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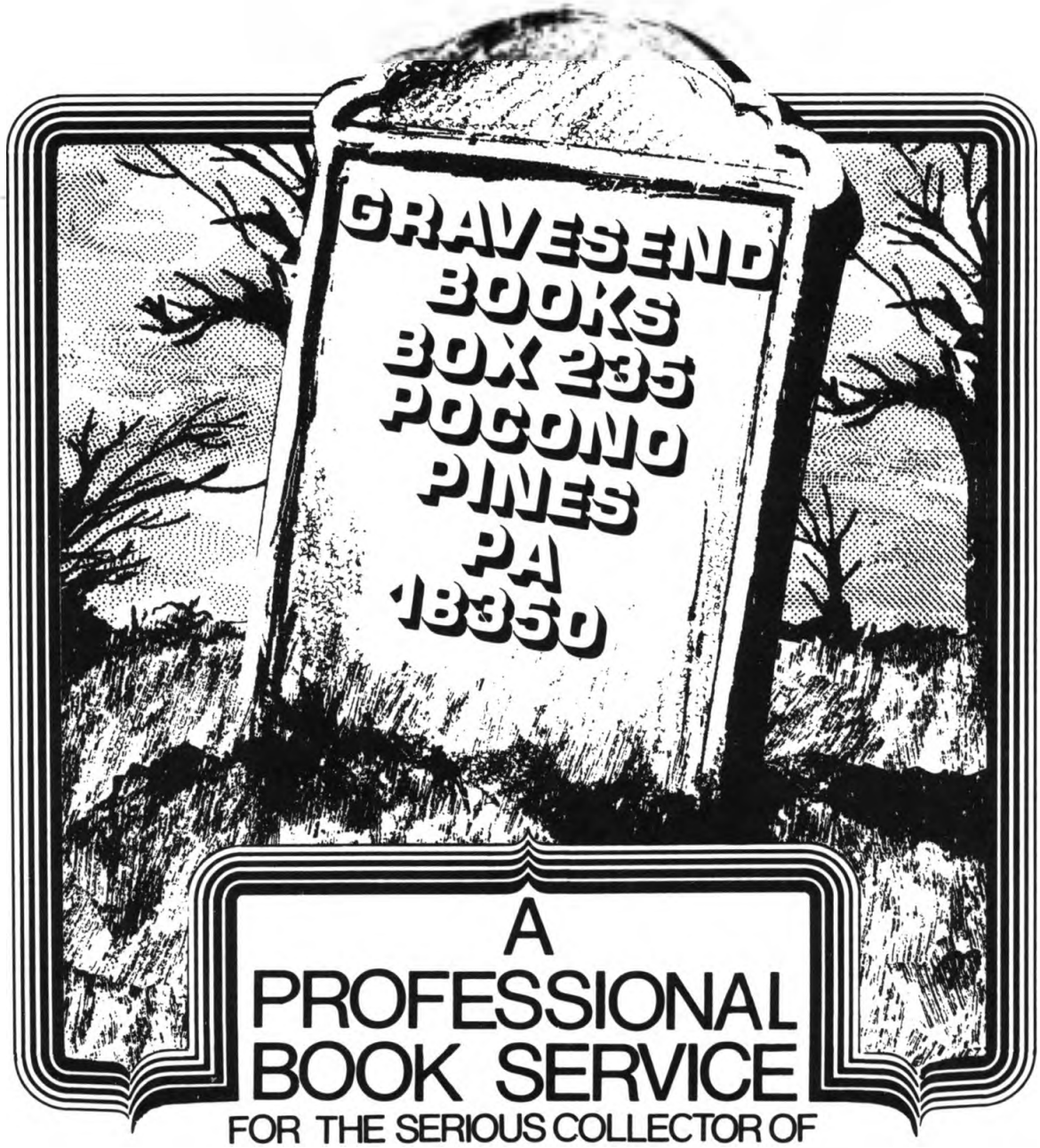
THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE



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THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

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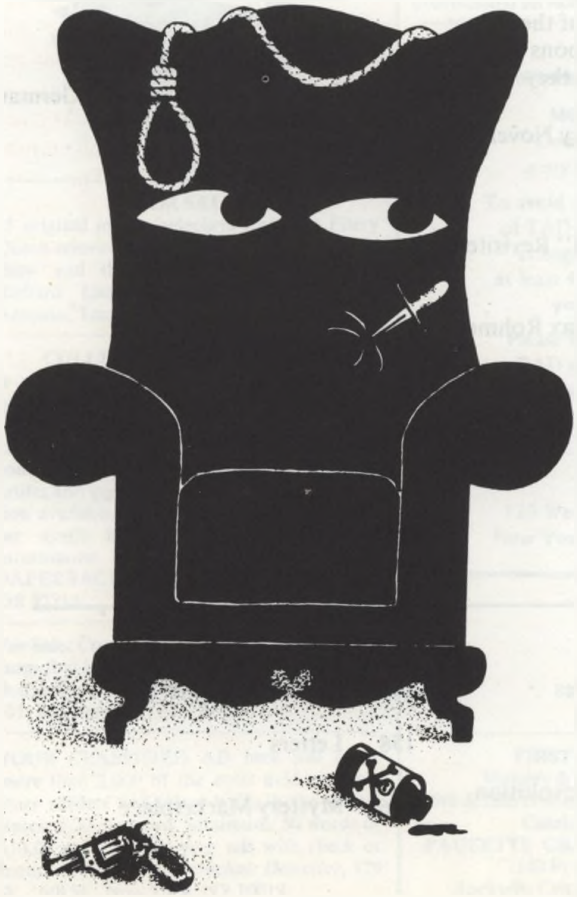
Departments

THE UNEASY CHAIR

Dear TADian,

Well, so much for guarantees. We had hoped that the previous issue would find us back on schedule, but it turns out to have been perhaps the latest issue yet published. It taught me a valuable lesson. I'll never make another guarantee that depends upon the cooperation of anyone else. It would read like "The Best of the Uneasy Chair" to rehash all the things that went wrong with the Winter issue, so I won't bore you with it all but will have to ask that an apology (still another) suffice. I *will* guarantee that we'll do the best we can to make the magazine appear regularly and that everyone gets all the issues due them. I think it's fair to say that the contents of this magazine (thanks to you all) and the format are not problems. Letters suggest that most subscribers are pretty happy with what we publish and how we publish it (we would like to hear from you if you disagree; no, on second thought, we wouldn't exactly *like* to hear from you in that event, but we *would* be willing to, anyway); the major difficulty is getting on a solid schedule *and* getting all copies of the magazine delivered. Without exaggeration, it seems a conservative estimate that about 8-10% of the magazines mailed are never received. The percentage gets higher as the distance gets greater—hence, foreign subscribers have had the worst of it, followed by those living in California. We send out hundreds of replacement copies per issue, using United Parcel Service when possible. In spite of its high cost, it is faster and infinitely more reliable than the post office (I cringe too much when I use the phrase "postal *service*").



We have begun the book service (handled through The Mysterious Bookshop at the same address as TAD) and it seems to be functioning smoothly thus far. It's a bit tricky when the book ordered is from a retrospective review, but we've even managed to fill that, so we'll continue it. No negative reactions and a fair number of positive ones encourage us to proceed.

On a grimmer note, I have had several communications from our editor indicating a desire to step down. As far as I am concerned, Al Hubin *is The Armchair Detective*, and I fear for it if he resigns. As many of you know, Al no longer reviews for *The New York Times* or edits *Best Detective Stories of the Year* (for several years past). The Mystery Library appears to be defunct (this is what I have been told, anyway; Al's exhaustive *Bibliography of Crime Fiction* is now distributed by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*) so he no longer is on that board, and he is making an effort to sell his extraordinary collection of more than 25,000 volumes of detective fiction. That is called phasing out. Still, it is a grave disappointment to us all, I am certain. More on this dreary subject to follow, perhaps from Al himself.

Mysteriously yours,

Otto Penzler

Otto Penzler

The Chronology of the Travis McGee Novels

By Allan D. Pratt

John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee series, which at this writing extends to seventeen novels, has attracted a large number of readers. It is rumored that some people have even gone to Fort Lauderdale looking for the famous houseboat, the *Busted Flush,* presumably wanting either help from McGee in recovering some of their assets or help from Meyer in increasing those they already hold. As is the case with any popular fictional character, it is of interest to attempt to fit him and his actions into the "real world;" to determine, or at least speculate on, his activities and whereabouts in terms of external events which have affected the lives of his real world contemporaries. This essay is an attempt to date, as closely as possible, the events which occur, or are described in, each of the novels.

MacDonald has scattered through most of the stories sufficient evidence to permit dating them with reasonable accuracy. In fact it seems likely that he has constructed a chronology for his own use, to avoid trapping himself in contradictions. As will be shown later, he has not altogether succeeded in this attempt. It would, of course, be simpler to ask MacDonald to reveal his chronology to his readers, but it is nevertheless interesting to determine what one can from the stories themselves. MacDonald has been quite careful, but there are some internal conflicts, and some between stories, which suggest that he sometimes looked at the wrong calendar in constructing his plots.

For simplicity of reference, each of the McGee novels will be referred to simply by the color appearing in the title. A full list of the titles and their publication dates is given in the appendix. All page references are to the Fawcett paperback editions—those published with the copyright dates given in the appendix. Some of the novels have been reprinted in recent years, however, and page references in these later editions may differ from the earlier ones.

One assumption is made in regard to MacDonald's writing patterns in dating these stories: that the action takes place at no later date, or at least minimally later, than the copyright date. Thought MacDonald has written science fiction, it does not seem likely that the McGee novels would be set any number of years later than the copyright date. However, one or two of them do appear to end early in the year following the copyright year. The first four novels (*Blue, Pink, Purple* and *Red*) are all copyrighted in 1964. Thus it is assumed that none of them could have concluded later than early 1965.

BLUE (mid-July to late November, 1960)

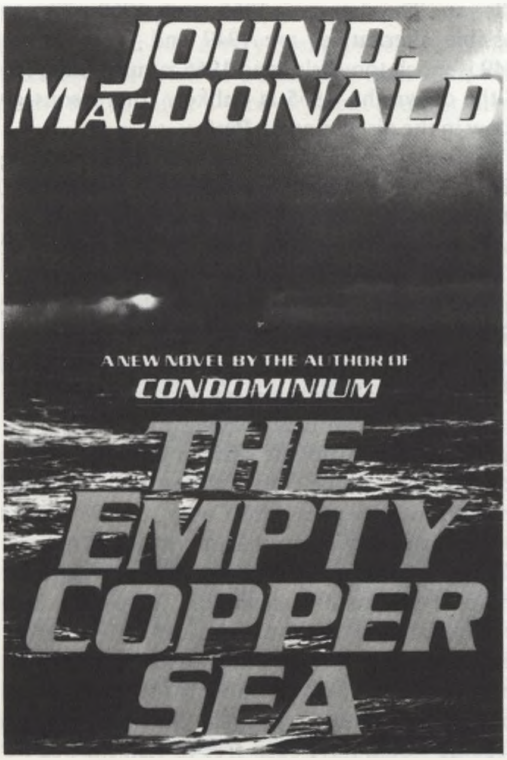
Quite specific dating information is available for *Blue.* In a telephone conversation between McGee and Mrs. Callowell (p. 56), she remarks that ". . .he will be at the convention in New York City through Tuesday the ninth." On p. 57 we learn that it is "Manhattan in August." Thus the date is August ninth. The only plausible years in which August ninth falls on Tuesday are 1955 and 1960. The only possible alternatives are 1949 and 1966, of which 1949 is much too early, and 1966 is ruled out because of the copyright. 1955 is unlikely for reasons given below in the discussion of *Pink.*

The call to Mrs. Callowell was made on August third (p. 56), which was the day after McGee returned with Lois Atkinson to find "nine days of mail" (p. 49). Counting back from August second (Tuesday), nine mail-delivery days brings us to Saturday, July 23. This in turn leads to some uncertainty regarding the actual starting date of the story. The adventure begins some unspecified evening, with Chookie McGall working on dance routines on the *Busted Flush.* The next evening McGee goes to the night club to see Chookie's friend Cathy. This cannot be a Monday, as the club is closed Mondays (p. 23). The next day he goes with Cathy to visit her sister, and the same day begins his ministrations of Lois. If this day is assumed to be Saturday, July 23, per the "nine-days-of-mail" calculation, Chookie must have been to visit him on Thursday, July 21. However, the visit takes place during what would be performance hours at the club, as it is unlikely that there would be no show on a Thursday night. The only night which Chookie would have been free to visit McGee would

be the Monday of that week, July 18. *Blue* ends "On the late November day when I left. . ." Candle Key after spending from late September to November with Cathy (pp. 140, 143).

Pink (October 1963 to April 1964)

Pink, the second in the series, can also be dated with some precision. McGee enters the story in October (p. 6), though the murder of Nina Gibson's fiance occurred on "Saturday, August tenth" (p. 19). Saturday falls on this date in 1957, 1963, 1968 and 1974. The latter two are eliminated by the copyright of 1964. 1957 seems somewhat unlikely, as the Korean War, in which Nina's brother Mike was crippled, ended in 1953, having begun in 1950. There is no indication at what time during the three year span Mike was wounded, however, so the remark that he had been in the hospital for "several years" (p. 10) could mean either four to five years, from say 1952 to 1957, or longer, from 1952 or 1953 to 1963. However, the fact that the story hinges on the use of hallucinogenic drugs suggests that 1963 is more likely. In 1957, knowledge of such drugs was fairly uncommon, and the use of them in a story would have been unclear to many readers. Further, there is evidence, described later, that McGee was in college in 1957. The story ends in April of the following year (p. 143). Hence *Pink* occurs between October of 1963 and April 1964, though Mike dies before Christmas 1963, and all the action is completed some time before that.



Pink is of particular interest because it provides both a glimpse of McGee's family and an estimate of his age. McGee was intending, presumably after his service in the army, to go into business with his brother, but when McGee returned from service, he found that his brother had committed suicide (p. 35). This is a curious parallel with another fictional "rebel," Mack Bolan of the *Executioner* series, who found that the same thing had happened in his family when he returned from the Vietnam War.

It seems reasonable to conclude that McGee was a sergeant like Mike (p. 138) in Korea. Otherwise, why was it that "The captain did not think he could spare us both. . ." (p. 6)? Even under combat conditions it is unlikely that one could be promoted to sergeant in less than a year of service, and most unlikely that one would be under the age of 20, so we can fix McGee's age at, as a minimum, 20 in 1953, the end of the Korean War. Hence he was born not later than 1933, making him 27 at the time of *Blue,* and 44 at the time of the latest story, *Copper* in 1977. It is possible, of course, that he is somewhat older.

Purple (October 1961 to January 1962)?

The next two McGee novels do not provide such definite clues for dating. *Purple* begins in "late October" (p. 25). It is difficult to determine exactly how many days the action takes, but it was "ten weeks later" (p. 153) that McGee and Isobel finished their stay on Webb Key. Allowing something like two weeks for the action, the story must end no earlier than the following January, but there is no internal data by which to determine which October-January span is involved. Taking *Blue* as the earliest of the novels, 1960/61 is eliminated for *Purple,* as this would conflict with *Blue.* 1963/64 is likewise impossible, as this conflicts with *Pink.* Thus *Purple* must be in either 1961/62, or 1962/63. The former is more likely, as the latter dates nearly conflict with *Brown,* below.

Red (February to March, 1961)?

The same problem arises in *Red.* The action begins in February (p. 5) and extends into March, but the exact dates are impossible to determine. The climax begins on "the first Tuesday in March" (p. 98) and extends to the following Sunday (p. 149). McGee's final encounter with Lisa Dean is a week from the next Monday (p. 158). Hence it is at least two weeks into March when the story ends. The years cannot be 1962 (see *Brown,* below); 1963 (see *Gold,* below); or 1964 (see *Pink,* above). Thus, 1961 is the most plausible year.

Gold (late February to late July, 1963)

Gold, copyrighted 1965, also lacks definite clues to

the year of the action. However, internal evidence permits it to be placed with a great deal of confidence in 1963. It begins on a Thursday (p. 77) in February (p. 5). This is probably the third week in February, as Sam Taggert's murder and the funeral occur before McGee goes to New York on the first of March (p. 49). This date is, from the description of the city, and from the fact that the Borlika Galleries are open, a normal business day (Monday-Friday). Of the plausible years (1961–1965), this eliminates 1964, in which March first falls on Sunday. On the day following his return from New York, McGee talks to the Cuban expatriate, Raoul Tenero, who was captured in the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion and later released (p. 67). The invasion occurred in April 1961, so the story must be later than this. 1962 is also eliminated, as this would conflict with *Orange* (see below). 1965 is made implausible by McGee's remark that Menterez y Cruzada left Havana "nearly five years ago." It seems reasonable to assume that Menterez left at, or shortly before, Castro took power in January 1959, rather than two years or so later, which would be implied by McGee's remark if he had made it in 1965. Hence, the reasonable year for *Gold*, by elimination, is 1963. It ends "on an evening in late July" (p. 285).

ORANGE (May 15 to July 5, 1962)

Orange, though copyrighted in 1965, can be firmly dated in 1962. Chapter fifteen opens "On Thursday . . . the last. . . day of May" (p. 171). This day fits only 1951, 1956, 1962 and 1973, of which 1962 is the only plausible candidate. The story begins on a Tuesday afternoon (p. 15) in mid-May (p. 5), which is probably the fifteenth. It ends on the fifth of July, the day after the reception on the beach following Chookie's and Arthur's wedding (p. 189).

AMBER (June to mid-July, 1964 or 1965)

Amber (c. 1966) lacks definite clues to the year, though the months of the action are clear. It opens on "a hot Monday night in June" (p. 7) and closes sometime after the fifth of July (p. 187). It is not possible to date the conclusion more accurately because the last scene occurs "one morning" (p. 188) after the fifth, but there is no indication of how many mornings later it is. 1962 and 1963 are impossible, as these would conflict with *Orange* and *Gold*. However, there is no way to tell whether 1964 or 1965 is the correct choice.

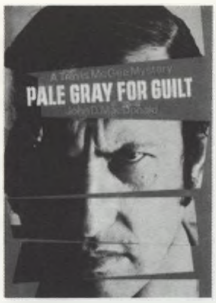
Of these first seven novels, then, four can be dated with reasonable accuracy, while *Purple*, *Red* and *Amber* remain questionable. The rest of the novels in the series to date—through *Lemon*—are all quite easily datable, though some of them have internal contradictions, and some also contain remarks which conflict with earlier stories.

YELLOW (December 8, 1966 to March 31, 1967)

The eighth novel, *Yellow*, is one with an internal dating error. There are at least two explicit dates given in the story; "Tuesday the thirteenth day of December" (p. 124) and "Thursday, the second day of March" (p. 220). The only years which fit this pattern are 1960/61 and 1966/67. The former is ruled out by the remark McGee makes about Chookie and Arthur Wilkinson being married (p. 9), which occurred in 1962. Counting back from Tuesday, December 13 to the beginning of the story results in a starting date of Thursday, December 8. The story ends shortly after McGee and Heidi have recuperated in the Carribean, "as the world was gathering itself to roll on into the fragrance of April" (p. 221), which may be assumed to be March 31.

The internal conflict arises in the phone conversation between McGee and a private investigator (p. 124), the same page on which McGee states that it is Tuesday, December 13. The investigator reports that "The Gorba family left last August twenty-second. A Sunday." August 22 was on a Monday in this year (1966), on a Sunday in 1965. It seems more plausible that the investigator made an error in checking his dates than that McGee did not know the date of the conversation itself.

Another conflict is found in McGee's recollections. He recalls that his affair with Glory Doyle occurred "four and a half years ago" (p. 14), which would be in the summer of 1962. This places it immediately after *Orange*. But if the affair was in 1962, McGee's remark about Chookie does not make sense. "She married one Arthur Wilkinson" (p. 9). This implies that Chookie married someone whom Glory had never met, but in *Orange* it is very clear that Chookie and Arthur were married on the fourth of July, 1962, before Glory and Travis could have met that summer. Thus Glory could not have been unaware of who Arthur was. It may be that this affair with Glory was in 1961, not 1962—that is, five and a half, not four and a half, years ago.



GRAY (October 1967 to February 14, 1968)

This ninth novel (1968) is also easily datable, but likewise contains an internal error. The story begins in October (p. 11) but the action begins ". . .the weekend before Christmas, late on a Saturday afternoon" (p. 20). A definite date is established on p. 84 as Wednesday, December 27. The year must be 1967, as the only possible alternatives are 1961 and 1972. This means that Christmas was on Monday that year, and the "weekend before Christmas" was not the immediately preceeding one, but the one before. McGee is well into the action on a day on which "tomorrow was Christmas eve" (p. 74). Thus the weekend before Christmas on which he saw Tush Bannon was Saturday, December 16.

The story ends "On another Wednesday, the day of the Valentine" (p. 213), on which he received both the check from Meyer and the letter from Puss Killian. This is clearly February 14, 1968. The internal error comes up in D. J. Carbee's conversation with McGee. "This being Thursday the twenty-third day, that would mean two weeks from today would be. . .January fourth" (p. 74). Two weeks from December 23 would inevitably be January 6, regardless of the year. Thursday, December 23 occurs only in 1954, 1965 and 1971. Of these, only 1965 is remotely likely, and in the following year Valentine's Day falls on Monday. This conversation must have been on Thursday, December 21, not December 23.

BROWN (October 3, 1968 to January, 1969)

Brown (1968) is datable from the remark on p. 1, "Helena Peterson had died on Thursday the third day of October." This limits the possible years to 1957, 1963, 1968 and 1974. The latest of these is ruled out by the copyright, while the earlier two are eliminated by the fact that McGee uses the Munequita (p. 1) which he acquired in 1967 (opening pages of *Gray*). Hence the action of *Brown* begins on October 3, 1968 and ends approximately October 21, after the funerals of Tom Pike and his wife. The climactic action is on Tuesday and Wednesday, the 15th and 16th. It is January of the next year (1969) when Bridget Pearson appears, and McGee sends her back home, being otherwise occupied (p. 225).

Brown contains another error in McGee's recollections. Much of the early part of the novel is devoted to his remembering his encounter with Helena Pearson and her first husband, Mike, who was killed. This happened "five years ago" (p. 13), in a cold winter month—presumably January or February. That same summer Helena returned to Florida, and she and McGee spent from early July to the end of August cruising (pp. 22, 29). Five years before the beginning of *Brown* would have been 1963, but this cannot be right, as McGee was involved in *Gold* from late February through late July of that year. Neither could it have been 1964, as *Pink* overlaps the time of Helena's husband's murder in that cold winter month. 1962 is just possible. *Orange* ends of July fifth of that year. In order to have gone with Helena in early July, McGee would have had to leave within a day or two of the conclusion of *Orange*. This is close timing, but possible. As in the case of his affair with Glory Doyle in *Yellow*, dating the event one year earlier than McGee recalls it allows the time frames to fit.

INDIGO (late August to early September, 1969)

Indigo has a definite date specified in the middle of the action. ". . .the last day of July. That was a Thursday" (p. 153). Meyer is here speaking of something which occurred somewhat earlier, as the novel begins on "that early afternoon in late August" (p. 1). Since the copyright date is 1969, that same year is the only reasonable choice. Other instances of Thursday, July 31 are 1958, 1972 and 1975. The action extends to early September, though there is no exact date.

LAVENDER (April 23 to mid-May, 1970)

Lavender is datable from the interrogation scene with Sheriff Hyzer. "Tomorrow is Saturday, Sheriff. The twenty-fifth" (p. 23). The opening sentence of the book places the month as April. Thus the year can be only 1959, 1964 or 1970. The first of these is too early, while 1964 is ruled out by virtue of Heidi Trumbill's appearance at the end of the story, something that could not have happened before *Yellow*, which occurred in 1966/67. Since McGee spent at least two weeks in the hospital after his beating by Sturnevan, the end must be at least mid-May, 1970.

TAN (April 14 to late May, 1971)

Tan begins on April 14 (p. 14). On the same page there is a reference to Friday morning, April second. 1965 and 1971 are the only possible choices. The reference to Spiro Agnew on p. 228 eliminates 1965, so 1971 is the only choice. *Tan* ends on "a Sunday late in May" (p. 250), 1971.

SCARLET (September 19, 1972 to January, 1973)

Scarlet's opening sentence places the beginning on a "hot Tuesday in late August," but later references make it clear that it is actually a Tuesday in late September. The theft of the stamps happened "on the seventh. Thursday" (p. 28). The theft is referred to again on p. 61 as having occurred on September seventh. The climactic scene was on ". . .the twenty-eighth day of September" (p. 306). Not enough time is consumed in the narrative to account for all the days between a Tuesday in late August and September 28. However, if we take September as the starting month, the timing works out correctly. The Tuesday when the story starts must have been September 19, not quite two weeks after the theft. This date fits 1955, 1966 and 1972. All but 1972 are eliminated by the reference on p. 57 to Puss Killian, who was involved in *Gray* (1968). It is a "cold day in January" (p. 316) when McGee returns to the *Busted Flush*.

TURQUOISE (early December, 1973 to early May? 1974)

The dating of *Turquoise* is straightforward. It begins in "early December" (p. 6) and reaches its climax with Howie's fall on "Saturday, the twelfth day of the new year" (p. 234). Of the possible years (1957, 1963 and 1974) on which January 12 is a Saturday, the latter is the only possible one. There is some question about the time span of the epilogue, however. It seems unlikely that the events described in it could take less than six months, but the next novel, *Lemon*, begins in the middle of May, 1974.

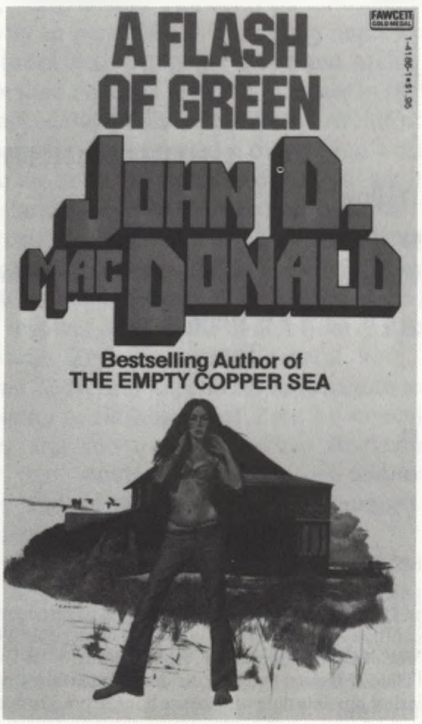
A considerable portion of the early pages of *Turquoise* is devoted to the narration of the treasure-hunt on which McGee and Meyer went with Pidge's father. McGee first met her and her father Ted "ten years back, when she'd been fifteen." This would have been in late July or early August of 1963—between the end of *Gold* and the beginning of *Pink*. Two years later, Pidge smuggled herself on board the *Busted Flush*. The treasure expedition could not have been earlier than the summer of 1965, and probably not before 1966, perhaps later. There is no doubt that it was summer, however, as they found it "on the tenth of July" (p. 36) and had been searching at least a few weeks before the find. It may be possible to date this more precisely by checking the records for a hurricane which struck Baja California in the appropriate time-span.

There is a "recollection" problem in this story which is more severe than those mentioned in *Yellow* and *Brown*. The story begins in early December, 1973. "It had been a little more than a year since she and Howie Brindle, a few months married, had set off from Bahia Mar. . .in the *Trepid*" (p. 6). McGee later goes to talk to Howie. Looking at the boat, he realizes "this was the first time I'd seen the *Trepid* since we all watched her take off one morning in November over a year ago."

From these two remarks it is clear that Pidge and Howie left in November, 1972. However, there is no way in which McGee could have watched their departure at that time. From September 28 until "nine more shopping days till Christmas" McGee was totally out of circulation as a result of his severe and near fatal injuries in *Scarlet* (p. 306). He was in no shape to wish anybody farewell, and in fact was not in Fort Lauderdale at all, but at Candle Key, being nursed back to health by Cathy Kerr. This clear-cut impossibility is, thus far, the only instance in which MacDonald has made what appears to be an irreconcilable error.

LEMON (May 16 to past June 15, 1974)

Lemon begins "May the sixteenth, a Thursday" (p. 11). The possible years are 1963, 1968 and 1974, of which only the latter is reasonable. On p. 113 is a reference to Walt Kelly which implies that he has died. "And I'll always miss Walt Kelly too." His death occurred in 1973. On p. 168 the date is given as Sunday the ninth day of June. The remainder of the



action extends till the following Saturday (p. 254), which would be June 15. The final scene between McGee and Cindy takes place after this date, though probably not very much later.

One extremely curious feature of *Lemon* is that it is "wedged in" between events described in *Turquoise*. As mentioned above, the latter's action ends on Saturday, January 12, 1974. In the epilogue, McGee and Meyer are playing chess on the *Busted Flush* on a "September night" (p. 253). Much of the epilogue is devoted to McGee describing the disintegration of his relationship with Pidge after their return from Pago Pago. In fact, McGee carries on rather excessively about the difficulty he has getting Pidge out of his mind, considering that he apparently never gave her a thought during the entire course of *Lemon*, which concluded two and a half months before the *Turquoise* epilogue.

COPPER (May 17 to July 1977)

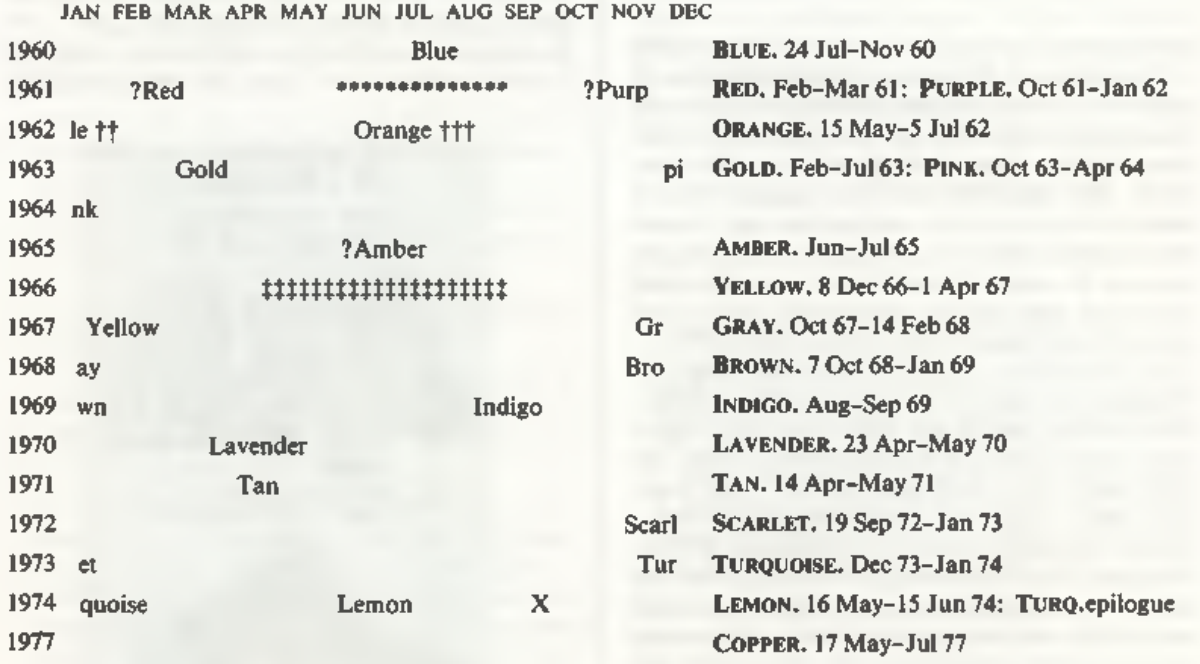
Chapter three opens with an explicit date of Wednesday, the eighteenth of May, the day after McGee was first approached by Van Herder for help. Chapter fourteen identifies the date of the McGee-Gretel picnic as Sunday, May 22. The climax occurs the next night (May 23) and McGee's concluding conversation with Sheriff Ames on the afternoon of the following Friday (May 27). Thus the action of the story encompasses only ten days, from the seventeenth to the twenty-seventh of May. McGee and Gretel return from their recuperative cruise "some uncounted day in July."

OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENT

Definite dates, or highly probable ones, have been established for fourteen of the seventeen McGee novels. The action extends from the middle of 1960 in *Blue* through 1977 in *Copper*, a span of seventeen years. The three undated novels, *Purple*, *Red* and *Amber*, can be restricted to a relatively few possible alternatives.

The inner-story conflicts noted in *Brown* and *Yellow* can be resolved within the context of the stories themselves by assuming McGee's memory to have been off by a year in recalling the dates of the Helena Peterson and Glory Doyle affairs. The conflicts in *Turquoise*, one extending back to *Scarlet* and the other forward to *Lemon*, are considerably more intractable. There seems to be no alternative to the conclusion that MacDonald has slipped up.

The chart below summarizes the datings that have been established.



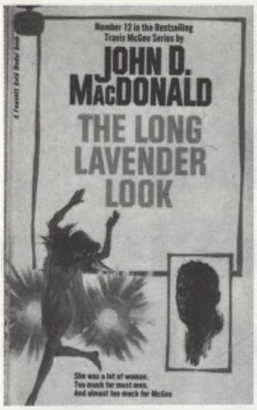
Notes:

Red and *Purple* are placed in 1961 and 1961/62 respectively, since these are the earliest possible dates. Each could be one year later without seriouss conflict. *Amber* is placed in 1965, though either 1964 or 1966 is also possible.

**** Time of Glory Doyle affair, from *Yellow*.

†† ††† Time of Helena Petersen incident, and affair, from *Brown*.

‡‡‡‡ Earliest possible date of treasure hunt, from *Turquoise*.



The novels also provide sufficient data to make some deductions about McGee's life before he became a "salvage consultant." If one assumes that he was in the Korean War until its conclusion in 1953 and began his salvage operations with *Blue*, what of the years between 1953 and 1960?

There is evidence that McGee both went to college and that he played professional football for a time. Firstly, nobody who had less than a bachelor's degree could keep up with Meyer. More specifically, he admits to having played college football in *Gold* (p. 100). The California beach bunny asks, "You play pro with anybody?"

"Just pro ball for a college."

"End?"

"Defensive line backer. Corner man. . . . It wasn't such a big thing when I got out. And I had knee trouble off and on the last two years of it."

This conversation strongly suggests four years of college. In the 1950s, college freshmen were not eligible for varsity play. Thus any player had a maximum of three years' varsity experience. Having knee trouble "the last two years of it" suggests that there was at least one year without knee trouble. One year as a freshman, one year uninjured and two with knee trouble accounts for four college years.

However, McGee is lying in this conversation at least in one respect. He did in fact play pro ball, as a tight end. In *Turquoise*, while checking out Howie Brindle's background at a police station, one of the men recognized him as an ex-pro (p. 170).

"Oh sure. Tight end. Kind of way back. Like you were up there two years, and you got racked up bad. Give me a couple of minutes and I can come up with the Detroit guy that clobbered you."

"I stared at him. 'Nobody can remember *me*, much less who messed up my legs. . . . It was a rookie middle linebacker named DiCosola.'"

McGee had every reason to be surprised. It was indeed "kind of way back." The conversation was taking place in 1973; McGee's pro career ended in 1959, fourteen years earlier.

If we combine these two references to his football career, we can account for the 1953–1960 years. He could have been discharged from the army in the summer of 1953, in time to enroll in college for the fall of that year. Following a normal four-year program, he would have been graduated in June 1957. His pro football career then began that fall. He played as a rookie in the 1957–58 season, and in the 1958–59 season until he was "clobbered" by DiCosola. This might be further verified by determining if there was a middle linebacker of that name on the Detroit Lions roster during that period. There seems to be no good reason why McGee lied to the beach bunny, but the incident in *Turquoise* definitely establishes that he did play pro football until injured. Presumably he then moved to Fort Lauderdale to begin his salvage career.

McGee has lead an active and adventurous life from 1960 to 1974. At this writing (1978) he is about 45 years old, and getting to the point at which his reflexes must not be quite what they were in *Blue*. However, a glance at the chronology shows a good number of holes unfilled. There is a full year of unreported activity between *Lavender* and *Tan*, and more than a year between *Tan* and *Scarlet*, as well as numerous shorter intervals. Perhaps MacDonald will go back to fill in some of the gaps, rather than dating his stories so as to make McGee older and older. There are allusions to incidents in some stories which have never been recorded in detail. What exactly *did* he do for Constance Trimble Thatcher "in Palm Beach a few years ago?"

APPENDIX
The Published Order of the Series

Copyright Date	Title	Chronological Order
1964	The Deep Blue Good-by	1
1964	Nightmare in Pink	6
1964	A Purple Place for Dying	3
1964	The Quick Red Fox	2
1965	A Deadly Shade of Gold	5
1965	Bright Orange for the Shroud	4
1966	Darker than Amber	7
1966	One Fearful Yellow Eye	8
1968	Pale Gray for Guilt	9
1968	The Girl in the Plain Brown Wrapper	10
1969	Dress Her in Indigo	11
1970	The Long Lavender Look	12
1971	A Tan and Sandy Silence	13
1973	The Scarlet Ruse	14
1973	The Turquoise Lament	15
1974	The Dreadful Lemon Sky	16
1978	The Empty Copper Sea	17
1979	The Green Ripper	18

CONQUERING THE STEREOTYPES: On Reading the Novels of John D. MacDonald

By George S. Peek

It was a superb season for girls on the Lauderdale beaches. There are good years and bad years. This, we all agreed, was a vintage year. They were blooming on all sides, like a garden out of control. It was a special type this year, particularly willowy ones, with sun-streaky hair, soft little sun-brown noses, lazed eyes in the cool pastel shades of green and blue, cat-yawny ones, affecting a boredom belied by the glints of interest and amusement, smilers rather than gigglers, with a tendency to run in little flocks of three and four and five. They sparkled on our beaches this year like grunions, a lithe and wayward crop that in too sad and too short a time would be striving for Whiter Washes, Scuff-Pruf Floors and Throw Away Nursing Bottles. (A Deadly Shade of Gold)[1]

The preceeding passage, without a doubt, marks J. D. MacDonald as a sexist writer and promotor of male chauvinist matter. Many passages from his novels, taken in isolation and out of context, would supprt a contention that MacDonald cares little about women as human beings and little about human beings beyond their physical feature or sexual prowess. Although MacDonald wields a considerable number of stereotypes in his novels, there may indeed be more than meets the eye at casual reading; in fact, a number of novels, especially in the Travis McGee series, develop stereotype characterizations in ways which allow the reader to make judgments about the very nature of stereotyping and certainly to consider the danger of dismissing a stereotype as a less than human character. It is the purpose of this paper to discuss MacDonald's treatment of female protagonists and to assess stereotypical treatments of femaleness in three novels: *A Purple Place for Dying, Bright Orange for the Shroud,* and *The Dreadful Lemon Sky.*[2]

A Purple Place for Dying (1964) is the story of Mona Yoeman and her supposed attempts to escape from the tyranny and insensitivity of her husband, Jason Yoeman; and it is about Travis McGee's success in thawing out the frigid, yet potentially lustful, Isobel Webb. Although Mona dies on page fifteen of the novel, we are told a great deal about her by other characters, and frequently what these other characters say, especially Jason Yoeman and Sheriff Buckleberry, reveal a number of attitudes about women which MacDonald holds up for our scrutiny and appraisal. As the novel progresses, the readers cannot fail to judge the dehumanization which these attitudes develop, nor can the reader fail to judge how McGee, albeit in primarily sexual terms, argues for the development of an individual freedom and responsibility. A more detailed analysis will serve to illustrate what occurs and how.

