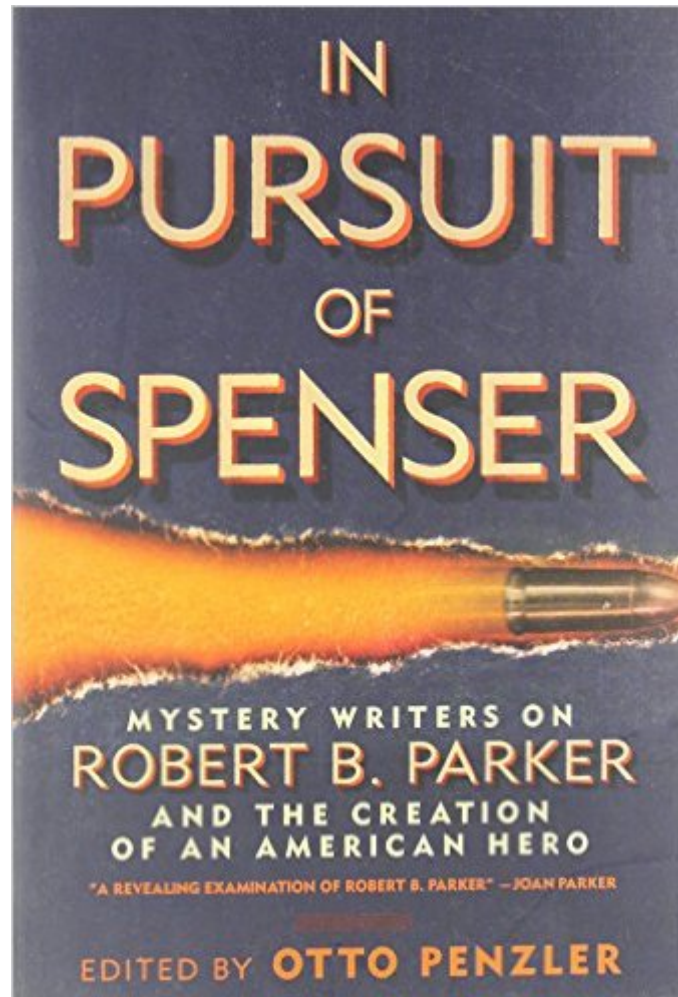


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In Pursuit Of Spenser: Mystery Writers On Robert B. Parker And The Creation Of An American Hero



Synopsis

****2013 Edgar Awards nominee in Critical/Biographical****2013 Anthony Award nominee in Best Critical Nonfiction****Join award-winning mystery editor Otto Penzler and a first-rate lineup of mystery writers as they go in pursuit of Spenser and the man who created him, Robert B. Parker. These are the writers who knew Parker best professionally and personally, sharing memories of the man, reflections on his impact on the genre, and insights into what makes Spenser so beloved. Ace Atkins, the author chosen to take up Parker's pen and continue the Spenser series, relates the formative impact Spenser had on him as a young man; gourmet cook Lyndsay Faye describes the pleasures of Spenser's dinner table; Lawrence Sanders explains the irresistibility of Parker's literary voice; and more. *In Pursuit of Spenser* pays tribute to Spenser, and Parker, with affection, humor, and a deep appreciation for what both have left behind. ****Includes a reprinted piece on Spenser from Robert B. Parker**
Contributors: Ace Atkins, Lawrence Sanders, Reed Farrel Coleman, Max Allan Collins, Matthew Clemens, Brendan DuBois, Loren D. Estleman, Lyndsay Faye, Ed Gorman, Parnell Hall, Jeremiah Healy, Dennis Lehane, Gary Phillips, S.J. Rozan

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Customer Reviews

I didn't realize how much I missed Robert Parker until I picked up a copy of *In Pursuit of Spenser*, edited by Otto Penzler. It happened while I was checking out the different essays written by other mystery authors about Mr. Parker and his most famous fictional character, Spenser. I came to the profile on Spenser at the end, written by Parker in the first person as Spenser. In this essay, our

private investigator is being questioned about who he is and why he's such a tough guy. Susan Silverman is sitting at the table while her friend throws questions at Spenser and he answers them with a wry sense of humor and his usual outright honesty. After a couple of lines, I was hooked without even realizing it. I felt at home with myself like I'd just run into a close friend I hadn't seen in years and could now play catch up with. I read the profile of Spenser, smiling to myself, enjoying his and Susan's company once again. You see, they are my friends, and it's always fun to re-encounter the bantering that goes on between the two of them and also in finding out how Spenser views himself and life in general. In the profile of Spenser, he talks about himself, his love for Susan, his code of honor, and his life as a private eye. This is a fabulous look at the character so many other writers try to emulate. Of course, it dawned on me afterwards that Robert Parker has now been dead for two years. It doesn't seem that long. I guess the fact he still had three unpublished novels due to come out during the following eighteen months after his died of a heart attack helped to keep him alive in my mind's eye. There was also the "Jesse Stone" television series with Tom Selleck and its continuation on CBS at the end of each spring.

"In Pursuit of Spenser" features a wide range of writers examining various aspects of Parker's writing and Spenser's development over the years. Having read everything that Parker has written, and much that has been written about him - as well as having interviewed him once - it was a subject that I warmed to. Still, in working my way through it, I was reminded not so much of Parker, but of E.B. White, who once said that analyzing comedy was like dissecting a frog - few people are interested and the frog dies. I've always thought that Parker's magic was in how he managed to communicate so much about character, theme, plot and place with a minimum of words. Some writers write like they are conducting an orchestra, but to me, Parker was more like a jazz pianist - gently working the keyboard, able to riff entertainingly yet purposefully, a singular performer with a unique sense of timing and sound. "In Pursuit of Spenser" has some wonderful essays. Ace Atkins contributes "Songs Spenser Taught Me," which tracks his personal connection to the character and author; there was a lot of resonance for me, and made me optimistic about his continuing work on the series. Dennis Lehane writes "Voice of the City," which is not just a look at Parker's connection to the Boston they shared (though their novels work different neighborhoods), but also has the best Parker anecdote in the book. (It concerns the New England Patriots and an annoying kid.) And a writer named Lyndsay Faye has a good piece called "Spenser and the Art of the Family Table" that looks at Spenser's love of food and cooking, and more importantly, how this reflects a broader view of the world. I'm not sure about some of the rest of the essays.

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