

Shake Off The Ghosts (A Tee Pepper Mystery Book 2) by Jay Zendrowski

Date Read – 20190330

Rating –4 Stars

Because this book is entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for best novel and I'm trying to read as many of the entries that I can that are of the types I like before the Shortlists announcement on April 17/19 I broke my cardinal rules and bought this book by a new to me Canadian author and read it out of the series order. And for a big change I really hit the jackpot with a superb read. Of course it's not perfect as my 4 star rating shows because a book must be truly unique and outstanding for me to ever rate it 5 stars but I am also usually quite reluctant to rate my first read by an author 4 stars either so that shows good I found this one. This book is well written, edited and proofread and I found the writing style to be easy and enjoyable reading. I am quite familiar with London Ont. and I thought the descriptions of the settings and the weather and the coffee quite well done. This story is populated by a large cast of pretty well developed characters both the good guys and the bad guys and it is very difficult to pick out ant favourites. I don't think I can remember any other book where I can't even list any of the law enforcement characters as unlikeable with possibly the slight exception of Gallup. Of course Tee and Rupe are great as the leading characters with Chin not far behind but I might possibly rate Ben Lambert as the best character. Up until reading this story I have always considered Bradley in Laurence Gough's Willow's and Parker mysteries as the boss every cop would want to work for but now I think he has been replaced by Caruso for that honour. If there's any weakness in this story it is that some of the mystery was solved by somewhat coincidental things but, then, that's kind of like real life too, and I really didn't like ending of the Gallup twist. I will admit that I would probably have enjoyed this read even more if I had have stuck to my rule that series should be read in order especially in completely understanding Shauna's problem but now I definitely will go back and read the first book in this series. Overall this is one of the best police procedurals that I have read this year and I highly recommend it.

The Goddaughter Does Vegas (Gina Gallo #6) by Melodie Campbell

Date Read – 20190327

Rating –4 Stars

Melodie Campbell's "Gina Gallo" Rapid Reads series is one of my favourite series of what I call "Laundromat books" that I can read in the hour and a half or so while I sit in the Coin Laundry and watch the washers and dryers eat up my coins and my clothes. And this one turned out to be one of the best in this series even though it was a bit longer than expected and I had to finish it at home. Quite often when I read what has been touted as a humorous cozy mystery novel or novella I never find any humour but that's sure not the case with this book 'cause I was giggling and smiling and outright guffawing on every page. Gina and her "Family" are all fantastic characters and Nico has to be number 1. Pete has to have the patience of Job to fit into this wacky bunch. And, WOW, we've just discovered another branch of the family in Vegas and Frank "Mushroom" and Rita and Salvo most definitely belong in this crazy family and I'm looking forward for some more raucous adventures with Gina. BTW I think cousin Mario better watch his back. Bring on the next one a lot quicker please 'cause I'm going to need some more laughs pretty soon.

Keep Her Safe by K.A. Tucker

Date Read – 20190325

Rating –4 Stars

I think this book is a fine entry for the 2019 Arthur Ellis best novel award and I am glad to find another new, at least to me, Canadian mystery author and I intend to read more of her work in the mystery genre. I know Ms Tucker is a well published and best selling Romance author who is trying to branch out into the Romantic Suspense sub genre and I think she has done so quite well with this book. I've rated it 4 stars which I very seldom do for the first book I have read by an author but I enjoyed this one so much that I pretty well had to. I think this book is well written and even with the quite gritty and serious story I even had a few smiles along the way to lighten things up a bit. This book is very well edited and proof read with few, if any, of the usual typo errors found in most current books. Many very well developed characters with Grace (Gracie) being an exceptionally strong, smart and likeable character even with her tempestuousity and I can quite understand and sympathize with Noah, even if he seems a bit naive, considering the situation he is in and his upbringing. One thing that is a bit unique is that that the FBI agents Klein and Tareen are portrayed as quite likeable and intelligent human beings rather than the way FBI agents appear in many mysteries. I'm not a huge fan of a lot of romance in a mystery novel but I think it is well handled here and I actually liked seeing how Noah and Gracie changed and grew together very realistically. Another thing that annoys me in

many books is the use of flashbacks but Ms Tucker pulled that off very smoothly by providing dates and names in the chapter titles and they became an effective way of providing all the background and motives for the plot and the character's actions. I had guessed the identity of the perp down to one of two and picked the wrong one and I never saw the second twist coming but I sure should have. I really liked the ending except that it possibly could have been a bit more definitive about what happened to Canning. It would also be kind of nice if Ms Tucker could set a Mystery in Canada as I know she has done with at least one of her Romances. Good read and I'm looking forward to her next mystery novel.

Flights and Falls: (B.C. Blues Crime #4) by R.M. Greenaway

Date Read – 20190321

Rating –3 Stars

A break from my 2019 Arthur Ellis awards reading project to read the latest release in R.M. Greenaway's B.C. Blues Crime series and I've basically enjoyed all four books in this series almost equally as I think it's a bit of a coincidence that I have rated all four as 3 star reads. However in this book as in all of the first three there is some small problem which causes me to slightly downrate what should be a 4 star read to a 3. In this case the only slight problem I have is the little cliff hanger at the ending with Kenny Poole's action that obviously is intended to sell the next book in the series and, as usual, I'm a bit turned off by this ploy. I still don't like Mike Bosko too much although in this episode he pulled a goof up that actually made him to appear more human. I have never been a huge fan of David Leith but I sure liked him a lot more in this story than in any of the previous ones. J D Temple is far and away the best cop in the series and it was nice to see her have her turn to be the MC. Dion is sure skating on thinner and thinner ice in every book and we learn a bit more again about his trouble but he really is a brilliant detective and it's quite clever how Ms Greenaway has managed to allow him to contribute so much to the investigations while maintaining his supposed memory problem. I never guessed the identity of the perp until the reveal but all the clues were there in spite of Dion's theories which had everybody running off in all sorts of directions. I think the title of this book is very appropriate for this story and I think it is one of the best titles I've seen for a very long time. Please hurry up with book 5 so I can find out what Kenny Poole is up to!

