WOMEN MYSTERY WRITERS
SERIES I

MEAN STREETS

The following authors all feature gritty realism or hard-boiled atmospherics in addition to strong female lead characters in their writing. Since most series are best read in order, the first book in each series is noted.

Ayres, Noreen (US)
Series Character: Smokey Brandon, forensics expert and ex-stripper
Setting: Orange County, California
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *A World the Color of Salt*, 1982

Barnes, Linda (US, 1949- )
Series Character: Carlotta Carlyle, P.I.
Setting: Boston
Time: contemporary
   Edgar Award winner.

Burke, Jan (US)
Series Character: Irene Kelly, reporter
Setting: Southern California coastal city
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Good Night, Irene*, 1993
   Multiple award nominee. More attention to romance than is typical for hard-boileds.

Cody, Liza (Britain, 1944- )
Series Character: 1) Anna Lee, P.I. 2) Eva Wylie, professional wrestler and junkyard guard
Setting: London
Time: contemporary
   Multiple award winner. 2) Eva is one of mystery fiction’s most unusual characters.

Cornwell, Patricia (US, 1956- )
Series Character: Kay Scarpetta, Chief Medical Examiner
Setting: Richmond, Virginia
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Postmortem*, 1990
   Multiple award winner. Not for the squeamish; much autopsy detail.

D'Amato, Barbara (US, 1938- )
Series Character: Cat Marsala, freelance reporter
Setting: Chicago
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Hardball*, 1990
   Much comment on social issues.
Dawson, Janet (US)
Series Character: Jeri Howard, P.I.
Setting: Oakland, California
Time: contemporary
First book in series: Kindred Crimes, 1990
   Multiple award nominee. Strong sense of place for the Bay area, particularly its US Naval installations. Written by a former naval officer.

Dunant, Sarah (Britain)
Series Character: Hannah Wolfe, P.I.
Setting: London
Time: contemporary
First book in series: Birth Marks, 1992
   British Crime Writer's Association Award winner. Much comment on social issues.

Dunlap, Susan (US, 1943- )
Setting: 1) Northern California 2) Berkeley, California 3) San Diego, California
Time: contemporary
   Anthony Award winner. Strong sense of place in all three series.

Fyfield, Frances (Britain, 1948- ) aka Frances Hegarty
Series Character: 1) Helen West, Crown Prosecutor 2) Sarah Fortune, solicitor
Setting: London
Time: contemporary
   Multiple award nominee. Much comment on social issues.

Grafton, Sue (US, 1940- )
Series Character: Kinsey Millhone, P.I.
Setting: Southern California
Time: contemporary
First book in series: A is for Alibi, 1982
   Multiple award winner.

Grant-Adamson, Lesley (Britain)
Series Character: 1) Laura Flynn, P.I. 2) Rain Morgan, reporter
Setting: London
Time: Contemporary

Kelly, Susan (US)
Series Character: Liz Connors, freelance writer
Setting: Cambridge, Massachusetts
Time: contemporary
First book in series: The Gemini Man, 1985
   Anthony Award nominee. Strong sense of place for Cambridge.
Matera, Lia (US)  
Series Character: 1) Willa Jansson, lawyer 2) Laura Di Palma, lawyer  
Setting: San Francisco  
Time: contemporary  
Multiple award nominee.

Melville, Jennie (Britain, 1922- ) aka Gwendoline Butler  
Series Character: Charmian Daniels, police detective  
Setting: London environs  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *Come Home and Be Kind*, 1962

Meyers, Annette (US, 1934- )  
Series Character: Xenia Smith and Leslie Wetzon, headhunters for Wall Street brokerage firms  
Setting: New York City  
Time: contemporary  
Strong sense of place for both financial district and theater district (Leslie is an ex-dancer) in New York. Written by a Wall Street headhunter and former assistant to theater producer Hal Prince.

Muller, Marcia (US, 1944- )  
Series Character: Sharon McCone, P.I.  
Setting: San Francisco  
Time: contemporary  
Multiple award winner. Considered the founder of the female hard-boiled private eye genre.

O’Connell, Carol (US)  
Series Character: Kathleen Mallory, police officer  
Setting: New York City  
Time: contemporary  
Edgar Award nominee. Sociopathic main character.