A Purple Place for Dying opens (in a somewhat unusual fashion) not with McGee lolling aboard his houseboat, the *Busted Flush,* at Slip F-18, Bahia Mar Yacht Basin, Fort Lauderdale, but *in media res,* speeding along a road in New Mexico, with Mona Yoeman, "a big ripe-bodied blonde of about thirty." McGee is impressed with her bearing, her poise, and her control. She had ". . .a competent way of handling herself, and a mild vulnerable arrogance. She would have looked far more at home on Park Avenue and Fifty-Something, in the highest of high style on a Sunday afternoon, wearing a fantastic hat and walking a curly little blue dog" (p. 8). But she is not; she is guiding her white Alpine convertible along dangerous canyon roads, and she is seeking McGee's services to find out what happened to her inheritance, which she believes has been stolen from her by her husband. The point is that appearance and reality, or expectation and reality, are truly deceiving. Mona is a tough-minded, striking, and an aggressive individual; she is not the mindless, simpering, love-struck doll that others conceive or desire her to be.

Jason Yoeman, her husband, is perhaps the greatest proponent of stereotyped female-wife attitudes in the novel, though many other characters share in those ideas (or mindlessly rebel against them). Our first encounter with the local attitude about women is from Sheriff Buckleberry, a rising, young, ambitious, but good cop with whom Travis has to deal. Buckleberry resents Travis' knowledge about police

matters and his skill in detective work, but holds a grudging respect for him and pursues the case in spite of a certain jealousy on the surface. Buckleberry is caught between a desire to excel and a desire to live well in a small, politically powerful town; fortunately, he prefers his individuality and his responsibility to a merely expedient and easy position. If Travis is to stand as the epitome of masculinity, brains, physical attractiveness, and humanness, then we may judge other male characters by the degree to which they share in those same qualities. Sheriff Buckleberry learns his lesson well, but it is only because he is willing to set aside, after a good bit of convincing, the stereotype attitudes of the people with whom he must work and live.

The digression about Sheriff Buckleberry is not without purpose: he begins by holding and basically accepting those attitudes about which this corner of the world centers.

> "This was a damn fool idea, McGee."
>
> "I don't know what you're talking about."
>
> "Why, that fool woman has been threatening to run off with a college teacher for months. She's been after old Jass for months to turn her loose. Jass has been sideling around town, telling people it's no worse than a bad case of the trots. She'll get over it, he says. And Mona knows well enough that she could never get so far Jass couldn't have her brought back, and give her a good whipping when he gets her back. She's just got a little passing case of the hot pants, McGee." (p. 23)

The attitude is further revealed by the "keep 'em down home, barefoot, and pregnant" synopsis of Sheriff Buckleberry.

> "The way I see it, it's Jass's fault," he said. "He let her range too far and wide before he brought her back and tried to settle her down. She could have got all the education she ever needed within fifty miles of home, and that's the way it would have been for her if Cube lived. But I guess Jass wanted her fancied up." (p. 25)

Women, therefore, who are "too fancied up" don't make good, docile playmates. Or do they?

In contrast to Sheriff Buckleberry's assessment of the proper role of wife is the character of Isobel Webb, a person who has been for years "fancied up" through study and an almost fanatical devotion her her brother, an assistant professor at State Western University. In the same way in which Mona is (was) fashionable, adept, confident, and sexy, Isobel is unglamorous, inept, weak, and frigid. Mona represents a female equivalent of Travis; true, she has problems, but they are caused not by herself, but by others who seek to limit and destroy her. Isobel, upon whom the novel secondarily focuses, needs to become like Mona in character; she needs to acquire the spirit and confidence (and sexiness) of Mona. She needs to become an individual who can be the equal of Travis and share in those things which Travis represents. While we may argue over the relative excellence of Travis McGee's world view *per se*, it is, nonetheless, superior to those espoused by Jason Yoeman, Sheriff Buckleberry, the early Isobel Webb, and, as we shall see, to the jealousy of Dolores Estober and her half-brother.

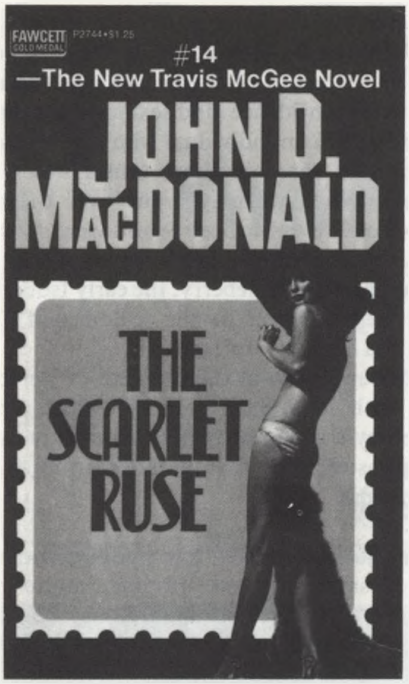
Another approach to the problem of stereotyping is dealt with in a short scene in which Travis is appraised by a group of females in exactly the same way demonstrated by the quotation from *A Deadly Shade of Gold*.

> They got coffee first, and huddled with a great deal of snickering and gasping, muttering and laughter. They acted conspirational, and I heard a few clinks of glass against the edges of the heavy coffee cups and knew the gals were betting a few. It seemed they had won [bowling]. They became aware of me. They whispered and sniggered, and the ones with their backs to me managed to turn to look beyond me with a vast innocence, then take the quick sharp look and turn back to lean heads together and make their jobs. Men alone, worth appraising. Brown-faced strangers, with shoulders big enough to interest them . . .
>
> Suddenly I realized that the world is upside down in more ways than one. They were the hard-eyed group, the appraisers, the potential aggressors, the bunch of gays making the half-obvious pitch at the interesting strangers. They made one feel almost girlish. I realized there had been something of the same flavor in Mona's arrogance—the unconscious usurpation of the male tradition of aggression. Touch me on my terms, buddy. (pp. 31–32)

I suppose there is some importance to the fact that this takes place in the Corral Diner; however, what is clearly important is that the reader sees an imbalance of the old ideas. Travis may not renounce his girl-watching and his sexual pursuits, but the reader, at least, understands the dehumanization inherent in being "looked over" or "checked out" as a potential good-time girl or boy. Travis senses the insufficiency of the "meat market" approach to male-female relationships; somehow, there must be more to it than this.

Jason Yoeman sums up the problem in the same manner as the sheriff.

> "Son, Mona has just come into her restless time,



> and the thing to do is just wait it out. She's gone romantic as a young girl. Let me tell you something. She isn't real steady. She like to tore herself up beyond fixing before I married her. She needs a firm rein. She needs a man half husband and half daddy to keep her settled down. . . . But as of now I'm her husband, and I knew better what's good for her than she does. I've whipped her when she ripe for it, and it has settled her down nice and grateful for it." (p. 33)

The simplistic notions that the female is an animal which needs a firm control and physical punishment (and perhaps reward) is seen in a different way through Travis' treatment of the "homeless puppy" Isobel. The contrast is, of course, that whereas Travis attempts to free Isobel from the fears and attitudes with which she contrains herself, Mona resists forces which limit her and define her as subservient. Her individuality is thwarted; Isobel's is unrealized, and it is Travis' intent to make Isobel into what Mona could not become—a totally free and self-determined individual (like Travis himself). While one might have trouble arguing for a vast psychological complexity in MacDonald's novels, certainly there is a dimension which causes us to confront simplistic views of human nature and human conditions. And through the character of Isobel we also see the danger in not attempting to fulfill a potential, a condition no less fatal to the spirit than Mona's enforced depersonalization.

The short scene in the Corral Diner brings a perspective to the novel which might be easily lost in that Travis helps Isobel find sexual, and therefore intellectual and personal, maturity. This scene underscores the theme of the growth of personality which is negated by the simplistic views of Jason and the early Isobel. It might be noted also that education, especially "book learning," is not enough to free the individual; there must be a sense of curiosity, a sense of adventure, and a sense of confidence as well. The combination of education and individuality is what frees a person; the problem, as MacDonald indicates, is that the combination occurs too rarely.

> Education is something which should be apart from the necessities of earning a living, not a tool therefor. It needs contemplations, fallow periods, the measured and guided study of the history of man's reiteration of the most agonizing question of all: Why? . . . A devoted technician is seldom an educated man. He can be a useful man, a contented man, a busy man. But he has no more the sense of the mystery and wonder and paradox of existence than does one of those chickens fattening itself for the mechanical plucking, freezing, and purchasing. (p. 40)

The animal reference here again returns us to the assessment of simplistic notions of human nature and the insufficiency of those attitudes to deal with things of importance. The character of Isobel undergoes a transformation from a very imperfect technician to a well educated, and therefore inquiring, individual, an element of which is the confident ability to live with herself.

Throughout most of the novel, Isobel fares poorly: her appearance is dumpy (i.e., unsexy); her attitudes are purely selfish; and she is unable to act or think independently. She laments her brother's supposed affair with Mona Yoeman not because she objects morally, but because of all the pride, devotion, and sacrifice she had for him. "And it is all. . . so utterly meaningless. Some absurd little sexual spasms and releases, and the whole world thrown away just for that! I shall never, never understand it" (p. 43). She, of course, is failing to ask the agonizing question, "Why?" The turning point in Isobel's recovery to individuality occurs after her miserable and unsuccessful attempt at suicide. The "failure–no one left in this world for me" syndrome finally overtakes her, and she takes an overdose of barbiturates. Travis throws her in a cold shower (several times) and fills her full of black coffee, and therefore saves her life (for which she is none too grateful). At first she is repulsed by the fact that he has seen her naked, but his subsequent actions towards her and his strong, yet gentle, care gradually cause her to begin to question and begin to open to new experiences. When Isobel and Travis are attacked by Dolores Estober's half-brothers and find themselves in a life and death

situation, Isobel reacts to the closeness of personal contact. It is a new awakening in her body, and she is afraid and hesitant. Travis understands and lets the new awareness develop at its own proper pace. By the end of the novel she and Travis are frolicking without cares on her Caribbean island, and the reader has the feeling that given proper care, attention, and room, the total individual will emerge and the elusive spirit of contentment will be obtained. Isobel, by the end of the novel, needs no one but herself to survive; sharing is a part of life, an essential part, but her sexual experiences have taught her much about the nature of love and sharing as individual choice. She attains that level of independence which Travis represents, and she becomes, by the end of the book, a counterpart of Travis, just as Mona Yoeman was at the beginning.

In *The Dreadful Lemon Sky* (1974), J. D. MacDonald again develops a novel around a dead female character whom he had helped in the past and who found herself in a situation (marijuana dealing) with which she could not cope. The living female protagonist in the novel is Cindy Birdsong, who undergoes the death of a drunken husband and a rebirth of spirit due to the ministrations of Mr. Travis McGee. Again Travis instills a spirit of independence which allows her to endure her loss (she truly loved her husband) and to continue her marijuana business.

The novel also deals with the character of Frederich Van Horn, a rising young politician. If MacDonald attempts to develop a certain arrogance and confidence in the female characters, he also attempts to destroy a false or misdirected confidence in many of his male characters. Freddy Van Horn is a powerful, know-it-all, good ole boy; he has worked his way up in political circles and made every effort to achieve success, no matter what the cost or consequences. He is supremely confident; he is almost righteous in his arrogance. His flaw is, of course, that he treats people as cattle, as things to be dealt with, rather than as human beings. The basic problems are repeated in this novel: females are insecure and dependent on others for help, and Travis assists them in developing self-confidence through sex; males are frequently dominant, arrogant, and viciously self-seeking, and Travis manages to humble them sufficiently just before they get what they deserve, usually some interesting variation of a painful death. Not only does the good guy win, but the world is somehow improved.

In *Bright Orange for the Shroud* (1965), we find a variation on the theme of female dependency–male superiority. Arthur Wilkinson is the victim of a total and destructive con game, one which reduces him to a nearly starved body without any shred of self-respect. He is a defeated person. In contrast to the male dominance and consequent female subjugation theme, Arthur is led to his destruction by his love for a beautiful, but ruthless, woman. The imagery is that of the black widow spider, and Travis attempts to rebuild Arthur by the recovery of some of the money lost to the wiles of the wicked woman. The characteristics of the "homeless dog" motif occur once again, but unlike Isobel Webb's self induced repressions, Arthur Wilkinson had had his confidence and dignity stripped away. An imperfect parallel may be drawn between Arthur's situation and Mona Yoeman's, except that Mona struggles to free herself and tries to maintain her individuality; Arthur simply is defeated. He must be renewed, just as Cindy Birdsong must be renewed. Thus his condition is not due to femaleness; it is due to external conditions and his response to these conditions. Through the characterization of Arthur, MacDonald moves beyond stereotype personalities for male and female characters; he moves the characterizations to a level which deals with attitudes toward one's life, one's situation, or one's self.

The significance of MacDonald's novels may lie in this movement toward confronting human personalities as they relate to stereotypes or pseudo-stereotypes developed by the society. Travis McGee may be an obnoxious personality (he is always right and has always thought things through), but his concern is not to impose his personality, but to evoke individuality in others. The key frequently is a sexuality, a male-female physical and emotional relationship, but the purpose of using that key is to create a total person in the other characters. In *Bright Orange* the stereotypical subservient qualities of the female are transferred to Arthur, and through his experience, we regard the problem of self-confidence and self-identity as not a merely female problem but a universal problem. Moreover, the female protagonist in *Orange* (Chookie McCall) works with Arthur in the very same way Travis works with Isobel Webb. Almost entirely the focus is on how one individual may help another to achieve the necessary self-confidence and self-determination. The problem is not one of maleness or femaleness; rather it is a problem of not developing the human personality to its fullest limits. Whenever such a failure occurs, all persons suffer. If only there were more Travis McGee's, no doubt the world would be a better place.

Notes

1. John D. MacDonald, *A Deadly Shade of Gold* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1965), p. 5.
2. John D. MacDonald, *A Purple Place for Dying* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1964); *Bright Orange for the Shroud* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1965); *The Dreadful Lemon Sky* (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1974). All references to MacDonald's novels will be from these editions.

AJH REVIEWS

Short notes on the current crop . . .

Dept. Supt. Ben Spence returns in *Spence at the Blue Bazaar* (Walker, $7.95) by Michael Allen, a tale set in the village of Tinley. Here the Bazaar, a nightspot, has trampled local standards by importing a sequence of striptease acts. But the place largely escapes police notice until Thana, a newly arrived stripper and a gorgeous creature, is very messily murdered. A suggestive hint sends Spence looking for a link to a seventeen-year-old double slaying . . . Although I anticipated slightly the revelation of both victim's and killer's identities, I find this a satisfying specimen of its kind.

If you haven't yet made the acquaintance of Robert Barnard, you've many treats in store. In fact, his fifth crime novel, *Death of a Mystery Writer* (Scribners, $8.95) will do quite nicely as an introduction. Mystery writers have been obnoxious and dutifully murdered in fiction before, but Barnard bestows freshness of language and character and resolution on this setting. Oliver Fairleigh-Stubbs, Britain's best-selling detective novelist, overbearing, malicious, taking his pleasure from being hated on every hand, succombs to a dose of nicotine in his tipple while celebrating his 65th birthday. Insp. Meredith has the dead man's three children, his widow, and sundry servants as immediate suspects, but with the reading of the will events take a curious turn . . . Good work. More, Mr. Barnard!

Backfire Is Hostile by James Barnett (St. Martin's, $8.95) is an interesting blend of police investigation and international intrigue. The author spent 30 years with the Metropolitan London police, retiring as a commander, and his novel betrays his deep understanding of police activity. Unfortunately he begins his tale with several nearly

Allen J. Hubin, Editor-in-Chief.

Photo: Robert Lopez

unintelligible pages of air force jargon. Once beyond that the sailing is smoother, as the Yard's Supt. Owen Smith goes to East Anglia to investigate a rape-murder at an RAF base. Matters are not so simple, however, for the curious antics of a Russian jet and the destruction of a British craft are also involved. We know early on—and Smith suspects—who the killer is; but no one has all the pieces of the puzzle, neither Owen nor the various spies and traitors, nor the killer, nor even the intelligence boffos. And its's a savagely ironic ending that Barnett brings us to.

Lawrence Block's third tale about thief Bernie Rhodenbarr is *The Burglar Who Liked To Quote Kipling*

(Random, $7.95). It's a wryly humorous and engaging affair, dappled with references to mysteries and their authors and neat plot gimmicks, with only an out-of-the-hat solution to mar the pleasure of perusal. Bernie is now running a used book store on East 11th in Manhattan, where we meet him in the great opening chapter. Soon comes a customer who wants Bernie to ply his first love and steal an impossibly rare volume of Kipling. So Bernie does, and shortly finds himself with a smoking gun in his fist and facing a fresh corpse. Naturally the cops come to want him badly, and various collectors—foreign and domestic—want what he has (had) with quiet, and not-so-quiet, desperation.

Charles Paris, sometime and journeyman British actor and avocational sleuth, returns for his fifth adventure in Simon Brett's *A Comedian Dies* (Scribner, $7.95). He and his sometime wife are in a seaside town, where a visit to the local music hall offers an unusual performance: a comic is electrocuted on stage. Accident—thus saith the coroner. But chance brings Paris in contact with other observers and their comments convince him it was murder. So Charles staggers about, picking up and misinterpreting clues, suspecting and accusing likely or unlikely candidates in turn. Amusing but not memorable bit of parody.

I can grant that John Cassidy's first intent, in *Station in the Delta* (Scribner, $9.95), is to tell an entertaining story. This he largely does, though the narrative is a bit predictable and his inexperience shows. But I think also important to Cassidy is his sympathetic portrayal of the Vietnam war, at least certain aspects of it, and the unfavorable light cast on the press and its motives. Toby Busch, CIA field man with a cloud over his head from an earlier episode in Frankfurt, is sent to My

Tho in the Makong Delta in 1967. His assignment is to set up an intelligence network, but he's little prepared for combat, the incompetence with which he's surrounded—and, worst of all, the disbelief of his masters when he reports an impending major Tet offensive. Meanwhile, despite a beloved wife in Iowa, he's falling repeatedly into love and into bed . . .

Total amorality, especially in a young person, is inherently chilling. Such is the theme of *Summer Girl* by Caroline Crane (Dodd Mead, $8.95), and its development is facile but not exceptional. Pregnant Mary Shelburne needs some help with her two young children during the summer at a cottage on a Long Island beach. Among several candidates she selects Cinni, a dumpy 14-year-old. But no sooner do they arrive when Cinni begins to unveil her weapons: a lush, precocious body and a fiendish ability to destroy relationships. Mostly Cinni does this for her own amusement—people are so stupid, so easily manipulated. Then she decides she will have Mary's husband, who comes from New York on weekends, and matters become deadly.

Add Wessel Ebersohn to the list of South African writers using our genre for exposure of the more raw aspects of that country's society. In *A Lonely Place To Die* (Pantheon, $8.95), a black man is captured after the murder of the son of an M.P. Yudel Gordon, Jew and prison psychologist, is asked to examine the prisoner. He concludes that the black is certifiable but that the nature of the crime (poisoning with mushrooms) is wholly incompatible with his mentality. So, on his own initiative, Gordon goes to the scene, the town of Middelspruit and environs, where a terrorist group has been active, where a Catholic monastery has been attacked, where the police have filed the case away, and where the blacks very much know their place. Anyone who interferes does so at great peril, as Gordon learns . . . An evocative first novel.

Night Trains by Peter Henry Fine (Lippincott, $9.95) is very fine crime-cum-disaster fiction, with only some stylistic fanciness—designed to enrich the narrative but tending instead to obscure it—to mute the impact. The story is expertly drenched in railroad lore, as a boxcar of plutonium disappears somewhere in our western desert. Enough plutonium, this is, to kill a quarter million people if properly used, but at first the disappearance seems an accidental snafu of the computerized railroad routing system. Until bodies start turning up, that is. You might think that the various investigative agencies would get their acts together. Not a bit of it. Even the FBI, in the form of Morse from the field office in Salt Lake City and Matthiessen from Washington, doesn't work together—Matthiessen doesn't work with anyone. Certainly not with Shigata of Environmental Research and Development or Mulloy of Railroad Security. So off each goes in his own direction, with the strands finally leading back to the center of the web and a big bang. One thread is a railroad bum, who overheard something that will be the death of him yet. Another is the Angel of Death, sent by God to punish sinners. Yet another is a geiger counter, ordered some weeks before from the midwest. A further thread is the manipulated boxcar routing system. And there's one more little matter: a second boxcar is missing, full of dynamite . . . This is one of the best plotted, best peopled suspense stories I've read in some months. It should make a humdinger of a film.

I've been less than entranced by Nicolas Freeling's series about Henri Castang—it serves more to remind me of the pleasures of the departed Van der Valk. Maybe Freeling has some second thoughts, too, for he offers us Arlette Van der Valk, now Davidson, in *The Widow* (Pantheon, $8.95). This, said to begin a new series, is a thoroughly delightful piece of work, full of feeling and observation and sensitivity—equal, I think, to the best of Freeling's earlier work. Arlette finds life and her career in Strasbourg a tad dull. Her husband, a sociologist, suggests she open a sort of advice agency: a sympathetic listening ear, if nothing else. She makes her peace with the Commissaire of Police and places an ad. It brings her a distraught girl, with an impossible father; a woman whose lover beats her; and an accountant who exhibits unspecified apprehension before dying accidentally under a train. Accidentally? Arlette's not certain, and the trio of cases makes a most curious and dangerous mosaic.

Quite a driving, tempestuous read is Thomas Gifford's *Hollywood Gothic* (Putnam, $10.95), which serves also to perpetuate the idea that practically nothing licit is done in film city. Screenwriter Toby Challis was convicted of beating his nymphomaniac wife to death with his Oscar. On his way by air to prison in Northern California the plane crashes on a snowy mountainside and only Challis survives. Through some amusing and fortuitous adventures, he makes his way back to L.A. with a determination to elude the cops (this proves surprisingly easy, which is probably a commentary on police competence) and prove who really bludgeoned his wife. The Roths of Maximus Studios seem to be key, and a little probing uncovers more than enough corruption to cause a murder, corruption personal, organizational and Mafian. I suspect that at the end you—like me—will not be greatly surprised at the killer's unveiling.

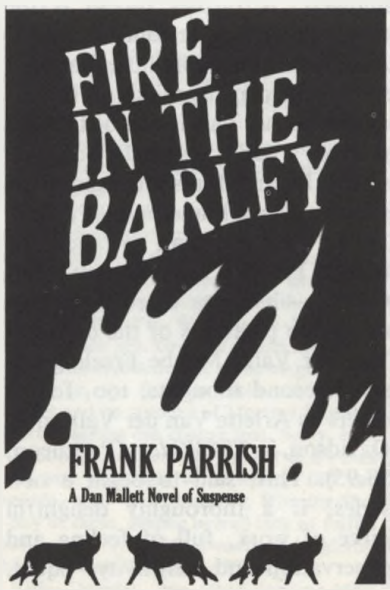
I'm not sure I'm yet at liberty to disclose who "John Ives" is, though word may have leaked out elsewhere. Suffice to say that he's quite a successful suspense novelist under his given name, that his Ives short stories have appeared in EQMM, and that his second novel from Dutton is *The Marchand Woman* ($9.95). Here Carole Marchand, separated from her lickspittle state department husband and pursuing a career in filmmaking, won't accept official answers and scheming when

her son is kidnapped and then murdered by terrorists. She hires Harry Crobey, an almost-over-the-hill mercenary, to identify the killers and bring them to book. The latter prove to be a mixed bag of Cuban exiles stockpiling on Puerto Rico for an assault on Castro, and most of the bloody action takes place on that island. This caper is a bit hard to swallow, but will certainly while away a couple of avid hours.

A reading of John Le Carré's *Smiley's People* (Knopf, $10.95) leaves undisturbed two convictions: that he is the best spy story writer I've ever read, and that *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974) is his best book. In *People*, George Smiley's retirement is interrupted by the murder of a man he'd worked with long before—a dissident Russian now also long forgotten. The current masters of British Intelligence wish the matter swept tidily under the nearest rug; this is the era of detente. But Smiley, his instincts still alive, detects in due course a chink in the armor of his hated opposite number in Moscow, Karla—Karla, who was responsible for all the most personal agony in Smiley's life. And so comes the final duel between these two aging masters of spycraft. Here is Le Carré's loving attention to detail, his ability to evoke character, his wizardry in creating suspense without motion, almost without conflict.

The second tale by Frank Parrish about Dan Mallett, *Sting of the Honeybee* (Dodd Mead, $7.95), is just as fine as the first (*Fire in the Barley*, 1979) and highly recommended. Mallett turned his back on a career in banking to follow the trade of his father: poaching in England's West Country, with the odd spot of burglary thrown in as need and opportunity arise. Need—surgery for his arthritic mother—drives him to horsetheft and housebreaking. This leads to deadly involvement with Eddie Birch, who, though seemingly kind and gentlemanly, proves to be a wealthy London hoodlum determined to recover the property his father once owned—recover it at any cost. At stake are the lives of the present owners—elderly, stubborn spinsters—and, in due course, Dan's and others. Intensity, humor, atmosphere, character, masterfully blended . . .

All the changes have *not* been rung on the Jack-the-Ripper theme. I advance in evidence Anne Perry's powerful debut, *The Cater Street Hangman* (St. Martin's, $8.95). The setting is London in the fall of 1881, before the actual Ripper. Terror, fear and distrust grow on Cater Street as, one after another, young women, servants and society damsels alike, are garrotted with thin wire by some shadowy madman. Perry explores with great perception and an excellent use of period the effect of these events on the Ellison family: mother Charlotte; daughters Charlotte (wilful and forthright, capable of deep feeling), Emily (selfish and determined to gain a titled husband), and Sarah; Dominic, charming and handsome and the subject of Charlotte's secret passion—and Sarah's husband. Slowly, as tragedy crosses the Ellison doorstep, relationships disintegrate, masks fall, eyes are opened, till Insp. Pitt lays hands on a truly unexpected killer.



Ritchie Perry's seventh novel about British agent Philis is *Bishop's Pawn* (Pantheon, $8.95). It would, by now, be a mistake to call Philis a *secret* agent, because his visage and exploits have become well known to all possible enemies. The East Germans are particularly annoyed with him, so Philis doesn't appreciate being sent to East Berlin to fetch a defecting clergyman. As is normal in Philis capers, arrangements come quickly unglued. Philis is captured, and the bishop proves to have a vastly unholy WWII past. He also has his own agenda, involving a gaggle of international terrorists and a huge cache of stolen gold in Italy. But Philis, employing tactics less savory than usual in an extended scenario in Switzerland, manages to clear the field. Acceptable espionage nonsense.

I am moved by the second Thackeray Phin book by John Sladek published here (though the first written), *Black Aura* (Walker, $8.95), to propose Hubin's first theorem (or maybe Hubin's second; I disremember if I've formulated any other theorems publicly before). This theorem says that, of an author's generally equivalent works, that work read first will be preferred by the reader, no matter which work that is. Thus it is for me and Sladek: I have a distinct preference for my first Phin (*Invisible Green*, 1979), but *Aura* is a graft on the same nostalgic golden-age trunk. With a tip of the hat in the direction of John Dickson Carr, Sladek offers us another trio of impossible crimes, here connected with a covey of spiritualists, into whose bosom enters the fearless sleuth, Phin. I rather think *Green's* bafflements were more persuasive and its characters more interesting, but I *did* read it first.

Michael Strong's *The Wolves Came Down from the Mountain* (Walker, $7.95) is a typical international action thriller, full of violence and gore tempered with sex. There's not an attractive character in the affair, and not much to remember either. A group of men are organizing the Wolves, cell by cell around Europe and now England, to use the tactics of terrorism in pursuit of wealth and power. They try for leverage by kidnapping the mistress of James Rigbey of British Security Service. This brings out the worst in Rigbey and associates, who mount a counter-offensive. But it seems the Wolves can't be stopped: their agents are everywhere, their security tight, their successes continuous. However, Rigbey has an ace up his sleeve . . .

James Francis Thierry's *The Adventure of the Eleven Cuff-Buttons* is hideously scarce in its original edition (1918); I've never even held a copy in my hand, much less owned one. So at least Sherlockians will rejoice as The Aspen Press (P.O. Box 4119, Boulder, CO 80302; $6.50) brings back into print a work which appears to be the first novel-length (albeit short novel) parody or pastiche in which Holmes appears as a central figure. Thierry was an American, and he "explains" the American slang which falls in profusion from Holmes' and Watson's lips by having the pair resident in New York for three years before returning to Baker Street to tackle the mysterious serial disappearances of the Earl of Puddingham's ancient gold cuff-buttons. Thierry's approach is unabashed burlesque; there's modest humor in the telling, perhaps a trifle of ingenuity, but no particular narrative skill is evident. Tom and Enid Schantz's introduction is insightful, informed and objective, as we have come to expect from them.

Nonfiction . . . Magazine enthusiasts and bibliographers take joyous note: John Nieminski's *The Saint Magazine Index* (Cook & McDowell Publications, 3318 Wimberg Ave., Evansville, IN 47712; 68 pp.; softcover; $6.75 postpaid) is out and billed as the "first in a series of Unicorn Indexes covering the entire field of digestsize mystery magazines." This *Index* has the same format at Nieminski's earlier EQMM index and exhibits the same meticulous care in compilation. A user guide is followed by a checklist of the 141 issues of the magazine, an author index (cross-referenced), a title index, and eight useful appendixes. Order also from the compiler (2848 Western, Park Forest, IL 60466) . . . *Dashiell Hammett Tour* by Don Herron is an interesting annotated guide to places in San Francisco that were important in Hammett's life and fiction. Useful map and detail; needed some editing it didn't get. Order from the author (537 Jones Street, #9207, San Francisco, CA 94102; 17 pp.; $2.25 postpaid) . . . I'm neither passionate Sherlockian nor great lover of poetry, but I took pleasure in *More Baker Street Ballads* by Charles E. Lauterbach, not only in its 24 verses, but also in its dozen illustrations by Henry Lauritzen and its introduction by the poet's son, Edward S. Lauterbach. From The Sciolist Press (P.O. Box 2579, Chicago, IL 60690; 41 pp.; $5.00).

An Interview with a Black Sheep of Amsterdam: Janwillem van de Wetering

By Chris and Janie Filstrup

Janwillem van de Wetering leads two lives. In one he is an ardent practitioner of Zen meditation; in the other he writes mysteries. Those interested in the first career should read *The Empty Mirror* (1973) and *A Glimpse of Nothingness* (1975), which recount van de Wetering's participation in Zen communities in Japan and the United States respectively. At his request, we kept the interview away from his spiritual discipline. Van de Wetering's Zen master reckons public discussion of his student's lotus-positioned search counterproductive.

Since writing the two books on Zen life, van de Wetering has produced (at this writing) five mysteries, published by Houghton Mifflin: *Outsider in Amsterdam* (1975), *Tumbleweed* (1976), *Corpse on the Dike* (1976), *Death of a Hawker* (1977), and *The Japanese Corpse* (1977). The trio of Amsterdam detectives featured in all five are Sergeant Rinus de Gier, his superior Adjutant Grijpstra, and their chief, the commissaris.

We interviewed van de Wetering in late January, when he and his wife Juanita stopped off at the Algonquin Hotel in New York City, en route to the Dead of Winter affair at Lake Mohonk, New York. Janwillem is lanky and slightly stooped. When he peers over his glasses, he resumbles a professorial stork. A Nordic countenance, scraggly hair, and easy slang tell of much travel, ups and downs, and hard-won self-discipline. An avowed non-conformist, he charms and disarms while he sizes up the rest of the world.

In the text which follows, **J** = *Janwillem van de W.,* **Jt** = *Juanita van de W., and* **I** = *Interviewers.*

I: How did you become a policeman?

J: I didn't want to go into the police until it was all I could do to avoid the army. But when the thought occurred to me I became excited about it. I went into the job because I wanted to go, not because I was forced. I didn't want to join the army. Holland won't get into a war. The Russians will just come and plow straight over us. There's no fun in that. In America I would have joined the army, because at least the soldiers get around.

I: Would you have gone to Vietnam?

J: Oh sure.

I: You had no sense it was an unjust war?

J: It was an unjust war. I can't stop that. I wouldn't walk around with protest banners. I don't think that war should have been there, but it is there. I don't think I should be born on earth but I'm here. I know Vietnam. It's a beautiful country, and the people are interesting. I don't think I would have killed them very much. I would have wandered around a lot.

I: The sergeant doesn't wake the soldier up and say, "Would you like to kill today, or to wander around?"

J: No, but you get lost in your helicopter. You fly the wrong way. Like the *daimyo* in *Japanese Corpse.*

I: If you performed a stunt like that in the American military, you'd be thrown in the clink.

J: You can be clever about it.

I: Houghton Mifflin's biodata on you tells you studied police routine and philosophy in an academy. What ever is police philosophy?

J: I don't know either. But you see, I became a constable, and then, because of my previous schooling, I qualified for the sergeant course. I took that and did so well that they promoted me straight into the officer course. For some inexplicable reason, my main subject was police philosophy. The police in Holland are undergoing tremendous change. The basic law, which is in the law books and which has been quoted several times in the supreme court recently, says: "The task of the police system is to maintain order, in accord with the prevailing mood in the country." So you get policemen who break the surface law and when they are accused say, "Yes, but I was defending the law, because I was acting according to the prevailing mood of the country." Then the second part of that law is, "and to give help to those who are in need of it." Which some of the

younger officers translate into actual practice. For instance, if a guy comes into a police station hungry, you buy him a meal. Because if you don't do that he may go out and break the law. And what does a meal cost? A couple of dollars. There are a couple of cheap restaurants around the station at which this actually happens. I do agree with the fact that the police should exist. Even in a hippie demonstration you'll find that the Hell's Angels perform police duty. There are always certain rules which must be applied, and the police have to apply them. I felt it was necessary to have a police force. I was in it, and was interested in its philosophy. The man who taught me this particular course went very deep. I enjoyed studying under him. Yet I almost failed to receive credit for that course. In the examination, although I knew the material, I launched forth on this "feeding the hungry" notion, and my examiners were reactionary old school officers.

I: There may be less ego-involvement for the policeman who sees himself as fitting in with the mood and with the task of aid as well as enforcement—almost a religious attitude.

J: It is religious. The whole police law is based on religion. Especially in a country like Holland which still has royalty. Royalty is the link between the population and divinity. Very often in the street when I was in my uniform, crazy people wandered up to make contact with me because I was the state, and the only part of the state they can reach is a policeman. I'm sure they felt they were talking to the Queen and maybe ultimately to God himself. They were aggressive. They were always threatening to beat me up. We were taught certain techniques to deal with them. You look them right in the eye, you touch them, ask them "Why are you so nervous?" To neutralize this aggression in them.

I: Did you ever have to use force on anybody?

J: I carried a gun as a constable. I pulled it once. We were told by a lady who was very distraught that her boyfriend had come in and threatened her with a gun —he was drunk—and he was still in the apartment. I pulled my gun. I was not going to be shot by someone's drunken boyfriend. But when I came in he was very quiet, so I put it away again.

I: It's amusing to have De Gier complain his pistol is so old that he's in danger of its exploding in his face.

J: They all have old guns. I had one too. It wouldn't have blown up but it was very old. They keep on replacing parts. It was probably a new gun that I had but it was made in 1939. The Dutch don't want to give their police better arms, because they don't want them to be murderers. They have carbines, but they don't have machine-guns. If it really gets bad, as when we had trouble with the Indonesians, they bring out special riot squads, and the army, because they have all the heavy hardware.

I: The Dutch finally attacked the train, no?

J: They used my trick from *Tumbleweed.* In the book there was a guy in a tower, and they flew over him with jet planes. The Dutch army did the same thing! They set off explosions in the ground all around the train so these people were looking around for an escape. Then the plane came and they ducked. Then the commandoes attacked the train.

I: Did you create this tactic out of your imagination?

J: Yes.

Jt: I said to him about *Tumbleweed,* "That's too crazy," but that's what they did.

J: They had four American Meteors diving at this target.

I: Were you credited?

J: No, I never get credited in Holland!

I: You wrote us, "I think mysteries bore me." Is that rhetorical?

J: I don't read them. I suppose I'm not really interested in mysteries.

I: Why don't you write straight novels? Why introduce the murder and the solution?

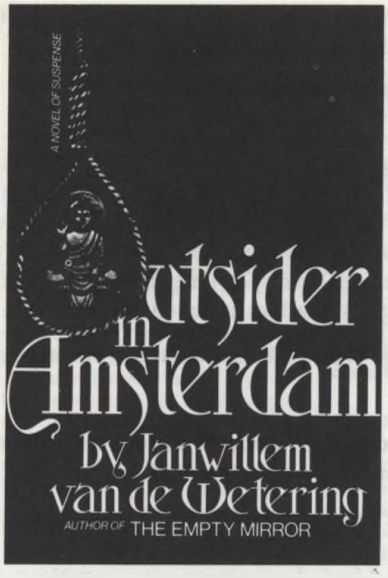
J: Because I was in the police. Also, my books are much more realistic than the average thriller. Maybe there are some very good, realistic thrillers, but I haven't read them. What happens in my books could actually happen or has happened. I've just changed the combination to make the book flow. For instance, in *Japanese Corpse* there is a combination of maybe four different cases. Besides, I haven't made my policemen very clever. In all these thrillers they are always unbelievably clever and do fantastic things. Mine don't do any of that.

I: What about procedurals, Sjöwall and Wahloo, for instance?

J: I read one of their books because somebody said my stuff was similar. But I don't think so.

I: Their last books show a severe disintegration of Swedish society. Do you think they'd write the same thing about Amsterdam? Is the difference between Stockholm and Armsterdam or between them and you?

J: I don't know Stockholm. I've been to Sweden, but not to Stockholm. I know only Goteborg, and it's a different society. Amsterdam is a very strange setting. That's another thing—I like writing about Amsterdam. There's a lot of Amsterdam's color and feeling in there—like in some of these characters.



I: Basically your books convey the idea the world is flawed, but not going to hell.

J: It may be going to hell, but that doesn't concern me so much. After all, it's a little ball in a forgotten corner of the universe. If it wants to go to hell, it can go to hell. I don't think we can change it. I wouldn't worry about the system. I'd rather try to fit in with it. I know I can't get away from it. The only thing I can change is me. I'm not interested in the moral impact of crime at all. I think a murderer can be a very good man, while a non-murderer can be an absolute idiot, and go straight to hell.

I: In *Tumbleweed*, Grijpstra says "Nothing ever happens in Amsterdam." There are only traffic accidents, stolen bikes, a car which falls into a canal, cigar store hold-ups. Does this describe your experience on the police force?

J: Although Amsterdam is like a lunatic asylum, there really isn't much going on. We have five murders a year. Of course we define murder differently from you. Here, anybody who dies in an unnatural death you include as murder. But most of those crimes are manslaughter, not premeditated.