Plots: A Robin Macfarland Mystery by Sky Curtis

Date Read – 20190318

Rating –3 Stars

Another pretty good entry for the 2019 Arthur Ellis best novel awards but I didn't find it quite as funny as "Flush" the first novel in this series. Sure there were lots of smiles and chuckles but no really LOL guffaws but a pretty good mystery with most definitely a very unique murder weapon. I really like Robin even with her weight and wine problems but brother Andrew is an absolute twit and I don't really like Cindy too much and I'm having some difficulty in deciding if I like Ralph all that much. He has lot's of good stuff going for him but I just get a bit of an off feeling about him. This book is well written, edited and proof read making it a real pleasure to read. I thought the ending was pretty solid but I thought the perp was pretty obvious quite early in the story even before Robin's rather different method of investigating by just eliminating each of her suspected suspects until only the perp was left. I did think the garbage can episode was dragged out a bit too long especially when the reader knows it's significance. Anyway an enjoyable read and I'll sure read any more that follow in this series.

Something Read, Something Dead (Lighthouse Library Mystery #5) by Eva Gates

Date Read – 20190315

Rating –3 Stars

A little break from my ArthurEllis awards entries reading project to read this book which is the latest release by one of my favourite authors, Vicki Delany, writing as Eva Gates. I've read all the entries in this series and for the most part have enjoyed them all but, of course, some more than others but although I found this a good fun read I can't rate it as one of the best in the series. Lucy and the whole gang from Body Island lighthouse and Josie and Jake and the rest of the Outer Banks characters are in their usual fine form and the descriptions of the weather and particularly the food are just as good as usual and it's nice to see Lucy and Conner's romance moving forward. However I didn't find as much humour in this book as in most of the earlier books. While Charles was pretty active I didn't think his escapades were nearly as hilarious as in previous books, Louise Jane wasn't as annoying as usual and actually became almost likeable and Gloria and her Southern Mafia which should have provided the laughs actually provided the good murder mystery and allowed Lucy to do a pretty good investigation to determine the perp. Anyway a solid ending to the main plot and the sub plot ended as expected and the way every reader wanted it to end and

even Gloria got off her high horse and went along with Josie and Jake's wedding plan. I'll sure keep reading this series but I still like Vicki Delany's "Year Round Christmas" the best of her series with the "Klondike Gold" a close second.

Give Out Creek by J.G. Toews

Date Read – 20190311

Rating –4 Stars

Another pretty good debut novel entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for best first novel by a new Canadian author and I found it a good enough read that I look forward to reading subsequent books by this author. Now once again I broke one of my rules and bought this book without having read any other work by this author and this time I won the gamble. Of course I may have been influenced by the coincidence that this book and J. E. Barnard's "When the Flood Falls" which is also entered for the 2019 best first novel and which I have already read (see my review) were both shortlisted for the 2016 Unhinged Arthur award of which "When the Flood Falls" was the winner. It's also a bit of a coincidence that both these books involve water but then again that's not too unlikely with them being set in Canada! And that brings me to some thoughts on what I liked about this book. I found the writing style to be very easy reading with a very well described setting, great descriptions of the weather and quite well developed characters, good, bad, likeable or not and here I really liked Stella and Ben and I thought Matt and Nicky were very realistic for boys of their ages but I am having a bit of a problem deciding if I liked Joe or not. Lots of good about him but just a bit of an off feeling. I didn't really see the twist coming in the scenes leading to the arrest and I didn't guess the perp until the reveal but I really should have 'cause there sure were enough clues provided. Again I'm going with 4 stars which I don't usually do for a debut novel but I can't really find enough faults with this book to downrate it further. Oh I really can't see the significance of the title to the story other than it being part of the setting but this story could have taken place on any watercourse. Yeah, BTW, I did a bit of a Google and "Give Out Creek" is a real creek near Nelson BC. Good read, I'm looking forward to a sequel and the suspense is building toward the April 17 2019 Shortlist announcements!

A Berry Deadly Welcome (Kylie Berry #1) by A.R. Winters

Date Read – 20190309

Rating –3 Stars

A quite enjoyable story that I read as a break from my 2019 Arthur Ellis award entries reading that actually has an adequate amount of the humour indicated in the blurbs, a good cast of mainly likeable and pretty well developed characters, a good if a bit predictable mystery and a quite solid ending. This book is pretty well edited but it does have one glaring proof reading problem that I can not stand and always causes me to downrate an otherwise good book quite a bit. Up until chapter 15 Rachel's sister's name is Veronica however when her husband goes to Jack's bank for a loan here's a quote -"If Jack didn't give Victoria's husband a loan, that must". Twice more she is called Victoria in the next paragraphs then here's the next quote -"I stepped away out of Jack's line of sight and made a note on a napkin. Veronica --> financial gain." There is no excuse for this kind of bad proof reading especially all in the same conversation in the same chapter. Anyway I'll very probably read more of this series when I need a little lighter read but no burn't brownies or uncooked cakes, please!

