

*Sisters
in
Crime*™

HOTSHOTS!

HEART OF TEXAS Chapter
www.hotxsinc.org



Announcing the 2013 Gulf Coast Prizes in Poetry, Fiction, and Nonfiction!

Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts, published by the University of Houston, Houston, Texas, is now accepting entries for the 2013 Gulf Coast Prizes in Poetry, Nonfiction/Lyric Essay, and Fiction. The contest awards \$1,500 and publication to the winner in each genre, as well as \$250 to two honorable mentions in each genre. The winners will appear in Gulf Coast 26.1, due out in Fall 2013.

The 2013 Gulf Coast Prize in Poetry will be judged by Stanley Plumly. His poetry collection *“Old Heart”* won the Los Angeles Times Book Prize and was a finalist for the National Book Award. He is a Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, and a member of the Academy of Arts and Sciences. His most recent collection is *“Orphan Hours”*.

The 2013 Gulf Coast Prize in Fiction will be judged by Maggie Shipstead. She is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, a former Wallace Stegner Fellow at Stanford, and a recent resident at the Cite Internationale des Arts in Paris. Her short fiction has appeared in *Tin House*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Ecotone*, *American Short Fiction*, *Subtropics*, *The Best American Short Stories*, and other publications. Her story 'La Moretta' was a 2012 National Magazine Award finalist, and her first novel, *Seating Arrangements*, won the Dylan Thomas Prize.

The 2013 Gulf Coast Prize in Nonfiction/Lyric Essay will be judged by Darin Strauss. He is the author of the international bestseller *Chang and Eng*, and the

UPCOMING PROGRAM

Helen Ginger presents- Putting Yourself into Your Book

As writers, we put ourselves into our books, not just the blood, sweat and tears it takes to write a book. We put our experiences, knowledge, and beliefs into our books and into our characters. If you're writing fiction, though, you keep it to a minimum. You don't want to go overboard until it reads like a memoir. I can't speak for all writers, but a book all about me would be pretty boring.



The old axiom that you should write what you know still holds true today, but it doesn't mean write about yourself and your experiences only. "What you know" includes what you learn from observation, research or talking to others. However, in just about any book you read, there are bits and pieces of the writer in it. In most cases, only the writer knows what is autobiographical and what is not, what is a memory of the author or an emotion the author dredged up from his/her own experiences.

There is a lot of me in my book, *Angel Sometimes*. There's even more that is not me or is not based on my own experiences. In my next book, *Dismembering the Past*, there are small bits of me, but not nearly as much as is in *Angel Sometimes*. And that was deliberate on my part. How much of you are you putting into your work in progress? Was it planned or accidental? Is the character doing, saying, and behaving as they should? Or are they a fictionalized you?

She has a husband, two children, and a house that is always in need of dusting. She's not wild about cooking, but for some reason her family likes to eat.

Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter, meets monthly on the second Sunday of the month at 2 p.m. On March 10, we will meet at Mangia Pizza 8012 Mesa Dr, Austin, TX 78731 Located in the Mesa Plaza Shopping Center at the northwest corner of Mesa Drive and Spicewood Springs Road, between Mopac/Loop 1 and 360/Capital of Texas Highway.

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The Jacket on Parker

By Bill Williams

The fictional thief known only as Parker has a 46 year career thanks to his creator Richard Stark. Donald Westlake writing under the pen name Richard Stark draws a hard-boiled world in a series of thrillers starring the cool-headed professional criminal. The cunning survivor first arrives in 1962 in “The Hunter” when Parker goes on a personal quest to avenge himself on his ex-partners. They had taken his share of a big score and left him for dead. He robbed, bullied, schemed and killed his way past other criminals in 24 novels. His world is a landscape dotted by crooked cops, sticky-fingered partners, chatty girlfriends, and seedy businessmen. To Parker, crime is a game played for keeps. The last of Stark’s Parker novels is 2008’s “Dirty Money”.