I: Is Dutch society superior to American society because there is less violence?

J: I think American society is better. The backdrop here is more gigantic and more interesting. The whole 240 million citizens, such a wealthy country, such a beautiful country. Holland is flat. Everybody does his thing eight hours a day. Maybe people try to do that here, but the land is so enormous they can't help being affected. They can't help being impressed by the better looking stage, and by the melting pot of people.

I: So law and order is not a big issue.

J: I dislike order, which makes me very bored. For example, in the original version of *Outsider*, the Papuan is caught. I sold the book with that version. Then I thought, "No, this is ridiculous. There must be some twist at the end so he gets free." And then he escapes very nicely.

I: But the police are so glib about that. They lose their man, and yet delight in speculating how he will make his way back to New Guinea.

J: Actually, they would be like that. Because there's no career involved. Grijpstra is at the top of his career. He's an adjutant. He'll never be an officer, whatever he does. There are two ways of entering the police. One is with low qualifications, which are still pretty high. An applicant has to have some sort of high school, and police school. You become a constable, a constable first class, sergeant, adjutant, if you do everything right. If you do a couple of things wrong, you'll stay constable first class until you're sixty years old. You'll never make officer. An officer goes in from high school plus college, enters the academy, and graduates as an officer. He receives a commission as he comes out. When he hits the streets he's an officer. He can go to the top.

I: They team a non-commissioned and a commissioned officer?

J: Yes, because the non-commissioned officer has had far more experience than the young officer. Grijpstra is the superior of De Gier because De Gier's younger. De Gier will become an adjutant. He could also become an officer, because he is quite intelligent, but then he has to go back to school, which he isn't willing to do. He's not career-minded either.

I: Have you still friends on the Amsterdam force?

J: One. I'll see him this trip.

I: Does he read your books?

J: Oh yes, he likes them. He was my teacher of philosophy. I ask him about certain things. Could this really happen? What would happen if this and that happened? He will tell me.

I: In *Tumbleweed*, the commissaris flies to Curaçao, to track down a clue. That seems improbable, to just go.

J: No, they do that. It's quite feasible. We had a Japanese killed in Holland and a Dutch policeman went to Japan to check his background. We don't want murderers, it's annoying. If the causes are beyond our frontier, we'll go abroad. We have to solve this murder—it happened on our soil. We usually do solve it.

Jt: In Colombia once a whole Dutch family was murdered or killed themselves and the Dutch police came. It was exciting to us.

I: Have you been to Curaçao?

J: Many times. I know the island well. I wanted to use it in a book. The parts about the medicine man, and the old ship captain who blows smoke in the police station window are true.

I: In the preface to *Outsider*, you say these are based on adventures you had while a member of Amsterdam's constabulary. There was a Papuan embroiled with the police?

J: The Papuan is true but he wasn't as peculiar as I made him. I was a member of that commune I call the Hindist Society for quite a while. I'm surprised that the owner didn't sue us. I suppose he didn't read the book. He left and went to the Pacific.

I: While you were on the police, you were a member?

J: I used to go to the restaurant and sit with him sometimes. He had a meditation class, used me as a feature to advertise his class because I'd had actual Zen experience.

Jt: Do you know what the successful operation was? Macrobiotics.

J: Mixed up with Hinduism and Buddhism. He ran the place just as I described it, using all these idiots to work for nothing. Then he sold out. He pocketed all the money and disappeared with it.

I: We're used to having police teams be pals and buddies. But in your books there's an adolescent play to it all. The flute/drum duet, goofing off. Do you agree these cops would be laughed out of most police stations, at least in the United States?

J: Yes, I had a long letter from a cop in Chicago to that effect. But in the Dutch police, that's acceptable behavior. I thought the instruments up myself, but they do the strangest things, like coming to attention and farting, and always giving you the wrong reply. Here the career thought is so important. There it isn't. In Holland, a constable can never rise to a commission, and they'll never get more pay. If De Gier does everything wrong, he'll still make adjutant. His increase in pay corresponds with the number of years he's been in service. On the other hand, he can be as brilliant as he likes and he'll never get a penny more. The credit for everything he's done goes to the brigade, not to him. There's a lot of childish horseplay, too, among the police.

Jt: In every Dutchman. There grown men are much more childlike than Americans.

J: I couldn't do too much of it because I wasn't a regular policeman, but in other activities I certainly went in for it all. And the Secret Service is a joke. I applied for a job there once, I really know. They just sit around. They have titles. They are very secretive about doing nothing.

I: One of Isak Dinesen's stories, "The De Cats Family," portrays an early 19th-century Dutch family which traditionally harbors a black sheep. It so happens that in one generation every individual of the family is so probitous that the family's fortunes flag. The situation becomes so bad that the family bribes one member to live in a scandalous manner. This succeeds in restoring the balance, and the family revives. Has Dinesen touched a central nerve?

J: Yes. Amsterdam is a city of black sheep, people who don't fit in with the normal, dumb, stolid, unimaginative way of living. But Amsterdam creates all of our art, and also much of our science. The university is quite important. The city's police are quite different. They are very accepting. A hippie can sleep in the park in Amsterdam and the police will probably just help him, take him somewhere where he can sleep better. In Rotterdam he'd be arrested on the spot.

I: Where are all the white sheep?

J: They're in Rotterdam, all over Holland. I was a black sheep, but now of course my family is pleased to have a famous member. They show off my books to their friends.

I: You decided to travel at some point. Did you go all over the world?

J: I went to Africa, spent six years in South Africa. What I did there reads like the back of a paperback. I was a truck driver, a salesman, a caretaker, and a clerk—anything to stay, to allow me to do what I wanted, give me enough spare time. But I became so depressed in the end I didn't know where to turn. After saving some money, I went to London and studied philosophy. That teacher suggested I go to Japan. I did. Then I went to South America and met Juanita.

I: Tell us about that.

J: There are so many different versions of that I forget which is true. I think it was like this. The Dutch consul in Bogota, Colombia, telephoned me and said, "You're a Dutchman and the Queen has her birthday and there is a party. I want you to come out and arrange the orange flowers on the table." I answered, "Not on your life." Then I thought, "This is silly. After all, I am Dutch. If I have to do a silly thing like that, why shouldn't I?" So I called up to apologize, and went. I arranged little orange flowers on tables for hours, put up the Queen's portrait, and started to leave. "No, no," he said.

"Stay for the party." I said, "Aww, a party." He said, "You've done all the work, so stay." So I went and met her. Her mother was brought up in Holland, and she spoke Dutch.

Jt: My family history is a bit complicated. I was born in Colombia and my forefathers were Spanish Jews. My mother wanted me to meet Dutch men. I didn't want to go to the terrible party. I was afraid of what I had heard from his best friend. I wanted nothing to do with him because he was a spooky, creepy person from a Japanese monastery.

J: Next we went to Australia, then to Holland, now America.

I: You weren't working, just traveling?

Jt: No, he was working. Were we poor in Australia!

I: Then you weren't on the family money?

J: Oh no, I always worked. My family was so much against me they wouldn't support me in any way—which was a good thing.

I: Now you are back in the fold.

J: Yes, because I am successful. They are my greatest fans.

Jt: His family is so Dutch they couldn't accept me. They wanted to but they couldn't.

I: Was the move to the States disruptive?

Jt: Oh yes, especially since he had me against it.

J: I gave her a choice. I said, "If you don't want to come, I still won't go on being a successful businessman. It's just too boring." I had the Harley-Davidson and thought I would go to Africa again, start all over.

I: How old were you?

J: Forty. But then she said no, she would go with me to America for two years, see what it was like. I was on the force until practically the last day I was in Holland. When I was training to be an officer, I was going on illegal night duty. The special constabulary officers should go home at eleven, because they don't want them to get killed. Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday night are heavy nights in the old town and I was going into the town every night with my teacher. There was a lot of objection to that in the police because I was breaking the rule. I said I need it, not for my books but for my experience, and just kept right on going. I was filling in the form that I was doing it. They said, "Well don't fill in the form." I said no.

I: You must be a good businessman.

J: Three companies I worked for did extremely well, while three others didn't go bankrupt but were liquidated. You can't win every time. I made mistakes too.

Jt: He's great when there is a tremendous challenge. When he went into the family textile business, they were almost bankrupt. Many families with children depended on that business.

J: I had a lot of help.

Jt: Help, come on. You only had people lined up against you, not helping you. He pulled it out of trouble.

J: This was the business from her side of the family. My brother is a surgeon. My sisters are married to businessmen. They are all retired now, much older than I. I'm the youngest. But I'm not a tycoon. It's not that everything I touched turned to gold. I would sell what was doing bad, liquidate before it went under.

I: Is part of your carefreeness and detachment based on financial prosperity?

J: It could be. However, I've been very poor at times. There are two types of money: money you need, which is very important money; and money you don't need, and what the hell do you do with it? I haven't figured it out yet. I have money which I don't know how to spend. I suppose I could give it away, but that seems utterly silly. To keep it is just as ridiculous. How many cars can I buy? I have a good car. I don't want a bigger house. My house is already very luxurious.

I: Is there a tendancy for the Dutch to cast off their Dutchness when they move abroad?

J: Yes. Although I always steer clear of fellow Dutch abroad, and so don't know much of them. But a certain kind of Dutchman I would look up to. I've met them everywhere, the rugged individualists. In the old days they would have been pirates or gun smugglers. Now they do other exciting things.

I: Have you read *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance?*

J: I didn't like it. I had to read it because on the Dutch radio my books were compared to his books. I'm impressed by his intellectual capacities, but he says too much and the story goes on and on. Besides, I can't stand that motorcycle he uses, a Honda. How can you write that much about a Honda? I've always had a Harley. I can write about a Harley, not about a Honda. That upset me.

I: Ross Macdonald once said, "I am not Lew Archer but Lew Archer is me." Does that approximate your relationship with any of your characters?

J: De Gier and the commissaris both are my superego, especially the commissaris. The way he

behaves I wish and try to behave. The commissaris has a deep and quirky mind. He understands and accepts offbeat behavior, although he lives a compltely normal life. Well, not so normal—he sits in his garden and plays with his turtle, or rather, watches his turtle. I find now that I use him actively as an example. Yesterday, when everything was against us, when the plane was turned back three times because of fog, I thought, "What would he have done?" And then I did what he would have done, which was absolutely nothing. I studied Chinese characters all day yesterday. In between times, sitting, waiting here and there, I drew characters, seeing how they were built up.

I: The commissaris is based on someone in the Dutch police?

J: Yes, but I made him far more spectacular than the actual model. The model is now very high up. The commissaris would not have risen that high. He wouldn't have wanted to. He doesn't care about career or his rank, or anything. The other guy did. I'd like to be more like De Gier in certain ways. I did some judo but never became good at it. I'm not as handsome as he is, and he steers clear from women. In the end he always leaves them.

I: He lived with Esther Rogge for a while.

J: I used Juanita as a model for Esther.

I: Do you feel your husband is like De Gier?

Jt: No, I think he is all three—De Gier, the commissaris, and Grijpstra. The last not so much but he is very much the commissaris and De Gier. I see sometimes in Janwillem that big tie I have around his neck. When he writes Grijpstra's marriage in that unpleasant form. I'm sure Mrs. Grijpstra exists but she's not the commonest person, it's the horror of the married man. Somewhere in Janwillem is the horror as it is in every man.

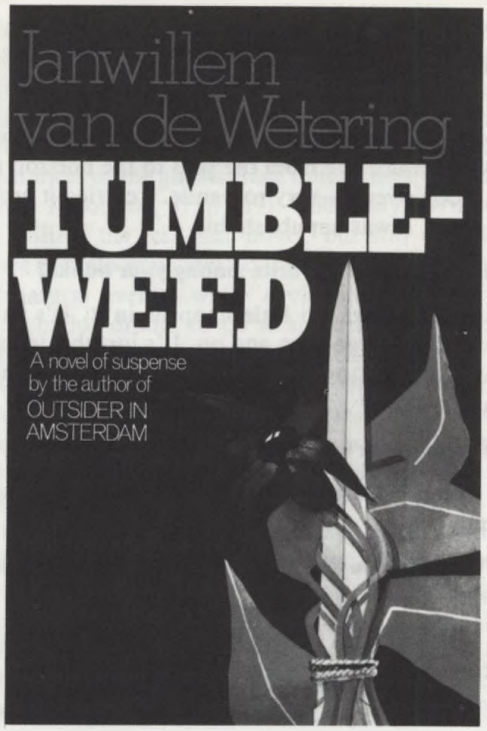
J: Also, I meant Grijpstra to be a contrast with De Gier. He became more human than I wanted him to be so I gave in. He's quite a pleasant man, in fact, not stupid either.

I: If De Gier came into a lot of money, would it change him?

J: He might buy a car, because it's inconvenient for him to take the bus. He must change bus lines several times, and his bicycle is rusting through. Maybe I'll give him some money one day, to see what he goes.

I: When you were writing books in Amsterdam, did you spend time on houseboats, like the one in *Tumbleweed?*

J: I knew them well. As a police I was in and out of them all the time.



I: Who lives on houseboats?

J: Junkies. Elizabeth, the man who thought he was a woman in *Death of a Hawker,* people like that live in houseboats too. So do students. Usually the houseboats in the city are very bad, no water, no sanitation. We used to take the corpses out all the time, because people die on houseboats. The junkies—the drug doesn't kill them, but disease does. They have no resistance.

I: Might you abandon the main characters you've created?

J: I may. I don't know how long I can go on with it. I have just one more idea featuring the three of them. Eventually I want De Gier to get away from it. I want him to go to New Guinea and live on an island. The Papuan will be his teacher. The Papuan stays in touch with him, has sent him postcards every now and then. It's just a one-line reference which keeps cropping up. In order to write that last book—De Gier in New Guinea—I have to really know something. I may have to go to New Guinea myself and live on an island with a teacher. I don't know.

I: Was there a turning point, when, in your work as a policeman, you decided to write detective stories?

J: I kept on being tempted because I saw all kinds of things happening. I thought, "This is a marvelous scene, that is a marvelous scene." But then the whole book [*Outsider in Amsterdam*] popped up one day. I wrote *Outsider, Tumbleweed, Corpse,* and *Hawker*

while on the force.

I: Had you attempted any writing before that?

J: Oh yes. I wrote a 700-page novel when I was twenty-six. I threw it into the Java Sea, page by page. It was a white line from the ship to the horizon with the moon over it—very romantic. I carried it around for years. It was unpublishable.

I: Do you have a favorite among your books?

J: *Tumbleweed.* So little happens in it. It's such a gentle story. It goes on and on. It's just this jet plane flying at the tower. The other books are much heavier.

I: Do you have a favorite, Juanita?

Jt: Yes, *The Japanese Corpse.* It's the most sentimental one.

I: Why did you kill Esther and deny De Gier marital bliss?

Jt: He had too. Otherwise De Gier would have to become Janwillem.

J: I couldn't go too far, you see. If he'd married Esther—

Jt: They would have been Janwillem and Juanita. How could he do that?

J: And he couldn't really get her. Because there had already been too much happiness for the guy and he had to go on. He's in training, he's under his teacher. If he has a beautiful home life, he'll fall asleep.

I: Why not just have him become restless and split?

J: Also my cat died at that time, the true cat, the model of Oliver, in a horrible manner.

Jt: He was as crazy for that cat as De Gier was for Oliver. The sentiment was true. Everything that cat does to De Gier, ours did also.

I: Is there any similarity between designing a plot and pondering a *koan?* Is the same part of your mind being used?

J: Technically there is, but not in essence. If you put your mind to anything, never mind what it is—it might be a criminal deed and you don't know how to do it—you set off a subconscious procedure which will pop up answers to you at unpredictable moments. I walk in the street and suddenly a part of the plot which I haven't been able to figure out will suddenly surface in my mind. Working on a *koan* may be the same technical procedure but on a entirely different level. Also, a *koan* is given to you by your teacher at the right moment and he knows precisely what he is doing.

I: Do you work out plots while you are meditating?

J: No. Everything else creeps into my mind, but not my books.

I: Do you write from outlines?

J: It's different in every book. *Outsider* popped into my mind complete in a split second. I was listening to my father talk about a business deal that was going wrong. I dreamed off and I had the whole book.

I: How long did it take you to write down?

J: Just a few weeks. But with the other books I've made endless notes and plots and didn't use them in the end. When writing one book, the next book is hatching. It's like a chicken laying eggs. You get a string of eggs behind the eggs it's laying. I can see them. But I can't see very much now, as though I have one more idea and that's it.

I: Do you talk to Juanita about the novels as you're writing them?

J: Oh yes. Nobody else cares. She has been a lot of help. I work in the basement and she reads upstairs. She comes running down and says, "You can't make him do that. He wouldn't do it, so why make him do it?" I follow her advice and take it out.

Jt: He drives me crazy. He's sweet about it. He just sits and talks with me. But all this rushes out. Then he goes away and does something else and we see each other again. Uhh, he goes on. He keeps pushing it on me. But there's nothing else he can talk about.

J: If I have a scene which won't come out of the typewriter, I go and talk to her for a while.

I: Do you write methodically, according to a schedule?

J: I write when I can. There's no "so many hours a day." If I have a choice of chopping wood or writing, I chop wood. Because that has to be done too.

I: You always have that choice.

J: Well, if I think there's not much I have to accomplish now, in all the other jobs I have to do, I would consider it free time and use it writing. It isn't that I have to get this book finished now because I have a schedule. If it's too late, it's too late.

I: You write in both Dutch and English. Can you describe the process of translation?

J: The first two mysteries I wrote in Dutch first, then rewrote them. The first one, *Outsider,* I couldn't sell in Holland. I rewrote it in English, and sold it immediately. Then I went to a Dutch publisher, the biggest one, and said, "You may have this—perhaps" —and I was very aloof about the whole matter because I had a very good American contract on it.

The third [*Corpse on the Dike*], fourth [*Death of a Hawker*], and fifth [*Japanese Corpse*] I wrote in English. Later I rewrote them in Dutch.

I: So you don't in fact translate?

J: No. They end up the same, they start the same, but the mood is different. I won't give Dutch readers a lot of the information I give the Americans. The Dutch know about Holland; it's useless to tell them about it. But I go into subtle jokes and feelings of the time. I make De Gier and Grijpstra talk in their mini-cruisers. They're very much against the local fads and they see through them. I don't do that in the American versions.

I: So there's more character in the Dutch and more setting in the American versions?

J: Yes, that's how I've gone berserk with words, because Dutch is my own language. So I can try to get very fine shades, which I can't do in English because I haven't as many words. My American books are quite sober and some people say much better.

I: But *The Japanese Corpse* was spectacular.

J: So much so that when I tried to rewrite it in Dutch —I did rewrite it—it became impossible. So I went back and translated from the English original.

I: How are your books reviewed in Holland?

J: Very strangely. The first book received substantial negative criticism, but sold well. Some critics said it was very good, it was not crime writing but literature. Other critics said, "What?" This became a big controversy. It was blown up in newspapers. It all amounted to free publicity for me. My publisher, who owns 350 bookstores in Holland, moved in and started intense advertising of the book. But now I get good reviews.

I: Do critics compare you to any other Dutch writers, such as Nicolas Freeling?

J: They can't fit me in. It seems my fiction is a new category.

I: Who reads your works in the Netherlands?

J: Here the readership is more elite. My best sales have been 11,000 hardcover. In Holland any book has sold 25,000 copies, some of them more, in an expensive paperback. But here I think they interest more the connoisseur, not the average reader. Soon all the mysteries will come out in paperback here.

I: You have written about Zen discipline, "Rules are no fun unless you break them occasionally" [*Glimpse of Nothingness*, p. 85]. What about your writing, do you see yourself as experimental, not conforming to the formal structure of the mystery?

J: Yes, I'd break through it all if I could. I don't think I have the talent but I'll certainly try.

I: What aspect of mystery-writing presents the greatest challenge?

J: The plot. You have to keep the plot constantly in mind, sometimes going back to insert some forgotten detail, purely for the sake of plot. Fortunately, I have a good memory to find the place where it belongs, but often this means rewriting a chapter.

I: In *Hawker*, the murder weapon is a bit far-fetched. Between buildings is quite a distance to cast a weight on a fishline and cave in the victim's head.

J: You could do it. It's a little ball with spikes on it. At sports clubs, they use a little ball with no spikes. They dip it in paint and they cast at a target. The imprint will tell exactly where it hit. I thought if you could put a spike in it and put a human there, you could kill with it. My brother, who is a surgeon and a fisherman, got angry with me about it, said it's impossible. I've seen it done in a club. As a weapon it's possible. Probably it wouldn't bounce around that much. It would hit the guy once, and that's it.

I: In *Japanese Corpse*, the scene on the inland sea is very much James Bond. One boat, another boat, radios, a chase. Is this a trend?

J: The Japanese are complex people, capable of that sort of thing. The *yakusa* are powerful. They have radios and boats, and small aircraft. The Secret Service is formidable too, and the Snow Monkeys, special commando troops, exist. Japanese are most concerned about their temple art's being stolen, and also about their image in Amsterdam. I'm sure that's a plausible way to do it if they would have to get at the *yakusa*. Yet what you say about *Japanese Corpse* bothers me. I thought it was my master work when I wrote it. Afterwards I've had my doubts. *The Blond Baboon* [forthcoming], which I wrote as an opposite to *Japanese Corpse*, is much better. *Blond Baboon* is very tight. The important things I omitted from *The Empty Mirror* I tried to write into *Japanese Corpse*.

I: Why is Vestdijk your favorite Dutch writer? You mention him in *Glimpse of Nothingness*.

J: He wrote endless novels, eighty or ninety. Some are just words, turning in circles, but others are brilliant. They show a command of Dutch language and a sly sense or humor. He's very courageous. He died in one of our mental wards, screaming with fear. He had to live with that fear all his life. He doesn't dodge it, he analyzes it constantly. He wrote a whsole book about a boy's bad teeth called *Ivory Sentinels* [*Ivoren Wachtes*]. To see such stuff coming out of Holland is astonishing. We only have four or five writers I can read at all. Two, Vestdijk and Slbuerhoff, were medical doctors. Both of them became ship's doctors and sailed aboard freighters all over the world. They drank and smoked opium—real black sheep. Slbuerhoff drank and whored himself to death, at age thirty-four, and Vestdijk became a hermit. He lived in a little house in the provinces. He wouldn't see anyone. He lived with his madness. He played the piano for two hours a day, wrote for eight, studied medicine for another four, and the rest he slept. He hasn't been translated.

I: There are certain scenes very cinemagraphic, almost as though they were written for a movie: the end of *Death of a Hawker*, for instance, where police and foe are chasing around with great earth-moving machines, and that scene in *Tumbleweed* where a jet comes in. Is there an influence of film?

J: Yes. I am now writing movie scripts. You see, people don't read books often but they go to the movies. I want to make a movie. The first movie is being produced in Holland right now, *Outsider*, but I don't want a Dutch one. I want an American movie.

I: Is the screen-play for *Outsider* yours?

J: Yes, but I had a letter yesterday that they are not accepting it. They ask me to try again. I want to rewrite it because I have no experience as a movie writer. This is why I'm going to Amsterdam at the end of the week.

I: One of your letters expressed an admiration for Fellini. Any particular film?

J: No, his general attitude. He uses his own mind, his own symbols of fear, and his own nightmares. What he does on the screen is to give a psycho-analysis of himself. It is therapeutic. It's also very creative. That's exactly what I want to do. When I wrote the books, with each I had a movie in mind. I really want that movie. I'm sure I'll get it.

I: Is there a special director you would like?

J: A director capable of something like *The Graduate* or *Midnight Cowboy*, not with the conventional approach at all. I want a very strange movie, using all sorts of things in the background that are seen for a split second and never explained, but belong in the movie.

I: Have you favorite mystery films?

J: I saw one by Polanski, a Raymond Chandler story, *The Long Good-bye*, a bad movie but with bits and pieces that were excellent. In *The Long Good-bye* a Jewish gangster threatens the hero Marlowe but then smashes a Coke bottle into the face of his own girlfriend. That detail impressed me, although it was overdone. I would hope to create the effects more subtly. My books are much gentler.

I: But you told us you were currently writing one with an opening scene in Boston more gruesome than in any of your previous books.

J: The commissaris is robbed by children, and a little boy cuts him with a knife. But it turned out to be a gentle book. Because I'm gentle and my Dutch background is gentle. I just can't do that very aggressive stuff, because I would never to it myself.

I: Does he ever lose his temper?

Jt: Sure, sometimes, but often he doesn't lose his temper when you would suppose he would. Like the travel yesterday night. We lost one suitcase. I lost my temper. He didn't, but he loses his temper with me.

J: But then I threw a banana. I threw bananas at her head, because I knew that wouldn't hurt her. Still it's a projectile—it breaks and splashes on the wall.

I: In a letter you mention Raymond Chandler and Poe as the American authors you have read in the detective genre.

J: Raymond Chandler I've read for his creamy writing—his descriptions of rain hitting the macadam, the person sitting behind his drink at a bar. I don't think his plots are so good, and don't care about them, but his writing is beautiful—the way he describes Marlowe in his office or Marlowe's odd meetings with ladies. Poe is as fascinating to me

as Fellini. I saw a Fellini movie of a Poe story, and it nearly drove me insane. For weeks I suffered. The story was of a drunken actor who sees his demon. That set me off on a cartoon book. Only the demon kills the actor, and Fellini did it perfectly. Poe's life also captivates me. I'm sure I could have lived as he did very easily, had I gone off on a tangent earlier on.

I: What about Simenon?

J: Simenon is much better in his novels *not* in the Maigret series. Simenon is a fearful man. He goes to a point and refuses to go further. If he were to go further, he might go crazy himself. He's full of fear of his pathology, and not all that adventuresome, but he is an honest man. He wrote a brilliant introduction to a book about Fellini.

I: Did you discover Arthur Upfield's mysteries when you were living in Australia?

J: Yes. Because I had no knowledge of Australia, I went to the public library. There were twenty shelves on Australia, so I started with the top left and worked my way down. A woman took pity on me because of all that heavy stuff. She said, "You should read Arthur Upfield. He will give you a different setting in Australia. He really knows about Australia." So I read him. What I liked about his writing is that he uses the thriller as a coincidence to another dimension. That's what I use my thrillers for too. They're getting better. The last two had real plots.

I: De Gier and Bony are similar. Is there any influence? For instance, they both like animals and are tidy.

J: And I like animals. De Gier dreams a lot, Bony doesn't, not as I recall. I read Upfield, then completely forgot him and rediscovered him only recently. I am reading him again now, not to steal from him or be influenced by him but because I like him.

I: You allude to reading van Gulik in Japan, in *The Empty Mirror*. The party scene in *The Haunted Monastery* is something like the *yakusa* party in *Japanese Corpse*, in which there is also a dance that transfixes everybody.

J: Yes. Van Gulik is my greatest writer. I read him when I get depressed or troubled. I have everything he ever wrote, including scholarly works, except ones so heavy with Chinese that I can't follow them. He was a Sinologist, had his Ph.D. when he was twenty-three from Leiden University. The man was a genius. He did Arabic and Japanese as extra languages, was fluent in them all. I bring van Gulik on the scene in *Japanese Corpse*, as the Ambassador. He was the ambassador to Japan when I was there. I never met him, but I went to his funeral.

Jt: There's quite a big photograph of van Gulik on Janwillem's desk.

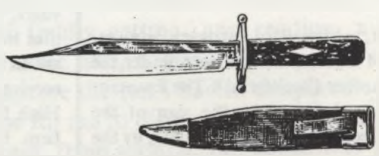
J: He wrote one book which I hope I'll be able to translate some day, *A Certain Day* [*Een Gegeven Dag*], but there's some tangle about the rights of that book, because his wife was very annoyed with him. He was planning to leave his wife, his Chinese wife, and live with a Japanese lady of nobility on the shore of Lake Biwa. He did a hundred pictures of a hermit's house on the shores of Lake Biwa, with him and his other lady in it. The wife's revenge is she won't discuss the rights with any publisher. So I can't at present translate this one book.

I: Tell us about the book you are still writing, set in Maine, and how the local sheriff has served as resource person.

J: I just finished it, probably entitled *Beware of the Bear*. I think the publisher will take that title. I wanted to call it *The Maine Massacre*, but he didn't like that. He said it was too commercial. The local police officer helped by taking me with him in the squad car, showing me around. I've attended some court sessions. The Maine law I read, but didn't use much. I did incorporate the sheriff. He defines people into two groups. Everybody's a subject and he has to deal with them. Then they break the law. Then he can grab them. So I used that a lot in the book, and introduced a gang in the plot called the Bad Motherfuckers, which actually exists in Boston. I elaborated them. They drive cars "BMF1," "BMF2." The sheriff is up in a small village. I said I was going to do the book. In the book he's a very sympathetic figure. I was not about to antagonize my very own sheriff.

I: What of the action is in Boston?

J: There's a trip to Boston in the most horrible part. It's no advertisement for the city. It's the "Combat Zone" and the Commons, and a hotel. But mostly this book is just the commissaris and De Gier going to Maine, and getting involved in a local series of murders. The whole crime is in America, and the sheriff solves it. The setting is the county of Woodcock. I'm in the county of Hancock. Coming out in March is *The Blond Baboon*, set in Amsterdam. I am also working on a horrific cartoon book about a man who learns to live with the demons of his insanity.



Bowie-knife and sheath.

REX STOUT Newsletter

By John McAleer

Nearly 800 members of the Wolfe Pack were on hand at the Biltmore, NYC, on 1 December, for the first Annual Nero Wolfe Assembly and the second Annual Black Orchids Dinner, both sponsored by the Wolfe Pack. Assembly speakers including cartoonist Gahan Wilson, Viking's Barbara Burn (Barbara edited the Nero Wolfe Cookbook), Chris Steinbrunner, Jail Sapp, novelists Marvin Kaye and Bill DeAndrea, and your editor. As chairman, Marvin put together a program that pleased everyone. The Assembly will be a regular feature of the Annual meeting hereafter. The dinner, cooked from Wolfe's recipes by an Egyptian chef, also was perfect.

Climax of the evening's activities was the presentation of the first Nero Wolfe Award, for a novel published in 1978 which best upheld Rex Stout's standards. After reading 41 books submitted by 23 publishers, the committee of six (chaired by me) unanimously picked Lawrence Block's *The Burglar Who Liked To Quote Kipling* as this year's winner. Block, on hand to receive the award (a replica of Wolfe's gold bookmark), acknowledged it handsomely.

The dedication of Block's *Writing the Novel from Plot to Print* (1979) reads in part: "For John O'Hara, Evan Hunter, Fredric Brown, W. Somerset Maugham, Rex Stout, Dashiell Hammett, James T. Farrell, Thomas Wolfe, and so many more writers from whom I've learned so much."

Block says he finds Wolfe and Archie so real he sometimes thinks that if he rang enough doorbells on West Thirty-fifth Street, he'd find the right house.

* * * * *

Rex Stout, whose 93rd birthday anniversary fell on 1 December, was born under the sign of the Archer (Sagittarius). The Emperor Nero also was born under the sign of the Archer (15 December, 37 A.D.). Archie, by the way, is not an Archer but a Scorpio (23 October).

The only extant photograph of Rex Stout in his sailor's uniform, when he was pay-yeoman onboard the presidential yacht *Mayflower* during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt; this was taken in 1905.

* * * * *

High Meadow, Rex Stout's home for 45 years, may soon pass to new owners. Before that happens, though, Wolfe Pack members are in for a treat. Pola Stout is planning to receive the Pack for a picnic and romp over High Meadow's 18 acres when spring takes firm hold. That alone should be reason enough for true Nerophiles to join the Pack. Write to The Wolfe Pack, P.O. Box 822, Ansonia Station, N.Y., N.Y. 10023. Rex's yin and day lines will live forever in your remembrance.

* * * * *

ABC at last screened the pilot film of *The Doorbell Rang*, slotting it for midnight viewing, 18 December. I wonder if ABC schedulers knew Rex began writing *The Doorbell Rang* on 18 December 1964? I wonder, too, how many fans stayed up till 2:45 A.M. to see the whole show? I did and so did my 14-year-old son, Paul. He thought it was better than a lot of prime time shows. And he wondered if ABC let the FBI pick the time slot. Smart boy, that Paul.

* * * * *

In the ABC pilot, a youngster hits a ball through Wolfe's window, then comes around with his own glazier to repair it. The glazier plants an FBI bug when Fritz trustingly admits him. Rex would have sneered at this. He had too much respect for Fritz to use him for a chump. Or do you disagree?

* * * * *

Margaret Farrar, widow of John Farrar, the publisher who launched the Wolfe series, and herself editor of the New York *Times* crossword for 35 years, tells me Winston Churchill once said: "The British crossword solver believes there is only one Roman emperor, and his name is NERO."

* * * * *

What detective created by Rex Stout is part Indian? Tecumseh Fox? Wrong. Fox had no Indian blood. Rex told me his full name was William Tecumseh Sherman Fox—namesake not of the Shawnee chief but of the Civil War general. If you look on p. 16 of *Over My Dead Body*, you'll see that Archie Goodwin says he is one sixty-fourth Indian.

Was Rex himself part Indian? Conceivably. His great grandmother, Regina Hartman (no kin of Mary's), was, as a young woman, for 19 years a prisoner of Indians in Pennsylvania.

* * * * *

Better take a close look at *The Fourth Wall,* a first mystery by science-fiction writer Barbara Paul, just published by Crime Club. Narrator Abigail James lives in a brownstone on West Thirty-fifth Street. Coincidence? Sure, if you don't think it odd that when someone breaks one of her windows the damage is spotted and reported by a neighbor, "a Mr. Goodwin" (p. 149). For a clincher, the escaping villain (no, he's not from the FBI this time), is observed by a physician driving by—"a Dr. Vollmer" (also p. 149). Credit for pouncing on these allusions goes to Dan Andriacco, the Cincinnati *Post's* mystery whiz.

When Dan was a lad, by the way, he wrote Rex a fan letter. Rex wrote back:

> "If your surmise, that Archie Goodwin wrote that gem 'Watson Was a Woman,' is correct, I would be silly to admit it, and I try not to be silly. So the answer to your question, what do I consider my best story, is 'Watson Was a Woman.' "

* * * * *

To promote a new terror novel, *The Wolfen,* Bantam mailed complimentary copies to 400 people named Wolf. "Sales were so-so," relates a Bantam marketing executive, "but the company did get nasty letters from Wolfe complaining of invasion of privacy."

* * * * *

In November 1979, The Royal Bank of Canada devoted the whole of its monthly newsletter to "The Great Detectives." The Newsletter singles out a handful of detectives who stand "on that transcendental plateau of literature where their fictional doings are, to the reader, intimate reality." Holmes, Maigret, Poirot, and, of course, Nero Wolfe. Our compliments to the Royal Bank's discriminating, if anonymous, editor.

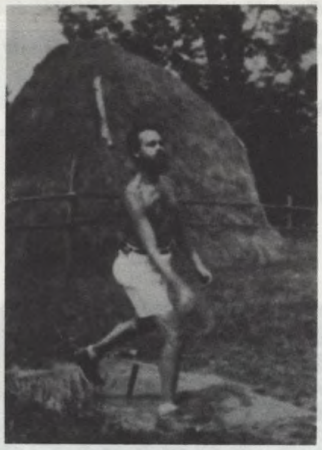
* * * * *

On 22 January 1980, I helped launch a new course on Detective Fiction at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, with a two-hour lecture on Rex Stout and the detective story as an art form. Norbert Weiner, the father of cybernetics, and Rex's old pen pal, was not, it seems, the only M.I.T. genius to rate Rex Alpha Plus.

* * * * *

Mike Greenbaum, of Tucson, Arizona, reminds me that the following blurb, supplied by Rex Stout, appears on the rear flap of A. H. Z. Carr's *Finding Maubee* (Putnam, 1971):

> "A marvelous picture of a small Caribbean island and the native-tourist frictions, but the story is so good that I didn't realize that as I went along. So I had to do some rereading, and I wasn't sorry."



Rex Stout pitching horseshoes at his home, High Meadow, a few weeks before he created Nero Wolfe, in the fall of 1933.

"This book," says Mike, "won an Edgar in 1971 for best first mystery, but obviously Rex Stout saw its qualities before the award."

I should not further that when *Finding Maubee* was released in paperback, by Bantam, in 1973, a King Features Syndicate's comment, used as a blurb, read: "Not since Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe stories has there been a thriller so intricately and artistically woven." Maybe the Syndicate's reviewer really believed this, but it looks as though he was riding pick-a-back on Rex's blurb.

* * * * *

If you are looking for friendly references to Wolfe and Archie in the novels of other authors, try these for a starter: P. G. Wodehouse's *Jeeves and the Ties that Bind;* Donald Westlake, *God Save the Mark;* Elliot Paul, *Waylaid in Boston;* Erle Stanley Gardner, *Pass the Gravy;* Clayton Rawson, *The Footprints on the Ceiling;* Iam Fleming, *On Her Majesty's Secret Service;* and Frank Thomas, *Sherlock Holmes and the Golden Bird.* How about sending me the titles of other books to add to this list?

* * * * *

Ann Ball, who captains the Houston den of the Wolfe Pack, says that when she was a senior at the University of Houston, an English prof asked her to write a paper discussing an author's style. She chose Stout and got an A-plus. With the grade came this gratuitious comment: "Anyone who has the courage to critique a mystery writer's style in a serious college English class deserves a good grade if for no other reason than gall." For a start this largesse-bestowing prof might check out " 'Homicide West': Some Observations on the Nero Wolfe Stories of Rex Stout," a 7000-word critique of the Wolfe saga, written by Professor Mia I. Gerhardt, Utrecht University, published in the Netherlands' scholarly *English Studies* in August 1968.

* * * * *

From my Mailbag:

> "I knew Rex and had some fun times with him at the Baker Street Irregulars dinner. We were once speakers and as I weigh in at 280 pounds and he at about $\frac{1}{10}$th that he had some remarks about it. Also it was at the time he took on J. Edgar what's-his-name and he found out that I belonged to a church order that had the Canonical power to legitimize bastards and he wanted the rite to use on J. Edgar."
>
> John Bennett Shaw, B.S.I., Santa Fe, N.M.

> "Three of the most difficult Wolfe editions to locate are the two Armed Services editions, P-6, 468 and 906, of *Not Quite Dead Enough,* and the single edition, in the same series, of *The Silent Speaker,* #1222. #468 was published in February, 1945; 68,000 copies were printed. #906 came out the following February; another 90,000 copies. #1222 was published in January 1947. A printing of 25,000 sufficed. By then WW II was over and the armed forces were shrinking rapidly."
>
> Melville C. Hill, Spring Valley, California

* * * * *

So far as I have been able to tell, "Watson Was a Woman" first was published in book form in *The Pocket Mystery Reader* (#172), in June 1942. Before that it was published as an article in the *Saturday Review* (1 March 1941). If you think otherwise, tell me about it.

* * * * *

In January, I succeeded novelist Gregory Mcdonald (who has won two Edgars for his Fletch novels) as vice-president of the Mystery Writers of America, heading up the MWA's New England Chapter. In that capacity I hope to represent Stout fans at the Third International Congress of Crime Writers to be held at Stockholm, 14–19 June 1981. I was glad to see that the logo of the Congress, appearing on my invitation, displays Nero Wolfe, beer glass in hand, in the front rank.