Find You In The Dark by Nathan Ripley

Date Read – 20190307

Rating –4 Stars

This is another entry in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for best first novel and I've rated it a 4 star read although I usually try not to do so for a debut novel as I like to leave room to see how the characters and the writing grow in subsequent books by the author but I had to as I enjoyed this read so much. I found it quite fascinating how Mr Ripley managed to build and sustain such a high level of suspense in a story where the bad guys are all known from the beginning and much of the story is told from their POV. However in some cases it is a bit difficult to determine if some of these characters are actually good guys or bad guys. I guess what I'm trying to say is that in some ways this is as much of a character study as it is a suspense story and it is very interesting to see the affect all the lies, secrets and misdirections have on the various characters and their lives. I'm trying not to get too specific and into some spoilers but I found Martin Reese to be an arrogant, egotistical and quite despicable kind of a person and definitely not too likeable but I also found myself pulling for him in

the search but the twist at the big ending scene really showed his real character. I thought Ellen was a bit weak and should have walked out long ago. Kylie is definitely the most likeable character in that family and the rather vague ending concerning the affects of the ordeal on her tends to indicate a sequel in the works. As to the cops I thought Chris Gabriel to be a very good and effective detective while Sandra Whittal, while touted as the greatest detective in the unit, really jumped to a conclusion and with tunnel vision spent all her energy trying to find facts to support her theory and even if she may have actually been partially correct I couldn't rate her as the top detective. Anyway I thoroughly enjoyed this read and will definitely read another by Nathan Ripley.

Cape Diamond (Frank Yakabuski #2) by Ron Corbett

Date Read – 20190303

Rating –3 Stars

After reading the first book in this series, “Ragged Lake”, which was a 2018 Arthur Ellis entry for best First novel I didn't really think I would read any more in this series (See my review of “Ragged Lake” . Many of my thoughts there also apply to “Cape Diamond”) However since this book is entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for Best novel and because I got it at no charge as a loner I gave it a try. Now while this is not a bad book and I didn't have to force myself to finish it there are some things about it that I, personally, find hard to like in a mystery novel and cause me to downrate it. I will admit that I liked Frank Yakabuski much more in this book than I did in the first book and I really liked how he treated Donna Griffin, enlisted her help in the investigation and credited her for her efforts. The best things about these books are the well written descriptions of the settings and the weather. I know a reader is supposed to suspend most sense of disbelief to enjoy these type of stories but the plot line of this book is so far fetched and over the top that it is very hard to accept that any of the wild action, of which there sure is plenty, could possibly take place anywhere in Canada where this book is supposedly set. That brings to me the problems I have with with this book. The major problem is with place names. It is quite acceptable for a writer to invent fictitious places but it is not acceptable to use the names of real places for them. Buckham's Bay is a neighbourhood in the City of Ottawa and Cape Diamond is the high ridge of land in Quebec City bordering the St Lawrence river upon which sits the Quebec Citadel. Valerie Tate made the same mistake in her Dunbarton series with the names of Dunbarton and Lancaster. Also a fictitious city must be situated in a geographic location where the topography, weather, distances, industries and people etc.

are realistic, possible and probable for that locality and I can not understand how a city the size of Springfield with all it's amenities could possibly be situated on the Northern Divide. If this book just stopped at the end of Chapter 55 it would have been a fine ending but, oh no, we have to have an epilogue to introduce another of my pet peeves and indicate that Cambino Cortez is returning to Springfield in order to entice the reader to buy the next book which, of course, I will not be doing. I might read it if I can get a freebie.

Cobra Clutch (Hammerhead Jed Mystery) by A.J. Devlin

Date Read – 20190227

Rating –4 Stars

This is another nominee for the 2019 Arthur Ellis award for best first novel and I found it to be well worthy of that nomination as I think it is one of the best debut novels I have read this year. This book has everything you could ask for in a mystery novel involving a somewhat different and unique kidnapping, a collection of well developed characters with many of them being quite quirky and headed up by a great father and son team of Frank and Jed and more raucous humour than I've read in many novels that are billed as supposedly funny. There's lots of spectacular action highlighted by a very Spenser like plan which, for a change, even with a few bumps actually works and produces one of the most spectacular crash bang shoot-em-ups that I've read for quite some time all leading to a pretty solid ending and a bit of a twist that I didn't really see coming. Now I'm not a huge fan of Professional wrestling but that didn't interfere with my enjoyment of this story and as a quite young boy at a father and son banquet with my dad I did meet and get to shake hands with the legendary wrestler, "Whipper Billy Watson". I'm looking forward to the next wild and woolly adventure with "Hammerhead Jed"

Gale Force by Owen Laukkanen

Date Read – 20190225

Rating –4 Stars

For some unknown reason this is the first book by Owen Laukkanen that I have read although I try to read crime fiction by Canadian authors and I have had

“The Forgotten Girls”, which was entered for a 2018 Arthur Ellis award, sitting in my calibre library for about a year. I think I avoided it because I didn’t think the synopsis sounded like a story I might like and I don’t like jumping into a series at book number 6 anyway. However after reading “Gale Force” I think I may be in for trying some more of Mr Laukkanen’s works and may start the “Stevens & Windermere” series from the first book but of course it will be after I finish my 2019 ArthurEllis reading. Anyway I thoroughly enjoyed this story and while it’s sure not great literature it most definitely delivered the escapism and entertainment that we are looking for when we read these types of books. This is definitely some kind of crime fiction with lot’s of stolen bonds, stowaways, murders, organized crime and shootouts but it is also most definitely not a detective investigation although most of the bad guys meet appropriate ends and the good guys win and live happily ever after. For the most part this is a rip roaring swash bucking high seas action adventure with some pretty solid descriptions of the settings that have still left me cold, wet and a bit sea sick and a pretty well developed cast of characters both the good guys and the bad guys. McKenna, Court, Nelson are really strong characters all with enough baggage and warts to make them quite believable and while it’s difficult to really like Court because of his attitude he’s really quite loyal and he sure has the ability to recover miraculously and rapidly from almost being killed. If there’s anything really wrong with this book it is that there is possibly a bit too many technical details about the salvage operation which kind of slows the story down a bit and since I don’t know any thing about high seas salvaging I have to assume from Mr Laukkanen’s bio that he does. This book is pretty well proofread but here is a quote that doesn’t really make sense to me because it possibly contains a wrong word - “I THINK THE SIMPLEST way is the best way,” Harrington told McKenna. “The portside ballast tanks are full, and the starboard tanks are empty. If we can ballast the tanks, the ship should regain equilibrium” I don’t think the second “ballast” is the correct word. Anyway a good read that I enjoyed and I think this would make a great movie.

