# Estleman writes ghostly western

Journey of the Dead By Loren D. Estleman IForge, \$21.95)



Though your probably won't find it classified as such at your local library or bookstore (check under 'western fiction', 'Journ ey of the Dead' is, in fact, a ghost story. The Zhot is that of legendary outlaw, Henry McCarty a.k.a. William Bonney a.k.a. Billy the Kid. The haunted figure is Pat Garrett, legendary lawman who tracked Bonney down and shot him dead one cold night in New Mexico Territory, way back in 1891.

In much western fiction, an event like this would serve as a climactic ending to a hell-for-leather shooten by a fer which count in the serve in the

Last year Cranbrook's first "Retrent for Writers" attracted 130 students eager to learn more about their craft from the best.

It was an experience that program director Tom Murdock calls 'wonderful.' This year, July 10-23, Murdock said he expects about 200 students to participate in seven. Five and three-day programs over the two-week programs.

"People come for a variety of reasons," Murdock said. "Some are just beginning in their craft and looking for pointers, others are more experienced and look-ing for feedback and others just want to be in a group with their

BY HUGH GALLAGHER

even though we'te never sure how he knows all he knows obliges, supplying the tall lawman with a foul-smelling potion, which helps not at all.

It you've been hankering to lose yourself in the Old West-particularly Texas and New Mexico Territory - you could certainly do worse than to experience this tale written by a veteran author of westerns (and crime novels). Estleman's setting is vivid as a west Texas sunset, tactife as the hide of an aged horned tond, odoriferous as an unwashed cowboy. Sometimes, the author's attention to physical detail approaches the exquisite.

Here are whores, whiskey, gliamonaters, bones, stones, cheroots, chaparral, godawfur weather, guts, blood, mesquite, mescal, pistols, poker players, a wide variety of snakes (most of them human), and countless things with thorns and stings. Here is a collection of unread (mustand-colored) law boks in a corner of the clubroom of an old-timey Texas hotel, a well-read copy of Harper's Weekly on a nearby 'and, a lush Belgian carpet vaderneath Garrett's high-herical boots.

Here are 'horses plunged into hidden hellows with grunts of

pet viderneath Garrett's high-bricationois. Here are 'horses plunged int-hidden hellbew with grunts of shock and pain, blowing steam that condensed on the riders' faces and frosted their cychrows and mustaches, turning them into old men." (Much of Estle-man's fresh, pictureaque way with words conjures images that arrest the reader's attention and energize the reading at the same time.)

me.) Dialogue also enhances this thought-provoking adventure, so much so that you'll feel you're listening in directly on conversa-

programs.

This year's participants include poet Mark Doty, children's author Elaine Greenstein, fiction author Joshua Henkin, poet Thomas Lux, screenwriter Bill Philips and poet Gerald

"It's easy to get published writers to come," said Murdock, who teaches high school English at Cranbrook. "I spent a lot of time going through letters and talked to other about their teaching abilities. I wanted people who were good at critical analysis and talking inspirationally. None of them have that edge of superiority or meanness that some workshops have."

Cranbrook welcomes writers

tions between deal-makers in barrooms, lovers in bedrooms, lawmen on the trail. Even the surrealistic, slightly comic agreement of the surrealistic, slightly comic angibrare repartee between Garrett and his nemesis, Bonney, rings true and convincing.

Though it packs a punch in many ways, some readers may find Journey of the Dead, a little choppy or episodic for their tastes. At times, it does read a bit like a list of ovents in Garrett's life, as the realtess legend moves from one position of job to another, and then another, and another. A fairly large cast of characters, many (most?) of them with rather blurry and similar outlines, sometimes contribute to confusion and looseness.

The main drawback is this

similar outlines, sometimes con-tribute to confusion and loose-ness.

The main drawback is this work of fiction, however, lies at its center, with Eatleman's char-acterization of Garrett himself. Estleman seems to have set out to make his protagonist less an icon and more a living, breath-ing, perspiring human being on these pages. But, in doing so, he's given Garrett perhaps too many flaws, so that readers may have to strain to admire or to care about the lawman. Even with all his troubles and vulner-shillities, for instance, it's diffi-cult to take less than seriously Garretta relative indifference to a devoted wife and many chil-dren over a period of many year.

The workshops cover every aspect of literary writing including poetry, short fiction, novels, playwriting, screenwriting and literary non-fiction. All workshops begin at 8:30 a.m. and last until 11:30 on the Kingswood campus. The session is followed by a free lunch with faculty members. The afternoon is free to create new work, do revisions and meet with other writers

Some participants stay on empus. Murdock sold last year 20 atudents lived at the school dormitories. Most students come from metro Detroit, ranging in age from 17 to the late '60s. Tuition for a three day course is \$280 (\$535 with board); 3450 for a five-day course (\$4875 with board); and \$630 for a seven-day course (\$4275 with board).

