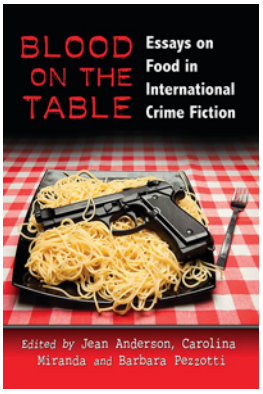

***Blood on the Table: Essays on Food in International Crime Fiction*. Edited by Jean Anderson, Carolina Miranda, and Barbara Pezzotti. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2018. 191 pages.**

Cuisinal criminography is discussed in these thirteen essays with a consciously international range. The connection can be direct: Camilleri's Montalbano celebrates at table his true Sicilian identity, though he prefers to eat alone, thinking about things, or escaping them. Alternatively obvious is Maigret, who eats little on the job as he awaits the finesse of Madame Maigret—who has her own cookbook. Donna Leon's Venice-based Brunetti prefers family food of a non- or even anti-tourist kind, and Leonardo Padura's detective Mario Conde, facing the difficulties of 1990s Cuba, favors the grand local past, especially the multi-layered stew ajiaco.

Women detectives reject such traditional roles, as Andrea Hynyen richly shows. The American feminists as chiefs rather than chefs—Kinsey Milhone "wolfing down" street food (66) and V. I. Warshawski enjoying the cooking of her elderly male neighbor—but Dominique Sylvain's Louise Morvan and Lola Jost are both true gourmets (what a shame *gourmette* means a bangle). Finally come the complexities of Fred Vargas: both her detectives, very large Retancourt and never-weight-gaining Froissy, eat busily and joyfully.

Other essays offer opposites. Lisbeth Salander follows tough male style with instant meals, beer and rum and coke—though when she pretends to be a fine lady to open a huge Swiss bank account, she has "an insanely delicious fish dinner" (96). Different negativity emerges in Ruth Rendell's *Heartstones*: young Elvira, anorexic after her mother dies of cancer, while her younger sister overeats, thinks food is poison, but also plans to poison her father's new fiancée. After such darkness, he merely dies without her help, and both girls eat better. Such food-death doubling is also seen in Arthur Upfield's *The Author Bites the Dust*. The over-literary man whom both Bony and the author dislike dies by poisoned powder, the dust of the title. Bony avoids his fine-dining world, preferring ordinary Australian bush tucker.

Of the editors' essays, Anderson's describes interestingly two French historical writers, then shows a Série Noire cookbook honoring three types of cassoulet from the French southwest. The other editors jointly show how *The Bridge* is globally varied in its televersions. The best essays here are three. Heike Henderson recounts how Ella Danz's Detective Angermülller novel *Geschmacksverwirrung* ("taste confusion") exposes animal maltreatment in the food industry, with a prologue by a turkey. Linda Crawford shows how Paco Ignacio Taibo's detective Shayne, though born Basque/Irish, adopts plain Mexican food through his commitment to the country's poor. The best, and now most moving, is Angelica Michelis on Anthony Bourdain. She alone develops the "high theory" toyed with by the editorial introduction, showing how Derrida on Plato's *pharmakon* guides Bourdain's complex reading of "ambiguity via the blurring of binary opposites" (28). In *Bone in the Throat* cooking is linked to family break-up; then his factual *Typhoid Mary* explores the historical typhus-bearer, who was also a cook. Such dialectics now have sadder meaning after Bourdain committed suicide last year at a French hotel with a fabled restaurant.

Moving between descriptive and genuinely revealing, these essays might well invite others to scan this murderous menu—and perhaps solve the mystery why never mentioned here is the cookery-oriented cozy, as from Cleo Coyle and Kerry Greenwood.

Stephen Knight
University of Melbourne
Australia