A Different Kind of Reunion (A Gilda Greco Mystery #3) by Joanne Guidoccio

Date Read – 20190224

Rating –3 Stars

While still a 2019 Arthur Ellis nominee this book made a nice change of pace after reading Rick Mofina’s latest “Missing Daughter”. I like this series very much

and I enjoyed this one although it doesn't have quite as much of the humour found on the earlier books in the series. That's probably because Gilda's mother and wacky aunts are all away and not involved but Gilda's godmother Maria Rossi and Rosa Geraldini, Maria's sister, manage to get in the picture to help lighten things up a bit. Perhaps the seances were dragged out a bit too long but Gilda sure had lots of suspects for the murderer and I never correctly guessed the identity until the reveal but it sure wasn't hidden and rung in out of nowhere. It was nice to see Carlo get in a bit, in person, on the action and it kind of looks like Gilda's love life is getting sorted out a bit. I'll sure read more in this series to find out. This is a pretty well edited and proofread eBook but there is one bloop in Chapter 11 which is one of my pet peeves that usually cause me to downrate a book somewhat. Here's the quote - "Leo had a Café Mocha. I followed him to a table at the far end, away from the amorous couple and the front counter. "We can talk here," Jake said as he sipped his coffee." where obviously "Jake" should have read "Leo". I just can not accept names being mixed up and interchanged like that or understand how it could happen if a human actually read this before it was published. A good read though and I recommend it but it's best if you read the series in order.

Missing Daughter by Rick Mofina

Date Read – 20190223

Rating –4 Stars

Upon reading the synopsis and seeing the premise for this story my first thought was that this has all been done before in books such as Linwood Barclay's "Never Look Away" or even Rick Mofina's own "Whirlwind" but boy was I ever wrong. The only real commonality among these stories is the missing child as this story is a very suspenseful family drama where everybody is hiding secrets from each other and trying to cover up either real or perceived actions while supposedly trying to protect another family member but mostly trying to cover their own asses. All this is written with Rick Mofina's fine style which always has me almost shivering while I'm expecting something horrendous to happen probably on the next page. There are some things in this book that prevent me from rating it a 5 star read such as the need for the phone call from Jack Gannon who all Mofina fans will recognize as the lead character from one of the earlier series and I kept waiting for him to get involved but it never happened. Now I did have the perps identified quite early in the story but I really had no clue as to how or why they did their things and I had no idea of the fate of Maddie until that marvelous beagle, Buster, got into action doing what beagles

would actually do and I know 'cause I've owned and raised many beagles. The clues were there though like all the little dots on the cell phone's path for instance. I don't know if it was just the upstate New York setting but at quite a few times I had to remind myself that I was reading a Rick Mofina novel and not a Linwood Barclay who, BTW, happens to be another one of my favourite authors. However if you look at my profile on Goodreads and check my favourite authors list it is not a coincidence that Rick Mofina holds place number 1. A great read and as usual I'm waiting, impatiently, for Rick's next release.

A Scandal in Scarlet (A Sherlock Holmes Bookshop Mystery #4) by Vicki Delany

Date Read – 20190219

Rating –3 Stars

Although I read this as part of my 2018 Arthur Ellis award nominees reading project I would have read it anyway as Vicki Delany is one of my favourite authors and I have been reading this series in order. This is not my favourite series by Vicki as I think that honour goes to the Year Round Christmas series or maybe even a dead heat with the Lighthouse Library series (Eva Gates) but I am still enjoying this series very much and this entry just as much as the three previous ones. These books have all the necessary elements of good cozy mysteries but are also a bit grittier than most cozies. Gemma and Jane get themselves in the usual jams and get out, usually with the help of Ryan, and Louise's attitude toward Gemma softens up a slight bit and she even gave Gemma a little "Well done". We finally find out that Great Uncle Arthur actually does exist as he makes a short appearance and the ending is quite satisfactory with perps for 3 murders all apprehended. Gemma's love life finally seems to be getting sorted out but the same can't be said for Jayne. However the two leading characters in this book once again are Violet and Moriarty who not only provide most of the humour but Moriarty is the key to solving two of the murders. I enjoyed this book and will definitely read any more in this series.

Darkest Before the Dawn (Sgt. Windflower Mystery Series Book 7) by Mike Martin

Date Read – 20190217

Rating –3 Stars

The only reason I tried another book in this series after being so disappointed

with the first two books (see my reviews of books 1 & 2 because many of my thoughts there apply to this book as well) is because it is entered for a 2019 Arthur Ellis Best novel award and I bought it for a very low price. I did find this a bit better read than the other two that I have read but there is much too much repetitive detail with Windflower's love and care for his new daughter, Amelia Louise, and again too much driving around on treacherous roads in rural Newfoundland in the fog. Some of this fits in this story which is really more of a character driven family drama, with some very well developed and likeable characters, than a mystery as the mystery investigation takes a back seat to all the picnics, dog walks, dinner parties, cat and dog relations and Uncle Harry and some good tight editing would make this a much better read. I did think that Windflower's First Nation's customs played a bit more of a role than in the earlier books and once again Eddie Tizzard is by far the best character in the book. I actually enjoyed this read more than the first two books but not enough to make me search for any more of this series to add to my TBR list.