To receive a catalog and for nore information, call (248)645

course (\$1225 with board).

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**Upper** 

## Murdock said the Cranbrook program set out to define its own niche as a program that is sup-portive or writers rather than being judgmental. This year's faculty features award-winning writers, writing

BOOK HAPPENINGS Book Happenings features various happenings at suburban bookstores. Sond news leads to Hugh Gallagher, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers Inc. 36251 Schoolcaft, Livonia, Mi 48150, or fax them to (313)551-779, or email him at Ingaliagher® oc. homecomm.net

BORDERS (BIRMINGHAM, SOUTH-

-BORDERS (BIRMINGHAM, SOUTH-FIELD ROAD)
Happy Birthday, William Shake-spearorfastival, 1 pm. Sunday, April 20; Narcy Weschurme dis-cusses and signs "Snorkelling Guide to Michigan's Inner Lakes, 7 pm. Tuesday, April 28; discus-sion group on Anne Bront's "The Tenants of Wildfell Hall," 7 pm. Wednesday, April 29 at the store 31150 Southfield Road, Birming-ham (248)644-1515.

SOUTHFIELD LIBRARY Raynetta Manees, author of "All for Love" and "Wishing on a Stor," 2 p.m. Sundey, April 26; "This Planet's Petals Painted," with Julie Dawson, watercolor artist, 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, \$5 registration fee; Merry Sil-ber discusses guilt making, 2 p.m. Saturday, May 2, \$5 regis-tration fee; at the library 26000 en Road, Southfield.

### BORDERS (BIRMINGHAM, WOOD WARD)

Pamela Thomas-Graham discus es and signs "A Darker Shade of Crimson," 2 p.m. Sunday, April 26; (Inkland County Writing Con-

test booksigning, 3 p.m. Sunday, test booksigning, 3 p.m. sambay, April 26; philosophy discussion, "What is Morality," 7:30 p.m. Monday, April 27; fencing club, 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 28; Jewish poets read, 7:30 p.m. Wednes-day, April 29; Charlio Vincent and Dave Schultz sign and discuss
"Broken Wings: The Inside Story
of the Investigation of the Tragic
Red Wings Limousine Crash." toon, May 2 at the store 34300 and Ave., Birmingham

## (248)203-0005 BARNES & NOBLE (NORTHVILLE) Mystery book club discusses Michael Connelly's "Blood Work," 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, at the store 1711 Haggerty Road et, Six Mile, Northyllie.

BARNES & NOBLE (BLOOMFIELD MILLS)
Colleen Dodt discusses and signs
'The Essential Oils Book and Natural Baby Care Book,' 2 p.m.
Sunday April 26; readers book sunday April 26; readers book group discusses Emest J. Galnes, "A Lesson Before Dying," 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 29 at the store 6575 Telegraph Road, Bloomfield Hills (248)540-4209.

BORDERS (FARMINGTON HILLS) The University of Detroit Mercy's nationally syndicated radio pro-gram "Ask the Professor" tapes final show of its 45th season, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 29 at the store, 30995 Orchard Lake Road, Fermington Hills.

RDERS (DEARBORN) Thomas Sullivan signs "The Mar-tyring," 7 p.m. Monday, April 27; Naomi Long Madgett reads poet-ry, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 28; Sheneska Jackson signs "Bless-Ings" noon Wednesday, April 29; Nancy Washburne signs "Snorkeling Guide to Michigan Inland ing Guide to Michigan Inland Lakes, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 29; Patricia Johnson signs, "I Know Who You Are," 7 p.m. Thursday, April 30; at the store 5601 Mercury Drive, Dearborn, (313) 271-4441.

HALFWAY DOWN THE STAIRS A literary feast featuring three Newberry Authors, Karen Cushman, Suzanne Fisher Staples and Gall Carson Levine 12:30 p.m Sunday, April 26. Tickets needed At the store, 114 E. Fourth St., Rochester, (248)652-6066.

SHAMAN DRUM The Rev. Richard O. Singleton reads from "The Last Words of the Resurrected Christ," 8 p.m. Monday, April 27; Donald Lopez signs "Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West 4 p.m. Tuesday, April 28; at the store 313 South State Street, Ann Arbor 734-662-7407.

### RORDERS (ANN ARBOR)

ORDERS (ANN ARBOR)
Scamus Deane reads and signs
"Reading in the Dark," 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, 3,541 23; Jon Lee Anderson signs "Che Guevera: A Revolutionary Life," 7:30 p.m. Thuraday, April 30; actor Peter Coyote
signs "Shearbly When J. Edi." signs "Sleoping Where I Fell,"
7:30 p.m. Friday, May 1 at the store 612 E. Liberty, Ann Arbor (734)668-7652.