O’Donnell, Lillian (US, 1926- )  
Series Character: 1) Norah Mulchaney, police officer 2) Gwen Ramadge, P.I.  
Setting: New York City  
Time: contemporary  

Paretsky, Sara (US, 1947- )  
Series Character: V.I. Warshawski, P.I.  
Setting: Chicago  
Time: contemporary  
British Crime Writers’ Association Award winner. Much comment on women’s issues. Written by the founder of Sisters in Crime, an organization to promote women’s detective fiction.
Paul, Barbara (US)
Series Character: Marian Larch, homicide detective
Setting: New York City
Time: contemporary
First book in series: Renewable Virgin, 1985
Comment on social issues and sexism in police force.

Prowell, Sandra West (US)
Series Character: Phoebe Seigel, P.I.
Setting: Montana
Time: Contemporary
First book in series: By Evil Means, 1993
Shamus Award nominee.

Smith, Julie (US, 1944-
Series Character: 1) Rebecca Schwartz, lawyer 2) Skip Langdon, homicide detective
Setting: 1) San Francisco 2) New Orleans
Time: contemporary
Edgar Award winner. Strong sense of place for both settings.

Spring, Michelle (British)
Series Character: Laura Principal, P.I.
Setting: London and Norfolk, England
Time: contemporary
Look at an England the guide books don’t show.

Walker, Mary Willis (US)
Series character: 1) Kate Driscoll, dog trainer 2) Molly Cates, crime reporter
Setting: Texas
Time: contemporary
Multiple award winner. Much comment on social issues.

Wheat, Carolyn (US)
Series Character: Cass Jameson, lawyer
Setting: New York City
Time: contemporary
First book in series: Dead Man’s Thoughts, 1983
Edgar Award nominee. Unblinking look at the criminal justice system. Written by a former Legal Aid lawyer.

Key to Awards:


Edgar: named for Edgar Allan Poe. The most prestigious award in mystery fiction. Given annually by the Mystery Writers of America.

Shamus: given annually by the Private Eye Writers of America.
WOMEN MYSTERY WRITERS
SERIES II

TEA AT THE VICARAGE

Although not all of their works are set in an English village, the following mystery writers all feature a minimum of violence or other distressing subject matter. The lead characters, however, are strong females. Since series are best read in order, the first book in each series is noted.

 Albert, Susan Wittig (US)
 Series Character: China Bayles, herbalist and former lawyer
 Setting: Pecan Springs, Texas
 Time: contemporary
     Multiple award nominee. Includes information on herbalism.

 Beaton, M. C. (Britain) aka Marion Chesney
 Series Character: Agatha Raisin, retired advertising executive
 Setting: Cotswolds, England
 Time: contemporary
 First book in series: *Agatha Raisin and the Quiche of Death*, 1992
     Cross Miss Marple with a barracuda and you get Agatha Raisin.

 Davidson, Diane Mott (US)
 Series Character: Goldy Bear, caterer and single mother
 Setting: Colorado
 Time: contemporary
 First book in series: *Catering to Nobody*, 1990
     Multiple award nominee. Includes recipes.

 Dentinger, Jane (US)
 Series Character: Josh O’Roarke, actress
 Setting: New York City, Los Angeles
 Time: contemporary
 First book in series: *Murder on Cue*, 1983
     Much theater detail. Witty.

 Douglas, Carole Nelson (US)
 Series Character: 1) Irene Adler, opera singer 2) Temple Barr, public relations freelancer and her cat, Midnight Louie
 Setting: 1) London and Europe 2) Las Vegas, Nevada
 Time: 1) 1880s 2) contemporary
     1) Sherlock Holmes pastiche. Good period detail. 2) For cat lovers.

 Fraser, Antonia (Britain, 1932- )
 Series Character: Jemima Shore, TV journalist
 Setting: London and England
 Time: contemporary
 First book in series: *Quiet as a Nun*, 1977
     Inside look at media power elite by one of its members.
Frazer, Margaret (US)
Series Character: Sister Frevisse
Setting: Convent near Oxford, England
Time: 1450s
  Edgar Award nominee. Good period detail.