Property Values by Charles Demers

Date Read – 20190215

Rating –2 Stars

I read this thing because it's nominated for a 2019 Arthur Ellis award for Best Novel and I've reluctantly and probably over generously awarded it 2 stars because I finished it but I didn't really like it too much. I dunno maybe it's just me or my lacking, or at least different, sense of humour than other people but I just didn't get one laugh anywhere in this story and not even any giggles although I think I may have smiled once or twice. I thought the whole thing was preposterous, impossible and away over the top but then BC isn't known as the Left Coast for nothing. It is hard to like a book when you don't like any of the characters although I did get to like the three stooges a bit better at the end. Now this is a well written book with some quite good passages and I wasn't at any time tempted to abort it which I have done in the past with some Arthur Ellis nominees so I guess that might justify the 2 stars but this book just was not for me. I'm glad I got it as a loaner because I would have been really browned off if I had paid for it and probably would have aborted it. No more by this author for me.

A double header to catch up!

Persistent Guilt: A March and Walker Crime Novel by Michael J. McCann

Date Read – 201902014

Rating –4 Stars

I once again broke my rule and jumped into a new series out of order because this book is nominated for a 2019 Arthur Ellis Best Novel award and I didn't have too much of a problem with that because this is not much of a character driven story but it is a solid police procedural with some very likeable characters and some pretty well described settings and weather. Perhaps reading the first 2 books in the series before reading this one would have provided more character development and I intend to read them after I finish my Arthur Ellis reading. I really liked Kevin Walker and Dennis Leung particularly and found it a bit different from many other books of this type that even the requisite bad cop wasn't really corrupt but just in a horrendous conflict of interest situation that should have been avoided. Now I really didn't like Ellie March all too much as, while she is professionally a superb police detective, personally she is very self-centered and only seems interested in furthering her own career. I just couldn't understand her relationship to her daughters and perhaps reading books 1 and 2 may have helped. At least this story has a solid ending with appropriate justice served to all the bad guys and I never saw the spectacular twist in the courtroom scene coming although it wasn't right out of left field either. The only fault I can find is there is quite a lot of unnecessary detail - like we don't need to be told what every detective wears right down to the colour of their shoe laces and the lace on their panties every time they go out. Some much tighter editing would have eliminated quite a bit of skimming. Anyway a good solid 3.5 stars rounded up to 4 and I'll read more by this author.

Chameleon (The Dunbarton Mysteries Series #5) by Valerie Tate

Date Read – 20190211

Rating –3 Stars

I took a break from reading Arthur Ellis nominees because I needed a slightly lighter and fluffier read and that's what you usually get from this fine series that I am liking more and more as it progresses. However this book, while it was a good read and I enjoyed it, was a bit grittier than some of the earlier books in the series and, while I had a few laughs, it wasn't quite as humorous as I expected. Chris and Alicia are just as solid characters as usual and again as usual Charlie supplied what humour there is with a couple of his usual escape episodes. I think perhaps Melanie's bad luck with her boy friend choices is getting dragged

out a bit too far and is starting to be somewhat annoying. It was nice having Chris's sisters as top stars in the story but Alicia's parents were not really involved at all and I think that is perhaps a small part of what little problem I can find with this story. James and Alice and Marmalade are the whole basis of this series with Marmalade providing most of the humour and for some reason in these later books the author has just seemed to forget about him and almost written him right out of the stories. Now one thing I did find quite good was the proofreading was much better than in the previous books with very few typos or other errors except for one major flaw which cost this book at least 1 star. Here is a quote from Chapter 1 - "And Chris and I are going to take you and Angie and Chris to see 'Blythe Spirit', the play that's on right now, one day before you go home." where "Angie and Chris" should obviously read "Angie and Richard". There really can be no excuse for the appearance of wrong names like this. Now there are a couple of other instances of what I consider to be incorrect names for things but as this is somewhat of a personal preference I didn't downrate the book for these. However I think a book by a Canadian author and set in Canada should use Canadian terminology and not UK or US terms. For instance in these quotes - in Chapter 3 "actual dog from the telly. Too valuable" If this story was set in northern Britain "telly" would be fine but I think in Canada and the US the term would be "TV" and in Chapter 6 "She gladly accepted a ham sandwich, apple, and a can of diet soda" If this were set in the north-eastern US this would be OK but in Canada and the mid western US the term would be "diet pop". Now there is one other problem I have, and I did knock a star off for this, I can not accept a mystery novel ending with the perp, who I happened to identify quite early in the story, riding off unscathed into the sunset with some or all of the loot. Just must never happen. Anyway I already have acquired the next book in the series and will read it when I need a change from my Arthur Ellis reading project.

Against Nature (Duck Darley #2) by Casey Barrett

Date Read – 20190209

Rating –3 Stars

I once again broke my rule and jumped into a new series out of order because this book is nominated for a 2019 Arthur Ellis Best Novel award and I didn't have too much trouble with character's backstories etc. but, although I liked it, I suspect I may have liked it even more if I had read book 1 first. It's also a bit strange that I liked and enjoyed a story when I really didn't find most of the main

characters all that likeable. For instance I didn't like Cass at all (As a professional dominatrix I liked Trixie Snelling, with all her warts, in Linwood Barclay's "Stone Rain" a whole lot more) and I'm not sure how much I like Duck although he does have some redeeming qualities and when he can crawl out of the bottle and stay out of fights he might even stay alive for a while. At least all the bad guys are really bad and they all meet appropriate ends and the only character in the book that I liked, Stevie, turned out to be the big hero. Now his mother, Juliette, is something else again! This book is worth reading and it's sure worth 3 stars and I already have and will read book 1 "Under Water" after I finish my Arthur Ellis reading

MARRY, BANG, KILL

by Andrew Battershill

Date Read – 20190206

Rating –1 Star

This was sure not my cup-a-tea! I'm reasonably sure that some people will like this book but I am definitely sure that I did not. I find it strange that I have just read two books so close together that are entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards, this one and "Left". that I just did not like. I find it very difficult to like a book when I don't like any of the characters in that book and that is sure the case here. There are no Good Guys in this story and not one of all the bad guys is in any way likeable and I really didn't care what happened to any of them. I did reluctantly finish it but I really don't know why I didn't abort it and it wouldn't be the first Arthur Ellis nominee that I have aborted either!