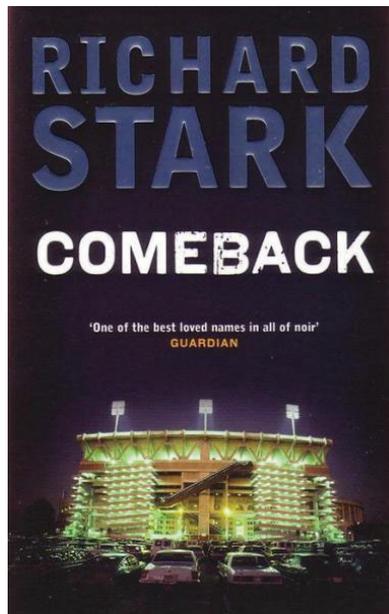
The crashing forces of people on both sides of the law engage in a complicated dance as the novels unfold with Parker planning a job, picking up the loot and heading for the exit. In Stark’s plots, the getaway is usually harder than pulling the job; there is no honesty among thieves or anyone else for that matter.

In the fifteenth novel “Slayground”, Parker staggers into an amusement park that is closed for the season, clutching a bag of cash taken from an armored car robbery. Teams of dirty cops and other teams of local mobsters hunt Parker through the park, hoping to grab his cash and silence him. To make his escape, Parker has to leave the loot behind. Stark retired his anti-hero after the sixteenth novel which had Parker and a crew working hard to recover loot left behind in “Slayground”. According to Donald Westlake, 1974’s “Butcher’s Moon” was not intended to be the last Parker book; it just ended up that way—for twenty-three years as he explained in a New York Times essay.

“In 1974, Richard Stark just up and disappeared. He did a fade. Periodically, in the ensuing years, I tried to summon that persona, to write like him, to be him for just a while, but every single time I failed. What appeared on the paper was stiff, full

of lumps, a poor imitation, a pastiche. Though successful, though well liked and well paid, Richard Stark had simply downed tools. For, I thought, ever.

“It seems strange to say that for those years I could no longer write like myself, since Richard Stark had always been, naturally, me. But he was gone, and when I say he was gone, I mean his voice was gone, erased clean out of my head.”



Westlake knocked out 26 more novels, a few of them starring one of Parker’s sometime partners, Alan Grofield. When working on a novel twenty years later, Westlake realized that he was working on a project suited to Parker’s blunt, thuggish approach. Unexpectedly, he slipped back into the character’s style and tone. Parker pulled a few more jobs starting with “Comeback”.

In “Comeback”, Parker and two other professionals meet with an inside man to get a sense of his general character. The professional thieves are not motivated by revenge or altruism, but necessity. In Parker’s world everybody has to find a way to pay the bills and ripping off a glorified roadside preacher is as good a way as any. The criminals plan their trip to the money room behind the stadium box office and aim to come away with duffel bags stuffed full of cash. The thieves strategy to avoid the police has them hiding out in a construction trailer near the stadium. When one of Parker’s partners tries to murder him in the night, the tension multiplies. Parker dodges the police in a small isolated town with private security on his tail and a gun-toting ex-partner driving around in a stolen cop car looking to do him in. Since the inside man had talked a little too much, a second set of criminals arrive in town looking to rob the thieves. Stark adds a cruel police detective and the conniving people in the inner circle of the traveling Reverend Archibald. Parker cons, fights and out-thinks the people in his path as he waits to catch a ride out of a town too hot for him.

The general corruption in the Parker novels runs

through this cast. Everyone in Parker's world either runs a game or spends his life as a sucker. Parker is there to do his job and then go back to a quiet life with his steady companion Claire. The villainous George Liss turns his shotgun on his partners as soon as he thinks the way out of town is clear.

Ed Mackey, a guy Parker has worked with before and considers solid, brings along his enabling wife

The ageless Parker is a ruthlessly efficient criminal with few redeeming qualities making him the perfect anti-hero for a world riddled by crime.

Brenda. Tom Carmody is the conflicted true-believer who is so repulsed by the commercialization of the Lord's word that he acts as an inside man to teach his boss a lesson. Reverend William Archibald is living the high life selling salvation and takes a dim view of anyone stealing the cash he earned selling hope. Dwayne Thorsen is the ex-Marine in charge of security for the ministry who can go to the places the police can't go. Detective Calavecci enjoys interrogating the criminals that fall into his path just a little too much. Zach, Woody, and Ralph are the three bumbling who hear about the robbery and just might be good enough to get the drop on the crooks as they make an escape.

The ageless Parker is a ruthlessly efficient criminal with few redeeming qualities making him the perfect anti-hero for a world riddled by crime. His professionalism when it comes to his craft is unmatched and the lengths he goes to are astounding. Parker frequently kills to protect the secrets of his latest robbery. A crook living by a strict code, Parker is frequently the best of a bad lot.

