

right away. Why shoot the undertaker, though? Because Dallas wants Barry to go to heaven and tell Martha nobody is going to take her property! Dallas escapes in his pickup, but when his body turns up at the bottom of a quarry pond after a second shooting incident, Barry realizes he himself could become the unknown killer's next victim. The author sensitively depicts the hill people, including Barry's childish and fearful father, owner of the mortuary, who's losing his battle with Alzheimer's. Fortunately, Barry has gorgeous Dr. Susan Miller to love him and sew him up when he's injured. Adept at both the grizzly and the graceful, de Castrique has produced a marvelous mystery you won't want to put down. *Agent, Linda Allen. (May 9)*

THE BOOK OF LIGHT

MICHELE BLAKE. Putnam, \$24.95 (224p)
ISBN 0-399-15046-3

★ In Blake's third outstanding Lily Connor mystery (after 2001's *Earth Has No Sorrows*), the slightly unorthodox Episcopalian priest, now a temporary chaplain at Tate University near Boston, helps an old friend from divinity school on the Tate faculty, Samantha Henderson, with a big problem. The author of several bestselling Biblical studies, Samantha reveals to Lily that her assistant has been receiving photographs of what seems to be an ancient scroll, *The Book of Light*, which predates the New Testament gospels and includes the words of Jesus himself. As Samantha and Lily become engrossed in discovering the source of the photos and trying to ascertain the scroll's authenticity, it soon becomes evident that others on the same quest will stop at nothing to get what they want. In spite of the personal dangers the priest and her friends face, the document provides a stepping stone for Lily to clarify her own personal doubts and solidify her spiritual beliefs. Eloquent prose, astute scholarship, convincing characters and vivid settings, from the streets of Harvard Square to a monastic community on the Greek island of Athos, make this a remarkable work, raising the genre of the parish mystery to new heights. *(May 12)*

Forecast: *Strong word of mouth among the Protestant Episcopal community should make this a lead fiction title at theological seminary bookstores.*

Mystery NOTES

May Publications

In *Burning Moon: A Wil Hardesty Novel*, the fifth entry in the acclaimed series by Shamus winner Richard Barre (*Blackheart Highway*), the sinking of a fishing boat in a squall off the California coast sends PI Hardesty on a harrowing quest for justice that leads back decades to the collapse of South Vietnam. Blurbs from Dennis Lehane, S.J. Rozan and Don Winslow will help propel sales.

(*Capra* [www.caprapress.com], \$25.95 330p ISBN 1-59266-011-8)

A bungled kidnapping by two inept psychiatrists sets the tone for *The Ablative Case*, a lighthearted stand-alone from Anthony winner Ralph McInerney, creator of *Father Dowling* and author of *Emerald Aisle* (Forecasts, Sept. 24, 2001) and other titles in his Notre Dame mystery series. Can the staff of Lyndon Johnson Community College, where the intended victim works in financial aid, cope with the spiraling mayhem? (*Five Star*, \$25.95 240p ISBN 0-7862-5234-0)

Linda Berry's *Death and the Ice Box: A Trudy Roundtree Mystery*, the third in the series after *Death and the Hubcap* (2000), presents the Ogeechee, Ga., police officer with a particularly perplexing case. When the body of Karen Willard, who disappeared 30 years earlier after a wedding shower in her honor, turns up in an abandoned refrigerator, Trudy must delve into the past for answers. (*Five Star*, \$25.95 248p ISBN 0-7862-5233-2)

April Publication

Leap Day and Other Stories collects 14 mostly nonseries tales by Francis M. Nevins, a crime author also admired for his scholarly nonfiction, such as his Edgar-winning biography of Cornell Woolrich. Jon L. Breen provides an appreciative and informative introduction. (*Five Star*, \$25.95 208p ISBN 0-7862-4321-X)

SF/Fantasy/Horror

THE GUIN SAGA:

Book One: The Leopard Mask

KAORU KURIMOTO. TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE BY ALEXANDER O. SMITH. Vertical, \$22.95 (240p) ISBN 1-932234-51-9

Originally published in 1979 and the first of a planned 100 books in the series (87 of which have already appeared in Japan), Kurimoto's fantasy provides plenty of straightforward action and adventure. Guin, a man with no memory, has the highly trained body of a warrior, the reflexes and fighting style of a large cat and, mysteriously, the mask of a leopard firmly fixed over his head. After the duchy of Mongaul invades the kingdom of Palos, Guin rescues the regal preteen "twins of Parros," Rinda and Remus, from a Mongaul patrol pursuing them through the Forest of Rood. Guin and the headstrong twins band together to fight their mutual enemies, but Janos, the weaver of fate, has other plans for them. They end up as prisoners of Count Vanon of Stafolos Keep, who has a curious wasting disease and an evil miasma about him. **Kurimoto has launched a rousing tale of intrepid heroes, horrid villains and wicked supernatural creatures.** A fast read with hardly any internal reflection on the characters' part, this book will probably appeal most to young adults. *(June)*

Forecast: *A huge success in Japan, where the series has sold 25 million copies, it remains to be seen whether Kurimoto can win comparable numbers in the U.S. Crossover from manga fans should give an initial boost.*

THE LIGHT AGES

IAN R. MACLEOD. Ace, \$23.95 (416p) ISBN 0-441-01055-5

★ Several hundred years ago a magical substance known as aether was discovered in England, and it changed the world in this beautifully written, complex fantasy novel, British author MacLeod's second (after the underrated *The Great Wheel*). Kings were overthrown. Aether-based industries flourished. Now, near the end of the Third Age of Industry (roughly the equivalent of our Victorian Age), great Guilds run the nation. Powerful captains of industry live like nobility, while the impoverished masses risk their lives mining, refining and working with the dangerous substance that supports the economy. Cracks are beginning to show in society, however. The poor are getting poorer. Quality workmanship is hard to find. Those who come into too much contact with aether often mutate into sometimes monstrous creatures called changelings. Worse still, there are dark rumors that the aether may be running out. The narrator, Robert Borrow, who rises from near-poverty as the son of a humble guildsman, falls in love with a changeling, participates in the revolution that brings the Third Age to its end and winds up among the masters of the new world that rises out of its ruins. With its strong character development and gritty, alternate London, this book won't attract fans of Robert Jordan or Terry Goodkind, but should hold great appeal to readers who love the more sophisticated fantasy of Michael Swanwick, John Crowley or even China Miéville. *(May 6)*

Forecast: *The jacket art—Thames-side London overshadowed by machinery—nicely captures the novel's grim, understated feel, but it's unlikely to grab the attention of the 12-year-olds of all ages who tend to thumb through the SF and fantasy bookstore shelves looking for babes and broadswords. MacLeod's novella *The Summer Isles* won a *World Fantasy Award*.*

THE DRAGON'S BLOOD:

The Fourth Novel of the Band of Four

ED GREENWOOD. Tor, \$25.95 (416p) ISBN 0-765-30223-3

Forgotten Realms creator Greenwood's fourth *Band of Four* book (after 2002's *A Dragon's Ascension*), with its gory and repetitive battle scenes, will please the faithful, many of them role-playing gamers, but fans of gentler fantasy had best stay away. Now in the position of Overdukes, sorceress Embra Silvertree, warrior Hawkril Anharu, thief Craer Delnbone, sorceress Tshamarra Talasom and ex-regent Ezendor Blackgilt must battle the