Shadow Puppet (Dan Sharp Mystery #6) by Jeffrey Round

Date Read – 20190203

Rating –4 Star

Jeffrey Round has become one of my all time favourite Canadian authors and I have a hard time waiting for each of his new releases. I am practically never disappointed in his books whether in the Dan Sharp series or a standalone like "Endgame" and this new Dan Sharp did not disappoint me in any way and probably ranks as, if not the best of this series, well up as one of the best. As usual I think it's best if you read a series in order but in this case I think it is

absolutely necessary to read the author's note before reading this story and remember the chronological time frame of this story as fourth fitting between *The Jade Butterfly* and *After the Horses*. If you haven't read the author's note and paid attention to the dates it sure would be easy to assume that the premise for this book was lifted right out of the current news in Toronto. This is a good mystery story on its own with Dan's usual great investigative skills helped, of course, by all his contacts and with some very serious social commentary that Jeffrey manages very well to weave into the plot without becoming in any way preachy. The usual cast of Dan's friends – Donny, Domingo, Lester and Prabin are all just as strong and involved in helping Dan solve the mystery with Prabin probably a bit too involved and even the eventual perp was a strong and interesting character and I will admit that I had no idea who the culprit was among all the suspects until the big twist and the reveal. However once again I think Ked is my favourite character in this book. Another spectacular and solid ending with appropriate justice served. Just a fine entry in a great series that I really enjoyed and I highly recommend.

When the Flood Falls (The Falls Mysteries #1) by J.E. Barnard

Date Read – 20190201

Rating –4 Star

Once again I've been able to read an Arthur Ellis nominated for Best Novel as the first in a new series and by an author who is new to me without having to read it out of order. Also against my usual practice I've rated this book 4 stars which I rarely do for the 1st book in a series and probably never for the 1st book by a new, to me author but I just couldn't find enough faults in the book to justify downrating any lower. And I broke another rule and paid for a book written by an author whose work I had never read but this time it turned out to be a good purchase. Possibly the only fault with this story may be that it started out a bit slowly with the many character introductions and description of the setting and atmosphere which were well written and probably necessary anyway and the murder didn't occur till late in the story although it was pretty well expected and hinted at. There sure were enough suspects with motives and opportunities and I had one picked out and felt strongly that I was right but boy was I ever wrong! At least when the identity of the perp was revealed it wasn't just wrung in out of the blue but there had been enough clues that one should have been able to figure out who dun it. Lot's of good and well written characters but not all likeable and all with enough warts to make them quite realistic. Although Lacey

McCrae is supposed to be the star I didn't really like her too much at first as I found her a bit whiny and too absorbed with her own problems but she did grow into a much stronger and more likeable person at the end of the story. I think Jan Brenner is the real star of this book and I think she and her husband, Terry, are the two strongest characters in the story. A good solid and spectacular wind up scene and a satisfactory ending and I think a worthy Arthur Ellis entrant probably aided somewhat by having won the 2016 Unhanged Arthur award.

Left (Kindle Edition) by Theanna Bischoff

Date Read – 20190129

Rating –1 Star

Weird, Strange and Terrible. No ending and a complete waste of time that I almost aborted many times but I thought I might actually find out what happened but I didn't! Silvie was really the only sane character and I'm sure glad I got this one as a loaner or I'd have been really browned off. And somehow this mess was nominated for an Arthur Ellis 2019 Best Novel award which is why I read it.

Be Careful What You Wish For (A Paladin Project Chronicle) by Solomon Knight

Date Read – 20190125

Rating –3 Stars

This book is one of the most hilarious supposedly mystery books I've read in a long time. There is enough of a mystery buried in here to allow this book to be nominated for an Arthur Ellis award but I doubt it will even make the shortlist unless there were a category for Comedic Mystery which perhaps there should be. This is really a very well written satirical take on historical mysteries and superhero books with a dash of romance, a different look at some historical events, some great atmospheric descriptions and a smattering of social commentary thrown in. I thought that this was a hootin' great action adventure story that I quite enjoyed and it sure was a break from the various mystery, suspense, thrillers and even cozy mysteries that I normally read. And OMG the names! I'm still laughing – c'mon – Gowan Inn! Now I'll have to try some more Paladin Projects just to see if they are all as hilarious as this one.

The Cat of the Baskervilles (A Sherlock Holmes Bookshop Mystery #3) by Vicki Delany

Date Read – 20190123

Rating –3 Stars

I quite enjoyed this story and even though I am not a huge Sherlock Holmes fan I have a fairly large liking for this series probably because Vicki Delany is one of my favourite authors. However this series is not my favourite of Vicki's series as I still think the Year-Round Christmas series is my favourite but I'll still keep reading all the books in this series, too. Also it helps that this one and the next in the series are both on my list of reads that are entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis Awards and I'm trying to read as many of those that I want to read that I can before the Shortlists are announced on April 18 2019. I liked that Jayne's mother had the major role in this story and, as usual, Moriarty is a riot even with his somewhat reduced role in this book. The twist at the end was a bit unexpected after what appeared to be a soft ending but it's possible that it was almost wrung in from left field with only Gemma, and not the readers, being provided with enough clues to come to that solution. I also think it would be nice if there would be some solution to Gemma's romantic dilemma but I suspect that we can't expect that to happen if this series is to continue. And it would be kind of nice if Uncle Arthur actually appeared in one of books for a change.

