

January, 2014

Burlington Public Library  
22 Sears Street, Burlington, MA 01803

# Crime Fiction Based on Fact



## *Novels built on the bones of real-life crimes.*

Can you tell where the facts end  
and the writer's imagination takes over?

This list accompanied an in-house library display  
over the winter of 2013-14.

Abbott, Megan – **Bury Me Deep**. Based on Winnie Ruth Judd (aka' the Trunk Murderess') in the 1930's.

Archer, Jeffrey – **To Cut a Long Story Short**. Fourteen stories, many of which are based on incidents recounted to the author in his travels.

Atkins, Ace – **Wicked City**. The 1954 murder of a crime-busting attorney in Phenix City, Alabama spurs the community to stand up against an underworld empire.

Atwood, Margaret – **Alias Grace**. Canadian housemaid murders her employer and his mistress in 1843.

Barnes, Julian – **Arthur & George**. George Edalji, an English lawyer of Indian descent, asks Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for help following his unjust conviction for mutilating horses.

Bernhardt, William – **Nemesis: the final case of Eliot Ness**. Based on the Cleveland Torso murders.

Boyne, John – **Crippen: a novel of murder**. Based on the 1910 transatlantic pursuit of Dr. Hawley Crippen for the murder and dismemberment of his wife, Cora.

Carey, Peter – **True History of the Kelly Gang**. The Outlaw Ned Kelly and his contentious Irish clan.

Chesterton, G.K. – **The Man Who Was Thursday**. Published in 1908, "Thursday" is Lucian Gregory, an anarchistic poet in London.

Christy, Agatha – **Murder on the Orient Express**. Based on the Lindbergh kidnapping case.

Collins, Max Allan – **Bye Bye Baby**. Marilyn Monroe received threatening phone calls from a movie studio.

Collins, Max Allan – **Target Lancer**. A favor for a friend leads to the murder of a Mafia contact, leading to a conspiracy to assassinate JFK.

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Cornwell, Patricia – **All that Remains**. Loosely based on the Parkway Murders in Williamsburg.

Cottam, F.G. – **The House of Lost Souls**. Revolves around a group of Satanists, including real-life novelist Dennis Wheatley and occultist Aleister Crowley who may have been involved in child sacrifice in the 1930's,

Donoghue, Emma – **Room: a Novel**. Inspired by the story of an Austrian man who was discovered in 2008 to have fathered 7 children with his daughter and kept her and three of her children in a secret basement room.

Dunne, Dominick – **A Season in Purgatory**. Inspired by the 1975 murder of Martha Moxley, for which Michael Skakel, a Kennedy nephew, was eventually convicted.

Ellroy, James – **The Black Dahlia**. Story of the 1947 murder of aspiring starlet Elizabeth Short, the 'Black Dahlia.'

Fairstein, Linda – **Night Watch**. Loosely based on the Dominique Strauss-Kahn affair in which the former director of the World Bank is accused of rape by a hotel chambermaid.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott – **The Great Gatsby**. Fitzgerald's vision of Long Island high society was influenced by the 1922 "Crime of the Century," the Hall-Mills murders in New Brunswick, New Jersey

Grafton, Sue – **Q is for Quarry**. Based on an actual unsolved murder case from the 1960's where a Jane Doe was dumped in a quarry.

Greaves, Joseph C. – **Hard Twisted**. A young girl is forced by a charismatic drifter to participate in a crime spree that ends in the notorious Greenville "skeleton murder" trial of 1935.

Grecian, Alex – **The Yard**. Filled with fascinating period detail and real historical figures, this showcases the depravity of late Victorian England and the advent of criminology.

Harris, Thomas – **The Silence of the Lambs**. The killer is based on six real serial killers.

Horan, Ellen – **31 Bond Street**. Recreates the murder of Dr. Harvey Burdell in mid-1800's New York and the trial of his widowed household manager.

Lippman, Laura – **What the Dead Know**. Loosely based on the disappearance of two sisters from a mall in the 1970's.

Mailer, Norman – **The Executioner's Song**. Based on the case of murderer Gary Gilmore, who wanted to be executed for robbing and killing two men.

McCrumb, Sharyn – **The Ballad of Tom Dooley**. Reimagines the events surrounding the murder of a North Carolina mountain girl and the hanging of her lover, Tom Dula.

McCrumb, Sharyn – **The Ballad of Frankie Silver**. Based on an 1830's crime: 18 year old Frances "Frankie" Silver was convicted of murdering her husband and cutting him to pieces.

McDermid, Val – **A Place of Execution**. Two children disappear from the streets of Manchester, England in 1963: the murderous careers of Myra Hindley and Ian Brady have begun (the Moors Murders.)

Meltzer, Brad – **The Book of Lies**. The unsolved murder of Jerry Siegel's father when Siegel was a child might have affected his later creation of Superman.

Moehring, J.R. – **Sutton**. Based on the life of the famous bank robber Willie Sutton.

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Newton, Charlie – **Calumet City**. A Chicago cop finds herself implicated in a series of seemingly unrelated crimes in a tale based on real-life events.

Piercy, Marge – **The Longings of Women**. The story of Becky, one of the three main women in the book, parallels that of Pamela Smart, accused of conspiring to murder her husband in 1990.

Shreve, Anita – **The Weight of Water**. A photographer is to take photos of an island off the coast of New Hampshire, home to an immigrant family involved in an 1873 ax murder.

Upton, Nicola – **Two for Sorrow**. Based on the 1903 London “Baby Farm” murderers.

Yan, Lianke – **Dream of Ding Village**. A story based on real events in China where blood selling operations have resulted in catastrophic AIDS outbreaks.



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(with thanks to the staff of the Noel Wien Library in Fairbanks, Alaska, for a fine display idea!)