* * * * *

Little, Brown has boosted the price of my biography of Rex Stout to $17.50. You still can order an inscribed, postpaid copy from me for $13.50.

* * * * *

Your letters are great. Keep them coming to: John McAleer, Mount Independence, 121 Follen Road, Lexington, Mass. 02173 U.S.A.

CHECKLIST

MYSTERY, DETECTIVE AND SUSPENSE FICTION PUBLISHED IN THE U.S. OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1979

By M. S. Cappadonna

Adams, Ian: END GAME IN PARIS. Doubleday, 8.95

Allen, Michael: SPENCE AT THE BLUE BAZAAR. Walker, 7.95

Asimov, Isaac, ed.: THIRTEEN CRIMES OF SCIENCE FICTION. Doubleday, 12.50

Barnett, James: BACKFIRE IS HOSTILE. St. Martin's, 8.95

Baxt, George: THE NEON GRAVEYARD. St. Martin's, 8.95

Block, Lawrence: THE BURGLAR WHO LIKED TO QUOTE KIPLING. Random, 7.95

Bulliet, Richard: THE TOMB OF THE TWELFTH IMAM. Harper, 10.00

Byfield, Barbara Ninde: A PARCEL OF THEIR FORTUNES. Doubleday, 7.96

Casey, Robert: THE JESUS MAN. Evans, 8.95

Chiu, Tony: PORT ARTHUR CHICKEN. Morrow, 11.95

Cooper, Parley J.: RESTAURANT. Macmillan, 9.95

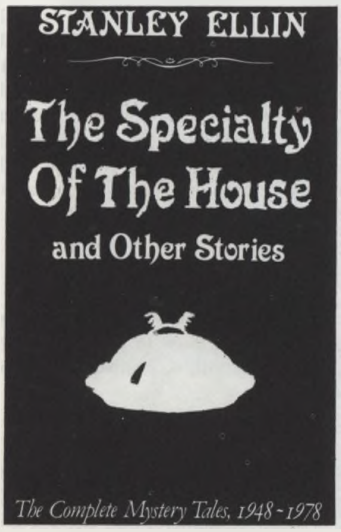
Davies, L. P.: THE LAND OF LEYS. Doubleday, 7.95

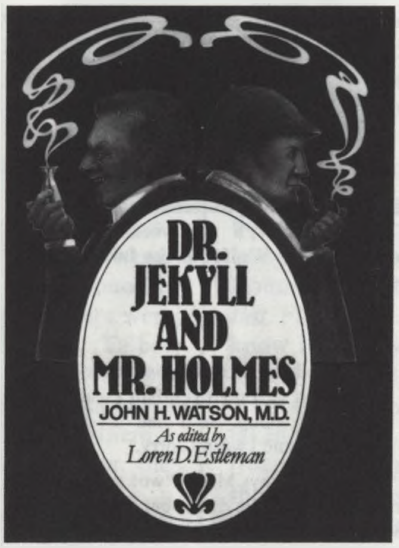
Denham, Bertie: THE MAN WHO LOST HIS SHADOW. Scribner, 8.96

Devine, Dominic: SUNK WITHOUT TRACE. St. Martin's, 8.95

Egleton, Clive: BACKFIRE. Atheneum, 8.95

Ellin, Stanley: THE SPECIALTY OF THE HOUSE, AND OTHER STORIES. Mysterious Press, 15.00





Estleman, Loren D.: DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HOLMES. Doubleday, 8.95

Feinstein, Elaine: THE SHADOW MASTER. Simon, 9.95

Fine, Peter Heath: NIGHT TRAINS. Lippincott, 9.95

Fraser, Anthea: ISLAND-IN-WAITING. St. Martin's, 8.95

Gatenby, Rosemary: THE THIRD IDENTITY. Dodd, 8.95

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Green, Edith Pinero: SNEAKS. Dutton, 9.95

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Hansen, Joseph: SKINFLICK. Holt, 8.95

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Hebden, Mark: PEL AND THE FACELESS CORPSE. Hamish Hamilton, 15.95

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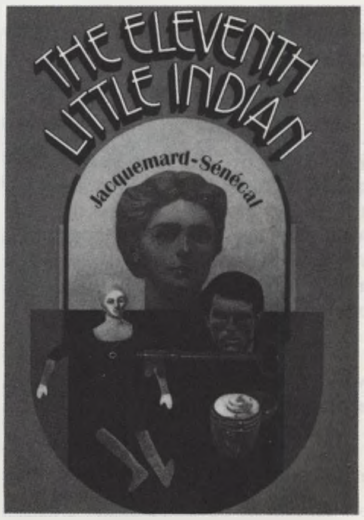
Olson, Donald: SLEEP BEFORE EVENING. St. Martin's, 8.95

Owen, Philip: MYSTERY AT A COUNTRY



INN. Berkshire Traveller, 7.95
Owen, Richard: NIGHTMARE. St. Martin's, [illegible]
Page, Jake: SHOOT THE MOON. Bobbs, [illegible]
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White, Terence de Vere: MY NAME IS NORVAL. Harper, 8.95

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Blake, Nicholas: THE SAD VARIETY. Harper, 1.95
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Christie, Agatha: WHAT MRS. McGILLICUDDY SAW! Pocket, 1.95
Condon, Richard: DEATH OF A POLITICIAN. Ballantine, 2.50
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Egleton, Clive: THE MILLS BOMB. Ballantine, 1.95
Forsyth, Frederick: THE DOGS OF WAR. Bantam, 2.50
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Graham, Winston: TAKE MY LIFE. Pocket, 1.95
Grimes, Sonny and Philip Rosenberg: POINT BLANK. Avon, 2.75
Greene, Graham: OUR MAN IN HAVANA. Penguin, 2.95
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Hallahan, William H.: KEEPER OF THE CHILDREN. Avon, 2.50
Hill, B. Lance: THE EVIL THAT MEN DO. Bantam, 2.75
Hilton, James: WAS IT MURDER? Dover, 3.00
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Innes, Michael: HONEYBATH'S HAVEN. Penguin, 1.95
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A FATAL ATTRACTION

By G. A. Finch

As every age has its own character, manners, and amusements, which are influenced even in their highest forms by the fundamental features of the time, the moral and political character of the age or nation may be read even in its lightest literature, however remote soever prima facie *from morals and politics.*

—Thomas Love Peacock
"An Essay on Fashionable Literature"

Thanks to the researches of William F. Nolan, it seems quite unlikely that anyone with a better claim to being called the "legitimate father" of the private eye detective than Carroll John Daly will be uncovered. Though the private eye has won a place in fiction which has proved secure against all his detractors—miscellaneous moralists and assorted sociologic and literary seers—the fame of the founder of the line is small: he has no following, he evokes no nostalgia, indeed he is forgotten in a way that few once popular authors are. He has been swallowed up by his successors, most of them nameless, and doomed to the extinction which printing on wood paper pulp stock could only hasten.

Upon due reflection I find that the obscurity into which the writing of Daly has fallen is not the occasion for writing a belated elegy or erecting a monument. Anyone who is advanced as an originator in literature is bound to be put to the severest of scrutinies and likely to be judged on his whole performance rather than upon his discoveries. Poe was fortunate; in so many ways he was far ahead of his generation in literary thinking. Of Daly it might be said that he was in so many ways far behind his. Moreover, it is a matter of acute judgment to discriminate just what is new in a writer's work. Beyond that it is often not so much the grasping of the new but the powerful transformation of it that brings significant changes. Why do we speak of the Shakespearean sonnet rather than the Surreyan?

Nevertheless, for the perspective of the present, and the view taken of the long run the fiction of the private eye has had—over fifty years of unbroken popularity—I believe that the one-time popular success of Carroll John Daly to be a subject of reasonable inquiry. The mere facts of numbers—statistics of circulation, years of publication, kinds and titles of detective pulp magazines—tell us very little about the minds of the readers; and since the voice of the reader, as recorded in letters and excerpts in editorial columns, mostly concern details (corrections about guns from gun buffs, for example), one must rely mostly on critical analysis of content and the presence of interpretive elements in the stories, whether they are naive or seem to be consciously woven into a narrative. One may begin by taking careful notice of a statement made some time ago in TAD by R. Gordon Kelly: "To account for the detective story, we must consider not only its formal elements but also the facts that books circulate in a complex commercial system of production, distribution, and consumption."

Professor Kelly's observation invites the student to consider one of the thorniest questions—how the disposition of the formal elements is affected by the fact that the story is marketed as a commodity. Since there never was time in this century when the existence of a cash nexus between writers as sellers and readers as buyers could be denied—excluding subsidized or privileged publications—conditions of popularity have been a recurring subject of speculative comment and are always worthy of serious study. On the whole the pragmatics of sociologic study have added little more to our enlightenment about popular literature than theoretical criticism. "Vulgar sociology" has been damned for its oversimplifications by Marxists, and Marxist literary critics, at least in the United States, have been overconcerned with their bourgeois enemies in the absence of a people's literature that they could defend on suitable ideological grounds.

At this juncture let us not forget the people who inject the query: "What's the point? As long as the detective story provides entertainment, at bedtime or any other time, that is all ye know and need to know." Since the genre has already withstood a great deal of non-sportive unfrivolous discussion, I think it can bear some more. There are enough of us around, as these pages bear witness, who will agree once more with Professor Kelly that "though people read mystery fiction for its good plotting, its good stories, or its challenging puzzles. . .it is essential to go

beyond these terms, to discover what, in fact, they mean to individuals who read mystery fiction." If this line of inquiry is inconsistent with the hearty pleasures of the buff or even obnoxious to him, let him be assured that this small minority wishes in no way in interfere with his tastes. To argue against critical analysis of the detective story is to set up a strange exemption for a branch of fiction whose marked range and diversity alone invite commentary.

One might suppose that behind this little embroglio lies a latter day expression of the prejudice the amateur feels towards the professional. A much more important question is whether the general aesthetics of literary criticism can be extended to popular literature. Are the recognized areas and procedures of literary theory available for the study of popular writing? If they are not, what are the reasons? For if they are not, then the discussion of archetypes, genres, structures are to be declared dysfunctional, and Professor Kelly's matters of inquiry can be disposed of by a few crude generalizations. After the curiously named "classic" detective story has been boxed off as a special display, the fiction of the private eye beginning with the pulps and going on to the paperbacks can be scanned in lots like the garbage scows that used to pass through the Narrows.

My position in this essay is the popular literature as it is exemplified in the fiction of the private eye may be studied with all techniques available to criticism. One proceeds, it must be understood, not by declaring or imposing a totally new method of study, but with the caution appropriate to exploratory moves. It will frequently appear that some kinds of critical analysis will be extended to unfamiliar situations.

I

Back in the nineteenth century two kinds of detectives appeared within ten years of each other who excited a great deal of popular interest and in time were largely responsible for the success of the detective-mystery as popular literature. One appeared in magazines and the other in the police force of Chicago. Poe's detective carried credentials that were established in the library, whereas Allan Pinkerton took care to establish the authenticity of his detective through his own experience. Less than a hundred years later, shortly after our first big venture into overseas warfare, a magazine called *Black Mask* uncovered two varieties of private investigators: one a self-employed detective named Terrance Mack, the other a man employed by a national detective agency who was simply identified as the Continental Op. Since I wish to show that each man is distinct in origin, conception of character and style of experience, and each has his own significance for one kind of popular fiction, I can not think it of much consequence that Carroll John Daly's private detective preceded the detective of Dashiell Hammett into the pages of *Black Mask* by a matter of a few months. One thing is clear: both were progenitors of a numerous offspring, similar in deed and word to their parents. Undoubtedly there was a mingling and blurring of the two lines in the detective fiction that followed for more than two decades in the pulps. But the original identity of each type can be clearly established, the career of each in popular literature can be examined.

From Allan Pinkerton to the Continental Op looks like a more open road than the one that leads from M. Auguste Dupin to Terry Mack, if indeed at first glance one can make out a road at all. On the other hand, if the last name were changed to Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer, the progress of the detective as hero to that terminus would seem more capable of being traced. For what is singular about the detective story on the literary side is a coherence and continuity in the characteristics of the detective and his aptitude for becoming connected with formulas of narrative. Coherence is exhibited by the appearance of stories about one man by typologies of character and plot that arise with him and control a great deal of literary invention. With the coming of Sherlock Holmes, a distinct literary genre is consolidated, and after him the detective becomes subject to the kind of treatment that the aborigines of Australia received at the hands of a succession of anthropologists—explored with not the same degree of rigor but at least a knowledge of what had come before became mandatory.

II

In a subject where digression is always a temptation, to follow in any detail the travail of the detective story at the hands of literary critics would prove a serpentine bypath. Let it be said that the relations between the detective story and fiction at large have been analyzed by the purists (men like Willard Huntington Wright and Jacques Barzun who insist on rigid categories of distinction) and those who have maintained that in detective fiction at its best the writer need not respect any a priori restrictions on structure. Raymond Chandler at last came around to this position, and in some correspondence with James Sandoe attempted to analyze some of the problems of genre through some observations on terminology. In one place he set aside as a clearly distinct class what he called "the story of murder." This kind of story was not a mystery at all: it could carry the whole history of a crime from the condition of the victim, the character of the murderer, and the full circumstances of the commission of the crime on to the exposure and punishment of the criminal. In this kind of story the crime and detective were not

isolated matters of interest and murder was regarded as a subject that fell within an unrestricted range of human experience.

Russian literature of the nineteenth century provided some outstanding examples of the story of murder, and as far as I know no literary detectives who won the fame of Sherlock Holmes. Porphyry Petrovich in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* has been joined to the ranks of the famous armchair detectives on the sole grounds of his methods of interrogation, but this very act shows his subordination to Raskolnikov. The novel, however, has earned the popular designation of psychological thriller. One of Anton Chekov's greatest short stories, "The Murder," epitomizes the story of murder. Here appear in strict chronological order the causes of a crime, the circumstances leading up to it, the pathetic efforts of the perpetrators to divert suspicion from themselves, and their detection. The suffering of the murderer in a prison camp on Sakhalin Island provides the dramatic climax. Of least importance in this sequence is the detection of the murderer; in fact, after reading the story, one realizes what an artifice the displacement of interest to detective and solution has become.

Dostoyevsky was preoccupied with Raskolnikov's sense of guilt and need for atonement, and these moral problems are of little concern to the detective. In the nineteenth century the "cases" of a detective replaced the career of the criminal as sensational story matter, whether they were treated on a genteel or on a popular level. From the time of the rogue and street novels of Elizabethan London to the eighteenth century and its gallery of footpads, smugglers and highwaymen, the notorious criminal was a reliable and ready-at-hand subject for the writer. The lives of clever, dangerous, irresponsible men, both the small fry and the great "villains," were sure-fire stuff at the printers. The crimes of the great were drawn into another category of material, and in the eighteenth century the notorious thief was popular long before the truant aristocrat.

In a short time the great villain found a worthy antagonist—the detective; the embattled criminal became a new subject in the sense that he drew attention to the powers of his antagonist, and it was possible for the reader to choose sides without any equivocation. The odds on popularity began to shift in favor of the crime-fighter. When the policeman became a visible presence in the community, and the criminal was viewed as a common enemy of respectable people, the catching of the crook became a shared interest of the citizenry.

From the writer's point of view the subject matter was still sensational, but the picaresque and romantic side of the criminal was more than offset by the virtuosity of the detective. What could be accomplished by feats of the mind was revealed in Edgar Allan Poe's figure of M. Auguste Dupin, a suave amateur of criminal detection.

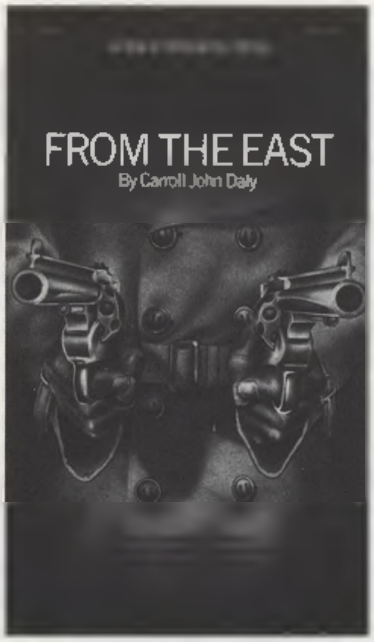
On the immediate reasons for the popularity of Poe's detective no one has written with more original perceptions than Brigid Brophy. She conceives that the popular appeal of the detective story resides in the mythical qualities of the detective:

> These fictions are our latterday myths. Although they carry an author's name. . .they shew the mythological tendency to repeat a standard pattern with variations conspicuous but superficial. . .he [the detective as hero] invariably shows forth distinguishing marks—idiosyncracies of speech, dress and habits which raise him to the heroic level above the other characters in the book;

he is also "the centre of a cycle." The new-in-time characteristics of this hero are that he is both a rationalist and an aristocrat in the distinguishing sense of joining intelligence and freedom from the restraints under which the ordinary bourgeois lives and labors. (Her essay refutes quite brilliantly those who would consider the detective story as an unproductive, insignificant bypath of fiction.)

The special role that the private investigator can play in the solution of all kinds of crimes becomes firmly established in Conan Doyle's tales of Sherlock Holmes. The qualities of his success as a fictional hero emerge clearly. His distance from others is shown first of all by his superior intelligence—his distance from clients, whether they be honest victims of the machinations of others or persons with machinations of their own to conceal; his distance from servants of the law, whatever their rank. He is quite aware of the isolating effects of the workings of his mind and takes people on his own terms and expects them to put up with idiosyncracies which are a part of his unique situation. From this it follows that he must be permitted to operate unhampered in an investigation, whether or not his methods correspond to an official code. He is aware of the dangers of his occupation and quite able to defend himself in a confrontation with an enemy. At this point he parts company with the armchair and the magnifying glass and so makes Poe's French seem a bit dilettantish. Still the armchair remains an important symbol, if for no other reason than to remind us that the detective is not necessarily a steady plodder.

The narrative of Poe that joined the crime with the detective at the expense of the victim and his relation to the victimizer (one of the few words that seem to have become especially appropriated for the discussion of the detective story) presented Poe's progeny with a number of devices within which a new genre could form. Nothing like this, needless to say, occurred within the story of murder. Though it is



obvious that in most nineteenth century detective fiction, the story is capable of forming realistic connections with society, the demands of invention acted as a control over social observation. Poe had shown that the detective enters the lives of others on a special tangent that dictated somewhat arbitrarily a sequence of action. The detective story owes to Poe its "classic" elements, and in them are to be located the beginnings of typology and formula.

III

My primary connection between a fictional detective and one of historical record has its justification in the speed with which the experiences of Allan Pinkerton were transferred into written stories. If he had not been the first to put pen to paper on his adventures as a private investigator, there would have been plenty of men around eager to do the job for him. Allan Pinkerton moved quickly from the post of chief detective for the city of Chicago to being the proprietor of his own agency of whom he was the chief operative. His rapid rise to success took place at a time when local law enforcement was in the hands of marshals and sheriffs who were hopeless chumps as thief-catchers, unequipped to cope with the free-booting law-breakers of the Middle West. Pinkerton made a close study of the methods and the operations of the counterfeiting and robber gangs of the time and understood at once the need for infiltrating his men into these groups. His successful use of the plant and the informer continued through the organizing struggles of labor well into the 1920's, when the Pinkerton name became synonymous with labor spy and stoolie. However, Allan Pinkerton may be properly thought of as the man who established the work of private investigation as a live and legitimate business occupation. As a private detective he (1) established an agency, (2) pursued criminals to the point of capture, (3) worked with the agencies of the law, (4) was paid for his services by clients according to a firm schedule of rates, (5) established a code for agency men that among other things reduced reasons and occasions for corruption.

His own books about his exploits began to appear at the time of the Civil War and they were in continuous publication during his lifetime. Anyone who has read his book on the Molly Maguires will take it as a fairly veracious account from the operative's point of view of the first struggles of the miners to organize actions against the mine owners. Pinkerton wrote in a quite readable style that secured him a wide audience among both young and mature readers, with a pronounced emphasis on the young, for his was a style that was eminently suited for the emerging galaxy of books, papers, and magazines directed to the youth of America. There was undoubtedly a desire to throw the mantle of truth supplied by the Pinkerton name over a great many detective stories in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and there was a growing distance between the activities of the Pinkertons and the multifarious adventures concocted by Old Sleuth, a name used by writers of the popular story-papers of the seventies and eighties. Old Sleuth traded on the reputation of the Pinkertons but seems not to have been restrained by the factuality of actual cases.

It is well to keep in mind that the kind of writing that is called popular as distinguished from the folk literature of the oral tradition was made possible by the printing press; in the United States, however, quite apart from the censorious role of the Protestant ministry for better than a century, the conditions for printing in large figures and the ability to distribute published matter in quantity did not exist until the nineteenth century. Mary Noel tells us in her interesting and valuable book *Villains Galore* that the printing of cheap popular fiction begins with the publication of the story-paper in the eighteen-thirties. Low mailing rates for newspapers improved circulation figures, and with spreading of the railroads the circulation figures rose into the hundreds of thousands after the Civil War. Not until Old Sleuth made his appearance was the detective anything more than an occasional figure in the story-paper. Old Sleuth's popularity spurred on a rivalry among the papers, in particular a rivalry between the Munro brothers, who owned competing papers, and there were claims and counter-claims of pirating and plagiarism of characters and stories.

A study of the titles that appeared under the "brand name" Old Sleuth in TAD's directory of detective story writers shows a range of background

and a variety of "cases" that erroneously suggests an extraordinary diversity of narrative. Old Sleuth wrote detective stories, Indian tales, "Mysteries of New York," et al.; among his detectives were boys, magicians, ventriloquists, Irishmen, Giants, ex-pugilists, gypsies, sailor boys, and both Lady and Female detectives. Noel points out that the detective was worked into many of the standard story-paper formulas of action with the usual variety of settings but with a marked preference for the big city.

Most popular of all the detectives of the story-papers was Nick Carter, who first appeared in September 1886 in Street and Smith's *New York Weekly*. Since there are today paperbacks carrying new series of adventures of Nick Carter, Nick Carter would seem to provide some kind of continuity between the detective of popular writing of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. "If reader interest is to be the gauge," according to Quentin Reynolds, "Nick Carter was undoubtedly the greatest fictional detective of all time." When you have made a statement like that about Nick Carter (as Northrop Frye noted about the proposition that Shakespeare was the greatest writer of all time), our knowledge of the detective has not been advanced one jot. But numbers of readers, it will be objected, mean one thing in a discussion of Hamlet and quite another in the discussion of Nick Carter. Of one thing we can be sure, an audience changes, and when we are speaking of large audiences they rarely are of homogeneous composition. Whatever the links are that connect a certain type of reading matter and a certain type of reader, both complementary and causative—take for quick examples, theme and low price—social conditions are surely in time going to account for the changes. Mary Noel affords us an interesting example: popular writing of the seventies and eighties affected an elegant style and a general tone of moral uplift, no matter the sensational lurid contrivances of plot. Fifty odd years later language is direct and colloquial, the expression of moral sentiments has been ostracized, and the possibilities of action have been much enlarged. Then incomes were low, the ratio of the uneducated to the educated was high, and the number of readers relatively small. There have been great changes in the audience; at the same time continuities can be located in the literature.

IV

I know of no one who has written of the period from Old Sleuth to Nick Carter with more penetration than Joan Mooney. In her interesting sixth chapter of *Best Selling American Detective Fiction* in TAD, Mooney writes about the fiction that was inspired by Gilded Age hopes of riches at a time when there were a certain number of counterparts in life to the heroes of Horatio Alger, Jr. According to the Alger formula, a clean living young man from humble, meager beginnings rises to a pinnacle of financial success by a combination of pluck and luck. How natural it was that the Alger formula should merge into the story of the young man who is not only strong and brave but is irresistibly drawn towards the detecting and punishing of crimes perpetrated on the innocent by a wild variety of villains who are masters of guile and disguise. Many of the Old Sleuth titles could be confused with those of Alger—A Clever Boy Detective, Fighting His Way, Resolute Jack, Tom the Young Explorer, True Blue. For this kind of success the peak year was 1870, according to Mooney, who cites the researches of C. Wright Mills. Thereafter to the end of the century one's chances of achieving a rags to riches success steadily diminished. Faith in the sure returns from hard work and high morals was replaced by "violent, aggressive behavior, overriding concern for the self and callous disregard for others as a more likely means for getting ahead."

The outlaws begin to look more like heroes, and the successful man is ever more likely the one who is unhesitant in the employment of violence against his enemies. Now bear in mind what Mooney says about the detective of the dime novel.

> The dime novel detective story lacks most of the attractions which the twentieth-century detective story offers its readers—a plot, relatively sound and intricate; either a formal puzzle which is more or less carefully constructed, or a mystery, more or less intriguing; and a representation of society which is often perceptive and occasionally comprehensive and penetrating. What is does present is a succession of impossibly violent and usually discontinuous episodes centered around the activities of the hero. Whether he is represented as having more or less human, or greater than human capacities, what enables the detective to triumph over all obstacles, human or nonhuman, is invariably his physical prowess, his aggressiveness, his capacity for violence.

The psychological groundwork for the acceptance of the heroes of Carroll John Daly had been laid long before the first appearance of Race Williams in *Black*

Mask.

By the end of the century the full impact of the changes in American society that Whitman had delineated with more alarm than hope in *Democratic Vistas* was being felt. The feebleness of traditional moral injunction and the ready accommodation of most middle-class people to the "lesser evil," so amply annotated in some of the short stories of Theodore Dreiser, were uncharacteristic of the ways in which the mood of the times was reflected in the cheap popular fiction. Whereas Dreiser could go directly into the lives of affected people and show the strains put upon conventional morality by new uncertainties in society (of course his stories were published in the "better" magazines alongside of escape fiction), popular fiction dealt with situations that annulled the representation of familiar life in favor of the extraordinary and the bizarre, of evil and maniacal criminals against whom were arrayed superpowered crimefighters. Thus, the plots in which unreal punishers of evil encouraged an ambivalence of attitude in the reader. The villains might represent all the qualities they had been brought up to fear and oppose, but the hero now was able to go the criminal one better. It became ever easier for the end to justify the means. Harmless stuff, one might say. What this suggests to me is that the dismissive notion that popular fiction is ever an evanescent light form of entertainment is hardly the last word on the subject.

V

In a memorable insight, Allan Pinkerton pointed out one reason why stories about the detective were popular: "There are three things that are the ambition of a great class of people who are either in need of employment or who are dissatisfied with the employment they have. They wish to go on the stage, or to become an author, or turn detective."

Following out Pinkerton's idea, if one were able to imagine a detective and think up some adventures for him, one would have satisfied not one but two of the ambitions. And who is to say that an excited and adolescent imagination joined to a very small talent for writing might not appear in that large group of wishful people? The enticements of such a writing career seem alluring, especially when a bounty is attached. It may require little more to explain why Carroll John Daly was a published writer, but that little more is important.

What were the resources of Daly? First and foremost, I think, should be his gameness. He was willing to attempt any kind of story, once he got his foot in the door. It was with a very odd item indeed that he made his way through the portals of *Black Mask* in October 1922. Titled "Dolly" after the name of the heroine, it was a story of a man's fascination for a woman of the theater. "I knew [says the first person narrator] that my father bore, in puritanical abhorrence, a deep animosity for the stage. And Dolly was of the chorus of a big musical review." (This is a fair specimen of Daly's "high style.") The narrator is caught up in a conflict between his enchantment with Dolly and his subservience to his father, "who had been a friend and companion more than anything else." When one finds that there is something about Dolly's throat that impels him towards her, one supposes that Daly is being torn between the attractions of Poe and Bram Stoker. If the fascinating throat were not enough, comes the discovery that Dolly is deceiving the narrator with another man who is posing as her brother. With the addition of the spice of suggested incest, it seems that Poe (*Ligeia* and *The Fall of the House of Usher*) must have supplied the main motifs in the story. For we have a morbid attraction for a woman with one especially dominating feature, a conflict between a higher and a lower self, and an ever-present threat of insanity. Daly had achieved a quite unfunny parody of Poe that *Black Mask* not only published but advertised to the reader as an example of "Something New for YOU."

> It [the magazine] will continue to print fascinating clever detective and mystery tales, which have proved so popular with readers. In addition it will use other stories—like "Dolly" and several others in this issue—that are founded on the deepest human emotions. These awesome tales are called DAYTIME STORIES because they are not to be read at night by people with weak nerves. Let us know what you think of the idea.

I don't know what the readers thought of "Dolly"; a few more Daytime Stories were printed but none by Daly, who made his next appearance in *Black Mask* in December of the same year. "The False Burton Combs" may be the landmark story for Daly. It bears the stamp of all his "major" work: a disjointed plot, a pseudo-colloquial style (Ron Goulart says that Daly had a tin ear, i.e., a total insensitivity to the felicities of language), and as for milieu, that combination of doubtful detail and spurious impression that was to become the trademark of the inauthentic in the worst pulp fiction.

I shall limit my attention to certain things in the story that accurately predict what was to follow "The False Burton Combs." The first might be called an incapacity for anything that might be considered fresh or original in observation, advertised in this story in a ludicrous and inadvertent way. There are three "bad guys" (all marked for delivery to the morgue by the revolver that is placed in the hands of the unnamed amateur detective—and remained fixed in the hand of every Daly hero thereafter). Proof of

the powers of observation of this crime fighter lies in the way he determines that one of these three men is a crook. "His mouth gave him away. When he thought he was alone with the others, he'd talk through the side of his mouth, a trick which is only found in the underworld or on the track." After a shoot-out in which Daly's man guns down all three of them, he is brought to trial for murder. In his summation his lawyer, who has pleaded justifiable homicide as a defense of the killings, says to the jury—"And if that isn't self-defense and good American pluck I'd like to know what in heaven's name is." The jury votes for an acquittal, the judge praises the verdict, and the way is paved for a long series of one-man slaughters by Terry Mack, Race Williams, Vee Brown, Clay Holt, and Satan Hall.

In the light of this earliest of demonstrations of the way in which crimes were solved by the detective heroes of Daly, it is noteworthy that Daly made clear at the outset the credo of his detective.

> I ain't a crook; just a gentleman adventurer and make my living working against the lawbreakers. Not that I work with the police—no, not me. I'm no knight-errant either . . . I've done a lot of business in blackmail cases . . . You see I'm a kind of fellow in the center—not a crook and not a policeman. Both of them look on me with suspicion, though the crooks don't often know I'm out after their hides. And the police—well they run me pretty close at times but I got to take the chances.

The beauty of this is the absence of irony: there is no division between the promises of his code and what he is empowered to deliver. Ego and id are in perfect harmony; he suffers from no repressions and is immune to any feelings of guilt, he seems to have nothing in his sub-conscious. If he is interesting, he is interesting in the way a Martian might be supposed to be interesting. But no one would think this man could arouse anyone's suspicions; he seems to be so down-to-earth ordinary, a man so attached to common mediocrity. The advantage of his "centrist" position is that he can translate the wishes of the non-thinking reader into action: the desire to overpower enemies without scruple or fear of retaliation; and to live in a world in which there are no obstacles to the quick elimination of chosen lawbreakers. Daly even gives the reader a "get tough" judge in his first story, the kind that is still dear to the heart of the closet vigilante.

Nolan calls the man in "The False Burton Combs" a "direct prototype" of Race Williams ("basically amoral, quick on the trigger, tough and illiterate"). And if it were not for Nolan, it is probable that Williams' immediate predecessor might have been overlooked. He was "Three Gun Terry" (the title of the lead story in *Black Mask* of May 15, 1923), and to cinch the case for an explicit classification of occupation, I note that Terry had an office with the words Private Investigator on the door. One also noted that the position of the investigator, as Daly explains to the reader, has undergone some changes in the intervening months. "I ain't a crook [Terry informs the reader], and I ain't a dick; I play the game on the level, in my own way. I'm in the center of a triangle betwen the crook and the police and the victim." "Victim" seems an uncharacteristic word for a man like Terry, but the victim is appropriately placed last in the triangle. With Mack, Daly reaffirms his strong attachment to the handgun. There was nothing fancy or erudite about Daly's interest: it was the gun at work that counted—from the quick draw to the holes that appeared like magic in the cranium, first preference being given to the crack shot between the eyeballs.

By January 1, 1924, Dashiell Hammett had been established as a co-attraction with Daly in *Black Mask*—Hammett with a new Continental Op story, "The Tenth Clew" (the first one, "Crooked Souls," had been printed the previous October), and Daly with a Terry Mack story, "Action! Action!" A memorable line from this one shows that the geometry of the pattern of interest had changed from a triangle to a square, as a fourth element was acknowledged. "The lure of my old life was calling me, the life where a man's pockets were filled by the quickness of his trigger finger." Alongside the Mack story, "The Tenth Clew" might have had its origins in the files of Hammett's memories of his years as a Pinkerton operative. It has all the earmarks of a conventional detective story of the slick magazines, except that the characters are firmly anchored in time by a now outmoded slang (generally reserved for humor in non-pulp magazines) and the girl in the story is a hard-boiled type.

Shortly Terry Mack was superseded by Race Williams. His original appearance is in a story about the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, "The Knights of the Open Palm" (one of Daly's better titles), in a special Klan issue of *Black Mask*. In the early twenties, it may be recalled, the Klan was on the march (or on the make) and had achieved a large following outside the South, particularly in the Middle West, in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. As is true of most of the rightist political formations in this country in the twentieth century, the Klan received an amount of respectful attention that was quite out of proportion to its membership and its platform. *Black Mask* put forward an issue featuring stories about the Klan as a way of airing arguments for and against the Klan. Klan stories were written by Richard Connell and Herman Petersen as well as Daly, and it must be said that the questions the stories raised about the activities of Klansmen made these stories quite different from the kind that the *Black Mask* buff had

come to expect from the magazine. The chief point about the open-palmed Knights was that they were men who masqueraded in the Klan garb to serve special selfish ends of their own. And the editors were wondering aloud whether this was not the great danger of the organization. A character in one of them says, "The Klan is a money-making graft bent on raising religious and racial hatred."

Like his predecessor, Race Williams has no hesitation about introducing himself to the reader and explaining the way he does business:

> I'm what you might call the middleman—just the halfway house between the dicks and crooks. Oh, there ain't no doubt that both the cops and the crooks take me for a gun, but I ain't—not rightly speaking. I do a little honest shooting once in a while—just in the way of business. But my conscience is clear; I never bumped off a gun what didn't need it.

As to his attitude towards the Klan, he says,

> Of course I'm like all Americans—a born joiner. It just comes like children playing; we want to be in on everything that's secret and full of fancy names and trick grips. But it wouldn't work for me; it would be mighty bad in my line.

The problem he foresees is that he might have to pull a gun on a brother who might not identify himself quickly enough, so "he might get his roof blown off." What Race Williams means to say is that he might kill a man "who didn't need it," just in his line of duty, as he defines it, regrettable perhaps, but just the sort of thing one has to expect will happen now and then. (This same point is made more than once by Race.) "No, I like to play the game alone" (but remember he's a born joiner). Daly's heroes are notable for their flexibility—it's always possible for them to have it both ways.

In the issue of July 15, 1923, Daly came back with another Race Williams story, "Three Thousand to the Good." Here, once more, apparently for the benefit of new readers (*Black Mask* must have been gaining readers steadily, for on the first of that month it had reported in its pages a circulation of a million and a half readers), Race Williams explains himself:

> That I am not a regular detective is of little importance, just simply a gentleman adventurer who lends his services against crooks for the benefit of innocent humanity—and pecuniary gain—the two of them running neck and neck for honors. Besides it helps me as an excuse for hanging out so much in the underworld and getting a beat [*sic*] on what the crooks are going to pull off next. It also sort of eases up that friendly interest which the police show in a good citizen trying to earn a little honest money. For after all the ethics of my profession is on the level even if I do occasionally slip over that uncertain line which divides the law-abiding citizen from the citizen.

This is perhaps the most remarkable confession of them all. If there were such a thing as ingenuous cynicism, Race's *apologia* might be believable. Though the question of plausibility may be waived, there can be little doubt that Daly is baring, innocently or otherwise, the reasons why his readers are going to accept Race Williams as a "real great guy." One does not expect to find consistency a problem for a reader who is looking for support for his wish-fulfilling fantasies. "Innocent humanity" too walks an "uncertain line" and surely appreciates the need for a "little honest money" of a guy whose one activity is getting "a beat" on the crooks.

Daly seriously compromised all the old pieties about the defenders of the innocent. He put over on his readers a detective who was not only ready to make money but willing to admit that that motive was probably as strong as his desire to serve humanity. Something new was thus added to the character of the crimefighter. Crime certainly will not pay the crook who is unfortunate to have Race Williams on his trail, but it will always pay the crimefighter.

If this debasement of the hero can be considered in some sense an original achievement, what about the narrative in which he figures? In the second Race Williams story, Daly made use of blackmail and the double cross, two motifs of character and action that were everywhere in use in the detective pulps. The story consists of a series of meetings which lead to a final scene of shooting which becomes obligatory in all of Daly's detective stories. Given the basic action of a Race Williams story—Williams guns down the crooks—plot as causual relations accounting for the actions of human beings becomes more rudimentary than the plot of "The Three Little Pigs." There is no mystery aside from some confusion and an elementary kind of obfuscation, and just enough intrigue to provide the occasion for violent confrontations.

Since Williams styles himself a "gentleman adventurer," one may ask this question: is the oafish illiteracy of the narrator to be thought of as a kind of cover for the man? Remember that the only person he is communicating with is the reader. Yet how can one account for the following sample of Race's talk?

> They is nearly all wops and the smell about the place is something you wouldn't want in your own home . . . Their English is pretty punk . . . It's pretty crude stuff and don't register with me and only brings a laugh which is an inward one.

Daly was something of a chameleon in his writing but hardly a parodist—the "inward laugh" rules that out. I think he is merely trying to show that Williams respects no niceties of any kind; in his line of work they have no place. It's find, slug, kill. If he talks like a slob, no one can put him down long for that. When Daly gave his readers Race Williams, he gave them a "prince of a fellow" but a prince who might have chosen to speak "good" if he had wanted but chose to make his language as common as that of the guy pushing a handtruck on a freight platform. (Studs Lonigan and some of his cronies come to mind.)

Whether intentional or not, studied or careless, Daly managed a kind of graceless bad writing that many of his readers must have thought was just the way they would like to write if they could. The passage also credits Williams with the sort of nasty anti-minority prejudice—in this case anti-Italian-American—that was almost second nature to lower middle class people, particularly in the Middle West and South.

VI

As late as 1924, *Black Mask* had not settled upon the detective story as the staple of the magazine. In April of that year the front cover under the rubric of Entertaining Fiction listed Mystery, Detective, Western, Horror, Novelty. In that issue were Hammett's "The House of Turk Street" (a Continental Op story) and Daly's "One Night of Frenzy" (a non-detective action story).

In the previous year, almost coincident with Daly's arrival in the magazine, the editors had published the following in reply to a reader's objection that some of the criminals in *Black Mask* fiction went unpunished:

> *Black Mask* makes no pretense of being an uplift magazine. We do not insist that crime should always be punished in the stories. Our only real aim is to supply strong, rugged entertainment. But, in *Black Mask* yarns, crime usually and naturally gets a final wallop, just as it does in real life.