Dragonfly: A Sean O'Brien Novel (Sean O'Brien #9) by Tom Lowe

Date Read – 20190119

Rating – 4 Stars

I am so glad after a much too long of a wait to have Sean and all his friends at the Ponce Marina back for another wild adventure. The task that Sean is handed in this story is considerably different than anything he has done in the previous books but, again as usual, it leads to some tense and suspenseful search and rescue missions and more than one magnificent, noisy and spectacular shoot-out and the usual Tom Lowe solid and satisfactory ending. Tom really knows how to end a story which is something a lot of current mystery writers haven't yet learned. Lately I've been running into some really monstrous bad guys in my reading adventures and Aswad and Thurston rank well up with the worst of them. I am especially happy to have Wynona Osceola aboard in a major role as she is a rock solid character who, as I noted in my review of a previous book in which she starred, I hope will become a recurring character in this fine series. Nick Kronus is a hoot but the leading star of this book has to be Max! I think these stories tend to be a bit better when Sean spends more of his time at his cabin on the St John River and Joe Billie is involved but of course that couldn't happen here with the nature of this plot. I was quite sorry to see deaths of some of the good guys but they had to happen to fit with the theme of channeling Agatha Christie's "Ten Little Indians" I am not a huge Agatha Christie

fan so I find it a rather strange coincidence that the themes of two of my recent reads, this book and Jeffrey Round's "Endgame" were loosely based on a reworking of "Ten Little Indians". There are a few proofreading errors such as in Chapter 1 where Sean is watching Katie paint the name on "Dragonfly" after returning from paying his "rent slip". I don't pay my "rent apartment" but rather I pay my "apartment rent"! And then the ebook formatting problems with the large blank spaces at the end of every chapter which force the next chapter number to appear in various places on a page following a large blank space. Chapter 36 is a huge example where the words "Chapter 36" appear on the bottom line of a blank page. These types of faults were common in the earlier eBooks but seemed to have been corrected until reappearing in this book. And then we have the epilogue where "Travis O'Brien" or is that "Sean McGee" sails off into the Caribbean with the rescued maiden and Tom Lowe is back to channeling John D MacDonald instead of Agatha Christie! I just liked this book a whole lot!

Another double header. Two Rapid Read novellas read as fillers after an early finish of a novel. However these are both nominated for a 2019 Arthur Ellis Best Novella award and I read them as part of my project to read as many of the AE entrants, that I want to read, that I can before the Shortlist announcements on April 18 2019.

Blue Water Hues (Ashley Grant #2) by Vicki Delany

Date Read – 20190117

Rating – 3 Stars

A quick and quite enjoyable book that I read out of order because of the 2019 Arthur Ellis entrant for Best Novella. Although Vicki Delany is one of my all time favourite authors and I have read most of her books and series or have them on my TBR list I don't think I can rate this as one of her best efforts. It's a very good story that I liked but I found it a bit predictable and I had the perp identified very early in the story. I also didn't find as much humour in this book as in some of Ms Delany's other books. Some good characters especially Ashley, Sergeant Alan Westbrook and Simon and a fairly well described setting all of which I probably would have found better if I'd read book 1 first. Anyway I now fully intend to read that book perhaps even interrupting my AE project when I need a short filler or laundromat book.

The B-Team: The Case of the Angry First Wife by Melodie Campbell

Date Read – 20190117

Rating – 4 Stars

I really liked this book and it's nice to be able to read an Arthur Ellis 2019 nominee for Best Novella which is actually the first book in a new series by Melodie Campbell as I've read and really liked all of her Goddaughter series and I didn't have to start this series out of order. I'm not sure I found this story quite as funny as the Gina Gallo series but it had lots of chuckles and it sure has a fabulous cast of characters in the B-Team and it's hard to single any of them out as the best but I think Kitty comes in as number 1 with Del a close 2nd. Now one of the things I really liked is all the interactions between the characters in this book and the characters from the Goddaughter series which, of course, is very logical because the stories take place in the same location but even more than that these people are actually all of the same family and "family" here takes on all meanings you want it to! I did find a very close resemblance between part of the plot premise of this book and that of the Gina Gallo's "The Artful Goddaughter" and it's kind of strange that all of Del's great plans go sideways, just as Gina's do, and with the usual funny but eventually successful results. I'm now looking forward to the next entry in this series and I hope it has even closer ties to the Goddaughter series and even more laughs.

Polar Bear Dawn: A Detective Bernadette Callahan Mystery by Lyle Nicholson

Date Read – 20190116

Rating – 3 Stars

Once again I've had a hard time rating a book because, while I did like reading it for the most part, there are some things that caused me to have to rate this a 2 1/2 star story rounded up to 3. The descriptions of the settings are excellent and I'm still cold and I have actually myself encountered temperatures in the -40° range, where C and F are the same BTW, and there's lots of action and violence and I really do like Bernadette Callahan a lot this is where I start to have problems with the story. While this book is supposed to be a mystery it really slips into a Sci Fi fantasy and while I am not totally against Sci Fi I'd rather not read Sci Fi when I'm trying to read a mystery. Even if we ignore the fantastic stuff the mystery is just so far fetched and over the top that there is no way to accept it no matter how much of a suppression of disbelief one makes. C'mon this is set in Canada not Mexico or some third world place! Oh and BTW after Bernadette the Polar Bear is the best character in the book and he gets lots of my sympathy! Now in my opinion a major flaw in any mystery is to have any of the bad guys ride off into the sunset with out meeting appropriate justice and, while it's a bit difficult to decide if Professor Allistair MacAllen is completely a bad guy and while Margaret Ashley most definitely is, there is no way this book should have ended the way it did. I'm glad this book was a freebie on Amazon because I'd be really disappointed if I had paid for it and while I'd like to read more Bernadette Callahan mysteries, but without the SciFi fantasy stuff, I won't be reading anymore by this author unless they are freebies.