Gordon, Alison (Canada)
Series Character: Kate Henry, baseball reporter
Setting: Toronto
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *The Dead Pull Hitter*, 1989
  Much baseball detail and strong sense of place for Toronto.

Hall, Mary Bowen (US)
Series Character: Emma Chizzit, salvage operation owner
Setting: Sacramento, California
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Emma Chizzit and the Queen Anne Killer*, 1989
  Over-60 main character.

Hardwick, Molly (Britain)
Series Character: Dorian Fairweather, antiques dealer
Setting: Kent, England
Time: contemporary
  Many allusions to literature and art.

Harris, Charlaine (US)
Series Character: Aurora Teagarden, heiress and ex-librarian
Setting: Georgia small town
Time: contemporary
  Agatha Award nominee.

Hess, Joan (US, 1949–)
Series Character: 1) Claire Malloy, bookstore owner and single mother 2) Arly Hanks, police chief
Setting: 1) Ozarks 2) Arkansas small town
Time: contemporary
  Multiple award nominee. Humorous.

Holt, Hazel (Britain)
Series Character: Sheila Malory, literary scholar and widow
Setting: Devon, England
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Mrs. Malory Investigates*, 1989
  Over-60 main character. Written by Barbara Pym’s literary executor and very much in her style.
Linscott, Gillian (Britain)
Series Character: Nell Bray, Suffragette
Setting: England and Europe
Time: Edwardian Era and World War I
First book in series: *Sister Beneath the Sheet*, 1991
  Good period detail and information on Suffragette movement.

McC crumb, Sharyn (US)
Series character: Elizabeth McPherson, forensic anthropologist
Setting: Appalachia and Great Britain
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Sick of Shadows*, 1989
  Edgar Award winner. Humorous.

Moffat, Gwen (Britain, 1924- )
Series Character: Miss Melinda Pink, mountaineer
Setting: England and United States
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Lady With a Cool Eye*, 1973
  Over 60 main character. Much information on mountain climbing.

Monfredo, Miriam Grace (US)
Series Character: Glynis Tryon, librarian
Setting: Seneca Falls, New York
Time: 1840s-50s
First book in series: *Seneca Falls Inheritance*, 1992
  Agatha Award nominee. Good period detail on 19th Century women's rights movement and other social issues.

Newman, Sharan (US)
Series Character: Catherine LeVendeur, nun and scholar
Setting: France
Time: 12th Century
First book in series: *Death Comes as Epiphany*, 1993
  Multiple award nominee. Good historical detail.

Page, Katherine Hall (US)
Series Character: Faith Sibley Fairchild, caterer
Setting: Massachusetts small town
Time: contemporary
  Agatha Award winner. Includes recipes and much New England atmosphere.

Peters, Elizabeth (US, 1927- )
Series Character: 1) Amelia Peabody, Egyptologist 2) Vicki Bliss, art historian 3) Jacqueline Kirby, librarian
Setting: 1) England and Egypt 2) Munich 3) New York City
Time: 1) 1880s 2&3) contemporary
  Agatha Award winner. 2) Good period detail and information on Egyptology.
**Pickard, Nancy** (US, 1945- )  
Series Character: Jenny Cain, philanthropic foundation director  
Setting: Massachusetts small town  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *Generous Death*, 1984  
   Multiple award winner. Much insight into dysfunctional families.

**Piesman, Marissa** (US)  
Series Character: Nina Fischman, lawyer and her mother, Ida  
Setting: NYC  
Time: contemporary  
   Jewish main character. Humorous.

**Rich, Virginia** (US, ?-1984)  
Series Character: Eugenia Potter, widow and gourmet cook  
Setting: Iowa and New England  
Time: contemporary  
   Over-60 main character. Recipes included.

**Roberts, Gillian** (US) aka Judith Greber  
Series Character: Amanda Pepper, private high school English teacher  
Setting: Philadelphia  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *Caught Dead in Philadelphia*, 1987  
   Anthony Award winner.

**Roome, Annette** (Britain)  
Series Character: Chris Martin, housewife turned reporter  
Setting: English town  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *A Real Shot in the Arm*, 1989  
   British Crime Writers Association Award winner.