When Daly was supplying the wallop, no criminal was left unpunished (they were all dead at the finish), but to suggest that, either concretely or generally, there was a correspondence between Daly's yarns and "real life" is at least to believe that the editors were confident that there was not much literary intelligence among the readers.

Some feedback from readers did appear now and then, and one sample from the issue of February 1, 1924 shows why this confidence was not misplaced. "The commonplace true mystery in detective stories unless 'doctored up' somewhat are lacking in real pep and thrills. So please give us more imaginative fiction." Real pep, not real life, please! These in the main were readers who were neither bothered by the absence of "crime does not pay" nor who saw any need for connection between the extended imagination and real life.

Not until 1927 did the magazine declare and show in a consistent policy of story selection a standard of fiction that would in any way have disqualified the productions of Daly. At this time a new editor, Capt. Joseph T. Shaw, had been installed at *Black Mask*. Continuity with its past was well represented by the moving up from editor to president of the company of Phil Cody, who had been associated with "strong, rugged entertainment" from *Black Mask's* beginnings. Continuity also appeared in the contributors; alongside the three stalwarts of *Black Mask,* Dashiell Hammett, Erle Stanley Gardner, and Daly, were such familiar names as Frederick Nebel, Raoul Whitfield, and Tom Curry, all writing the same kind of story they were writing in 1923 and 1924. From 1927 on, however, all *Black Mask* stories were about detectives, whether those in business for themselves or men who because of a happily chosen occupation and a flair for nailing crooks were the coevals of the private eyes. (The newspaperman was a fairly common example but Steve Midnight, a hero of John Butler, was the driver of a taxi.)

An editorial statement printed in June 1927 asked the reader to take note of the changes in the magazine of the past six months and to explain that *Black Mask's* chosen field was now detective fiction, "the most absorbing of all literature." Furthermore, *Black Mask* stories "must be real in motive, character, and actions. . .clear, understandable, and not confused. . .written with keenest thought and greatest skill." This statement of policy was amplified by a promise of editorial concern for "truthfulness in detail, of realism in the picturing of thought, the portrayal of action and emotion." So little related were any of these criteria to the stories of Daly that printing any more yarns about Race Williams could only be regarded as a mental aberration on the part of the editors. Under the direction of "Cap" Shaw it was no secret that Hammett's stock was going up and Daly's was down.

However, there was no immediate sign that the discovery of literary realism at *Black Mask* was any setback to Daly. For one thing, within his limitations, Daly could readily follow any of the stereotyped action story plots and was not slow to detect a trend. For example, in 1928, just at the time stories about super crimefighters began to take over whole magazines—*The Shadow, The Whisperer, The Avenger,* and *Phantom Detective*—Race Williams was employed by a secret organization of wealthy men called Men in Black, who are dedicated to bringing down the supermen of crime that ordinary powers of law enforcement have proved impotent

against. With their millions to draw upon, Race wipes out the Kingpin of criminals and rakes in the dough. This fantasy—that the power of great wealth can accomplish what no government has ever accomplished—one of the most curious of all the fantasies spawned in the minds of pulp writers—must have exerted a strong attraction upon Daly, since it put unlimited resources at the disposal of the private operative and raised vigilanteism to the prestigious level of the Union League. There is a curious chapter yet to be written about organized crime as it was portrayed by Daly and some of his fellow writers of the pulps and crime as it actually was being organized in his time.

After *Black Mask* stopped taking his stories in 1934, Daly moved over to *Dime Detective,* a pulp which specialized in private eyes and provided in its years of publication a broad spectrum of all types of "investigators." The new Daly protagonists—Clay Holt, Vee Brown, Satan Hall—were even more attached to the handgun than Race Williams, but they went through the motions of plot like an old tank fighter in the ring. They knew what they must do but they lacked the old Williams zest and punch. But this time Daly had returned to his "high style," but the barbarisms, the clinkers, and the cliches were all there. The threadbare plots reveal nothing more than a desire to finish off the action fast in the old style—with the spattering of blood and brains over the scenery.

By the middle thirties the popularity of Daly was coming to an end; and later on Race Williams enjoyed no revival of fame, no reprints were in store for him and his brethren. The cruel truth is that Daly's career ended where it might well have begun. After all it was he who had helped to fashion a pattern of behavior for the crimefighting heroes of the comic books, and according to Nolan, Carroll John Daly performed his last writing chores for the crime comics.

It has been noted before that Daly and Hammett began publishing in *Black Mask* about the same time, and though Hammett stopped writing for the pulps before Daly did, the rise in the reputation of the one interacts with the decline of readership of the other. Yet it might be supposed that some of the indicators of the popularity of Daly were not markedly different from those of Hammett. There are, however, two qualifying conditions that must be taken into consideration. First, the number of readers was large enough that, when one remembers the wide spectrum of magazines (and assumes that there were few who read *Black Mask* to the exclusion of the other pulps and also keeps in mind that content in the simple taxonomy of most readers could be comprised in *genus,* adventure, *species,* mystery), the person who is reading Hammett is not necessarily reading Daly. Furthermore, for almost anyone, reading is some sort of educative process; and no one can go through the old issues of the detective pulps and not believe that reading the stories involved a continual process of discrimination in which decisions were made that affected the history of popular writing. Over the years Daly added nothing to his fiction that would sensibly affect the tastes of his readers. He was slowly losing ground to other writers, and whether they were better or worse with pen and dictionary is of less consequence than fresh scenes and pauses for something other than reflex behavior, and realistic interaction between people of more than fractional dimensions. Hammett added to his work. Crude and violent as some of his pulp stories were, he wrote about places verified by familiar details and his men and women were not mental extensions of a whimsical robot armed with guns. With a command of a diversity of story materials, he transformed the actual commonplaces of criminal behavior into explosive problems that could be brought within the regulating functions of a national detective agency.

Hammett's *Black Mask* stories can be understood in relation to two well-defined aspects of American fiction. One may be cited as his respect for attitudes engrained in the tradition of American literary realism. For the people in his stories and the actions of lawbreakers, Hammett draws upon the factuality provided by his agency experience. On the second, it must be remembered that, from the age of O. Henry on, the art of short story telling was supposed to lie chiefly in the ability to construct a well-made plot. Nowhere was the need for careful plot construction more emphasized than in the detective short story. While it has not been overlooked that Hammett was a master of plotting, he has been so frequently blanketed (and summed up) with the hard-boiled cliche that the conventional aspects of his plotting have not been noted. His three short stories about Sam Spade appeared in the slick magazines, and Hammett was as well aware of the conventions of the "polite" detective story as he was of the other.

Consider the schematic action of a Continental Op story. Assigned initially by the agency to take up a problem that someone has brought to it, the Op has to start with a past sequence of events that will soon interconnect with the present. He himself may be responsible for triggering actions that will lead to the disclosure of the original agents in a crime. (The full extension of this pattern is exhibited most notably in *Red Harvest.*) Following leads (clues) that take him from one person and place to another, the Op meets persons under suspicion of being participants in the crime or knowledgeable about it. (This kind of legwork is opposed to the thinking out of a solution by the armchair detective as the pieces of the puzzle are brought to him by others.) The Op is a willing and welcome collaborator with the police; he is paid by contract for the job he is doing. He uses methods

of discovery that are normally closed to the gifted amateur if for no other reason that his wide knowledge of the underworld. Lastly he has a kind of responsibility that is defined for him by the conditions of his employment; and what there is beyond that for him in his work is a matter of much speculation by students of Hammett but the Op himself has supplied the only reasonable and sufficient answer—he likes his work and he knows nothing that he would be any better at.

VII

The most extraordinary thing about Daly's private eye should now be clear: whatever responsibility he has for his actions is self-defined, self-justified, and self-proclaimed. Unlike the agency operative, he fails to establish any firm connection with history. He seems to appear *de novo,* out of the blue, falling outside history or bringing self-made history with him replete with criminals and the magic solvent of violent action. His connections with a written past are of an underground kind since he seems to have been called forth by yearnings similar to those that had been satisfied for fifty years by the bravos of popular sensational fiction who gradually became more violent and more invincibly comprehensive in their counterattacks on crime.

All Race Williams requires is the inner assurance that the job "needs to be done." He supersedes or circumvents all agencies of law enforcement (they have to operate under some rules which he simply ignores) and usually wins their support and sometimes their poorly concealed admiration. He takes on their toughest cases, the blackest crimes, and wipes out the most vicious and notorious criminals. He cares nothing for the opinions of others, never asks anyone what they think of his actions; he has no fears ("I don't know fear myself—but it must be a terrible thing"—he tells the reader in "Wanted for Murder"). He has no pretensions to intellect ("I'm a pretty slow thinker at times, but I don't need a brick wall to fall on my head to wise me up"), and there's a strong implication that anyone who is as good with a gun as he is, has no desperate need for the brainy stuff.

The driving force in Daly's first-person narrative is an urgency for action, the hunger for the confrontation with the crooks, and desire for the kill; the single-mindedness of the man, his reliance on instinct, the feverish desire to reach the point of ultimate solution excite the reader. Narrative is dominated by this mood, and once Daly gets it going, he improvises (rarely with any cleverness) whatever is required to implement a path of action. Milieu is manufactured for the moment, doors appear when needed; there is no concern for consistency of detail, for Williams is actually inventing the action as he goes along (which a critic like Steven Marcus might regard as a sophisticated nicety of Daly's). What is specific in most writers in Daly is generalized; for example, think of the careful way in which factual details are now presented, the importance to the writer to convince the reader that he knows what he is writing about (William H. Hallahan in *The Ross Forgery,* for example). Often in a Daly story it is impossible to get from his language a clear picture of something that has happened. As for characterization, the woman is a blonde, the man is a red-head, and the only thing that Daly notices with any real interest is the amount of chin a person has. His wooden formulas provided him with a limited typology and surprises are never used to correct the system. Race Williams is a kind of monster of self-sufficiency, in which the adequacy of his powers of self-verification of all data is not the least extraordinary.

One more item needs to be added to Daly's portrait of the private detective: his worship of the handgun. Terry Mack breaks into a room with a gun in each hand, sometimes with both blazing. Of course, the hidden gun appeared as often in pulp fiction as the gun drawn with the safety catch on. No doubt the gun as a promoter of action was transplanted from the pulp western, and with it the emphasis on the quick draw and the shoot-out scenes which became as much a standby for the pulp novelettes of Hammett and Chandler as they were for Daly. The gun owes its popularity in the detective pulps to its convenience as a weapon and its threat in close quarters. Though it is easy to transplant an actor like Clint Eastwood from the horrific violence of *A Fistful of Dollars* to the outlawry of crime in a metropolis, the parallels between the western and the cowboy and the private eye have been much overstrained.

Few people have forgotten one thing that Raymond Chandler said about writing the pulp story: "If you stopped to think you were lost. When in doubt, have a man come through the door with a gun in his hand." The trouble with Daly was that it was always the same door and the same man and the result was always the same. Daly could never overreach himself. In the same passage Chandler had remarked that the writer can not be afraid to overreach himself. For Daly the gun was an absolute, a statement of power, in the hands of Race Williams the magic source of his invincibility. One of the last of his gun-crazed crimefighters named Satan Hall defends himself to a police captain, who regards him as no more than a hired killer, by arguing that every gun has the same chance as his—the chance to be drawn first. What kind of a society it was that required this kind of primitive individualism and the employment of such creatures as Satan Hall were in all probability questions that Daly never thought much about.

One of the most interesting suggestions about the popularity of Daly is that editors had little to do with

his success—beyond publishing him. I cannot say what happened between the printing of the freakish "Dolly" and the clumsy "The False Burton Combs" but one thing should be clear about the editors of *Black Mask:* in a year in which the magazine published a serial by the well-known English mystery writer J. S. Fletcher and had a man named Robert E. Sherwood reviewing movies for the magazine, they were not only publishing the grotesquely literate work of Daly but promoting it. Why was the magazine employing a trial and error policy and sending out to its readers the plain message—tell us what you would like to read?

We are not accustomed to the frank naivete of such an appeal. The present stance is that editors know that you the reader are out there waiting for this new magazine and understand exactly what you want to read (without mentioning promotional P.R., consumer research, mailing lists, and computerized information). From 1923 to 1927, Race Williams had a lot to do with sweeping the older type of action story from the pages of *Black Mask;* the success of the specialized appeal was obvious by the thirties when new detective magazines appeared and the new stereotypes that arose with them, and readers began to drift away from *Adventure* and *Argosy*. Though as Steve Fisher tells us, *Black Mask* on occasion accepted stories that departed from formula, and in the thirties we can watch Daly sink below the level of acceptable writing, it is manifest that in his sudden prime Daly was a force that the editors reckoned with quite candidly by publishing, we can fairly assume, almost anything he sent them. His influence upon other pulp writers need not be assumed by anyone who is willing to discipline himself to read some of the "lesser" writers who appeared in the same issues as Daly. A few names will do: Frederick Nebel, Raoul Whitfield, Roger Torrey, Walter Ripperger. Yet to do justice to these men, they were not as awkward in their writing nor as joyfully savage about the sadism of their heroes as was Daly.

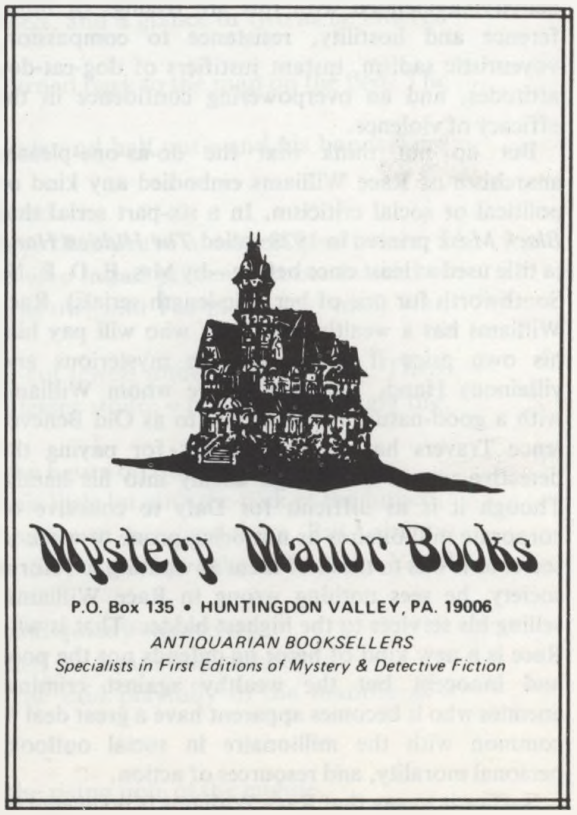
VIII

A final look at Race Williams—the model for all of Daly's detective heroes and the nonpareil—since differences of time and changes of cirumstances were non-essential modifications of the great original—impresses on one reader that Daly understood quite well the state of mind of a good many American males in the twenties.

The daydreams of a more tranquil time were not to be revived. More than that, the idealism of the war to save and perpetuate democracy, a heady illusion for the very young (with of course a very simple division between the brave and pure and the minions of the Beast of Berlin), had been anything but a strengthener for moral conviction and an uplifter for American character for the participants. The bottom had dropped out for Krebs; and the plight of his parents was part of a generation of parents who had gone along for the most part with an abiding faith in the mission of their country.

The ones who were having the fun in the twenties were not the Krebses; even out there in Kansas the prohibitionists were having a hard time of it. For those who held to the pre-war moralities and publicly professed them, the early years of the twenties were a disaster. Many of the middle class suffered less from a sense of loss of the old pieties than they did from the fact that they weren't sharing in the fun. If they were still bound by their old convictions, they had lost the power to restrain others; if they were glad to slip out of the traditional grasp of the churches, many of them, lacking the means, could never have much more than a sense of failed opportunities or of no opportunities at all.

If we simply look at Race Williams, we will see a man who had what no ordinary man had and every common man wanted to some degree: autonomy of action—to do what was necessary to punish enemies without fear of reprisal, and the almost unbearable pleasure of getting paid to do something one likes to do. Let me stress the importance of ordinary and common: one thing that Race Williams especially took pride in was that he was no brain. It must have



seemed commonsense to many that in these times brains counted for little against two forces: the gun in the hand and money. In his "wholesome" contempt for education and his overwhelming confidence in the final efficacy of fist and gun, Race Williams could ease the pangs of every young man who wasn't doing so well on the books. He might also take consolation in the thought that one sure way of making money was to become as ruthless as a Race Williams.

Race Williams presented an example of successful achievement which was not in accord with the respectable counsels of the time: viz., that education improves earning power and social status, that men with university degrees are, on the whole, to be respected, and that the way of the non-conformist is hard. Race Williams in fact offered a young man non-real formulas about a life on which none of these ideas had any bearing. If you needed a means of disengaging yourself from the hard facts of life, a Race Williams story was a prescription that could be filled at the nearest newsstand. In it you would find no points of contention with anyone's daily life, not even with the familiar urban landscape. There was nothing in stories to house the imagination. Rooms, streets, cars, interiors and exteriors, all are alike; one is left with the urges of Williams and the drive for their gratification. What it comes down to is an acceptance of a state of mind which makes the demolition of other people a necessary and happy activity; associated with this are feelings of indifference and hostility, resistance to compassion, voyeuristic sadism, instant justifiers of dog-eat-dog attitudes, and an overpowering confidence in the efficacy of violence.

But do not think that the do-as-one-pleases anarchism of Race Williams embodied any kind of political or social criticism. In a six-part serial that *Black Mask* printed in 1928 called *The Hidden Hand* (a title used at least once before—by Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth for one of her epic-length serials), Race Williams has a wealthy employer who will pay him his own price if he locates the mysterious and villainous Hand. This millionaire whom Williams with a good-natured sneer refers to as Old Benevolence Travers has private reasons for paying the detective to put his malign enemy into his hands. Though it is as difficult for Daly to conceive of corporate millionaires as not being prone to work in secret as it was to think of them as wanting to reform society, he sees nothing wrong in Race Williams' selling his services to the highest bidder. That is why Race is a new kind of hero; he defends not the poor and innocent but the wealthy against criminal enemies who it becomes apparent have a great deal in common with the millionaire in social outlook, personal morality, and resources of action.

Suffice it to say that Race Williams is no enemy of private enterprise; next to the freedom to use his gun how and whenever he pleases, the most precious freedom was the freedom to make money. He knew that money talks, money opens doors, money counts money. The only trouble was that he was embarrassingly plain about it; he wasn't afraid to admit it. He didn't need the cover of an Old Benevolence Travers; all he needed was a cover for his activities as a hired killer, and providently that was being a private detective. Daly did not quite understand that the most demonstrable truth about American life also required the most carefully maintained fig leaf.

Carroll John Daly's greatness consists solely in his perception of the impulses and fears, the unrationalized, unrealizable, ineradicable desires of the powerless American male who held a dead-end job and a fading hope that he would hit the jackpot that would bring him level with the free, uninhibited fun-loving American he tried so hard to be. In his union of mediocrity, worship of money-making, and celebration of the use of ultimate force, he found a psychic amalgam that even in its latency period was a threatening and baneful force in American life and finally was blatantly appealed to by a president of the United States when he reached out for his silent majority.

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The Adventure of the House with the Baboons

Bertram Atkey

Smiler Bunn, the gifted pickpocket of Garraty Street, King's Cross, is not your typical gentleman jewel thief. Unlike the cultivated A. J. Raffles and the suave Michael Lanyard, Bunn is middle-aged, fat, and a laborer in the seamier venues of London. He steals from everyone but prefers to concentrate on those who have no right to the wealth in the first place. The Robin Hood syndrome hit him as the series of stories and books about him progressed. Seven collections of short stories and four novels by Bertram Atkey spanned the twenty-nine years from 1911 to 1940. This story is from the first book about the ingenious crook, *The Amazing Mr. Bunn* (Newnes, London, 1911).

The author, Bertram Atkey (1880–1952) was a prolific writer of crime stories and other types of fiction. He created the Bunn character in 1907 and produced scores, even hundreds, of tales as one of the most popular magazine fiction writers of his day. He was the uncle of Philip Atkey, the author of the superb stories about the ultimate gentleman thief, Raffles, under the pseudonym Barry Perowne.

—Otto Penzler

ONE DAY in late autumn Mr. Smiler Bunn paid a visit to the Zoo. He arrived there at about half an hour before closing time, and proceeded without delay to a lonely nook at the back of the eagles' aviaries, where, unobserved by a living creature, except an elderly, bald-

headed vulture of intoxicated appearance, he took from a handbag a bowler hat and a false moustache, both of which he rapidly donned. He thrust the bag under some shrubs and went back to the entrance lodge. There were many people going out of the Zoo and none coming in. He knocked peremptorily at the door of the lodge and scowled at the mild-looking individual who opened it.

"Mr. Heber Ilch?" he asked sharply.

"Yes," said the mild-looking man. Smiler handed him a card.

DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR SAVIDGE,
Scotland Yard.

"This is a very unpleasant thing for you, Ilch, my man," he said.

The unfortunate Ilch staggered.

"Wha—what do you mean?"

"This shortage in the gate receipts. Don't speak—don't incriminate yourself—anything you say may be used in evidence against you, and don't you forget it—see? Nobody accuses you *yet*. You're to go to the superintendent at once to attend the inquiry. All the other gate-keepers are there already. It'll look bad, your being late." He scowled more than ever. "If you're innocent you're safe—if you're guilty, Lord 'elp you. You'd better be careful. And now slip across to the super's house. You'll probably lose your job, anyway. And don't try to bolt—*you're watched!* There's half a dozen detectives within reach. Here, lock your door and hook it."

Mr. Ilch put his hands to his head like a stunned person. It was not surprising that he should feel stunned, for there never was and never will be a more honest man in London than Mr. Ilch—now deceased. His accounts were perfectly in order—and he was in a hurry to prove it. Locking the door of his lodge, he galloped hastily off in the direction of the superintendent's house. Mr. Bunn watched him till he turned a corner, then taking a key from his pocket, he opened the door, calmly stepped into the lodge, cleared all the gold and silver out of the till in two swift grabs, stepped out, relocked the door, passed carelessly through the exit gate, and took a taxi.

"Simple as kiss me hand," he said complacently; "I always reckoned it was. Poor blooming Ilch! I reckon his receipts 'll be a bit short to-night, anyhow. Serve him right for not having the courage of his convictions."

He leaned forward to the hole which leads to the taxi-driver's ear and commanded him to drive to the Religious and Temperance Tract Association's offices in Paternoster Row. This was to cover his tracks.

He stopped the taxi at the top of the Row, and took a four-wheeler to Liverpool Street. From Liverpool Street he took a bus to Piccadilly Circus. From the corner of Piccadilly he strolled along to a quiet restaurant in Wardour Street, where he proceeded to order so thorough a dinner that he became a prime favourite of the waiter at once. He took a small table in a remote corner with his face to the wall and his back to the world, and proceeded to count the result of his incursion into the realm of natural history, while the waiter brought him a sherry-and-bitters.

"Thirty-three pound twelve," he mused, and looked at his hands. "Thought I had bigger hands than that. It's deceiving work, grabbing money. However—it's not so dusty, Smiler, my lad. Be satisfied—don't be a hog. It's unlucky to be hoggish."

Then the waiter placed his *aperitif* before him and went away to command his soup. The restaurant was quite empty and quiet as Smiler leaned back in his chair thoughtfully smoking a cigarette. As a he sat there musing he became vaguely aware of a low murmur of voices behind the wall facing him, and in an absent sort of way he listened to this murmur—much as a man lying half asleep on a sunny beach listens to the murmur of the water. But the voices rose a little and suddenly Smiler stiffened, sitting bolt upright. One of those voices he had heard before—and had not been anxious to hear again. Moreover, he had not expected to hear it, at any rate during his life.

It belonged—unless he was woefully mistaken—to no less a person than Kate the Gun,

whom he had last seen being led away by a detective who had arrested her, and from whom he had understood that she was likely shortly to be extradited for the purpose of receiving something in the neighbourhood of a life sentence in New York.

And incidentally Smiler Bunn had been largely responsible for her arrest.

The thought of Kate the Gun being at large gave him a feeling as though his stomach had turned a handspring! And not unnaturally either, for he was well aware that Kate—if it really was she behind the wall—would stick at nothing to get even with him for his part in her arrest.

He listened again.

Yes, it was Kate the Gun behind the wall. There was no doubt about that. He did not know *how* she got there, nor did he care. She was *there*—that was enough for Mr. Bunn. He turned and beckoned to his waiter.

"Give a liquer of best brandy. I'm feelin' rather bilious," he said softly. "You can stop that dinner. I've lost me appetite. Bring me a steak and chips, and a pint of Scotch ale instead. I'll have a welsh rabbit to follow it."

"Yessare."

The waiter started away, but Smiler quietly called him back.

"Listen," he said.

The man listened.

"Where does that talking come from?" asked Smiler.

"Private room, sare. Three gentlemen and one madame. They have but now come. One minute before you arrive, yessare?"

Smiler produced a sovereign.

"See this?" he said.

"Oh, yessare!" said the waiter blandishingly.

"Well, now, listen to me. I want to hear what those people are saying without being seen—see? And it's worth one quid to me. One James o' goblin. Understand?"

"Oh, yessare! Will you come to zis table."

He conducted Smiler to a table round a corner—a table tucked away behind a pillar, and partly covered with newspapers. Obviously it was the table at which the waiter sat when he was not working.

"If you sit here, sare—"

The man placed a chair and Smiler sat down. The wall was now on his left, almost touching his elbow. Level with his ear there was a slight depression in the paper-covered wall.

"A hole in ze wall," said the waiter in a whisper. "It goes through. Nozzing but papare at zis end of ze hole, and nozzing but papare at ze ozzare end where is ze private room. You place the ear nearer to ze wall—a-ah, you hear? *Merci, m'sieu, merci.*"

He took his sovereign and stood away. Mr. Bunn more or less fixed his ear to the wall-papered tunnel leading through to the "private" room and listened tensely. Kate the Gun was speaking.

"And when I get that fat slouch I'll hand it to him good and hard. Bunn's his name, is it? When I've finished with him he won't be much more than a biscuit—and no champion biscuit neither. He threw me down, and if it hadn't been for you, Billy, I'd have been well on my road to jail."

Smiler nodded thoughtfully. He had an idea now, and when another voice was raised in answer to that of Kate the Gun that idea was confirmed. The voice which answered the adventuress was the voice of a man whom Smiler had only seen and heard speak once before in his life—the man who, disguised as a German chef, but really a detective, had arrested Kate the Gun on the occasion when Smiler had saved his brother from her. Had this man done his duty Kate would have been extradited and in an American jail by now. But she was here—obviously because she had bribed the detective, who possibly had become one of her gang. The other two men were the "plug-uglies." Smiler knew that the moment they raised their melodious voices.

Then Kate the Gun said in a lower voice:

"Now, see here, this year's trip's been a freeze-out for us up to now, and we've got to make good quick. I'm no Oil Trust, and it gives me a sore head to see good golden bucks paid out day after day and nix paid in—see? Now, what about this lonely miser at Horsham—say, it sounds like a dime novel. You got wise to him and his gold plate first, Michael. Now put us next to the facts and we'll work out the scheme." She spoke very softly, and "Michael," one of the "plug-uglies," answered in the same key.

And Mr. Bunn glued his ear to the wall and closed his eye in order to hear better.

Not till an hour later did he arise from that table, hand the waiter another five shillings, and hastily quit the restaurant. He left the meal he had ordered wholly untouched and stone cold; the waiter inherited that.

Two minutes after his departure there issued from the "private" room a party of four, made up of one nice-looking old lady with silvery hair but rather hard eyes, a quiet little man of German appearance, a tallish, well-built clergyman with a face like a prize-fighter, and a keen-eyed man who looked like a Colonial cardsharp. On the whole the gang of Kate the Gun were admirably disguised.

None of them took much notice of a four-wheeler a few yards from the door of the restaurant; the blinds of the cab were drawn down, and only the bland blue eyes of Smiler Bunn were visible as, peering round the blind, he carefully scrutinised the party as they left the cafe.

The four vanished up the street, and Smiler drove thoughtfully to a famous Fleet Street hostelry, where he devoured a meal which made the waiter look anxious.

Then he returned to his flat in Ridgeford Mansions, where he proposed to utilise an hour in silent thought. First of all he carefully marshalled and mentally arrayed before him the facts. There was, it seemed, a miser who lived in a lonely old house just outside the Sussex village of Southwater, near Horsham. The place was known as the Tower House, because it possessed a tower of some kind. *In* the tower, it was said, the miser kept a chest of rare gold plate. *On* the tower, for some weird, miserish reason of his own, the owner of the gold plate kept a searchlight. The name of the miser was Amberfold—Colonel Amberfold. And the gang of Kate the Gun proposed to "pinch" the plate of Colonel Amberfold in four days' time precisely.

That was all the information Smiler Bunn had gained from this hour at the tunnelled wall of the "private" room—that and a slightly sprained ear. They were a clever gang, and had gradually lowered their voices to little more than whispers.

Nevertheless, it was enough to furnish food for thought. Smiler rose, switched off the electric light save only for one shaded lamp on a writing-table, and, taking a large apple in his hand, reseated himself to plan things out. He had quite decided to enter into competition with Kate the Gun's gang. It was nervous work certainly, for they were a tough "bunch," but it looked like being well-paid.

The thing that puzzled Smiler most was the searchlight which Michael, the "plug-ugly," had mentioned. He couldn't see *why* the miserly Colonel had gone to the expense in installing it. Vainly he racked his brains, vainly he ate apple after apple, groping for a reason. And so at ten o'clock he grumpily ate what he termed a "lay-out" of eggs and bacon and went to bed.

On the following day a long, grey, speedy-looking motor-car slid to a standstill outside the Black Lion Hotel, Horsham, and its solitary occupant—a heavy-looking man with a reddish beard and moustache—having turned the car over to an individual who looked as though he usually washed in lubricating oil, and who claimed to be in charge of the garage, entered the hotel and reserved himself an apartment for three days. Then he passed on into the dining-room. The name that he wrote in the register was Huish—Coomber Huish. But the voice with which, immediately after he had registered, he proceeded to galvanize the waiter into activity was the voice of Smiler Bunn. After the meal he gave the waiter half a sovereign.

"That was a steak worth eating, my lad. And the tomatoes was hot stuff. You look after me and I'll look after you—see? Here's half a bar for you."

When the waiter recovered his breath he learned that Mr. Coomber Huish was an author and was engaged in writing a book as astronomy. He had come to Horsham, it seemed,

because only from a spot midway between Southwater and Horsham in all England was a certain comet to be seen during the next three days.

"I shall probably be out half the night—p'r'aps all night—while I'm here, surveying the stars and this comet, and if you want to do yourself a bit of good you'd better arrange with somebody to sit up at night to let me in," said Mr. Huish. "Side or back door 'll do. I don't want to disturb the whole hotel every night. It'll be worth half a quid a night to anybody who obliges me."

The waiter implored Mr. Huish to leave it *all* to him, and Mr. Huish was graciously pleased to do so.

He took a little run in his car on the Southwater road during the afternoon.

It may be explained here that the first thing Smiler Bunn had done on his return to town after the episode of the Duchess of Cornchester's diamonds in the New Forest was to take a thorough course of lessons in the art of motor-driving and managing.

During his spin he had found occasion to pull up and refresh himself at the Vine Inn, Southwater, and, thanks to a few innocent questions, a certain freedom in the standing of drinks, and the natural garrulousness of the landlord, he had learned quite a number of interesting facts concerning Colonel Amberfold of the Tower House.

They were neither pleasant nor encouraging. Smiler, lying on a lounge in the smoking-room after a heavy meat tea, reviewing the information he had gathered, came to the conclusion that Colonel Amberfold was a person to whom he had taken a pronounced dislike. Like most misers, the Colonel lived quite alone in the house, but he had taken precautions. The fighting baboons, for instance; Michael had not mentioned them.

Yet the Colonel kept a brace of them—surly, dangerous, dog-toothed, hairy demons that feared nothing in the world when their anger was aroused. "Better than house-dogs," the landlord of the "Vine" had said, and after he had listened to a description of how they had dealt with a poacher's lurcher, fatally, which had come within their reach some time before, Smiler had been inclined to agree with him.

"And every night one of 'em chained on a forty-foot chain to the front door, and the other on a forty-foot chain to the back door," mused Smiler. "Well, it looks like a window entrance for me. Fighting baboons—ugh! Give me 'plug-uglies' for choice. Seems to me I'll have to break my usual rule here. 'No violence' is very good as a rule, but I don't see much sense in gettin' scragged by a blinking baboon. Fair's fair, anyhow, and from what I can hear these apes are as strong as lions and as cunning as tigers. No scraggin' for Smiler, I don't think!"

He thought again of the wanton savagery with which—according to the landlord of the "Vine," at any rate—the baboons had killed the wretched lurcher, and, quite suddenly, and to his extreme surprise, he felt a surge of blood to his heat, hot and furious. He was angry.

"Why, what's this?" he muttered, got off the sofa, and looked at himself in a mirror over the fireplace. "Lost your wool, have you, Mr. 'Uish? Well, and quite right too, my lad. Dogs are fair play—dogs are *gentlemen*. But baboons is beastly. Tear you to pieces, do they? Ah—well, we'll see."

He left the smoking-room and the hotel still a little flushed.

When he came back half an hour later he had in each of the side-pockets of his jacket a Browning automatic pistol and cartridges to match.

He laid them on his dressing-table and smiled upon them.

"Lucky to get you two gents in a one-eyed town like this," he said affably. "Just the lads to teach etiquette to baboons, ain't you?"

He slipped them into a drawer and locked it. Then he went down to get what he termed a "mouthful of dinner."

* * * * *

The residence of Colonel Amberford lay rather far back from the main road, and was approached by a narrow lane some hundred yards long. A field stretched between the main road and the dense shrubberies which surrounded the house, and the lane ran down one side of

this field. At the road-end of the lane was an ordinary five-barred gate giving entry to the field.

It was at this spot that between twelve and one in the night following the arrival of Smiler Bunn at Horsham a curious happening might have been witnessed by anyone with a habit of nocturnal prowling and ability to see in the dark.

It was a black moonless night; the darkness was so profound as to render it almost impossible to see even the white road. But at twelve o'clock there appeared floating silently through the darkness a small dim light coming along the road from the direction of Horsham. It grew gradually larger and brighter, and brought with it a whirr of a powerfully-engined and carefully-driven motor-car. The car slid level with the lane and slowed to a crawl. Quietly the driver turned the car so that it faced towards Horsham again, stopped it, and, getting down, ran quickly across to the gate in the field and opened it, fastening it back. Then, very carefully, he backed the car into the field, and left it there with its sharp semi-racer nose pointing straight across the corner of the lane to the main road. Thus the car could remain practically invisible from the road, but nevertheless could take the main road again, as it were, at a single bound, if necessary.

The driver chuckled softly, extinguished the light, and, leaving his overcoat in the car, moved quietly away down the lane towards the Tower House.

Mr. Smiler Bunn was what he termed "on the job."

Not fifteen minutes later a big, brilliantly-lighted car boomed up from the other direction —as though proceeding to Horsham—passed the lane, slowing as it passed, and some five hundred yards farther on stopped, the roar of the engine dying out gradually. It had been run close into the edge of the road. There were three people in the car—two men and a woman. The men alighted and spread out an assortment of motor tools upon the driver's seat. The woman—she was wearing a man's cap—got down and took off a fur cloak. She was dressed in man's clothes, and with a quick whisper moved silently away from the car. Instantly one of the men stood on the seat of the tonneau and stared steadily towards the Tower House. The woman had slipped through a gap in the hedge level with which the car had pulled up and headed stealthily away towards the house. Kate the Gun and her gang seemed to have put their raid forward two days.

Hardly had the second car stopped when a third, moving silently as only a steam-car can, and absolutely unlighted, glided up, on the heels as it were of the big petrol car, and stopped soundlessly at the head of the lane. There were three men, including the driver, in this car, and had Smiler Bunn been there he would have recognized them from their voices alone—for Smiler never forgot a voice or a face. One of them was the "plug-ugly" Michael, who had told Kate the Gun of Colonel Amberfold's hoarded plate. The others were two London thieves whom Smiler had encountered more than once before. One was a skilful scoundrel, whose favourite line of business was safe-breaking, but who was willing to embark on any little enterprise that promised profit without too much risk. He was known in certain police and criminal circles as "City Joe." The third man was one "Captain" Panton, a "smasher" or counterfeiter, and a close companion of City Joe. These three whispered together for a few moments, and finally two of them went quietly down the lane.

Things seemed ominous for Colonel Amberfold's gold plate. No less than three individual expeditions were "out" after it on this very dark night. And the curious part of the whole business was that there was no coincidence about it at all. It was due to perfectly natural causes.

Smiler Bunn was trying to forestall Kate the Gun, whose attempt on the plate he thought was to take place two nights later. That accounted for Smiler.

City Joe's trio also were trying to forestall Kate the Gun, thanks to Michael, the "plug-ugly," which gentleman, dissatisfied at the share he was to receive as a member of the Kate the Gun's gang, had deserted the standard of that American adventuress and formed his own gang. That accounted for the presence of the steam-car party.

And Kate the Gun, expecting that Michael would endeavour to cut in before her, had shifted her raid two days before in order to get the plate before Michael had time to form his

own little army.

* * * * *

Smiler Bunn lay flat on his stomach—much to the discomfort of that usually pampered organ—in the dense shrubbery which surrounded the Tower House.

Only his head protruded from the undergrowth. He was staring intently towards the house through a pair of night-glasses.

He had taken his bearings that afternoon disguised as a tramp, and he knew that only twenty yards of ill-kept lawn lay between him and the front door and windows of the house. The sky seemed to have lightened a shade during the past twenty minutes, and he could just make out the black bulk of the building.

He had lain there some minutes listening and sharing—a Browning pistol resting in the crook of his left arm—and during those minutes he had heard and seen absolutely nothing. But he was uneasy—with an uncanny, creeping uneasiness that he had never before experienced. The place was utterly soundless, but the darkness felt inhabited. It was as though out there in the darkness, perfectly still, perfectly quiet, there were things standing, waiting for him to step on the lawn.

He put down his glasses and clutched his pistol; the butt felt warm and comfortable and reassuring. A Browning automatic pistol is the last word in rapid-firing pocket-size weapons, anyway, and Smiler was feeling glad of it.

He snuggled down in the shrubbery, listening. There was no hurry after all, and he wanted his nervous fit to pass off before proceeding to locate the baboons.

Then, as he lay there, he became gradually aware that the darkness seemed to be waking up. Away across the lawn something yawned enormously; Smiler heard the long sighing inhalation and exhalation of breath, and instantly after a snap of huge teeth brought sharply together. Then something grunted and a chain rattled a little.

Half a second later came the clear, crisp crunch of a soft sole on the gravel—just one, no more. It was as though someone had inadvertently stepped off the turf bordering the coach drive on to the gravel, and then suddenly stepped back on to the turf.

"Hallo?" breathed Smiler. "Who's this?"

From the black patch against the sky right away to the right of the house, which Smiler knew was formed by a clump of half a dozen stunted fir trees, came a low squeak and a sudden soft, liquid pop. In the silence Smiler heard it distinctly. Someone under the firs had drawn a cork from a bottle.

