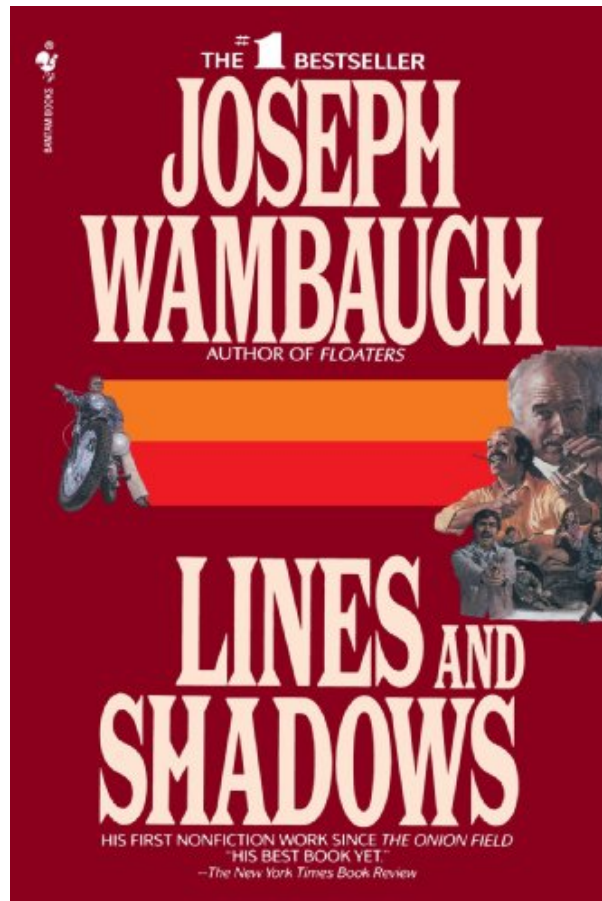
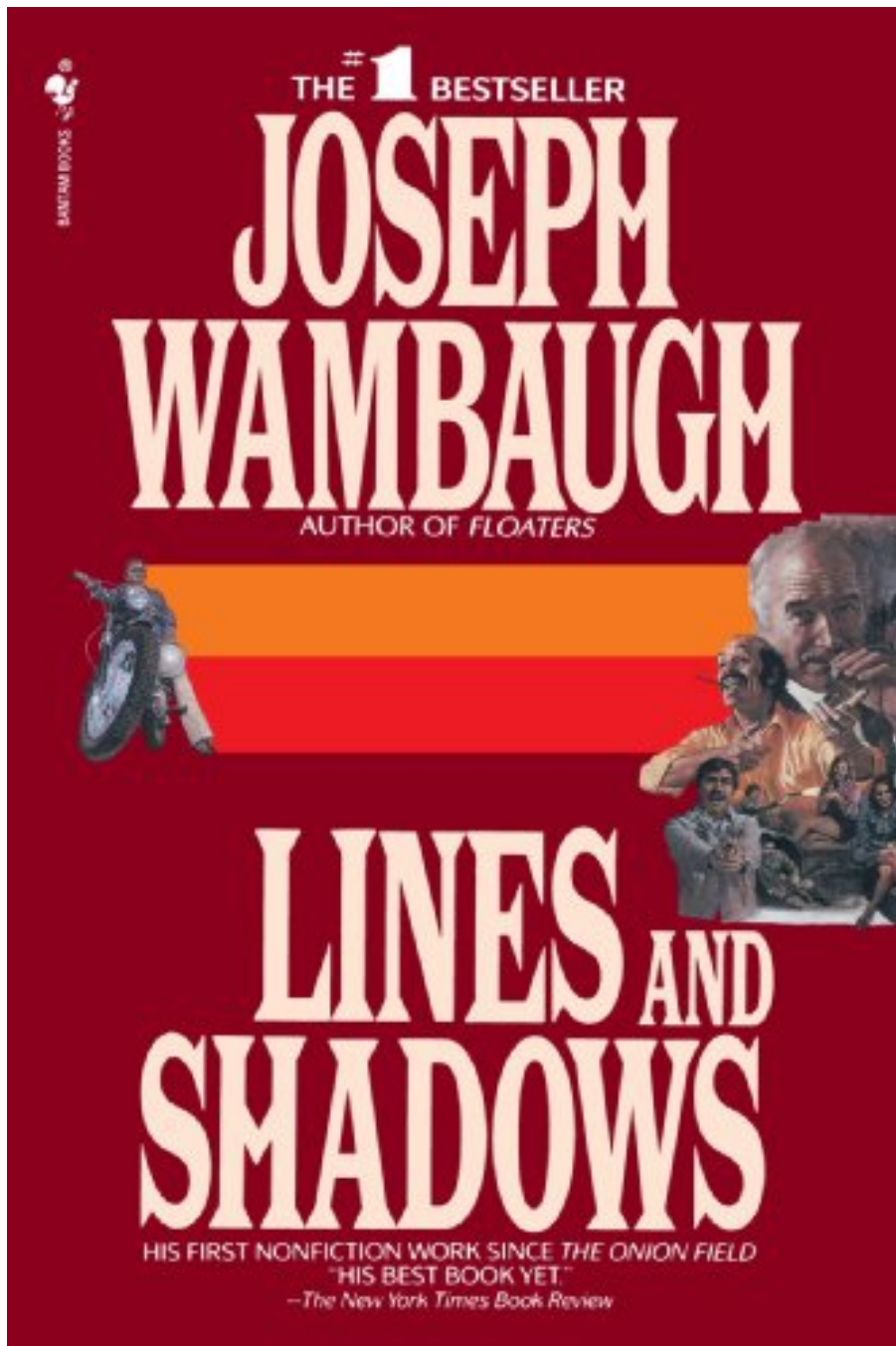