**Rowe, Jennifer** (Australia)  
Series Character: Verity Birdwood, TV researcher  
Setting: Australia  
Time: contemporary  
   "The Agatha Christie of Australia"

**Rowlands, Betty** (Britain)  
Series Character: Melissa Craig, crime novelist  
Setting: Cotswolds (England) village  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *A Little Gentle Sleuthing*, 1990  
   Good view of English village life.
Smith, Joan (Britain, 1953-)  
Series Character: Loretta Lawson, feminist literature professor  
Setting: London  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *A Masculine Ending*, 1988  
Irreverant look at academic politics.

Trocheck, Kathy Hogan (US)  
Series Character: Julia Callahan Garrity, cleaning service owner and ex-police officer  
Setting: Atlanta  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *Every Crooked Nanny*, 1992  
Multiple award nominee. Comment on social issues.

Wentworth, Patricia (Britain, 1878-1961)  
Series Character: Maude Silver, P.I.  
Setting: England  
Time: 1930s-60s  
First book in series: *Grey Mask*, 1928  
One of the few female professional P.I.'s among the Golden Age mysteries. Over-60 main character.

Key to Awards:

Agatha: named for Agatha Christie. Given annually by Malice Domestic to honor mystery fiction that features an amateur detective, no excessive violence, and emphasizes character, relationships, and setting, i.e. "cozies."


Edgar: named for Edgar Allan Poe. The most prestigious award in mystery fiction. Given annually by the Mystery Writers of America.
WOMEN MYSTERY WRITERS  
SERIES III  
MAKING A STATEMENT  

The following writers all use the medium of mystery fiction to comment about social or environmental issues as well as to entertain. They all feature strong female main characters. Since series fiction is usually best read in order, the first book in each series is noted.

**Baker, Nikki** (US, 1962- )  
Series Character: Virginia Kelly, financial analyst  
Setting: Chicago  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *In the Game*, 1991  
African-American lesbian main character.

**Barr, Nevada** (US)  
Series Character: Anna Pigeon, US Park Ranger  
Setting: various national parks  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *Track of the Cat*, 1993  
Multiple award winner. Environmental themes.

**Bland, Eleanor Taylor** (US)  
Series Character: Marti McAllister, police officer  
Setting: Lincoln Park, Illinois  
Time: contemporary  
First book in series: *Dead Time*, 1992  
African-American main character.

**Bowen, Gail** (Canadian)  
Series Character: Joanne Kilbourne, professor  
Setting: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
Time: contemporary  
Canadian Crime Writers' Association Award winner. Comments on feminism.

**Carlson, Patricia M.** (US, 1940- )  
Series Character: 1) Maggie Ryan, student and then statistician  2) Marty Hopkins, Deputy Sheriff  
Setting: 1) Upstate New York and New York City  2) Southern Indiana  
Time: 1) 1960s-70s  2) contemporary  
Multiple award nominee. 1) comment on Vietnam War's effect on the homefront  2) comment on single-parenthood, sexism.

**Corpi, Lucha** (US)  
Series Character: Gloria Damasco, P.I.  
Setting: Los Angeles  
Time: contemporary  
Chicana main character.
Cross, Amanda (US, 1926-) aka Carolyn Heilbrun
Series Character: Kate Fansler, professor
Setting: New York City
Time: contemporary
First book in series: In the Last Analysis, 1964
Highly literary. Comment on sexism in academe. Written by feminist literary scholar.

Douglas, Lauren Wright (Canada)
Series Character: Caitlin Reecce, P.I.
Setting: Vancouver Island, British Columbia
Time: contemporary
Lesbian main character. Strong sense of place for Vancouver.

Greenwood, D.M. (Britain)
Series Character: Theodora Braithwaite, Deaconess
Setting: England
Time: contemporary
First book in series: Clerical Errors, 1991
Look at Church of England politics by an insider.

Hager, Jean (US)
Series Character: 1) Molly Bearpaw, Cherokee advocate 2) Tess Darcy, bed and breakfast owner
Setting: 1) Oklahoma 2) Ozarks, Missouri
Time: contemporary
1) Native American main character; use of Cherokee lore.

Harris, Lee (US)
Series character: Christine Bennett, ex-nun
Setting: New York City
Time: contemporary
First book in series: The Yom Kippur Murder, 1992
Edgar Award nominee. Each book features a different religious tradition.