A cold thrill fluttered along the spine of Mr. Bunn, as, following the sound of the cork, he heard several grunts from somewhere near the front door of the house. A chain rattled as though it was being drawn across a gravel path, and in a moment the rattle was joined by the swishing sound of the chain as it was dragged over the grass.

Evidently one of the baboons was suspicious. The sound of the chain ceased. The animal appeared to be staring into the shrubbery, then it grunted again; it seemed to be under the fir clump. Smiler remembered that it had a run of forty feet, and drew back into the bushes. The swish of the chain began, and, judging from the sound of it, the animal returned to its shelter by the front door. Followed a sound of eating—and thirty seconds later three hoarse barks, an almost human growl, a moan, the thud of a fall, and silence.

Smiler felt his skin creep and his hair lift. For a moment his blood seemed to freeze.

He had seen nothing at all, but he knew what had happened as though the tragedy had occurred in broad daylight.

One of the baboons had been poisoned.

Out there in the mysterious dark someone, clever as himself, was working swiftly, ruthlessly, silently.

And his instinct told him it was Kate the Gun; she was out there somewhere under the fir trees. Probably she had poisoned a banana with some swift poison from the bottle she had just uncorked.

But if that was so it was not she whose single footstep he had heard on the coach drive. It was impossible for her to be in two places at once, and the fir trees were at least forty yards from the spot where the gravel had crunched.

He stiffened abruptly. Two men had suddenly run softly, on tiptoe, round the edge of the lawn. They passed no more than two feet from his face. And then his heart stood still, for there sounded from the Tower a quick hiss and cackle, and a blinding spear of white light stabbed out into the darkness, sweeping across the shrubbery like the sword of Fate.

The searchlight. Its great clear-cut javelin, passed swiftly over Smiler's head, hung steady for a moment—that was when it picked out Smiler's car—quivered and steadied again and yet again, as it disclosed both the other cars. Then it lifted and swung away to the left. The cold clear beam settled upon a cottage in the village and suddenly began to flicker as a cinematograph projection flickers. The centre of its circle was a window—or what was evidently intended for a window. It looked now like a black shutter. The cottage was really the police-station—a miniature affair that sheltered one constable only. The district sergeant lived in the next village.

And Colonel Amberfold was signalling desperately to the constable. That was why he had installed the searchlight; the fierce, white glare flickering on and off into his bedroom would almost wake a dead policeman, to say nothing of even a village constable.

Suddenly there was a muffled cry from under the firs. The searchlight wheeled and swooped down. Smiler Bunn, lying flat to the earth, a "gun" gripped in each hand, saw in the cold light one with a face that was unmistakably the face of Kate the Gun twist furiously away from the grip of two men. She was dressed in man's clothes, but a lock of black hair falling down her cheek betrayed her.

In her right hand was a revolver, and she jammed in in the faces of the two men with a look and gesture of such ferocity that they quailed back from her.

Not five yards from the group a monstrous black misshapen thing, grotesquely human, jumped about straining at a glittering chain, and uttering queer grunting barks.

Even as Smiler recognized the two men a thin sharp voice quavered down from the top of the Tower:

"Clear out or I'll shoot! I've a shot-gun here!"

Three white faces turned unpwards and dropped instantly as the glare of the searchlight hit the pupils of their eyes. Then the chain of the baboon snapped suddenly and the brute flung forward with a howl. It looked like some kind of devil.

One of the men swung a weapon blindly at the ape; it appeared to be a bar of black steel; but really it was a sandbag, and it took the baboon on the side of the head.

There was no sound, but the baboon dropped like a dead thing. Michael, the "plug-ugly," was one of the most expert sandbaggers in the world.

Kate the Gun flung her revolver viciously at the head of the other man (Smiler recognized him as City Joe) and ran forward out of the beam of light. Smiler heard her panting as she passed him, running to the coach road.

There was a savage snarling oath from Michael, the American ruffian, and he pitched his sandbag into the darkness after her.

"Come away, you fool!" cried City Joe, gripping the "plug-ugly's" arm. "There's nothing doing to-night."

"Aw, in a minute," said Michael, and shook the other off.

He raised a fist clenched round a revolver, and staring straight into the eye of the searchlight pulled the trigger once—twice.

With the second report the dazzling ray vanished—precisely as though it had been blown out.

Out of the profound and pitchy blackness that followed Smiler heard a low groan from the Tower. More footsteps pattered across the lawn before him, and suddenly all was silent. The whole affair had not lasted five minutes.

A faint acrid fume of burnt powder found its way into his nostrils and he shivered slightly.

He lay there listening; almost immediately he heard from somewhere near the head of the lane the rush of a suddenly started engine, followed by the diminishing note of a receding motor. Evidently one of the parties had gone.

He rapidly thought the thing over. Now was his time if he meant doing anything. The others had cleared the way to the gold plate for him if he cared to risk waiting there. But with a dead man on the Tower it was a dangerous risk—if the man at the searchlight *was* dead. If the shots had alarmed the village, the sooner he was out of it the better. He felt fairly certain that the searchlight had alarmed nobody—least of all the policeman. For not half an hour before he had "shuttered" that policeman's bedroom window himself with a specially-made black-painted wooden shutter muffled in sacking and attached to two long bamboo poles. And even a searchlight cannot shine through half an inch of deal.

He listened for a few seconds longer; they seemed like weeks. There was no sound from any quarter. He remembered that two shots in quick succession are heard not infrequently at night in a district where game is reared and poachers are plentiful.

"When thieves fall out," he muttered, "honest men get a bit of their own back, and I'll chance it."

He crawled out from his shrubbery and stole across to the house, pulling out his electric flash-lamp. In the afternoon he had marked a certain french window. This he found, and two minutes later he was inside the house.

First he went up into the Tower.

At the top he found the Colonel—a lean, mean-looking little man—lying in a heap under the broken searchlight. He turned him over and hastily examined him. He was unhurt save for a nasty graze along the side of the head just above the ear. The "plug-ugly's" bullet had cut a long furrow through the hair, but a touch told Smiler that it was no more than skin deep. He lifted the man carefully, and carried him downstairs to a sort of bed-sitting-room immediately below, and laid him on the bed.

Then he turned briskly to a big safe in the corner. If there was anything worth stealing in the house, he fancied some of it, at any rate, would be here—the garrulous landlord had told him that only about two rooms in the place were furnished, and a glance or two as he entered had confirmed this.

The safe was locked, but with unerring instinct he turned back to the man on the bed. The keys were in the pockets of the shabby dressing-gown.

Ten seconds later half of Smiler Bunn was in the safe and half out—and his hands were busy.

Presently he paused and turned to the figure on the bed.

"You're a miser all right, mate," he said humorously. "But you're a dashed good miser. I will say that for you. I've never heard of a miser before who mised precious stones instead of precious money, but I'm glad to find that there's *one* any'ow, and I'm pleased to meet you, mate."

He rose from his knees and held a handful of loose-cut jewels under his flashlight. There were all kinds there—diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and lesser stones—none astonishingly big, but all valuable.

Smiler slipped them into his pocket and addressed the figure on the bed:

"Of course, I know as well as if you'd told me that this little lot ain't the pick of the bunch," he said in a friendly voice; "the big 'uns are hid all over the house, here and there. But I ain't no hog; Colonel, and I ain't got time to look for 'em any'ow. So *you* can have them. So long! You'll be all right—bar a bit of an 'eadache."

He put a water-bottle within reach of the Colonel, and quietly cleared out.

His car was waiting exactly as he left it, and he lighted the lamps and climbed in.

"London, first stop. Change here for Horsham!" he said playfully in the manner of a railway porter, and ran her out on to the main road.

"Ah, well," he chuckled, "when thieves fall out——"

But the remainder of the proverb was drowned by the rising note of the engine.

TAD at the MOVIES

By Thomas Godfrey

Seasons Grievings

I doubt that 1979 will be remembered as a great year for the mystery-suspense movie. The December flurry of releases qualifying for Academy Award consideration brought us nothing in the genre. About the closest qualifier, and that with a bit of stretching, was the November release . . . *And Justice for All* from Columbia.

As an entertaining indictment of the criminal justice system, it has its strengths: sharp writing, crackling dialog, excellent photography, and telling moments of black humor. But in its enthusiasm to get its point across, it overdoes everything, creating a carnival atmosphere that negates the serious moral message it is hammering home.

The script writers have over-played their hands too confidently. Subtlety and balance are sacrificed to dramatic effect and "wow" impact. Example: Al Pacino (in a very uneven performance) as Arthur Kirkland, a distressful but naive trial lawyer, tries to discuss a case with an ambitious assistant D.A. They go out onto a balcony above a courtroom where a pickpocket is being tried. The camera begins to intercut bits of this trial with their conversation. The trial is a genuine horror show where the pickpocket goes free and the elderly victim is humiliated. At one point the defense attorney argues for leniency saying, "he was only trying to get her money."

The line gets a laugh, but it's a cheap laugh, at the expense of story and authenticity. Pacino's conversation is lost. The scene becomes meaningless. You wonder why two lawyers would choose such an open, noisy spot for a conference. And the only explanation is that it makes for lively cross-ring entertainment.

This over-ripeness and dramatic dishonesty mars the characters as well. Jack Warden gives a good performance as a judge with a death wish, but he is sabotaged by a script that can't stop showing him as a suicidal freak. John Forsythe is better as a loathsome judge on trial for rape, but mainly because the picture avoids having him shave his head, wear women's clothes or drop out of the air from a helicopter.

Magnifying this sideshow atmosphere is a jazzy, pop sound track that sounds right out of the archives of *Saturday Night Live*. Everybody is having such a rollicking good time, but is this what director Norman Jewison actually intended?

Justice is least successful when it attempts to be most sincere. After all the crazy jokes, its concern for a black transvestite and a falsely-imprisoned motorist are too put, too perfunctory, awash in crocodile tears.

The only genuine outrage I felt was at the movie's handling of Lee Strasberg as Pacino's addled grandfather. When he hunted around for his false teeth just to get a laugh, I felt like yelling foul on behalf of every senior citizen in this country. No injustice in the picture approaches this one.

Who can be moved by tales of inhumanity and inhumanity from storytellers as crass as this?

The mid-winter lull gave me the chance to catch up with two fairly recent French pictures, *Cat and Mouse*, which I liked, and *The French Detective*, which I didn't.

The French seem to have the light touch for everything. I could think of several Gallic directors who could turn the filmed version of the Jonestown Massacre into a light souffle, given the chance. Certainly Claude Lelouche could. In *Cat and Mouse*, he turns a rather bloody killing into a light romantic comedy. Pierre Chimin contributes strongly as the tenacious Inspector Lachat, but it is Michele Morgan who insures just the right tone with her elegant performance as the suspected murderess.

Problems of tone beset *The French Detective*. It never seems to decide whether it is a *film noir* pulpster or a good-natured romp. Lino Ventura performs earnestly as Verjeat, the French detective, but suggests only that someone involved has "ODed" on reruns of *Kojak*. Patrick Dewaere is similarly afflicted, vascillating between Romantic Young Assistant and Hopeless Smalltown Hick. The ending does not work (more pseudo-*Kojak*), but might have, if what preceded it had been less schizoid.

At least there was television to offer some small comforts for the long winter. I finally got a look at the first Farrah Fawcett-Majors vehicle *Somebody Killed Her Husband* (1978), sandwiched in between soap commercials. It wasn't as bad as I had espected. In fact Jeff Bridges did quite well as the light romantic lead. But, then again, it wasn't all that good either.

Later I stumbled across a made-for-TV old-fashioned whodunit called *She's Dressed To Kill*. The plot device was not exactly new —sort of *The Bat* out of *Ten Little Indians* —but fairly well done here. Stories about mass murder at dark old houses always seem to work. This time it was built into the bitchy, limp-wristed world of High Fashion design and modelling, and bolstered by good performances from Jon Rubinstein, Jessica Walter, Clive Revill, and (especially) Eleanor Parker.

It helped that the screenwriter had apparently done his homework, because it enabled him to walk dangerously close to camp without actually falling in. A solid "B" effort, infinitely more entertaining than a lot of the multi-million-dollar turkeys gobbling their way to obscurity in the movie houses this past year.

The highlight of the winter season shone at midnight, December 18, when ABC finally aired its two-year-old version of *Nero Wolfe*. This adaptation of Rex Stout's *The Doorbell Rang* by Pulitzer Prize winner Frank Gilroy showed style and skill and a healthy respect for the master's work. Any faithful reader of my colleague John McAleer's column who missed it has no doubt said pfui to his own flummery by now.

Why ABC sat on it (and did not follow it up with the proposed series) is a mystery worthy of the powers of Wolfe himself. Perhaps the failure of the Ellery Queen series gave them cold feet. Perhaps the deflationary involvement of the F.B.I. in the story tells the tale. Whatever the explanation, a work of this quality deserves better than a timid bow on the Late Late circuit.

Gilroy is the hero here. His screenplay is intelligent and uncompromisingly faithful to Stout's forthrightly style. He captures Wolfe and Archie far short of charicature. If *Nero Wolfe* ends more with a snap than a bang, it is only because Gilroy has resisted the temptation to add his own improvements to the story, admittedly not Stout's best.

Gilroy does well as director, too. He moves the film effectively, without the usual infusion of hyped, small-screen cliches. Leonard Roseman's score sounds just right, helping the production capture a sense of period, without larding it on the way the Ellery Queen series could.

Thayer David, who unfortunately died

between filming and release, makes a commendable Wolfe. A little lean, perhaps, and a trifle stiff in the opening scenes, but he settles comfortably into the custom-built, over-stuffed seat with requisite authority before long.

The acting revelation, for my money, came from Tom Mason, playing Archie Goodwin like the character had been created for him. Never had I imagined all the disparate qualities Stout assigned this fellow could be drawn together as convincingly as they were here. Archie Goodwin comes to life as a distinct and formidable individual. A fine acting job.

Anne Baxter supplies the name and glamour as Wolfe's wealthy client. John Randolph turns in another strong character performance as newspaperman Lon Cohen. With cameos by Fritz in the kitchen, Theodore Horstmann in the greenhouse, and Lt. Cramer in a snit, no lover of Nero Wolfe should be slighted.

Is it too late for someone to get PBS interested in reactivating the project? With Mason and, say, Raymond Burr now filling Wolfe's chair? Surely there must still be an audience out there for intelligent plots and stimulating mystery? We haven't all pickled our brains in reruns of *Starsky and Hutch* and *The Mod Squad*.

* * * * *

This concludes my first year as the TAD reviewer. In an upcoming column I plan to address the mystery-suspense films of the past decade. Your nominations, comments and gripes are cheerfully solicited. Please address them to me at:

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THE PAPERBACK REVOLUTION

By Charles Shibuk

This, my 50th column, must represent some sort of milestone. I might add that I personally count it a great privilege to be associated with such a superlative magazine as TAD—to say nothing about its equally meritorious publisher and editor—and I sincerely hope that "The Paperback Revolution" has been, and will continue to prove, of value.

CHARLES ALVERSON

Ex-San Francisco cop turned private eye Joe Goodey is obliged to investigate the murder of a buxom go-go dancer whose lover, the mayor, holds the detective's future in his hands in *Goodey's Last Stand* (1975) (Playboy Press). This hard-boiled novel doesn't deviate too far from standard operating procedure, and is a well-written and enjoyable caper.

REX BURNS

A beautiful girl's head is found in Denver's Botanical Gardens. The rest of her later appears in the trunk of a car abandoned in a junkyard. These objects *Speak for the Dead* (1978) (Berkley) and proclaim murder. A cold, relentless search for the victim's identity, and for the killer, by newly-promoted homicide detective Gabriel Wager highlights a model example of the documentary approach of the police procedural novel.

VICTOR CANNING

British private eye Rex Carver is noted for his interest in financial gain, and his frequent involvement in affairs of espionage. *The Whip Hand* (1965) (Charter) starts quietly with the routine investigation of a German girl in Brighton, but ends in fine style with a globe-trotting fur several of the most prominent characters concerned in this thriller.

AGATHA CHRISTIE

A train journey to visit her friend Miss Jane Marple seems innocent enough, but *What Mrs. McGillicuddy Saw!* (1957) (Pocket Books) was murder. Mrs. Christie's favorite sleuth stars—and shines—in what Messrs. Barzun and Taylor consider to be one of this author's best latter-day novels.

MICHAEL COLLINS

Private eye Dan Fortune's attempt to renew the lease held on a parking lot by a huge corporation for a client leads to four murders in *Blue Death* (1975) (Playboy Press). Much of this novel is well-written and fast-paced, but gratuitous violence, philosophical discussions, weak motivation, shaky detection, and a general lack of conviction make this a distinctly lesser entry in the Fortune opera.

WILLIAM L. DEANDREA

The inelegant but aptly titled *The Hog Murders* (Avon, 1979) is an interesting but not completely successful attempt to recapture the glory of the great golden age of the detective story. Here you have the eccentric detective, a series of bizarre, often inexplicable, and unrelated deaths, and a serial murderer with a penchant for writing letters. More up-to-date elements include a private eye, a hard-working police inspector, and a famous newspaper columnist.

WINSTON GRAHAM

There is nothing new or startling in *Take My Life* (1947) (Pocket Books), whose plot somewhat resembles Cornell Woolrich's *Phantom Lady*. It is smoothly written and suspenseful enough to afford a full evening's entertainment for the average reader.

CHARLOTTE MACLEOD

A breath of fresh air awaits admirers of the classic form with *Rest You Merry* (1978) (Avon). It's Christmas time at Balaclava Agricultural College, and it's the wrong time to have a dead librarian turn up in the living room of a faculty member. This is a charming and witty novel that can be read with profit and pleasure during any season of the year.

FREDRIC NEUMAN

The locked room genre has a new entry with *The Seclusion Room* (1978) (Fawcett) when a patient at Four Elms Psychiatric Hospital is found dead in his padded cell. Psychiatrist Abe Redden determines to solve this "impossible" murder, but it seems he's also the chief suspect. This is a notable first by a writer who shares his sleuth's profession.

PATRICK QUENTIN

Theatrical producer Peter Duluth is summoned to Acapulco by his estranged actress wife Iris to help resolve some of her romantic difficulties in *Puzzle for Pilgrims* (1947) (Avon). An unexpected murder solves few problems, but creates many more—especially when Iris is one of the chief suspects, and the festive south-of-the-border atmosphere becomes menacing.

STANLEY RICHARDS (ed.)

Best Mystery and Suspense Plays of the Modern Theatre (1971) (Avon) is a collection of ten famous (and unabridged) plays that includes *Dracula, Sleuth, The Letter, Angel Street, Dial "M" for Murder, Arsenic and Old Lace*, and *Witness for the Prosecution*. An introduction, original cast lists, and individual notes for each play are helpful.

JUSTIN SCOTT

The Shipkiller (1978) (Fawcett) commences when Peter Hardin's sloop is rammed by a monstrous tanker, and his wife is lost at sea. Hardin, with limited resources, swears vengeance on the ship and its captain, and a relentless chase ensues. This is a long and extremely uneven work, but at its best it is very powerful, and will keep you on the edge of your seat.

JACK TRACY

The Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana (1977) (Avon) is a monumental volume designed to accompany the Canon by explicating the historical references that abound in each tale. Maps and illustrations are present in profusion. This is a staggering work of scholarship and a labor of love—six years in the compilation, and slightly revised for this edition. The *Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* aptly calls this volume "a must for all Sherlockians."

PAPER CRIMES

By Fred Dueren

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF SOLAR PONS. Basil Copper. Pinnacle Books, 1979.

Copper's second series of Pons stories has all the ingeniousness and complexity of plot displayed in the first. The longest of the four stories, "The Shaft of Death," is by far the best. It offers a mysterious death, a family burial vault and an exotic means of murder to conjure up the charms of the earlier stories. Deadly violence is absent only in one of the tales, "The Adventure of the Missing Student." On the whole, though, these stories are flat, like an actor repeating his lines for the thousandth time, but not infusing life into them. The play, the plot, is as complex and fascinating as at the first performance—only the execution is lacking.

An exceptionally large number of non-fictional and historical/critical books is out in paperback now. Avon leads the list with publications on Sherlock Holmes, Peter Wimsey and the *Best Mystery and Suspense Plays of the Modern Theater,* edited by Stanley Richards. Providing some of the best and most successful plays by master craftsmen, it is a handy volume for both mystery-lovers and playgoers.

A CATALOGUE OF CRIME. Carl Sifakis. Signet, 1979.

While waiting to be executed, killer Donald Snyder tried to gain so much weight that he would not fit in the electric chair. . . . "Alice Crimmins, charged with the murder of her two young children, on hearing the jury's verdict: 'Oh, my God, how could they do it?' ". . . The last words of Lefroy, ". . . an Englishman who had a play produced the night before he was hanged: 'Is there anything in the papers about my play?' " . . . Four times John Lee was placed over the trapdoor on the scaffold and the mechanism released to drop him—but it never did. Finally released, due partly to the anguish he suffered in the bungled "execution," he later toured as The Man They Couldn't Hang. Want to know the best way to cash a bad check? Get drunk and "let" the bartender take advantage of you. H. H. Holmes designed his Hotel to have chutes which dropped his corpses to the basement and a crematory, a lime pit, vats of acid, and torture racks—all of which aided in disposing of up to 200 women. These and dozens of other bizarre and fascinating crimes make up these cons, quotes and tales about being caught on the wrong side of the law. For a sparkling, bracing reminder that truth is stranger, don't pass up Sifakis' *Catalogue.*

THE WIMSEY FAMILY. C. W. Scott-Giles. Avon, 1977.

This slim volume draws on the Lord Peter books and a few letters and essays from Miss Sayers to whimsically produce full-blown antecedents for the celebrated detective. With more than tongue in cheek we learn of forbears who so valiantly fought with and for British royalty. We sample Lord Roger's (of the 16th century) poetry, and watch Bredon Hall evolve from a simple medieval manor to the opulent castle that Peter showed Harriet. Indeed, Wimseys seem to have been in every important event in British history since William invaded England. The so-appropriate cat-and-mouse motif of the arms and crest is also carefully chronicled. Slight, but diverting, this is a necessity for any admirer of Lord Peter.

THE ENCYCLOPAEDIA SHERLOCKIANA. Jack Tracy. Avon, 1977, 1979.

Sherlockians have undoubtedly already purchased the *Encyclopaedia* and used it extensively to pinpoint characters and bibliographic details in the Canon. But the book is almost as valuable for those who don't care for the limited range of Sherlockiana but are interested in London and England at the turn of the century. Numerous photos of the period show the landmarks we've read of so often. Entries give the history and significance of towns, streets, battles and buildings —items that any Englishman of the times would know, but are vague or completely unknown to today's American readers. London is particularly well covered, its boroughs, streets, landmarks, history, trains, bars and shops all brought to life. Maps are provided of the boroughs and of the Scotland Yard divisions. The Indian history that all those colonels and majors helped to make is simply set out. Included are definitions of a deal table, a quid, English slang terms, and a Blue. The greatest charm and interest, however, remain the photos, depicting a life and style that have vanished. In all it is a well-packed guide to the times and knowledge of the Holmes era. An excellent reference work for any reader of the early stages of detective fiction.

THE WHIP HAND. Victor Canning. Charter Books, 1965.

Although Canning has long been acknowledged as one of the master craftsmen of spy-intrigue novels, he seems never to have achieved the popularity or recognition of Ambler, Le Carré or Deighton. His work is solidly consistent rather than containing one or two high spots. *The Whip Hand* shows the extent of his ability to make an implausible scheme to overtake Europe seem realistic, and to bring the people alive enough to hold our interest. Rex Carver is the agent/private eye responsible for unweaving the intricate plans, a feat he accomplishes with competency and no unnecessary flashiness. If there is any complaint it is that the cover gives too much away, taking surprise out of the plot.

P.S. YOUR SHRINK IS DEAD. John Reisman. Leisure Books, 1979.

The bestowing of the William James Award to renegade psychologist Arthur Logan was certain to provoke antagonism. Who else would advise an assembly of psychologists to love their clients, to establish more physical contact. Not long after a few personal attacks on various leaders of the profession, Arthur is found dead in his apartment. His old friend Jack Rubin becomes the police's inside investigator and the detective who solves the crime. The narrative has a few amusing spots, but not the riotousness the cover touts. If at times the explanations intrude on the action, it is still nicely and logically resolved with some fairly planted clues for the reader.

THE DOPPELGANGER GAMBIT. Lee Killough. Ballantine/Del Rey, 1979.

Joining the burgeoning ranks of mystery-science-fiction tales, *Gambit* is a refreshingly new slant on old themes. Killough relates the killing of a space colonist, Andy Kellener, by his partner Jorge Hazlett. Hazlett defrauded a colonist group in the supplying of their ramjet, resulting in the death of over 400 colonists. But as in any inverted story, the detectives and their methods are the stars. Here Janna Brill and Mama Maxwell (her new male partner) make a superb team, using imaginative twists of basic detective techniques to solve their case. Suspense and interest mount in the closing pages as the final battle between greed and justice is played out in the 21st century. *Gambit* is well worth searching the sci-fi shelves for.

FLOWERS IN THE ATTIC. V.C. Andrews. Pocket Books, 1979.

Although it is billed on the cover as "a spellbinding novel of physical terror," *Flowers* doesn't come into the mystery/suspense field until the final chapters. Belonging more in the mainstream, it is a good novel with likable characters, but the "solution" of the problem comes out of the blue and some of the motivations are weak.

The *Worst* Mystery Novel of All Time

By Bill Pronzini

One of the few impossibilities in this world is achieving unanimous agreement on what is the absolute best—the best film of all time, the best mystery novel of all time, and so forth. No two tastes are exactly alike; no one has quite the same preferences and prejudices as anyone else. Different strokes for different folks, as the current cliche goes. We're just *not* going to agree on what's the best of anything.

Or what's the worst, either.

Now I know that most people seldom give any thought to the worst things in life and the arts. They're too busy thinking about the best things, and that is as it should be. But some individuals are perverse; they spend as much time seeking "perfection" (if the word may be used) at the bottom as at the top. I'm one of those individuals, a fact which you already know if you read my article on Phoenix Press. I get as much pleasure, for example, out of reading a novel which is brilliantly bad as I get out of reading one which is brilliantly good. For years now, like a kind of warped Diogenes, I've been searching for the ultimate bad mystery—the one book which stands far below all the others, which by its sheer terribleness achieves a negative perfection that cannot be surpassed.

And at last I've found it.

I was not sure I ever would. God knows, there have been a lot of abominable mysteries published in the past half-century (I may even have written one or two myself; the Virginia Kirkus Disservice thinks so anyway). I have read at least a hundred and each has been accorded a place of honor (or dishonor) on what I fondly refer to as my "Rotten Shelf." Most of these are Phoenix Press titles, with a sprinkling of Mystery House, Arcadia, Hillman Crime Club, Gateway, and Messner. But while some came close to the consummate—notably, *Murder at Horsethief* and *Death Down East*—none quite achieved it in my jaded eye.

The problem, you see, was that I was looking in the wrong place. I had thought that if there *was* a truly great bad mystery, it had to be a hardcover. But I was wrong; I was guilty of a certain chauvinism. The worst mystery novel of all time is not a hardcover, it is a paperback original.

It is one half of Ace Double D-9, published in 1953.

It is *Decoy*, by Michael Morgan.

You may want to argue with these statements, of course, after reading this article or even after reading *Decoy* (should you ever *want* to read it). You may, after all, be someone as perverse as me and already have settled on your own choice as the worst of the worst. Wich is why I began here as I did. The point is, I do not want to debate the matter with anybody. If you have your own favorite, fine. You know your selection is worse than mine—and I know it isn't. You can write your own article; I'll read it with pleasure. But I won't change my mind.

Michael Morgan's *Decoy*, by God, is the worst mystery novel ever published.

Bear with me and I'll demonstrate why.

Decoy. Innocuous title, isn't it? Same title, in fact, as a pretty good hardboiled private eye adventure by

Cleve F. Adams. You would think that the worst mystery of all time would have a title like *I'll Grind Their Bones* or *The Terror of the Handless Corpse* or *Blow Out My Torch*. No. *Decoy*. You would think that its author would be somebody named Virginia Van Urk or Knight Rhoades or maybe Mickey Spillane. No. Michael Morgan.

Who, you may be wondering, is Michael Morgan? And well you might; I asked the same question myself when I first read this book. The answer is, Michael Morgan isn't anybody. Michael Morgan is a pseudonym, and not of one person but two—a pair of Hollywood movie flacks named C. E. "Teet" Carle (I'm not making this up) and Dean M. Dorn.

The first and only other novel by Teet and Dean was called *Nine More Lives* and was published by Random House in 1947 (and by Lion Books in 1949 as *The Blond Body*); it is almost but not quite as bad as *Decoy*. Teet and Dean also wrote a handful of pulp detective stories in the late '40s and early '50s, at least two of which appeared in *Dime Detective* and one of which appeared in *Mammoth Detective;* they are almost but not quite as bad as *Decoy*. The very last piece of published work by Teet and Dean *was* the great *Decoy*—and little wonder. When a writer or team of writers creates a masterpiece, what can he or they possibly do for an encore? So they quit and never wrote another line of mystery fiction. Or at least, another line of mystery fiction that ever saw the light of print. It may be argued that the world of criminous literature is a better place for that. But not by me.

According to the biographical sketch on the jacket of *Nine More Lives,* Teet did the writing and Dean served as a leg man (?) and gimmick creator. Teet, therefore, was the real genius of the pair. Dean's gimmicks are pretty wonderful, to be sure, but Teet's writing is what lifts *Decoy* below the ranks of all the others. Magnificent. As you'll soon see, the man was a poet laureate of the absurd.

What I'd like to do first of all is to give you a plot synopsis of the novel. Unfortunately, I can't. For the simple reason that I don't *know* what it's all about—and I've read it three times so far.

Oh, I have a sort of general idea, of course. Which seems to be about all Teet and Dean had at any time during its composition. It has something to do with an unofficial Lonely-Hearts Club/gigolo/blackmail racket down in Tinsel Town run by a villainess called the Duchess; but another gang from the East Coast is trying to muscle in on her crowd, led by a mysterious Mr. Big who goes by the name of King Lazarr. And in the middle of this mob warfare is one Bill Ryan, hero and narrator, who is a Hollywood stuntman. He is also a dumb cluck, by his own testimony on at least a dozen occasions throughout the book. And who am I to dispute a character's self-analysis?

Also involved are several hardboiled types named Joe Salka, Belmont Spur, Franklin Carter, Geoffrey Dare, Russell Orth, and Mr. Yegg and Mr. Thug. Plus several softboiled (and sexy, as if you couldn't guess) types called Linda Douglas, Sally Willow, Ina Andrews, and Judith Monroe. There's lots of exciting action stuff, most of it choreographed by Dean so Bill Ryan can use his Stuntman's Wiles to escape the Jaws of Death (once by doing a neat one-and-a-half gainer out a hotel window into a swimming pool full of guests—and, lucky for him, full of water too). Lots of interesting murders as well, including one in which a bad guy is impaled on the spine of a giant cactus. (Some cactus. I wouldn't want to meet up with it in a dark alley. Or have it marry my sister. Not if it has a spine that big.)

But that's about all I can tell you. Except to quote the following passage of dialogue spoken to Bill Ryan (operating under the alias of Reynolds at the time, don't ask why) by the Duchess (who sounds more like Duke Wayne, or maybe Edward G. Robinson):

> "I didn't find out your name just today, Reynolds. I knew it last Friday when you busted into the picture, claimin' you was a friend of Russell Orth's, wantin' a setup with the Andrews dame. I could of cooked your act that day. I said let you have plenty of rope. I wondered how come you said you was a friend of a guy who was already croaked. Russ was one of my pets, brother. I know about your playin' games through the Traxton halls so's you could make contact in the men's room with Salka and Spur. Right after that you tied onto Frank's tail an' followed him outside the hotel. You never came back, an' early this ayem, another of my best boys was found on the lawn—dead as a poop. Today you show up here with that dreamy-eyed blond, Judith Monroe, actin' like you was a real gee-gee. That give you an idea of what I know?"

No.

See what I mean?

The above passage is only one example of Teet's artistry with the English language; other specific examples to follow. But first, a brief overview—because to fully appreciate his prose, you have to understand that he had a positive passion for synonyms and euphemisms (surpassed only by his positive passions for hyperbole and for the unique simile). No commonplace words for old Teet, no sir. Not when slang or pseudo-slang would do.

Men aren't men in *Decoy;* they're chaps, ginks, bozos, cookies, Joes, characters, and didos. Women aren't women; they're dames, babes, skirts, tamales, dolls, floozies, chippies, and trollops. Crooks aren't crooks; they're yeggs, thugs, mugs, lugs, lunks, punks, hulks, scums, gigs, palookas, plug-uglies, rats, buzzards, birds, baboons, monkeys, apes, and apemen. Guns aren't guns; they're rods, heaters, six-shooters, cannons, and gats. People don't walk or run; they ankle, loll, amble, stretch strides, or get on

the speed track. Nor do they speak much; they burp, wheeze, dribble, chirp, crackle, croak, crisp, husk, syrup, gruff, grunt, and gurgle.

Okay. So now let's get on the speed track, the Pronzini bozo burped, and check out the ginks and skirts, rods and yeggs—and other Teetisms—of *Decor*.

We open the novel to page one. And we find that Teet doesn't waste any time letting the reader know he's a writer to be reckoned with. Witness the very first sentence:

> The way she looked at me sent a craving through my body for a tall cold drink.

Ah. And a few sentences later:

> Her face was rounded with beauty and had two features which demanded complete attention. Of these, her eyes were most absorbing; they were two wide pools of darkness which exuded warmth. Then her lips; they rose from her face with the vivid freshness of lovely, sparkling champagne bubbles.

One of Teet's strong points, as you can see from the above, is description—particularly of females. Here are a few more examples (including the single greatest sentence Teet ever wrote; see if you can pick it out):

> When she moved, [her] muscles stood up individually and made a speech. Her hair was still touseled and the disarray snapped at my eager fingertips.

> She wore low-heeled Oxfords, the kind made for walking, and the backs of firm-swelling calves of her legs told me she might be a chorus girl who'd turned somebody's moll.

> Her graceful legs, swelling gradually upward to the bottom of her white swim suit, were as appealing as they'd been, sheathed in sheer hose, straddling the window of Carter's bedroom the night before.

> Just as I was wondering how I could pull Ina out of this itchy situation, a Mountie came riding to our rescue. It was a female Mountie, and she was a flaming torch on top of a little body which swooped down on us like a kootch dancer in a waterfront dive.
>
> Ina syruped, "Hello, Sally." The redhead laid an eye on me and started rubbing it over my bulk as though she was sizing up a rib roast.

> I sat beside her in the Traxton's Parisian Room and let the edges of my eyes siphon up the pleasure of her tall, slender figure in a blue evening gown which made a low-bridged criss-cross right above where the meat on a chicken is the whitest.

Teet's greatest sentence, of course, is the last one quoted above. It may even be the single greatest bad line in the history of published fiction (and I don't say that just because it has "chicken" in it and I happen to have been born in Petaluma, once known as "The Egg Basket of the World"). I defy anyone to quote me another bad line more ingenious, lyrical, delightful, and absurd. Not even Robert Leslie Bellem, he of the gaspers and the roscoes that sneeze "Kachow!" nor Richard S. Prather in his salad days, ever wrote anything quite so sublime.

Ankling right along, we discover that Teet was also adept at describing chaps, especially cop chaps:

> The cops weren't long in arriving. They descended on the corridor like a blustering winter wind off the Nebraska plains. The character who apexed their flying wedge was a hunk of tough meat.

And that other of his strong points include dialogue:

> "Suck back that crack, copper. That kid's strictly top of the heap, and I knew it the minute I laid eyes on her shaking down Carter's room . . ."
>
> "Don't tell me you carry a heater in your girdle, madam!"

And compelling introspection:

> I wanted to see the murderer of that beautiful creature seated in the gas chamber. I wanted it so bad my saliva glands throbbed.

And emotional reaction:

> "What are you afraid of, Linda?"
> "Afraid?" She sucked the word clear down to her short [illegible].

And action scenes:

> The blast of the iron fist caught me high on the jaw, and my guardian angel must have been astride my shoulder, because, surprisingly, my jaw bone didn't crack. I went streaking out through the darkness on the wings of pain. A tidal wave rolled up from Wilshire, a hundred yards away, and engulfed me. My jaw bounced off the back of my skull and I wallowed in the softness of a cloud. I groped around for my brain and after a couple of years it back back from San Francisco and said: "Get up!"

And cryptic messages and reactions thereto:

> Ryan:
> The giant cactus at nine sharp. Come up path from Inn, whistling Yankee Doodle. Keep hands on top of head. Remember, you'd better be on the level.
>
> Spur
>
> It was a little melodramatic, but that was fine with me . . .

And (this is where Teet really shines) the masterful one-liner:

> Silence settled like a hen squatting on her eggs.

> He laughed once in the direction of his right ear.

My stomach dropped out of my body.

My head flew off and hit the ceiling.

The fire from my ears, my eyes, and my throat congregated into a lump and shoved off the top of my head.

Her cheeks had a case of the flushes.

His eyes popped out of his pink-cake face and danced in the air.

Below his hat were enough eyebrows to stuff a pillow.

Lips seemed to be Teet's specialty, though:

His lip did a nip-up at the left end.

He puffed out his lips and they made a blooping sound.

Her lips wore smugness like a slipper.

There was interest licking his lips.

His lower lip hauled in its droop.

Alas, some of Teet's one-liners don't quite make it. Following are a few examples of what I like to think of as "Huh?" sentences:

He ran his eyes over my silence.

My burn was going to boil soon.

She laid a hand on my arm and I knew I really had her in the palm of my hand because her face was contorted.

Judith just didn't look like a hot urge having its fling.

He put his vocalizing on arrested motion.

A choking pig couldn't have done better and I patted my inspiration on the head for the effect it had.

She went up in a puff of smoke, and a startling truth dribbled out of her explosion.

Reality cut me down six notches.

The realization of what all this meant exploded inside my head and shot me from the mouth of a cannon.

As you can tell from the foregoing, Bill Ryan (and some of the other didos and babes) has a hell of a time keeping himself together, what with his head flying off, his stomach dropping out, his brain going off to San Francisco for a couple of years, and his whole self being shot out of a cannon. But he manages somehow and is more or less whole when the exciting final chase arrives.

And it *is* exciting, make no mistake about that. In fact it starts out as a real cliffhanger—literally. By using his Stuntman's Wiles, our hero escapes from a car sent hurtling over a precipice by Mr. Yegg and then hangs by his fingertips for a short while (maybe half a page) before the old S.W. come through again.

But that's not all. Next we have a car chase, which commences when Ryan commandeers a police car (with the police still in it). He's driving at 100 mph, right on the tails of the apemen, when they throw out a "Spare wheel" directly into his path, causing a spin-out and allowing the scums to escape. Ah, but not for long: Ryan and the coppers are soon back on the road and bearing down on a private airstrip where a small private plane is about to take off.

