

Who's Sorry Now?

Catholic Press Features

New York — The author of a comic novel about the Mafia, "The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight," now believes that any work that casts the Mafia as glamorous and likeable is the result of "demented thinking," and should be labeled pornography.

In a public breastbeating, syndicated columnist Jimmy Breslin confessed, "I learn slowly," shortly after two innocent men were accidentally killed by Mafia gunmen in a Manhattan restaurant.

Breslin, whose novel was based on the Gallo Brothers, said he could easily see how the accidental killing could be turned into one more warm chapter in someone's book about the Mafia.

"The moron who did the shooting had been sent in with instructions to kill the four men at the bar," Breslin wrote. "The four who were supposed to be at the bar, four Mafia hoodlums from Brooklyn, minutes before had decided to go back to a table. Their places at the bar were taken by (four) businessmen and their wives.

"In the dramatic lore of the Mafia, as recorded by the frauds who write books about it, the gunman will go down as a hero because he did not shoot any of the women. The gunman had proper respect for family."

Referring to himself and other writers who have "earned enormous sums of money writing about the Mafia," Breslin said their works should be classified as pornography.

"The widow of Max Tekelch (one of the men shot by mistake) would be sickened at The Godfather and consider Mario Puzo a writer of hardcore pornography," he wrote. "She would be correct. Just as correct as she would be, in saying Jimmy Breslin's The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight was the product of demented thinking, Gay Talese's Honor Thy Father was juvenile and sickening, and Peter Maas' The Valachi Papers a sluggish attempt at truth."

Breslin said that the accidental shooting and the funerals and sorrow that followed "show that all we have been doing is writing porno books that sell for porno movies. There is not even the faintest grain of truth in The Godfather. It is the worst pack

'The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight was the product of demented thinking.'

of lies, I ever went through. In my book, The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight, you had a writer having fun about murders in the street. How do you like it? How do you like what I think is funny?"

"There should be from now on," he added, "only one way to describe the Mafia — as a pack

of criminally insane people whose great murder schemes of book and film fame become in real life as well-planned as auto accidents."

Referring to the mistaken-identity shootings in which the two men were killed and two others seriously wounded, Breslin wrote:

"... They said to a gunman, go inside and shoot the four people at the bar. Which the gunman did without knowing who the people were. Think of this when you see those last scenes in The Godfather."

Breslin said that the major fault of books and films relating to the Mafia is that they fail to stress the Mafia's main business: heroin.

"In my time I have never met, seen or heard of anybody in the Mafia who was not involved somehow in selling heroin," he wrote. "It is the only business of the Mafia; everything else is subsidiary today. They tell you they are bookmakers and shylocks. Their money comes from heroin."

Turning again to books and films about the Mafia, Breslin continued:

"I read vaguely about narcotics in The Godfather. The other side, the bad guys, were into it. Not the heroes of the book. Beautiful. In The Gang That Couldn't Shoot Straight, there are one or two passing references to narcotics selling. But you couldn't make a big thing of it. Whoever heard of amusing narcotics peddlers? 'No movie in that.'

"In Honor Thy Father (a book about the Bonanno family), I don't even think the writer bothered to put down how these people actually made their money. A travesty. The heroes in the book sell heroin, always have."

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