Too Many Women in the Room (A Gilda Greco Mystery #2) by Joanne Guidoccio

Date Read – 20190113

Rating – 3 Stars

I enjoyed this book just about as much as I did the first book in the series but I didn't find it as funny as the first book mainly because all of Gilda's wacky Italian family were off to Italy and had a very minor role in the story. This is a very good murder mystery story with a couple of victims that were very much unliked thus creating a large number of suspects all with strong motives, most with good opportunities and most with weak alibis and causing Gilda, her PI and the police a very tough investigation and ending with a big twist that although quite logical I will admit that I never saw coming. I quite like this well written series with strong and well developed characters with, of course, Gilda being the leading lady. I will definitely read more of this series and recommend these books to any one who likes a good character driven mystery.

Scapegoat (The Dunbarton Mysteries Series #4) by Valerie Tate

Date Read – 20190110

Rating – 3 Stars

I thought this was an enjoyable read but I don't think it is the best yet in this good series. All my good friends from Dunbarton are back and in fine form with Alicia staying out of the investigations as usual – NOT! However this time when she came up with her usual way out plan to catch the culprit Chris had enough sense to arrange backup. John and Alice are still pretty good characters and I was sorry to see Lucia leave because I have really grown to like her character a lot but I hope, as it is hinted, that she'll be back. Now I don't think there is as much humour in this story as in the earlier ones and I think that is because Marmalade played a much smaller role in this story and while Charlie played a huge role his part was much more serious and no where near as hilarious as his role in the previous book. Anyway my greatest reason for only awarding 3 stars is the many proofreading errors in this book. This seems to be a common problem with the books in this series and I have been unable to find, with a Google search, any record of a professional publisher named "Red Cottage Books" so I have to assume, and maybe I'm wrong, that it is an Indie publisher and possibly privately owned by the author who should arrange some better proofreading by a human being and not rely on computer spell checking before publishing. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this publishing arrangement as it is done by many other authors such as R. E. Donald for instance. Anyway I like this series and I have already bought the next two books and I hope there are more.

Cave of Bones (Leaphorn & Chee #22) by Anne Hillerman

Date Read – 20190108

Rating – 3 Stars

I found this book to be a very enjoyable read and a fine addition to this series. Now Anne Hillerman is by no means Tony Hillerman but she is getting very close and if one had never read any of Tony's originals and had started with "Spider Woman's Daughter" as book 1 of a new series I believe one would have rapidly judged this a topnotch series on it's own. Anyway I am glad to see the way Anne has taken Tony's characters and slightly remolded them as her own and so far has made Bernie Manuelito her main character while introducing her own characters but has managed to keep all the wonderful settings and First Nations' customs and beliefs. When I first finished reading this story I had rated it 4 stars but on second thought I reduced my rating to 3 because of a part of the ending that I do not personally like or can accept in a mystery story. I did think that what is probably the main plot was a bit predictable and I did have one of

the perps identified almost as soon as they appeared in the story but I was quite impressed with how Ms Hillerman tied all the other subplots together even though I rather expected them to all be part of the same story. Annie Rainsong is a superb character and I hope she will find her way into subsequent books as I am quite sure FBI agent Sage Johnson will and it was quite nice to see the subtle change take place in her attitude. Now to my personal beef with the ending that caused me to deduct 1 star. While the main perp ended up in custody and a couple of the other bad guys met some kind of death one of the culprits was allowed to, in this case, drive off into the sunset, unscathed and the way that it is written sounds very much like a ploy by the author to encourage the reader to buy the next book to find out what happens. Anyway I'll keep reading this quite good series.

Switch by Grant McKenzie

Date Read – 20190103

Rating – 2 Stars

This is another book that I am having a hard time rating and reviewing but I think it is a 2 1/2 star reluctantly rounded up to 3. I read this because in my preference for Canadian authors I have read all of Mr McKenzie's Dixie Flynn series which started out very good and with lots of humour but went down rapidly to the 3rd book which almost convinced me to read no more by this author. However I gave "No Cry For Help" a shot and found it fairly enjoyable if a bit violent and far fetched (see my review) and the blurbs and synopsis for "Switch" sounded interesting so I gave it a try. This is not really a bad book but it is even more far fetched and over-the-top than "NCFH" and requires a huge suspension of disbelief to even slightly enjoy the escapism. I think the underlying motif for all the murders, tortures and violence was actually very weak and the whole thing with the living arrangements of the perp was just too far out to have any believability at all. I will say that there was one twist coming before the big ending that I never even guessed at or saw coming. I also think that Detective Preston is one of the best cops I've ever met in a mystery novel. Now I'm going to ramble on about a couple of things that are personally a pet peeve of mine in any book. I know Grant McKenzie is an ex-pat Brit but as he is living and working in Victoria BC he is considered as a Canadian author and Portland is in the state of Oregon which as far as I know has not yet seceded from the United States and joined Canada. Therefore as Mr McKenzie has set his books in the US, as many other Canadian authors do and which I find annoying but understandable, I would assume and expect that the book would be written in American English not British English as in this quote from Chapter

15 “blare of car horn and the sharp screech of **tyre**, but no fleshy crunch” and the Canadianism in the following quote from Chapter 85 “flakes of dandruff twinkling in the light. ‘He didn’t show up till **Grade Twelve**” where Americans would say “12th Grade” not the Canadian’s “Grade 12”. I may read some more of Mr McKenzie’s books if I’m looking for this type of a far fetched and violent adventure and as long as I can get them as loaners or freebies but I doubt if I’ll be buying anymore.