Ryan notes the plane as soon as he wheels the police go-buggy inside the airstrip grounds—and notes, too, through the open cabin door, that it not only contains Mr. Upstairs, the mysterious King Lazarr, but Ryan's own lady-love, Judith Monroe. Then the door closes and the plane begins to taxi down the runway. How can Ryan stop it in time?

In a flash of inspiration he realizes the answer: *he'll have to use his Stuntman's Wiles!*

So he rockets the rattle (police car, that is) onto the runway, opens the driver's door, leaps out onto the tail of the plane, and—hot damn—grabs the rudder and rides the tail onto the ground "like a cowboy bulldozing [*sic*] a steer."

Bravo, Dean!

Bravo, Teet!

Bravo, *Decoy!*

And there you have it, at least in essence: the worst mystery novel of all time. If any of you are perverse enough to want to read the book for any reason, drop me a note; I know where copies can be obtained. But please, as I said at the outset, don't offer me an alternative selection. I know what I know, and that's that.

De gustibus non est disputandam.

One final note. If anyone is interested, my second choice for the worst mystery of all time is *The Dragon Strikes Back*, by Tom Roan, which Julian Messner, Inc. published in 1936. (You don't remember Tom Roan? He was a writer of pulp Westerns, primarily—the author of "Here's Lead in Your Guts!" and other sensitive tales of the Old West.) *The Dragon Strikes Back* features a Fu Manchu-type villain named Whang Sut Soon, who keeps a vicious pet octopus in an underground lair in San Francisco's Chinatown. The underground lair belongs to Whang, that is; the octopus lives in a pit inside the lair. What Whang does is throw his enemies in there to be devoured. By the octopus. In the pit. The slimy floor is strewn with bones, see, and—

But that's another article.

"The Wild Bunch" Revisited

By Brian Garfield

Part of this essay is adapted from a chapter of the author's forthcoming book, A Complete Guide to Western Films. *Copyright © 1980 by Brian Garfield.*

We recently finished filming a four-hour TV miniseries based on my novel *Wild Times;* in the cast were Ben Johnson, Harry Carey Jr., L. Q. Jones and other veterans of the John Ford and Sam Peckinpah movies that have dominated and defined the Western movie for the past forty years. Peckinpah himself was to appear in an acting role in our picture, but ill health forced him to withdraw. Still, when I got to talking with Ben Johnson and the others about Ford's and Peckinpah's films, it began to occur to me that Westerns and crime movies are closely interrelated in the American *mythos,* and that Peckinpah is the man who finally brought the two genres together.

Peckinpah's films actually lie more in the gritty tradition of *film-noir* crime movies than they do in the romantic tradition of *The Virginian* or *Shane* or John Ford's sentimental Irish-accented Westerns. Even when Ford made movies about outlaws (e.g., *Three Godfathers*), the outlaws generally turned out to be warmhearted, patriotic softies. Peckinpah, however, has made no effort to sentimentalize his outlaws—not since *Ride the High Country,* in any case; Randolph Scott reforms at the last minute in that one, just as he did in *Western Union* twenty years earlier, but the same can't be said of Steve McQueen in Peckinpah's *The Getaway,* or Warren Oates in *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia,* or James Caan in *The Killer Elite,* or Kris Kristofferson in *Pat Garrett & Billy the Kid;* and in *Straw Dogs,* Peckinpah contrives a set of circumstances that force a civilized, moralistic character (Dustin Hoffman) to become a brutal murderer. Many of these Peckinpah films aren't Westerns; all of them, however, are crime stories, and it seems to me they owe more to films like *The Killing* and *The Asphalt Jungle* and *Point Blank* than they do to any of Gary Cooper's or John Wayne's pictures. Peckinpah has fused the gangster genre with the Western, and nowhere did he do it with more effectiveness than in *The Wild Bunch.*

Ben Johnson has had the misfortune to get shot to pieces in more than one Peckinpah film (he is virtually disintegrated by gunfire in *The Getaway*), and I asked him what it was like to work for Peckinpah. In his laconic fashion Ben allowed as how working in *The Wild Bunch* was the roughest job he'd ever had—"I never want to go through that again"—but he acknowledged that it may have been the finest movie he's ever appeared in. Coming from the gentleman who won an Academy Award for *The Last Picture Show* and who may have appeared in more classic Westerns than any other actor alive (*Shane, Rio Grande, Fort Apache, Wagonmaster, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, One-Eyed Jacks,* and so forth), that was striking testimony. Harry Carey Jr., called "Dobie" by everyone who knows him, has partnered with Ben in dozens of films since the late 1940s, and while Dobie has never appeared in a Peckinpah film, he too seems to feel that *The Wild Bunch* is way up there, perhaps tied with his own *The Searchers* as the most powerful Western he's ever seen.

* * * * *

In the 1969–70 movie season, three major Western films appeared—virtually the last of their kind; there has been nothing to match them since: *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, True Grit,* and *The Wild Bunch. Butch Cassidy* and *True Grit* won Oscars of various kinds; they were treated amiably and respectfully by reviewers; they were hugely successful at the box-office—indeed, *Butch Cassidy* is still among the top box-office films of all time. *The Wild Bunch,* by contrast, won no important awards; received—at best—mixed reviews; and, even though it made a profit, was hardly a blockbuster success.

Now, a decade later, it may be time for another look at this curious film. And TAD isn't an inappropriate forum for such a reappraisal. All three of those Westerns dealt essentially with crime and justice, but of the three, *The Wild Bunch* most clearly represents the total union of the Western and crime genres.

Both *True Grit* and *Butch Cassidy* are, in retrospect, quite ordinary; excellently made, but they added little to what already existed in the genre. If the John Wayne role of Rooster Cogburn in *True Grit* had been played by, say, Dean Martin, then the film probably would have attracted very little attention; it was markedly inferior to the novel on which it was based; interest was stirred up solely because the cantankerous, hard-drinking, profane character was outside Wayne's usual limited range of

stalwarts. Both films, to some extent, attempted to approach the same theme as that of *The Wild Bunch* —the death of the old ways and values, the death of the old outlaws—but *True Grit* and *Butch Cassidy* did it on a slick, glib level that left one with the feeling that all those shootings were good clean fun. *The Wild Bunch,* by contrast, is a serious film—a drama which insists that death is not fun; that there is tragedy in the passing of the old ways and that what has replaced the old values is smuch less than we had before. Edmond O'Brien delivers the film's tagline: "It ain't going to be like it was before, but it's all we've got."

Peckinpah assumed the throne of the Western kingdom when John Ford retired. A comparison of the two men is necessary to an understanding of the changes that have taken place in the Western.

The Westerns of the 1940s and 1950s were dominated by Ford's romantic visions. His films virtually define the Western from 1939 to 1956: *Stagecoach, My Darling Clementine, Fort Apache, Rio Grande, She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, Three Godfathers, Wagonmaster, The Searchers.* There were other important Westerns in those days, of course; but hardly a one of them failed to owe a great deal to Ford's influence. (Howard Hawks directed *Red River,* but it might as easily have been directed by Ford.)

The Westerns of the 1960s and 1970s have been dominated in a similar way by the visions of Sam Peckinpah, whether we like it or not.

Ford and Peckinpah shared striking similarities. Both were primitives rather than sophisticates; this quality was in keeping with the nature of the Western. Both were hard-drinking advocates of the concept of *machismo*—a Western staple traceable back to William S. Hart, Tom Mix, Buffalo Bill and Natty Bumppo. Both men epitomized the filmmaker as creator of pictorial images—in that sense both were important artists, and certainly no director since Ford has displayed the painter's eye for cinematic composition that Peckinpah has shown; Peckinpah's *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid,* whatever its faults, is pictorially splendid. Ford learned from the painter Frederic Remington; and Peckinpah learned from Ford.

Both men were romantics: in a way, they were throwbacks to the simple agrarianism of our nineteenth-century dreams. But of course there's a striking philosophical difference between the form that Ford's romanticism took and the form that Peckinpah's has taken. Ford affirmed traditional values. He was a storyteller who chose scripts that reinforced his visions: his reverence was almost painful toward old virtues and standards of heroism. Many of his cinematic heroes—in *Stagecoach,* the cavalry movies, *The Searchers*—are towering, larger-

than-life giants.

Peckinpah, by contrast, saw his romantic dreams infected with disillusion and cynicism. Unable to ignore present-day reality as Ford had done, Peckinpah evidently concluded that the old values were matters of nostalgic wistfulness rather than reality. The criminal heroes of his films—Pike Bishop in *The Wild Bunch,* Cable Hogue, Billy in *Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid*—are honorable men, but their honor dooms them because Peckinpah seems to believe it's inevitable that such heroes will be cut down by corrupt villains or petty assassins, just as the Kennedys and Martin Luther King were cut down. The virtuous hero of *Ride the High Country* is killed in the end. In Peckinpah's films we find the insistent theme of changing times: the message that those who wish to survive must knuckle under to the big corporate interests, the faceless bearers of power who really run the world. There's no room left in Peckinpah's universe for the heroic loner, the iconoclast, the virtuous free individual, the hero who offers something grand and old-fashioned by way of aspirations and achievements. The real power—always in the background of Peckinpah's films—is seen to be masked by empty slogans, corruption and a sense of a remote manipulation (comparable to today's bureaucracy) that pays lip service to honor while crushing life blindly. It didn't really shock anyone when Peckinpah splashed the screen with gore in *The Wild Bunch*—just as it didn't really shock anyone when a President of the United States turned out to be a crook.

Peckinpah is John Ford disillusioned. His films cannot be equated with the titilations of dreary bloody opportunism that one finds in the violence-for-its-own-sake Westerns (the spaghetti oaters and their imitators) in which we are left with bleak spectacles of amoral gunslingers wiping one another out in mechanical and unemotional excesses of bloodletting. Peckinpah's movies are anything but unemotional. They are painful outcries. They are, I suppose, warnings (from Peckinpah's point of view); in any case, they are fiercely dramatic, and they are concerned profoundly with questions of morality.

The Wild Bunch gives us the heroes of *The Magnificent Seven* a decade later: the world has changed under them. The old truths have died. Now

the fighting men are soured, embittered, gone empty with disillusion and anger. "This was going to be my last one," says Pike Bishop (William Holden).* "I'm not getting around so good any more. I was going to do this one and pull back." His partner says flatly: "Pull back to *what?*"—and Pike has no answer to that.

These are doomed men. First they were heroes, then they went bad: now they can go only to death. They've outlived their world. "They'll be waiting for us, Pike." And Pike replies: "I wouldn't have it any other way. . . . We're finished, all of us." But they mean to go out in a blaze of valor; their indomitability has the magnificence of grand tragedy. These are extraordinarily powerful characters in an extraordinarily powerful movie.

Robert Ryan plays an ex-partner of Pike's who is being forced by an evil railroad boss (Albert Dekker) to track down his former partners-in-crime. When two of Pike's men (Ben Johnson and Warren Oates) complain about this double-cross by their ex-partner, Pike defends the man: "He gave them his word."

Then Pike's partner (Ernest Borgnine) shows the shift in values that will destroy them all. "It ain't your word that counts. It's who you give it to." But Pike can't buy that. Of them all, he is the one who fights to the end without compromising. The contrast is between Pike's dignity—the old ways—and what the film implies are the new ways: Strother Martin and L. Q. Jones as a pair of utterly immoral killer-scavengers, like hyenas, stripping the dead of their gold teeth and boots; the railroad boss who salts a bank with sacks of steel washers to bait the outlaws into a trap; the inept bureaucratic U.S. Army which can't even get mounted on its own horses; the Mexican revolutionary "general" who tortures prisoners for fun. ("General, hell," says Oates, "he's just a common bandit—just like us." But Borgnine replies, "No. Not like us. We don't hang people.")

The Wild Bunch is a thematic reprise of Peckinpah's earlier film *Ride the High Country*. His vision is an interesting one, a consistent one—the death in our society of valor and dignity, their replacement by flaccid denials of the value of courage and honor. Unfortunately his expression of that vision is invariably flawed by the fact that he allows his penchant for technical gimmickry and cheap cinematic tricks (all those distracting telephoto-zoom shots) to get in the way of his stories. He has been accused of misogyny—the women in his films usually are either villains or baggage—and his views certainly are monolithic, stubborn, irascible and often childish. As a writer, he is not capable of creating whole characters who are not flawed by caricature; therefore he has to rely on his actors to bring them to life, and usually his actors are not good enough to do that: Jason Robards did not have the range or the warmth to make us care about Cable Hogue; Kris Kristofferson was an over-age and inadequate Billy the Kid. But the cast of *The Wild Bunch* was up to it.

The Wild Bunch is a better "caper" movie than *The Professionals;* its honesty—whether or not you agree with its attitudes—is far beyond comparison with such cheap shots as the aforementioned *True Grit;* it has moments of profound impact, as when the Bunch rides out of the Mexican village where it has licked its wounds and the villagers assemble to bid the outlaws farewell, watching the Bunch ride slowly out of the village to the strains of a tune sung softly by the villagers. It is a solemn, dignified procession, as if these are great holy warriors riding out on a grand quest. The photography in these scenes (by Lucien Ballard) has great dramatic effect: it is a style of low-angle camera work we don't see very often any more. This scene is reprised in the film's closing shot to point up the statement of the movie—along with echoes of the bawdy laughter of the Wild Bunch: a free, reckless laughter which will not be heard again.

The Wild Bunch is both an entertainment and something more; in spite of its flaws, it is the most powerful and most important Western of the past decade, and probably the most important crime film as well.

One need not agree with Peckinpah's moral point of view, but one must concede that he has one. His moral sensibility makes him all but unique among contemporary Hollywood filmmakers; virtually everyone else in the industry gives evidence of exactly that collapse of values that Peckinpah attacks. (Even Peckinpah himself, in his rapidly declining films since *The Wild Bunch,* seems to have succumbed to it.) There is a cynicism among us—we not longer believe in much of anything: we elect dishonest men and fools to high public office, knowing as we vote that they are dishonest men and fools, but we no longer seem to expect honesty or intelligence from our leaders. Overwhelmed by chicanery, agony and dilemma, we see ourselves become isolationists—we want merely to be left alone. We have no heroes any more; that is what Peckinpah says in films like *The Wild Bunch.* (Technology may have rendered certain kinds of heroism anachronistic: it is not heroic but merely whimsical to cross the sea in an open boat when it can be done in a few hours in the comfort of a jetliner.) I don't altogether agree with his pessimism; I think we still need heroes, and welcome them when we find them. But the virtuous hero on

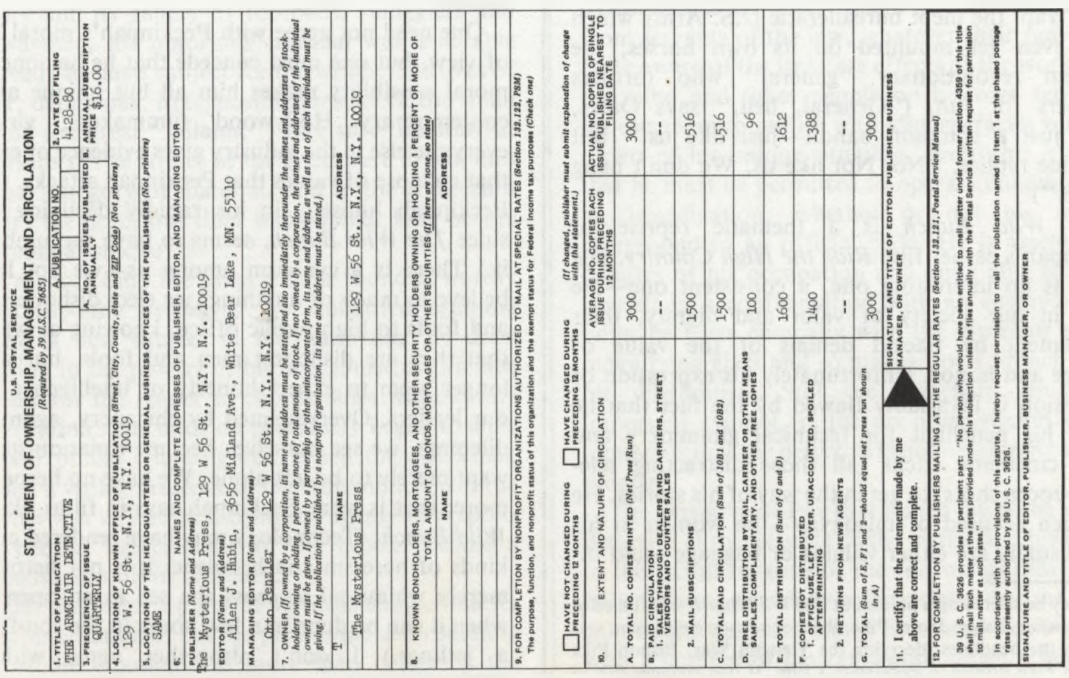
*It may be stretching a point, but *The Wild Bunch* was filmed at the time when Bishop James Pike, the iconoclastic clergyman, was much in the headlines, decrying the Vietnam War. Bishop Pike becomes Pike Bishop in Peckinpah's film. If one assumes this to have been deliberate rather than coincidental, it reinforces the moral significance of the film.

horseback no longer fits into Peckinpah's world.

In the American legend, Jesse James became an outlaw to inflict retribution on the faceless, amoral robber barons and bureaucrats who represented the railroad that had killed Jesse's father and swallowed up the family farm. (There may be little historical truth in that myth, but it sustained the Jesse James legend for a hundred years.) According to Peckinpah, the corporate bureaucracy has become so powerful, and the moral climate has changed so much, that it's no longer possible for a Jesse James to exist—either in reality or in our mythic beliefs. (In Philip Kaufman's dubious recent movie *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid*, Jesse—played by Robert Duvall—is presented as a Bible-pounding psychotic. No vestige of the earlier romantic legend remains.) From Robin Hood to Raffles, from Billy the Kid to Bonnie and Clyde, the outlaw-as-romantic-hero has dominated our literature of crime; movies from 1902's *The Great Train Robbery* to the sentimental silent-movie badmen of William S. Hart to Edward G. Robinson's gangsters, Humphrey Bogart's sleazy, rule-bending private eyes, Mark Hellinger's tragic-hero convicts and criminals, and the caper-master-mind heroes of movies from *The League of Gentlemen* to *The Italian Job* (and the many movie versions of Donald E. Westlake/Richard Stark capers—*Point Blank, The Split, The Outfit, The Hot Rock, Bank Shot*)—all these have glamourized and glorified the outlaw hero, the iconoclast, the nonconformist, the loner against society or corporate villainy or The Mob. Peckinpah says we can no longer sustain that imagery. I tend to disagree; if anything, I think we need those myths more than ever; but Peckinpah has made himself heard—and nowhere as vividly as in *The Wild Bunch*.

At the time when *The Wild Bunch* was first released, college students and movie buffs were standing in queues to get in to see classic crime movies with Humphrey Bogart. Today, the same queues are occupied by students lining up to see *The Wild Bunch*. It is beginning to show up regularly on the cult-movie circuit of university cinemas and movie-buff revival houses. A theatre in Los Angeles recently screened a rare print of Peckinpah's original uncut version of *The Wild Bunch* (a version I saw in 1969 before the picture went into general release). A few critics who, a few years ago, were classicizing John Ford's 1956 *The Searchers* as "the greatest American film ever made" have begun to reconsider *The Wild Bunch* as a possible contender for the same title.

I doubt it's possible for any movie to be the "greatest film"; comparisons are not only odious but usually impossible. Nevertheless, *The Wild Bunch* must be reckoned with, as one of the more powerful and important films of both the Western and crime genres. It bears seeing again—and again.



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CURRENT REVIEWS

The Chain of Chance by Stanislaw Lem, tr. Louis Iribarne. Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, 1978. 179 pp. $7.95. Tr. *Katar,* Polish, 1975.

Like his earlier *Investigation,* this is Lem's equally idiosyncratic attempt at the purist mystery form. *Chain of Chance* may possibly attract some mystery readers who would resist *Investigation* (TAD 11/75). The earlier novel located itself in a fictional "London" derived, I think, partly from suspense films and partly from the old Freeman Wills Crofts type of story. *Chance,* by contrast, roves across a recognizably 1970's urban Europe: post-colonial, with terrorized airports, an ex-astronaut American hero on a Mission, and a (very slightly) more sexed-up texture to its story.

Furthermore, while *Investigation* derived from plodding-procedural, *Chance* is Lem's individual variant on the bloody mass-murder *A.B.C.-Murders* brand of plot. However, *Chance's* most interested readers will be those who see, by the time they read its final solution, how Lem has not only licked the ratiocinative problems or challenge of the form (by which a bizarre series of events has a single unexpected causal agent), but has transplanted this kind of Carr-early EQ story into "our" contemporary world.

As a tip for the reader of *Chance,* a simplistic version of Lem's plot gimmick occurs in one of the sf-mystery shorts that Tony Boucher once wrote. Some TAD readers may possibly remember his futurist tale in which duplicate fingerprints begin to appear; and, more relevantly to *Chance,* Boucher's explanation. It is even possible that this old Boucher short was the remote stimulus for Lem's scientifically much more sophisticated expansion of this idea.

To further identify *Chance's* "natural reader," let me quote in full one paragraph (p. 102):

> "Excuse me," I said, "but that's inevitable. What you've just accused us of is the classic dilemma of every investigation into the unknown. Before its limits can be defined the agent of causality must be identified, but before the agent of causality can be identified one must first of all define the subject under investigation."

The reader who finds such points stimulating—I don't mean to imply Lem forgot to supply a real plot, characters, or physical peril for his hero—will enjoy the novel, specifically the long midsection in which a French think-tank is turned loose to theorize on a series of chemical-physical breakdowns among middle-aged bachelor male European tourists. Such a reader will appreciate that the theoretical aspects of the "investigation" of "mysteries"—whose serious discussion is mimicked but (mostly) faked in Poe, Van Dine and early EQ—is here for the first time in the mystery field taken up by a professional novelist with the proper theoretical equipment.

—J. M. Purcell

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Murderess Ink by Dilys Winn. Workman Publishing Co., 1979. $6.96.

Given the success of *Murder Ink,* this companion volume was probably inevitable. Ms. Winn has given us a handsome "trade" (i.e. expensive) paperback, identical in format to *Murder I,* with a very fine picture of a ladies' maid holding an extremely lethal glass of sherry (or perhaps Madeira). It would be nice to report that this book, like its predecessor, is a fan's triumph: but that is not the case.

Murderess I suffers from a bad case of sequelitis: enough material to make about a 125–150 page book is strung out and/or supplemental to approach the length of *Murder I.* There are some invaluable pieces: Kathleen Maio's scholarly discussion of early detective fiction by women, which quite upsets and refutes much of the standard history-of-detective-fiction works (the notes says Ms. Maio is researching a book on this topic, and from this sample, it should be dynamite); Mary Groff's linking of famous murderesses and suspects to fictional treatments; nice reminiscences by Ngaio Marsh, Patricia Moyes, and Josephine Bell, among others; a good piece on Elizabeth Daly, by Lenore Offord, and two fine articles on Craig Rice. And there are some nice instances of the screwball trivia sort which made *Murder I* so much fun—a floor plan of Harrod's, for example.

But this material is almost lost in a welter of easily forgettable "let's make up corny plots" articles. Do we really need or want to know what Ms. Winn and friends think are the most notable marks of the Shady Lady, or read semi-pastiches of domestic horror stories, or standard blackmail plots, or a standard Stately Homes plot, and so on and so on? A totally non-statistical overview leaves the impression that as much as half the book's pages are taken up with this kind of stuff. And the little sidebar boxes, which in the first volume were filled with nice tidbits from famous people, writers and non-writers, about the mystery story, here often come to naught—why in the world do we want to read a paragraph by Edith Head telling us that she does not read mysteries?, and a solid black entry entitled "The Lady who Disappeared into the Night" looks like a desperate move to fill up 6 column-inches. And the book is rife with typos, the most egragious of which is a recipe for a "perfect Martini": 3 parts vermouth to 1 part gin! It is devoutly to be hoped that no one follows this recipe (which is controverted obscurely by the text below)—mayhem might well result.

There is some pure gold here, and we must thank Ms. Winn for it: if only it were not hopelessly outnumbered by the rest of the contents! So much of it must have sounded hilarious around the table: like too many in-jokes, the material does not bear transferring to print.

—Norman D. Hinton

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Holy Disorders by Edmund Crispin. Walker & Co., 1945

In the second of Walker's reprints of the Gervase Fen series we have a well-nigh perfect evocation of all the enjoyable, workable techniques and tricks of the Golden Age. Bursting with humor, wit and literary references, *Disorders* relates Fen's adventures in an English sea-side cathedral town at the end of the Second World War. Spies, witches and greedy church leaders are only part of the zany plot elements. Brooks, the church organist, sets off the action by receiving a lethal beating on his way home from choir practice one night. Then the head of the cathedral, Dr. Brooks, was crushed beneath a fallen slab of stone, the padlocked covering of an old tomb. These might seem gory, unseemly atrocities in a cathedral, but they are glossed over in pursuit of insects, romance, and entry into a locked church. In short, *Disorders* is pure enjoyment.

—Fred Dueren

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Winter Stalk by James L. Stowe. Simon and Schuster. 284 pp. $9.95

Haunted by a secret from the past and chased by a shadowy pair of pursuers, Kate and David Meredith have the usual problems that afflict distressed couples in suspense novels.

But *Winter Stalk* is no ordinary novel. It is one part Fenimore Cooper, one part D. H. Lawrence, and one part Alfred Hitchcock.

Trapped by a New Mexico blizzard, the Merediths urgently need to find shelter, sanctuary, and first aid for their ailing infant son. Rescue arrives in the form of a mysterious deer hunter, whose peculiarity is the bow and arrow stalk, and his solicitous wife, who keeps a family skeleton locked in her gothic closet. For them, and for their guests, a winter of warm discontent and chilling discovery has only just begun.

James Stowe's unusual plot sends the lost couple on a perilous journey through the southwestern American wilderness into the unexplored wilds of the human heart.

Mysteries such as these might tax any ingenious novelist's ability to plant his clues and keep his reader guessing until the moment of truth. Stowe is a skilful architect, however, and his carefully prepared Freudian finale even manages to give a new twist to the old Oedipal horror.

Winter Stalk is a perfect winter evening's recreation for readers who like the creeping anxiety of a well-told suspense yarn and the freedom to play armchair detective (or armchair analyst). It also provides a valuable boost to two fine novelists who need to learn, or be reminded, how to tell their tale in a way that keeps the reader obediently turning the page.

Despite Stowe's tendency to mingle too many interior monologues and lean too heavily on a few symbolic props, *Winter Stalk* is difficult to put down. The strangely troubled and troubling archer of the novel is just the sort of figure who can lend piquancy to a dark and stormy night, and there are those irresistibly dangerous riddles of possessive love that lend the book its puzzle, its urgency, and its central tension.

Whether the reader prefers to follow the snake footprints in the snow or track the more elusive mystery of personality all the way back to its source in the womb, the quarry is worth the stalk. Stowe's gifts for pacing, eerie atmospherics, and tantalizing characters have produced an offbeat experiment in literary terror and introduced a talented new craftsman of the psychodramatic thriller.

—Howard Lachtman

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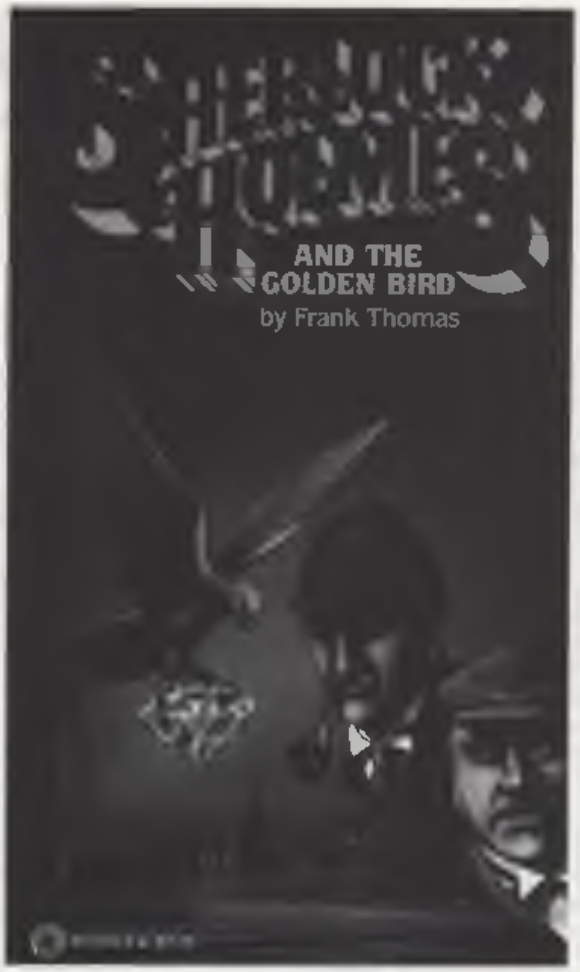
Sherlock Holmes and the Golden Bird by Frank Thomas. Pinnacle Books, 1979. 246 pp. $2.25

In this pastiche Holmes agrees to continue a case begun by a fellow sleuth who is dying. The problem is to find a twenty-three inch statue of a roc made of gold which, since the eighteenth century, has had a mysterious history of appearing, disappearing and being stolen. It has recently been stolen again just as a collector in Berlin, Yael D'Anglas, hopes to buy it. For some reason the statue of the bird seems to have a value beyond its simple worth as an objet d'art cast in gold. To solve the mystery Holmes and Watson pursue the elusive statue in Berlin and Constantinople as well as London and other parts of England. Along the way they encounter Basil Sellick, an aged, unscrupulous British collector, and Chu Sun Fu, owner of a vast empire of opium dens and houses of prostitution, both of whom covet the statue of the bird. Slowly, Holmes unravels the intricate web of secrets which have surrounded the bird for more than a century and comes up with a long lost diamond.

The new adventure of Sherlock Holmes has two weaknesses. First, it is obvious to anyone who has read widely in mystery fiction that a jewel must be hidden within the statue of the golden bird. The use of statues to conceal such treasures is nearly a commonplace in detective stories as seen, for example, in Doyle's own "Adventure of the Six Napoleons" and Freeman's *Shadowy Monkey*. The discovery by Holmes of a diamond of great value in the golden bird is anti-climactic. Most readers are certain what is hidden inside the statue within a page or two of the first description of the bird. A second weakness is the over-use of such phrases as "ol' chap" and "ol' fellow" by Sherlock Holmes. Presumably such phrases (variations include "ol' boy," "ol' comrade," and "ol' friend") are attempts to show Holmes' camaraderie with Dr. Watson. But Holmes rarely speaks in this fashion in the original Sherlockian stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. For example, Holmes uses "ol' chap" at least five times between pages 70 and 85, in this pastiche, and at least four times between pages 151 and 186. In fact Thomas is consistent in offering Holmes' usage as "ol' friend" (page 208) and "old friend" (pages 122, 187). The over-use of these phrases becomes annoying. And anyone who has not read the original Doyle stories (is there such a reader?) might come to believe that Sherlock Holmes uses such expressions much more frequently than in fact he does.



There are some plusses in *Sherlock Holmes and the Golden Bird*. Thomas plays the game of the Baker Street Irregulars very well. He claims to have discovered Dr. Watson's dispatch box in the bank vaults of Cox & Co. The biographical sketch, "About the Author" (page 239), is of Dr. Watson and not Frank Thomas; various references to other Holmes stories (some invented by Thomas in footnotes) are given, and minor characters from the original Holmes stories appear. A definite strength is Thomas' portrait of Dr. Watson. The faithful doctor is more astute than usual. As he relates this story, Watson states he often deliberately asks Holmes naive or simple-minded questions to draw Holmes forth on theatrical method. This technique is that of Boswell and helps explain the ofttimes dumbness of Watson as narrator. And in chapter eleven Dr. Watson, when threatened in a bar, raises a chair and unintentionally and hilariously subdues his enemies. With a chuckle, Holmes says Watson is "The Famous Chair Fighter of the Andaman Islands." Other phrases include the clear deductions made by Holmes and his solutions of code and cipher. The final disposition of the diamond, which Holmes has sought so patiently, is a surprise indeed. By now, novel length pastiches of Sherlock Holmes are numerous, and the merits of each —as direct imitation of Conan Doyle's original stories—vary widely. The present pastiche, regardless of some excellent parts, is recommended mainly for Sherlockian completists, those admirers of Holmes who simply can't read enough about the Great Detective's post-Doyle adventures.

—Edward Lauterbach

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Tales of Terror and Mystery by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Penguin Books, 1979. 224 pp. $2.50

Though Conan Doyle is always remembered as the creator of Sherlock Holmes, he wrote many other stories and novels that do not concern the great detective. *Tales of Terror and Mystery* gives a selection of this fiction. All the stories in this collection, regardless of type, emphasize the elements of mystery and suspense. Often the mystery elements are of the WHYDUNIT variety, rather than WHODUNIT—why is what happens happening? The actors in these stories are usually less important than the events. In a WHODUNIT the detective concentrates on finding the criminal—a person—thus focusing attention on character. In a WHYDUNIT the reader is intent on discovering the cause and the *modus operandi* of a crime or series of mysterious happenings. The two types of mysteries, of course, can be interrelated. Many of the stories in this Doyle collection do contain crime, though the crime, or the puzzle caused by crime, is not necessarily solved by a detective. Only two are detective stories, though detective stories of a curious kind. The other stories are science fiction, horror, supernatural, and satire, and all are WHYDUNITS. "The Horror of the Heights" and "The Terror of Blue John Gap" are science fiction in the tradition of H. G. Wells. "Heights" tells of the discovery of a monstrous life form that lives in the stratosphere; "Blue John Gap" relates an encounter with a form of prehistoric life below the earth in an ancient Roman mine. Both stories are typical of late Victorian and Edwardian science fiction. "The Leather Funnel" is an excellent example of Doyle's supernatural horror; a psychic force emanates from a tool of torture, causing a terrifying occult vision. Revenge for faithless love lies behind "The New Catacomb" and "The Case of Lady Sannox." In "Catacomb" rival archaeologists vie for a girl's love, and the seducer is left to wander in an endless maze of blackness. "Lady Sannox" is guaranteed to make anyone's flesh creep, when a surgeon is tricked into slicing off the lip of the woman he loves. "The Brazilian Cat" pits a man against a jungle beast and describes his escape. "The Beetle-Hunter" is a story of madness; "The Japanned Box" is an early example of a mystery story using a phonographic recording; "The Black Doctor" relies on identical twins (a minor doppleganger motif), and "The Jew's Breastplate" is an example of the Victorian belief in the redemptive power of a good woman. "The Nightmare Room" is a curious piece satirizing the melodramatic conventions of romantic fiction and silent motion pictures.

Though no Sherlock Holmes stories are included in this book, "The Lost Special" and "The Man with the Watches" are often considered apocryphal tales of the Holmes canon. Both stories concern crime and railroads. In "The Lost Special" an engine and two cars disappear completely, and in "The Man with the Watches" three people disappear from a coach. The solutions to these mysteries are clever, but what makes "Lost Special" and "Watches" so interesting is that in each an unnamed "private investi-

gator" offers a solution in letters to the editor, published in newspapers. The manner of writing and the deductions in the two letters certainly sound like Sherlock Holmes. For example, the detective writes, "It is one of the elementary principles of practical reasoning that when the impossible has been eliminated the residuum, *however improbable,* must contain the truth" (p. 118). However, in both cases, the deductions of the unnamed sleuth are only half-right. If the letter-writing detective is meant to be Holmes, he is not Holmes at his best. *Tales of Terror and Mystery* is an excellent sampler of Doyle's short stories. If some show reliance on various conventions of Victorian fiction such as revenge for betrayed love and mysterious twin brothers, most of these stories should please any reader who savors mystery and suspense.

—Edward Lauterbach

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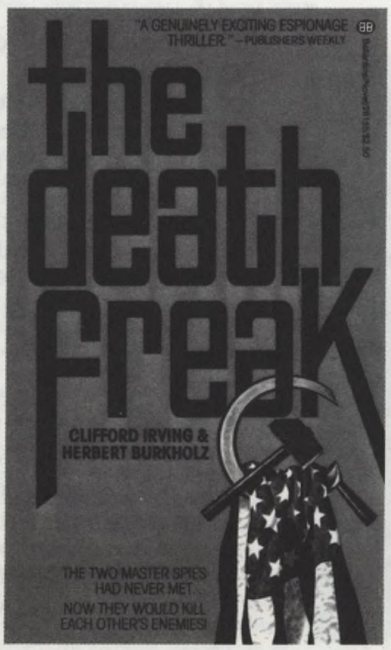
The Death Freak by Clifford Irving and Herbert Burkholz. Ballantine. 277 pp. $2.50

An elegant mirror-image plot powers *The Death Freak*. Ed Mancuso, a twenty-year veteran of the CIA, decides he's tired of being a spy and wants to quit. The only problem is that his superiors would rather see him dead than out of the service. Meanwhile, 5,000 miles to the east, KGB operative



Vasily Borgneff is coming to the conclusion that *he* wants out, too. The only problem: you guessed it.

Our heroes' troubles are compounded by the fact that their respective agencies each possess a supercomputer programmed to anticipate their every move and recommend the best way to stop them. Against these odds, they seem in imminent danger of termination.

But Mancuso and Borgneff have some advantages, too. For one thing, they possess a pipeline into the CIA command through Chalice, nymphomaniacal wife of a top spy. She brings the two fugitives together and keeps them informed as to what the bigwigs are planning next. What's more, both Mancuso and Borgneff are experts in designing Unusual Killing Devices, those nasty contraptions like backward-shooting pistols and poisoned cigars by which the world's espionage outfits seek to eliminate each other's agents. *The Death Freak* develops as an extended duel between the two hunted spies and their ruthless superiors, and before it's finished there are corpses scattered from Kiev to Williamsburg, with a surprise ending involving the death freak of the title.

Authors Irving and Burkholz have obviously conducted extensive research, and there are numerous convincing descriptions of how spies extract hornet venom and manufacture explosives out of styrofoam insulation. (In fact, an authors' note printed before page one warns the reader not to try duplicating any of the devices in the book; apparently *The Death Freak* is hazardous to your health, like cigarettes and low-calorie soda pop.) But one murder is pretty much like the next, and by the halfway point the novel is in danger of dissolving into a dreary how-to handbook for killing people.

The authors realize this and solve the problem by introducing one Thomas Crowfoot, a new character who simultaneously speeds up the plot and sends it jetting into fantasy land. Crowfoot is the legendary American Indian spymaster who has masterminded every major U.S. intelligence operation since the Second World War. Though well over seventy years old, he's still the best we have, and no slouch with whiskey or the ladies, either. Crowfoot takes over the search for Mancuso and Borgneff, and all connections with reality suddenly disappear. *The Death Freak* climaxes with an entertaining but totally preposterous encounter at colonial Williamsburg, as Mancuso and Borgneff try to smuggle a laser into a mock Revolutionary War battle.

Odd as it sounds, this self-conscious farce is *The Death Freak's* saving grace. The book refuses to take itself seriously, in contrast to the current number-one bestseller, *The Matarese Circle,* which also features a Russian and an American joining forces to save the world. *Circle* tries to make a Meaningful Statement about the shape of the world, but instead comes off cloyingly smug and laughably paranoid; it works the thriller cliches as solemnly as a comic book, and carries all the impact of one. In contrast, *The Death Freak* sits back and mocks itself, an ultimately much wiser formula. The book is a first-rate entertainment.