Stark owes significant elements of his prose to Hemingway, a lean narrative style and a feeling that Parker is constantly in the wilderness. In terms of observation, Stark's writing has the hard-boiled elements of the Chandler school with dry irony replacing romanticism. Consider the following section where Parker pressures the inside man to finish his part of the job as the voice of the minister fills the stadium and the tunnels beneath the gaudy show.

Tom Carmody's resistance was all used up. As the other two followed, he plodded along at Parker's side, shaking his head slowly. "I hate that bastard," he muttered, but in an exhausted way, without passion. "I hate his lying voice. I hate everything he does. I ought to burn the money, and him in it. Burn him in his own rotten piles of cash.

Parker tightened his grip on Carmody's bent

thumb, just a little, just enough to bring him back to earth. "Where's the money room?"

Structurally, Westlake tends to use a simple technique to keep the story flowing. In general Parker gets three chapters and then the supporting cast gets one. While not a hard and fast rule, this approach keeps the action moving. In Chapter One of "Comeback", Parker, Liss and Mackey knock on the security door to the stadium and the inside man opens the door. Chapter Two has a flashback with Parker getting the first phone call about the job. Chapters Three and Four have Parker and Liss meeting with the inside man Carmody. With Chapter Five, the novel is back in the action of the robbery. The story continues with twists and reversals as characters come into and leave Parker's orbit.

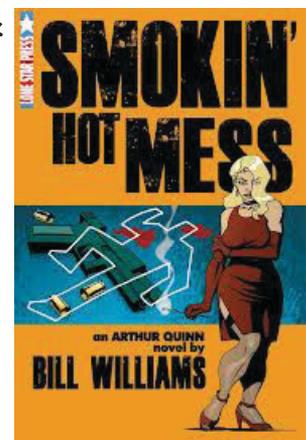
Parker has been brought to the screen with two adaptations of "The Hunter", once by Lee Marvin in 1967's "Point Blank" and again by Mel Gibson in 1999's "Payback". Jason Statham stars in the adaptation of the novel "Flashfire" in 2013's "Parker".

When asked about who he would cast as Parker, Westlake stated: "Usually I don't put an actor's face to the character, though with Parker, in the early days, I did think he probably looked something like Jack Palance. That may be partly because you knew Palance wasn't faking it, and Parker wasn't faking it either. Never once have I caught him winking at the reader."

Before his death, Westlake saw Darwyn Cooke adapt the first Parker novel "The Hunter" into graphic novel form keeping the 1962 setting of the original story. Other adaptations by Cooke have followed including "The Outfit" and "The Score".

"Smokin' Hot Mess", Bill Williams' first novel is available for the Kindle reader.

For more info on Parker, please visit- www.violentworldofparker.com



Sisters in Crime Heart of Texas Chapter is pleased to announce the 2013 Ninth Annual Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Project.

Aspiring Writers of Mysteries, Cozies, Suspense, Thrillers and True Crime are invited to submit a one-page synopsis and the first 500 words of an unpublished manuscript to the 2013 Ninth Annual Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Project.

Aspiring Mystery Writers that are selected will each be matched with a published Mentor Author for one-on-one sessions, and recognition at the Barbara Burnett Smith Aspiring Writers Event on May 19, 2013. This is not a contest – there is no judging and no fee. It is a wonderful opportunity for writers unpublished in the mystery field to get to talk with and be mentored by published authors.

Full details about the March 31, 2013, deadline submission can be found at <http://www.hotxsinc.org> 

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Gulf Coast

New York Times Notable Book The Real McCoy, one of the New York Public Library's "25 Books to Remember of 2002," as well the novel *More Than it Hurts You*, and most recently a memoir, *Half a Life*, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award. Also a screenwriter, Darin is currently adapting *Chang and Eng* for the screen with the actor Gary Oldman. Another screenplay on which he collaborated is in pre-production at Paramount Studios. He is the recipient of a 2006 Guggenheim Fellowship.

The deadline for entries is March 15, 2013. The \$23 reading fee includes a year-long subscription to Gulf Coast.

Gulf Coast will accept submissions via both online submissions manager and via postal mail. For more details please visit- <http://www.gulfcoastmag.org/contests>



I think that some books are more successful than others to certain readers. People who read my books for the humor, they're going to love one book. People who read my books for the mystery, they might not like that book quite as much.

-Janet Evanovich



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