Hess, Joan (1949-) Encyclopedia Article

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Joan Hess has infused her mystery writing with her knowledge of her home state of Arkansas and its regional culture. She has two important mystery series—the first features Claire Malloy, a book store proprietor who is the widow of an English professor, and the second is set in Maggody and features Arly Hanks, who returns to Maggody after an unsuccessful marriage, as its central character. Both series are set in Arkansas and are marked by a kind of off-center humor that enlivens the action and rounds out the characters. Among the books in the two series are *Strangler Prose, The Murder at the Mimosa Inn, Dear Miss Demeanor, A Diet to Die For, A Holly Jolly Murder* (all Claire Malloy), *Malice in Maggody, Mischief in Maggody, Maggody in Manhattan, O Little Town of Maggody,* and *The Maggody Militia* (all Arly Hanks). In addition, Hess has another series featuring Theo Bloomer, written under the name Joan Hadley. Hess has won the American Mystery Award, among others, and is president of the American Crime Writers League.