# LINES AND SHADOWS BY JOSEPH WAMBAUGH



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"With each book, it seems, Mr. Wambaugh's skill as a writer increases . . . . In "Lines And Shadows he gives an off-trail, action-packed true account of police work and the intimate lives of policemen that, for my money, is his best book yet."--"The New York Times Book Review.

"A saga of courage, craziness, brutality and humor . . . . One of his best books, comparable to "The Onion Field for storytelling and revelatory power."--"Chicago Sun-Times

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Not since Joseph Wambaugh's best-selling The Onion Field has there been a true police story as fascinating, as totally gripping as . . . Lines And Shadows. The media hailed them as heroes. Others denounced them as lawless renegades. A squad of tough cops called the Border Crime Task Force. A commando team sent to patrol the snake-infested no-man's-land south of San Diego. Not to apprehend the thousands of illegal aliens slipping into the U.S., but to stop the ruthless bandits who preyed on them nightly--relentlessly robbing, raping and murdering defenseless men, women and children. The task force plan was simple. They would disguise themselves as illegal aliens. They would confront the murderous shadows of the night. Yet each time they walked into the violent blackness along the border, they came closer to another boundary line--a fragile line within each man. and crossing it meant destroying their sanity and their lives.

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

hard to follow

By Ron DeFevre

Very repetitive hard to follow not his best work

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

Factual report on USA/Mexican border crossings

By William A. Hunter

This book was written in the late '70's and is still true today. Only the numbers of illegal crossings have changed and they were high then; astronomical today. The book recalls an experiement that lasted just over a year.

The San Diego Police Department sent specially trained undercover police officers into the canyons of the border to intercept drug gangs and other bad actors. In the process, they also intercepted illegal aliens in their attempts to cross into the USA. Sometimes their intervention saved the lives of illegal aliens from harm dealt out by the gangs, the coyotes, and indeed, even the Mexican policia!

Wambaugh has written many superb police accounts based on fact. He presents them with grit, humor, and truth.

This is one of his best.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

An Incredible Story, But Gets Lost In the Telling

By Andy in Washington

Lines and Shadows relates an amazing series of events on the US/Mexican border. The book describes either a very heroic group of San Diego police officers, or an out-of-control group of gunslingers, depending on how you look at things. The events occurred in the 1980's, although the book is fairly recent.

=== The Good Stuff ===

\* The story is truly amazing, bordering on unbelievable. I won't spoil the details for anyone, but if this was a work of fiction, you'd think it was over the top. In a nutshell, a group of San Diego police officers form a special task force to combat violence in the border crossing area...and become quite violent themselves.

\* Wambaugh seems to have spent quite a bit a time with at least some of the principals in the group. There are some very detailed recollections of events, dialogs and thoughts. The story is fairly complete, and takes us through a whole phase in the officer's lives. Wambaugh captures much of the darker side of police officer's lives, including infidelity, alcoholism and a few assorted felonies.

\* The story is spell-binding, and I got sucked up into reading the book. I won't say that it reached "can't put it down" status, but I did keep going back to it and wanted to see how it ended.

=== The Not-So-Good Stuff ===

\* I have never been a fan of Joseph Wambaugh's style. The story seems to get lost in his attempts to capture witty dialog, cool language and clever turns of phrase. I found some of the individual events difficult to comprehend and am still not sure I understand what happened in several of them.

\* The text seems to repeat itself, and many of the descriptions just run together. As a brief example, the 393rd time the environment and inhabitants of the area are described as "smelling like garbage", I was more than ready to concede the point. Many of the descriptions and dialogs seem quite detailed for events that happened nearly 30 years ago.

\* My biggest complaint is the shallowness of the story. The book relates a fascinating tale of meeting criminal violence with police violence. There were some very positive results, along with some rather nasty events. It would have been nice if the author had stepped back a bit and examined the larger implications of this. More simply, did the end justify the means?

=== Summary ===

If you are a fan of police stories, this one is fairly unusual and different from the usual one. It reads much like Wambaugh's other books, which have always struck me as more of a proposal for a screenplay than serious works of non-fiction. But the book is readable, the story is fantastic, and you will walk away shaking your head. I'd recommend it for fans of the genre, but you might want to read a sample page or two and make sure you are comfortable with the author's style.

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