Hart, Ellen (US)
Series Character: 1) Jane Lawless, restauranteur 2) Sophie Greenway, food critic
Setting: Minneapolis
Time: contemporary
First book in series: 1) Hallowed Murder, 1989 2) This Little Piggy Went to Murder, 1994
1) Lesbian main character.

Kelly, Nora (US)
Series Character: Gillian Adams, history professor
Setting: Vancouver, British Columbia and Cambridge, England
Time: contemporary
First book in series: In the Shadow of Kings, 1984
Comment on sexism in academe.
King, Laurie (US)
Series Character: 1) Kate Martinelli, police officer 2) Mary Russell, theology student
Setting: 1) San Francisco 2) Sussex, England
Time: 1) contemporary 2) 1890's-1920's
   Edgar Award winner. 1) Lesbian main character 2) Sherlock Holmes pastice with good period
detail.

McQuillan, Karin (US)
Series Character: Jazz Jasper, safari owner
Setting: Kenya
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Deadly Safari*, 1990
   Strong wildlife conservation theme and sense of place for Kenya.

Maron, Margaret (US)
Series Character: 1) Sigrid Harald, police officer 2) Deborah Knott, lawyer
Setting: 1) New York City 2) North Carolina
Time: contemporary
   Multiple award winner. 1) comment on sexism in police force 2) comment on social and political
   conditions in the New South.

Moody, Susan (Britain)
Series character: 1) Penny Wanawake, photographer 2) Cassandra Swan, bridge professional
Setting: England
Time: contemporary
   1) African-British main character.

Neely, Barbara (US)
Series Character: Blanche White, house cleaner
Setting: North Carolina and Boston
Time: contemporary
Style: traditional
First book in series: *Blanche on the Lam*, 1992
   Multiple award winner. African-American main character.

Padgett, Abigail (US, 1947- )
Series Character: Barbara "Bo" Bradley, child abuse investigator
Setting: San Diego, CA
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Child of Silence*, 1993
   Multiple award nominee. Manic-depressive main character.

Scoppetone, Sandra (US), aka Jack Early
Series Character: Lauren Lauranao, P.I.
Setting: Greenwich Village, New York City
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *Everything You Have is Mine*, 1991
   Shamus Award winner. Lesbian main character.
Shankman, Sara (US), aka Alice Storey
Series Character: Samantha Adams, investigative reporter
Setting: Atlanta, Georgia and southern United States
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *First Kill All the Lawyers*, 1988
Recovering alcoholic main character. Comment on conditions in the South.

Slovo, Gillian (South African, 1952-)
Series Character: Kate Baeier, journalist and P.I.
Setting: London
Time: contemporary
Leftist political overtones. Author is the daughter of anti-apartheid activists.

Stabenow, Dana (US)
Series Character: Kate Shugak, former District Attorney
Setting: Alaska
Time: contemporary
Edgar Award winner. Aleut main character.

Van Gieson, Judith (US)
Series Character: Neil Hamel, P.I. and lawyer
Setting: New Mexico
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *North of the Border*, 1988
Shamus Award nominee. Environmental themes.

Wesley, Valerie Wilson (US)
Series character: Tamara Hall, P.I.
Setting: Newark, New Jersey
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *When Death Comes Stealing*, 1994
Shamus Award nominee. African-American main character.

Wilson, Barbara (US, 1950-)
Series Character: 1) Pam and Penny Nilson, printers 2) Cassandra Reilly, translator
Setting: 1) Seattle 2) worldwide
Time: contemporary
British Crime Writers Association Award winner. Lesbian main characters.

Wings, Mary (US)
Series character: Emma Victor, feminist activist
Setting: Boston and San Francisco
Time: contemporary
First book in series: *She Came Too Late*, 1987
Lesbian main character. Much comment on women’s issues.
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Edgar: named for Edgar Allan Poe. The most prestigious award in mystery fiction. Given annually by the Mystery Writers of America.

Lambda: given annually by the Lambda Book Report for the best mystery novel featuring a gay or lesbian detective.

Shamus: given annually by the Private Eye Writers of America.

by Helene Androski
University of Wisconsin-Madison
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