate about this twisty, academic historical. Trow, who's written nonfiction about Marlowe in the past, keeps it fast and entertaining while cluing us in to the secret agent methodology of the day. For the true historical mystery buff.

Villatoro, Marcos M. *Blood Daughters: A Romilia Chacón Novel. Red Hen. Oct. 2011. c.221p. ISBN 9781597094269. pap. \$18.95. M*

Sorrow runs deep through FBI agent Romilia Chacón (*A Venom Beneath the Skin*). Not much surprises this Salvadoran American anymore; her career is taking its toll, and alcohol is her best friend. Social activist Karen Allende, Romilia's surrogate little sister, is heavily involved in U.S.-Mexico border victims' issues and has been arrested for interfering with a border crime scene. Romilia recognizes that Karen's suspicions about child trafficking and sex crimes are right on the mark. When Romilia is almost shot, she knows she's onto something big. But now Karen is missing, and her kidnapers don't plan to let her go. Romilia must break rules before she loses again. A deeply flawed heroine battles hard to make things right for the loves she's lost and the ones she still has. **VERDICT** Add child pornography rings to the chilling pile of U.S.-Mexico border crimes. T. Jefferson Parker's Charlie Hood thrillers (*Iron River*) have given us a flavor of border corruption and angst, but Villatoro is right in there with this gritty thriller. A superb nonfiction tie-in would be Sonia Nazario's seminal *Enrique's Journey*. [For more crime fiction about the U.S.-Mexico border, see Sebastian Rotella's



QUOTABLE "One look at her face revealed the truth. The girl had the startled wild expression of a young bird of prey brought down by a poacher. She quickly composed her expression into a subdued look."

—Susan Koefod, *Washed Up*



Triple Crossing and Johnny Shaw's *Dove Season*.—Ed.]

COZY CORNER

Barrick, Ella. *Quickstep to Murder: A Ballroom Dance Mystery. Signet: NAL. Sept. 2011. c.304p. ISBN 9780451234544. pap. \$6.99. M*

Stacy Graysin's dream of a successful dance career glides precariously near the edge when her ex-fiancé, the handsome Rafe, is shot dead in their ballroom studio. Rafe had his share of enemies, but Stacy (and the police) can't quite agree on a motive. When Rafe's dashing Argentinean half-brother shows up to claim ownership of his half of the studio, Stacy digs in to save her livelihood, and her life. Concurrently, dance competitions—described in wonderful detail—provide quite a backdrop for a zany supporting cast of dance instructors, a lovesick teen couple, a dancing congresswoman, a no-nonsense detective, and the Argentinean embassy. **VERDICT** Perfect for all your dance show fans. Barrick brings a light step and upbeat tempo to her debut. Readers will like the adjacency to the greater DC area (plot potential there) and the interplay between generations. Who wouldn't want to spice up their lives with a little ballroom?

Charbonneau, Joelle. *Skating Over the Line. Minotaur: St. Martin's. Oct. 2011. c.275p. ISBN 9780312606626. \$25.99. M*

Rebecca's life is on hold while she tries to sell the small-town roller rink she inherited from her mother, just down the street from the senior center where her beloved grandfather, Pop, reigns as an Elvis impersonator. Then someone starts stealing cars, and the seniors turn to Rebecca as their favorite detective, based on her spot-on work last season (*Skating Around the Law*). To complicate matters, her estranged, ne'er-do-well father returns to town, ready to mooch off her again. All of a sudden, the stolen car case heats up violently. Reluctant to trust Lionel, the handsome veterinarian, or Sean, the local deputy, Rebecca skates into uncharted territory again, with her own safety at risk. **VERDICT** Light and breezy, Charbonneau's sophomore entry holds up. Her humor mixed with an eccentric cast keeps the mystery rolling at a steady clip. With this title's romantic triangle not unlike Janet Evanovich's trio of Stephanie Plum, Ranger, and

Joe Morelli, and relatives reminiscent of those in books by Rita Lakin or Deborah Sharp, you've got another humorous series at the ready. [Library marketing.]

Kelly, Sofie. *Steight of Paw: A Magical Cats Mystery. Signet: NAL. Sept. 2011. c.336p. ISBN 9780451234537. pap. \$7.99. M*

Minnesota librarian Kathleen returns in this second entry (*Curiosity Thrilled the Cat*) featuring the detecting ability of her uniquely gifted feline companions, Owen and Hercules. A young and talented professional, she's also, she realizes, a crazy cat lady. Nonetheless, when retired school principal Agatha, known for her ability to turn young people's lives around, is found murdered in a downtown alley, Kathleen knows the cats will help her figure it out. She's especially concerned because her friend Ruby has been arrested. Believing Ruby innocent, Kathleen and the cats puzzle through the clues in true Agatha Christie style. **VERDICT** It's good to have a touch of magic up your sleeve, and Kelly makes it work. If peanut butter-loving felines can live up a mystery, then I say, bring it on. Obvious tie-ins would be Miranda James's and Rebecca M. Hale's cat mysteries. You might also try Jess Lourey for spunkiness and locale.

Logan, Kylie. *Button Holed. Berkley Prime Crime. Sept. 2011. c.288p. ISBN 9780425243763. pap. \$7.99. M*

In this urban cozy set in Chicago with a Hollywood connection, sensible Josie Giancola, a known expert in antique and specialized buttons, suddenly finds herself in deep trouble. A movie star who wanted special buttons for her wedding gown is murdered in Josie's store. The victim, reviled by her assistants but adored by fans, leaves quite a wake behind her. A stray, unique button is found near the body, the only clue. Josie's likable neighbor, who happens to be a retired cop, and the lead detective provide the support she needs to solve her case. Because you see, when it comes to buttons, Josie is the top cop. **VERDICT** This first-person narrated cozy series debut has strong crossover appeal for bibliophiles and museum fans. Think Kate Carlisle's "Bibliophile Mysteries" and Sheila Connolly's "Museum Mysteries." Logan includes tips on antique button collecting. Logan also writes as Miranda Bliss and Casey Daniels.

★
Sep
\$2E
Adi
Tig
eve
bui
spe
awa
tari
by
wh
the
stra
all-t
reth
out
othe



Far fr
In th
per's
jealo
are g
grec
ing o
vario
funct
VERD
the n
wreck
Adige
Gilbert

Basu,
Overlo
ISBN
When
learns
in Lisl
a cure