—Carl Hoffman

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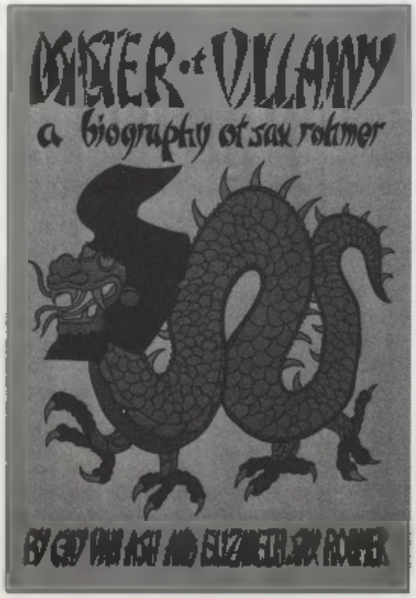
On Compiling a Sax Rohmer Collection

By Alan Warren

Strange, but true: I owe my interest in collecting Sax Rohmer to a book I never expected to find, a mimeographed volume entitled *Bibliography of Adventure*, compiled by Bradford M. Day. It's a scarce work today, and even in 1967, when I acquired it, it wasn't all that easy to come by. The truly odd thing about it, however, was the fact that I found it for sale at the very bookstore where, a week earlier, I had been *reading* about it—in an out-of-print issue of a science-fiction magazine—convinced I would never be lucky enough to get hold of it. It sounded interesting: besides the work of Rohmer, there were full bibliographies of H. Rider Haggard, Talbot Mundy, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. Imagine, then, my surprise at returning to this same bookstore a week after hearing of the volume and finding there a stack of copies, priced at just slightly over the original cost! Luck was with me that day.

I read the entire book, rereading the section on Rohmer several times. I can't explain just what it was that initially attracted me to his books, but I think the *names* had a great deal to do with it; there was genuine magic in reading of titles like *Bat Wing, The Green Eyes of Bast, The Moon Is Red, Dope, Grey Face,* and—my favorite of all, and the book I had the hardest time obtaining—*The Haunting of Low Fennel.* My fourteen-year-old breast surged at the thought of obtaining copies of "those books with the great titles"; exactly when the thought of collecting all of them crossed my mind, I cannot say, but it came soon enough. Up until then, I had known Sax Rohmer only as the creator of Dr. Fu Manchu; and my experiences with the Devil Doctor had been with the movie versions of his career, not the books. Thus, a whole new—and totally fascinating—world had been opened up for me, and a challenging goal had been set: I would get at least one copy of every Rohmer work listed in the Bibliography, from *The Bat Flies Low* to *Yu'an Hee See Laughs.* I don't know if I really had any idea of what I was letting myself in for—I just thought it would be fun.



I was not wrong in that: it *has* been fun; but it has taken ten years. Ten years of great thrills, enormous frustrations, and numerous disappointments. In short, it's kept me busy.

As with collecting the works of any particular author, the collector first goes after the "easy" titles, the ones in print, available to collector and non-collector alike. In Rohmer's case, of course, this means the Fu Manchu books—fourteen of them, all available in paperback. These I was able to acquire early on (except for the last one, *The Wrath of Fu Manchu,* which did not appear until 1973), both in paperback and hardcover. After these came the slightly more difficult, but still accessible, titles obtained at a bookstore here, a science-fiction convention there, and through the mail. Thus, by the end of the sixties, I had more than half of Rohmer's forty-nine titles (three more were to be published, for the first time, in the seventies).

But by now the usual sources for acquiring these had either dried up or else simply weren't offering anything more. In 1969, however, I got lucky—or so I thought (luck has a nasty habit of turning from good to bad).

That year, I attended the World Science Fiction Convention in St. Louis, and, strolling through the dealers' room, I chanced to see some ancient hard-cover books at one table. I looked at the titles, first with a mild interest, and then with awe: one of the books was *The Haunting of Low Fennel,* which I wanted more than I've ever wanted any book in my life. Gingerly, I lifted it from its place on the table and opened it with trembling fingers. The price was six dollars and fifty cents—a reasonable cost for a

book I would gladly have paid ten times that amount for. There were a couple other Rohmer titles: *White Velvet,* one of his scarcest, and another, whose title escapes me even now. I bought all three, and stowed them away in my suitcase, intending to read them the minute I got home. I never got the chance.

The problem was this: in taking a plane from St. Louis to San Francisco, I was obliged to transfer to a helicopter and ride in that the rest of the way into Oakland. But someone (I never found out who) took my suitcase, presumably by mistake, and in that suitcase was that precious copy of *The Haunting of Low Fennel,* along with everything else I'd bought at the Con. That was in 1969, and to this day I have not seen any of the contents of that suitcase, nor do I expect I ever will. The helicopter company (which has since gone out of business) gave me a check to cover my loses, but in this case money was a poor substitute for the missing items, which proved—as I had feared—irreplaceable (for some years, anyway: I didn't get a replacement copy of *Low Fennel* until 1977, the year I completed my collection). Consequently, to this day I have an aversion to helicopter flights.

Other missing pieces in the jigsaw puzzle I was assembling presented themselves in time: I found a copy of *Tales of Secret Egypt* in the ten-cent box of a tiny, dingy fisherman's shop in Northern California that sold fishing tackle and bait, primarily; I uncovered a copy of *White Velvet* in an Oakland bookstore, priced at a dollar and a half (the clerk asked me why I was buying it, as if the volume were completely worthless); and, in a tiny bookstore in Philadelphia, I came across an entire *shelf* of titles I needed: there before my eyes were *The Bat Flies Low, Grey Face, She Who Sleeps, Fu Manchu's Bride, The Emperor of America, The Quest of the Sacred Slipper, Brood of the Witch Queen,* and several others, priced at a dollar and twenty-five cents apiece.

I should mention that, somewhere around this time, Bookfinger reprints came into business: this company, specializing in limited-edition, low-cost reprints of hard-to-find Rohmer titles, offered several I was unable to find anywhere else: *The Moon Is Red, Tales of East and West, Sinister Madonna,* and *The Exploits of Captain O'Hagan,* among others. Once these titles were in my collection, the rest was comparatively easy. The main stumbling block was still *The Haunting of Low Fennel,* which was—as I'd always suspected it would be—one of the very last titles I found: it was number 273 on a list of fantasy books available by mail. It cost me twenty-five dollars, four times what I'd paid in 1969, but I have no complaints: it's a great book, a collection of Rohmer's best and most characteristic short stories. I was rather surprised, however, when it did *not* come out in paperback a week after I'd finally procured a hardcover copy.

As I mentioned before, three Sax Rohmer titles did not come into being until the seventies: one was a paperback entitled *The Secret of Holm Peel, and Other Stories;* another, *Wulfheim,* was a very atypical novel published during Rohmer's lifetime under the pseudonym "Michael Furey"; and the third was the aforementioned *Wrath of Fu Manchu,* another collection of stories. I was, understandably, surprised and pleased to get these three titles with such little effort.

I won't go into the pleasure of reading Sax Rohmer's works: I leave that for the enterprising mystery addict to discover for himself. All I can say is that there's a very special thrill of finally laying your hands upon a particular title you've wanted for so long that you've come to doubt it even exists. That is the thrill I spent ten years looking for, and hoping to experience—ten years of searching the shelves of obscure bookshops in every part of the U.S., of looking hopefully at the old book displays at science-fiction conventions and fantasy bookstores, of mailing off sizable checks to bookdealers around the world, only to receive the checks back along with a note reading, "Sorry; book sold."

It's quite unfair, however, to stress the low points; the highs have made up for them. In some ways, in fact, I'm at my lowest point *now,* for I have all the books, and so the thrill of the chase is over. I'm still after some first editions, of course, and my eventual goal is to have first editions of everything, but the big thrill of finally getting, and reading, a previously unobtainable title, is gone. Perhaps the only way I can recapture the fun I had in the pursuit of my goal would be for me to dispose of my collection and then start again, from scratch. But something tells me I'd hate myself in the morning.

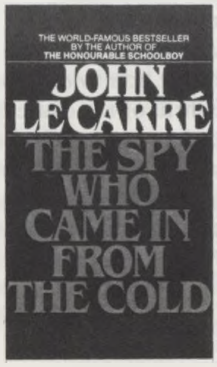
John Le Carre's Circus

By Harry D. Dawson

Just as our calling the CIA "the company" probably reflects an American obsession with corporate structures, John Le Carre's use of the term "the Circus" to denote his fictitious British Secret Service suggests an admiration for the flair, the showmanship, the precision, the skill, and the daring that once characterized performances under the big top. At the same time, the circus motif allows Le Carre to suggest that the operations of a modern intelligence agency are as complex and confusing as the proverbial three-ring circus. Finally, the term implies that international espionage is basically a gawdy but essentially phony spectacle put on mainly to serve the interests of those who run it—a recurring theme in Le Carré's spy fiction.

Directing the spectacle is the Chief of Circus—a role played by a succession of characters. Like a Barnum and Bailey ringmaster, the Chief puts the various performers through their paces, always with one eye on the crowd (the public) and the other on the owners (the government ministry responsible for the Circus). The pressures of this job are enormous, and the only character who lasts long at it is George Smiley's mentor, Control, who dies in office.

The heroes of Le Carre's books, however, are the field men who, manipulated and tricked by the London office, become the sad clowns of Le Carre's Circus. Alec Leamas of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), sent into East Germany believing that his mission is to kill Hans-Dieter Mundt, a vicious neo-Nazi high in the East German intelligence hierarchy, learns that Mundt is actually a double agent working for London, and that his own mission is, in reality, intended to shore up Mundt's credibility within the East German agency. Jerry Westerby of *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977), having realized the moral bankruptcy of his work, tries to disrupt the



conclusion of the operation for which his own mission has laid the groundwork, and, as a result, is needlessly killed by his own people. Smiley himself plays the sad clown as he tolerates the chronic infidelity of his beautiful and aristocratic wife and as he is repeatedly forced into retirement by the service to which he is so devoted.

Analogous to the high-wire and trapeze artists who perform without the security of a net are the agents who daily expose themselves to the dangers of discovery and death. Though they are supported and even pampered by London as long as they are useful, they are routinely sacrificed when the interests of the Circus so dictate. Leamas's network, deliberately fed to Mundt in order to build up his reputation as a counter-spy, serves as an example.

Many of the minor characters in Le Carre's fiction are grotesques reminiscent of the sideshow freaks on display outside the big top of the traditional circus. Connie Sachs, the Sovietologist of *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974) and *The Honourable Schoolboy*, is an arthritic, overweight, alcoholic spinster with a keen mind and deep loyalty to Smiley. Her counterpart, China-watcher Doc de Salis, reminds his colleagues of an insane priest. Fawn, Smiley's devoted bodyguard, is a diminutive killer who in *The Honourable Schoolboy* takes sadistic pleasure in breaking both arms of a Chinese youth who tries to steal his watch.

S. Kanfer has noted that in *The Honourable Schoolboy* the once glorious Circus is reduced to a cheap carnival.[1] One might add that that has happened to most circuses in recent years and to many spy agencies. In a larger sense it has happened to the British Empire, once the greatest show on earth.

FORM AND FORMULA IN DETECTIVE DRAMA

INSTALLMENT VIII

By Charles LaBorde

VARIATIONS

In addition to the major formulas for writing modern mystery dramas, many sub-formulas exist that are simply variations on the standard approaches. Four such variations appear on the list of successful confined-mystery plays: ghost drama, which dwells upon supernatural ingredients and often enlists aid from occult forces to solve the mystery problem; collective detective mystery, in which the detective function shifts constantly from one character to another; environmental mystery, which employs the entire theatre-building as an integral part of its setting and assigns an active role of participation to the audience; and propagandistic detective drama, in which extraneous, politically related thought is imposed upon a basic mystery formula. A brief analysis of these four variations reveals the extent to which a single change in a mystery formula can radically alter the standard pattern.

The first of these sub-formulas, ghost drama, violates the general rule for writers of mystery that prohibits the use of fantasy, supernatural forces, or occult sciences.[1] Since a detective purportedly solves a mystery by a rational process of deduction, authors consider it unfair to use supernatural forces to reach a solution. Such aid to the detective effectively removes a work from the realm of true mysteries, in which detective and audience alike get an equal opportunity to assess clues and solve the problem. Nevertheless, as has been noted previously in this study, stage mysteries have never been particularly fair in their treatment of clues and solutions. Authors of mystery drama have seen fit on occasion to employ supernatural materials both as part of the basic premise of their works and as a means of solution.

Four confined-mystery plays utilizing varying amounts of supernatural ingredients are Bayard Veiller's *The Thirteenth Chair,*[2] Arnold Ridley's *The Ghost Train,*[3] Emlyn Williams's *A Murder Has Been Arranged,*[4] and William Archibald's *The Innocents,*[5] an adaptation of Henry James's short novel, *The Turn of the Screw.* Essentially, each of these dramas belongs to one of the major confined-mystery formulas. Veiller's play possesses the standard qualities of a procedural, while the Ridley work is an example of a murder-house mystery. *A Murder Has Been Arranged* is an almost perfect formula play of the inverted school. *The Innocents,* with its strong delineation of character and depiction of the collapse of mental acuity under great stress, obviously stems from the psychological-thriller formula. Although the plays fit neatly into separate categories, some points of similarity may be found. Those resemblances arise directly from the employment of supernatural material and, therefore, offer some insights into its use in standard mystery formulas.

A supernatural motif greatly affects a mystery's method of solution. Before such methods can be examined, however, the typical nature of the mystery questions should be noted. The question to be answered at the end of a supernatural play may be either "Who done it?" or "What is happening?" *The Thirteenth Chair* and *A Murder Has Been Arranged* ask the first question or a formula-based variation of it.[6] In *The Ghost Train* and *The Innocents* the mystery questions belong to the second category: the central characters seek explanations for mysterious events that are taking place.

Plays posing the first mystery question must, of necessity, have supernatural, non-logical solutions. If such "whodunits" were to use a standard deductive solution, few supernatural elements would remain. The dramas would simply be typical examples of the major formulas that merely include allusions to seances (*The Thirteenth Chair*) or ghost-chasing (*A Murder Has Been Arranged*), since they do not contain any inexplicable incidents before the entrapment of the villain,[7] as do plays such as *The Ghost Train* and *The Innocents,* in which ghostly occurrences are more pervasive. In the resolution scenes of both *The Thirteenth Chair* and *A Murder Has Been Arranged,* however, supernatural elements are fully integrated into the action and become the means to uncover the villain's identity.

Such methods of solution are actually modern versions of a *deus ex machina,* the Euripidean device of having the gods almost magically resolve an insoluble situation. In *The Thirteenth Chair* the guests and a medium spend most of their time disproving the existence of supernatural forces. When the medium can find no other method of catching the criminal, however, she appeals to the occult world for a "real message" (III.101). Her importuning is finally answered at the moment of solution, when strange forces douse lights, open

windows and doors, and make the murder weapon reappear (III.103), thereby driving the killer insane and causing him to admit his misdeed. A *deus* is necessary because the functional detective, the medium, has admitted defeat and because no clues to the killer's identity have been presented. Since it follows the inverted formula, *A Murder Has Been Arranged* emphasizes the question of how the killer will be trapped into revealing his crime. Because the cautious murderer has devised a foolproof plan, a *deus* must again be injected into the solution scene of a play that has continually hinted at ghosts but has offered none up to that point. As occurred in the Veiller play, supernatural forces take over where the mortal shortcomings of the problem-solver leave off. The ghost of the victim makes a startling appearance on stage and so unnerves the killer that the villain inadvertently reveals how he falsified evidence. He then, rather conveniently, goes insane (III.105–6).

In supernatural dramas using the second mystery question of "What is happening?" two general methods of solution are possible. One approach discounts all supernatural influences and offers a supposedly logical explanation, no matter how strange events may have seemed up to that point. The use of such a non-supernatural solution, while at the same time retaining the overall impression of a ghost story, is possible because all events prior to the solution have borne the impression that supernatural forces are at work.[8] In *The Ghost Train,* which utilizes such an approach, the strange events in the play at first appear to be the fulfillment of a legend involving a phantom locomotive. No clues leading to any other explanation are provided. At the moment of solution, however, the detective reveals his identity and presents a lengthy, unexpected, and improbable explanation of the previously inexplicable occurrences. Somewhat more artistic, unified, and structurally logical is the solution that takes a diametic approach. William Archibald uses such a solution in *The Innocents* rather than resort to an improbable, last-minute recounting of a hoax. He develops his resolution gradually along firmly established lines of the probability and eventual necessity that supernatural beings are, in fact, very much at work in the home of the innocent children.

The types of emotions aroused by supernatural mysteries are even more noteworthy than their methods of solution. In most mystery formulas bafflement dominates. Only occasionally, such as in murder-house mysteries, do fear, hate, and suspense contribute significantly to the emotional makeup of crime dramas. In supernatural plays the roles reverse. Bafflement is subordinated to fear and its attendant emotions of hate and suspense. Furthermore, the less the play resembles a standard mystery (that is, the more pervasive its supernatural ingredients), the less important bafflement becomes. In *The Ghost Train,* with its eventual logical explanation, bafflement seems strongest, since no one ever completely accepts the possibility of supernatural influence and all of the characters continue to seek a reasonable solution. Conversely, *The Innocents* depicts no one doubting the presence of the ghosts from the moment that it is suggested they exist.[9] From that point on, the mystery element of bafflement is effectively eliminated in the Archibald drama.[10] Fear, hate, and suspense fill the supernatural plays and become increasingly strong as bafflement dissipates. Of the three emotions aroused, fear is strongest, but ordinarily suspense, too, arises considerably. As in all mysteries, creation of hate remains a problem during those scenes that occur before the villain's identity is known.

The three emotions develop earliest and strongest in *The Innocents,* since the play is virtually devoid of bafflement after the fourth scene. Particularly effective is the creation of suspense and hate, both of which benefit from the early acknowledgment of the existence of ghosts. Since it is evident that ghosts are the sources of the trouble in the play, hate is easily created for them. Because the governess realizes she is fighting almost insurmountable foes, defeat seems inevitable. The inescapable misfortune that must accompany a final confrontation provides excellent material for creation of suspense, which depends heavily upon an expectation of disaster. While such difficult-to-achieve emotions as those aroused in *The Innocents* can be evoked only by a skillful dramatist, the potential for them exists more strongly in all supernatural plays than in any of the other confined-mystery formulas.

Just as fear, hate, and suspense replace bafflement in a play placing emphasis on supernatural ingredients, deduction gives way to discussion of preternatural occurrences. All too often such talk is external to the play and seems to be merely an addendum. Such thought usually appears in supposedly weighty discussions about the existence of supernatural forces. In *The Thirteenth Chair,* Bayard Veiller provides debates over the trickery employed in seances, with the medium asserting that she possesses "a power—a wonderful—power" (I.18). *The Ghost Train* contains debunking of spooks in the face of apparently incontrovertible proof that ghosts exist (II.47). Occasionally, as in *A Murder Has Been Arranged,* the action of the entire play centers around efforts to establish the existence of ghosts. Only William Archibald disdains the use of empty philosophizing on supernatural occurrences. He presents the ghosts in *The Innocents* as a reality above discussion and debate, thus allowing thought in his play to concern itself with a complex question, the responsibility of every individual for both his duties and his actions. The answer or, more precisely, the exploration of the question is correspondingly complex; Archibald examines responsibility throughout his

tale of supernatural possession and not merely in occasional set speeches. Ultimately he offers no answer, but only more questions, as befits such a complicated quandary.

Sound and spectacle play especially important roles in plays utilizing a supernatural motif. Both elements function in all ghost mysteries as principal contributions to the creation of fear. Each play demonstrates, however, its own peculiar variety in the use of sound or spectacle to evoke the fearful. Sometimes the setting dominates in the creation of fear, while at other times sounds, music, lighting, or even special effects serve as the primary contributors.

In *The Thirteenth Chair* the drawing-room setting does little to establish the probability of fearful incidents. Instead, the author depends on special effects utilized in combination with elaborate sound and light cues. The technique is most apparent in the final ghost scene: a door swings open by itself; window curtains fly back and the shade rises noisily; light streams in through the window and illuminates the ceiling as the room lighting dims; a knife embedded in the ceiling is revealed in the light and then begins to fall; it sticks in the table below, directly in front of the killer (III.103). The complexity of the effects goes beyond the mere number of them crowded into a short span of time. The single device of the falling knife involves an elaborate system of slots and wires to enable the showing of the knife as it falls and embeds itself in the table. The following stage direction best conveys the complexity of this small but powerful special effect:

> In ceiling, directly over table R., is a double slot to hold knives. During first act, . . . the knife, in down stage slot, is let down in sight of audience. Seen with point sticking in ceiling. Between second and third acts, the knife that falls on cue, during the third act, is placed up stage slot in ceiling, with point downwards. Setting the knife down in view of audience in first act, as well as releasing the second knife so that it falls, and sticks in table during third act, is worked by strings off stage R (I.6–7).

Such an exceedingly elaborate blend of sight and sound is only one of many instances of Veiller's strong dependency upon the two elements.

Arnold Ridley utilizes a mysterious setting as well as special sound and visual effects in *The Ghost Train*. His deserted train station is "dingy. . . .dirty . . .grimy. . .smoked up. . .scarred" (I.7). Ridley particularly excels in his suggestion through sound and lighting of the unseen ghost train. Strongest aid in the creation of the phantom vehicle comes from an assortment of sounds: "Clang-clang-clang. . .whistle . . .roar. . .noise of the engine. . .grinding of the brakes. . .hissing" (I.9). The stage electrician is called upon to augment the sound effects with simulations of headlights, red flares, and the swiftly moving lights of the coaches (II.73) in order to provide a thoroughly horrifying and representational experience.

Although the two plays that actually depict ghosts, *A Murder Has Been Arranged* and *The Innocents*, do not use realistic sound extensively,[11] they fully utilize lighting and visual effects, including on-stage disappearances of the ghosts from time to time (*Murder*, III.106; *Innocents*, II.iii.439). The Emlyn Williams play utilizes the less-than-novel, but still effective, feature of a gloomy deserted theatre as the setting for supernatural events, while Archibald calls for the setting of his drama to be so nondescript that it is dominated by fluid lighting (*Innocents*, I.i.375). No matter to what extent each play employs separate sound effects, lights, scenery, or special visual effects, all of the above examples clearly demonstrate how important sound and spectacle are to the supernatural motif in the evocation of the fearful.

Although there is no separately-detailed formula for supernatural or ghost mysteries, plays utilizing that motif possess the common characteristics examined above. Their plot resolutions ordinarily depend upon a non-logical, supernatural explanation. Bafflement is minimal in most ghost plays and is subordinated to fear, hate, and suspense. The dramas' thought does not involve deduction, but instead usually develops in discussions of the existence of supernatural powers. Both sound and spectacle serve as major contributors to the creation of fearful situations. In all other areas of analysis, each ghost play closely adheres to the characteristic features of the formula from which it is derived.

A second variation on the basic formulas comes not from adding a feature, but from the substitution of one for another. The collective-detective mystery, as represented by *Cock Robin*,[12] takes a standard procedural story and omits the police. The officers of the law are replaced, not by a single amateur detective, but by a collective-detective, a group of people who perform the functional role of a detective. This multi-person detective force is the sole remarkable feature of *Cock Robin;* in other aspects it closely resembles other procedurals with an early point of attack. The plot is complex, as a result of the delay of the murder. Characterization is sketchy, while diction consists of realistic speech blended with quasi-period language used in a play-within-the-play. The authors make a somewhat futile attempt in spectacle to enliven their unimaginative setting by depicting it from varying angles in different acts.[13] That last bit of innovation marks the limits of the play's uniqueness in all but its treatment of the detective.

In what has often been labeled a rather pedestrian piece of hack work intended solely to turn a quick profit, the eminent authors Elmer Rice and Philip Barry have ably demonstrated how to handle a collective detective or multiple protagonist. On the

surface their approach seems quite simple: in place of a single character, the authors supply many. If that were the extent of their technique, Rice and Barry could be faulted for contributing to the disunity of an already inherently episodic formula. The authors do more, however, than replace oneness with plurality. Actually their technique never calls for more than one character to assume the role of functional detective at a given moment in the play. What the authors achieve in *Cock Robin* is the creation of a situation in which the role of detective shifts rapidly and fluidly from one character to another so as to convey the impression that there is a group detective working to solve the crime. Shifting of guilt makes possible this fluidity of movement. As apparent guilt changes from one person to another, the prime suspect or a friend coming to his aid must show how the evidence points in yet another direction or to another person. The new suspect (or his defender) then assumes the detective function. Though unapparent in performance or after a cursory reading, the shifts in detectives in this example become quite obvious when closely examined. With the realization that a murder has been committed, a detective is required. Julian Cleveland, an in-law of the deceased, rules out the bothersome presence of the police until the crime is solved. Since it is his decision to omit the police detectives, he first assumes the role of functional investigator. His interpretation of the evidence points to Richard Lane, a jealous rival of the victim. McAuliffe, the stage director, comes to Lane's aid and assumes the guise of detective. He explains away the clues against Lane and in doing so effectively places suspicion on Torrence, the man who fired a property gun in the play-within-the-play. Torrence then sets to work proving his innocence. The pattern continues throughout the second and third acts until the ingenue, Carlotta, seems guilty. Faced with the hateful prospect of seeing his newly-found love carried off to jail, Lane, the original suspect, solves the mystery. The authors have by then placed the dual mantels of suspect and detective upon most of their characters and have come full circle to reach the solution. In the hands of Barry and Rice this device involving a subsitution in detectives proves an effective variation on an overworked formula.[14]

Another type of confined-mystery sub-formula derived by imposing a distinct motif on a standard formula is what might be called an environmental detective play. Only infrequently have mystery dramatists attempted this technique, in which the theatre itself and all its contents, including the audience, become an integral part of the play. Except for dramas such as *Cock Robin,* which merely use a theatre setting, examples of even a limited environmental approach are minimal. Emlyn Williams employs the theatre in which the audience is sitting as

the setting for *A Murder Has Been Arranged;* however, his method goes little beyond filling in blanks in the script with names and dates corresponding to each separate production and performance of the play. Williams ignores the presence of the audience. More audience involvement occurs in *The Gorilla,* by Ralph Spence, when the title character romps up the center aisle of the theatre, but the device is extraneous to the play as a whole. In Thomas Fallon's *The Last Warning,* police place the audience under arrest, but the involvement is entirely passive and the environmental element is introduced only in the final scenes. Seldom has the Broadway theatre employed an environmental approach so extensively, however, as in the mystery play *The Spider* by Fulton Oursler and Lowell Brentano, in which the murder takes place in the audience.[15]

In all of its elements except spectacle, *The Spider* resembles a typical police procedural with occasional murder-house qualities.[16] The play contains a standard murder scene, arrival of the police, confinement of all suspects as material witnesses, and threats to haul everyone to headquarters for more violent questioning. There is nothing remarkable in the play's paucity of clues, implausible solution, lack of unity, and simplicity of plot. The emotions aroused are chiefly bafflement and fear, as would be expected in a play patterned on procedural and murder-house formulas. From the tough, stupid police to the screaming females and sinister foreigners, the characters seem familiar to a frequenter of mystery melodramas. Thought and diction similarly offer nothing new or striking; a remote semblance to a deductive process is hinted at in the final scene, anmd the police speak their standard tough-guy jargon. Even in the areas of sound and spectacle, much of the material in *The Spider* has appeared in countless earlier mystery plays. Lights are extinguished before shots are fired. Women scream for no apparent reason. Special effects taken directly from the typical magician's repertory augment other devices used to instill fear during the melodrama. The sole novel feature of spectacle involved the extraordinary staging of the play. Except for two brief scenes,[17] the

action of *The Spider* takes place on the stage and in the auditorium of a vaudeville theatre, the theatre in which the paying customers are viewing the play. Not only does the entire theatre become the "stage" for the production, but the real audience members also are incorporated into the play.

The authors of *The Spider* strenuously work to convey the impression that the audience members become involved in a murder investigation while they are attending a performance at a vaudeville theatre. The creation of that illusion begins on the street and in the lobby. The outside decoration of the theatre building consists of streamers and bunting typical of a low-class vaudeville house during its celebration of a special occasion. The lobby contains similar displays, as do the boxes in the auditorium itself. Annunciators adorn both sides of the stage. Ushers dress like those in a vaudeville house and bear the name of the fictional theatre on their hats. The program they distribute tells of the acts for a vaudeville show and says nothing about a mystery melodrama. The performance itself begins not with the play proper, as the authors note, but with a series of vaudeville acts such as skaters and black-face entertainers (I.7–8). After several minutes of vaudeville entertainment the mystery commences unobtrusively during a magic act. At that point the authors are no longer content to let the audience sit passively and enjoy the novel setting. Instead, Oursler and Brentano almost immediately get the paying customers involved in the activities.

Audience participation begins when the house lights are brought up and the magician descends into the auditorium. Actors planted in the audience help to get the people in the mood to participate. The fictional members of the audience first offer objects for use in a mindreading act; however, the magician then selects articles from real audience members and uses those objects in his act (I.14). Soon afterward the murder takes place in the audience, thus giving the paying customers a vicarious sense of personal danger. After the arrival of the police, the audience never is allowed to revert to its passive role. Officers roam the aisles of the theatre, guard the exits at intermission, and force people back to their seats when the stage detective wants their attention (I.45). The height of audience involvement comes in the second act when brave viewers are asked to join hands and participate in a seance (II.ii.73). As befits a play with such extensive direct audience involvement, the solution occurs when the killer is tackled in the center aisle of the theatre while trying to sneak out in the dark (III.iii.103). Since *The Spider* maintains its audience-participation motif until the closing moments in such a fashion, the play could prove hazardous to those (e.g., critics) who do not see fit to stay for the curtain call.

A final example of a sub-formula created by imposing an additional feature on an otherwise standard formula play in the propaganda mystery, which enjoyed a limited popularity during the Second World War. While the use of political opinion and the denigration of a particular ideology have never been major factors in Broadway mystery theatre, propaganda did enter into the mystery formula in many plays produced on a regional basis at the time that the United States was preparing for and embroiled in war.[18] Furthermore, mysteries on film and in many other forms readily advocated liberty and democracy in the face of fascism. Everyone from Wonder Woman to Sherlock Holmes fought the hated Nazis.[19] Although elements of propaganda appeared less frequently in Broadway mysteries than in other dramatic forms, the Nazi-centered propaganda boom obtained an early boost in New York with Clare Booth's *Margin for Error*,[20] the first hit play to deal with the subject of the Hitler regime.

Except for its anti-Nazi features, *Margin for Error* is a fairly standard example of a police procedural. All the expected qualities of a police play are present: an early point of attack, a slow introduction of characters, and a careful creation of motives for the eventual murder. Reversals accompany not only the discovery of the body, but also the seldom-used procedural device of revealing that several people have tried to murder the victim.[21] The play also contains an obligatory confinement speech[22] and threats of rougher treatment at the police station.[23] The only standard procedural feature not adhered to is the use of two policemen.[24] Nevertheless, the propaganda ingredients permeating the drama transform it into an entirely different sort of play.

On the level of characterization, the effect of propaganda becomes rather obvious. As is to be expected in a mystery play, characters are typed; however, propaganda requires an exceptional refinement of type to caricature. Boothe provides such an approach to character and even acknowledges it when she describes her victim as "the type of German who makes caricaturists' lives easy, and pro-German propaganda difficult" (I.24). The author reduces the types to the purest of blacks and whites, so that no one can fail to distinguish the ideological heroes from the villains. The following sketch of Moe Finkelstein, a Jewish American, leaves little doubt where the author's sympathies lie:

> Moe is in his late twenties, small, slender and almost handsome in a rather wistful Jewish way. Elaborately and awkwardly polite to his superiors, he is nevertheless fully conscious of his status as a public functionary. His demonstrations of good-will could only be mistaken by snobs for servility. In common with most of the people of his race, he has the gifts of ready sympathy, loquacity and inquisitiveness. Born in some sub-human crevice of a large American city, he has kept intact his allegiance to his family

and to his God (I.6).

The antithesis of that introduction is a somewhat less flattering portrait of an American Nazi:

> Otto Horst, the American Bund leader, is a fat, forty-year-old ex-elocution teacher, with a pasty intramural complexion, who has attempted in vain to suppress his pedagogical pudginess by wearing a tight-fitting Nazi-brown military uniform. . . . Horst is ruthless but timid, he is without a shred of humor, and is generally dour, unless drunk with his own verbosity. Always having imagined himself as a cunning fellow, he is really a facile target for any form of guile or mischief which originates in a superior mind. He is a pushover for flattery, and when it is not forthcoming from others, he is quick to knock himself practically insensible with it. 'Tis a pity he is an American (I.5).

The Fuhrer himself receives a similar treatment, even though only his voice is heard: "And now the Awful, Awful Voice of Hitler, the man who talked a nation and perhaps a civilization to its doom begins, hysterical, gutteral, hideously sure and hard and loud" (I.118). Boothe describes her other characters in the same overly simplistic manner. Only occasionally is a portrait ambivalent and never does that approach occur without a reason. Max, for instance, seems rather likeable for a Nazi; not only does he speak flawless English, but he is also "a nice fellow . . . well bred and well tailored; in short he is the exact opposite of all his own leaders" (I.5). Eventually the reason for Max's personal, sartorial, and elocutionary excellence is made clear: his grandmother was Jewish. Only in such an exceptional case can character treatment in a propaganda play fall anywhere but in the strictest of good-bad delineations.

Propaganda also greatly influences thought in a mystery. Writers of "whodunits" have always been fond of imposing serious moral discussions on their seemingly serious form. Favorite among such topics have been questions of justice, guilt, and vigilantism. Seldom, however, has an author of mysteries indulged himself to the extent that Clare Boothe does in *Margin for Error*. Most of the imposed thought in her play consists of either anti-Nazi or pro-Jewish sentiments: Nazis should not have the right to free speech;[25] Jews are "a biologically sound and superior race" (I.17). Often Boothe merely lets the foolish Nazis speak for themselves. Their un-American aphorisms abound: "Books are dangerous!" (I.33) and "Democracy is a good word for that. Stupidity is better" (I.50). Boothe also includes the standard German threats about one's relatives. She likes that method of depicting the underhandedness of Nazis so much that she uses it on two different occasions (I.23, 51). Nazism is represented as being so detestable in *Margin for Error* that even the Nazis themselves admit it. The villanous Consul exclaims in one of his infrequent truthful moments, "Do you think *I* want to go back to Germany any more than you do? It is an easier country to serve than to live in—just between us" (I.61). Occasionally anti-Nazi thought rises above isolated, one-line attacks against Hitler's regime? however, the scenes that appear to present discussions of the issue are actually assemblages of the same one-liners, as can be seen in this brief exchange:

> DENNY. Every cause gets the leader it deserves.
> CONSUL. I take that as a great compliment to our cause in Germany.
> DENNY. But some causes can't stand transplanting.
> CONSUL. We don't transplant. We sow seeds which propagate naturally.
> DENNY. Baumer, we can't argue. We begin from opposite premises. You believe the citizen was born to serve the state. We believe the citizen is the state—
> CONSUL. Our belief has created a great Germany.
> DENNY. All the returns on Germany are not in yet. Don't forget. America's still the richest and freest nation.
> CONSUL. I hope you can defend this fat Eden (I.80–81).

As extraneous as such arguments are to a mystery, they might still persuade and eventually lead to definite alterations of veiwpoint about the problem under discussion. Boothe fails, however, to provide reasoned debate or workable solutions to the serious material she appends to her mystery. Her rebuttal to Nazi racism employs merely more racism and a strong reliance upon ethnocentric biases.[26]

Diction, music, and spectacle contribute similarly to Boothe's anti-Nazi portrait. The heroic Jew speaks charmingly and ingenuously in a New York-ese that he himself describes as "Just an American way of talking" (I.47). He peppers his diction with such stereotyped Americanisms as "jeez," "you ain't no brother of mine, mister!" "O.K." "Hizzoner the Mayor," "yeah," and "nope" (I.47–51). Conversely, the wicked German Consul speaks not only standard Nazi rhetoric in strongly accented English, but he is also given in moments of stress to uttering the most ungraceful and unmelodic of Teutonic phrases, such as "Schweigen Sie!" "Ach, der Tag!" and "Lassen Sie mich!" (I.51, 55, 69). The same sort of anti-German, pro-Jewish advocacy occurs in the use of music. A recording of a Mendelssohn piece played by Heifetz is enjoyed by all the characters including the Nazi Consul, who mistakes it for Wagnerian opera (I.37). When he is apprised of his error, the German replaces the offending record with the more Teutonic "Liebestod," which does little to improve anyone's disposition. Strident German music also sets the mood for violent events. "Deutschland über Alles" introduces Hitler's radio speech, which soon develops into a carefully orchestrated cacophany of the Awful Voice and the "thunderous, . . . maniacal roar of the 'Seig Heils,' " that are supposed to "fill the theatre" while the murder apparently takes place (I.120). Spectacle never functions with such complexity. The stage directions merely note that the room in the

German Consulate is paneled in "clumsily carved" wood and conveys an impression of deepening gloom (I.3–4), thereby indicating the author's desire to carry the anti-Nazi feeling into this element as well.

Margin for Error is not unlike the other mystery plays, such as *The Thirteenth Chair, Cock Robin,* or *The Spider,* which impose their own particular novelties on otherwise standard formulas. While some dramatists may be faulted for excessiveness or heavy-handedness, as appears to be the case with Boothe, all the authors of such plays have sought to do something worthy of commendation: having selected the basic form of a confined-mystery melodrama, they have attempted to expand the ordinarily severe limitations of that form. Unfortunately, in their quest for novelty, playwrights such as Boothe have sometimes imposed too much upon a frame that cannot support many appendages.

Notes

1. Ronald A. Knox states the rule succinctly in "A Detective Story Decalogue": "All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course." See *The Art of the Mystery Story,* ed. Howard Haycroft (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), p. 194.
2. Bayard Veiller, *The Thirteenth Chair* (New York: Samuel French, 1922). Further references to this play will be noted in the text.
3. Arnold Ridley, *The Ghost Train* (New York: Samuel French, 1932). Further references to this play will be noted in the text.
4. Emlyn Williams, *A Murder Has Been Arranged* (New York: Samuel French, 1931). Further references to this play will be noted in the text.
5. William Archibald, *The Innocents,* in *10 Classic Mystery and Suspense Plays,* ed. Stanley Richards (New York: Dood, Mead, 1973), pp. 367–439. Further references to this play will be noted in the text.
6. In *A Murder Has Been Arranged,* which is an example of an inverted mystery, the standard murder question is reversed to "How will the murderer be caught?"
7. Before their solution scenes, plays like *The Thirteenth Chair* and *A Murder Has Been Arranged* contain only talk about supernatural forces. All of the early, seemingly inexplicable incidents eventually prove to have logical explanations. In their use of mere verbiage about ghosts, such dramas do not differ appreciably from standard formula plays like *The Bat* and *The Donovan Affair.*
8. It can, of course, be argued that such a play does not belong in the category of supernatural mysteries; however, such a drama is actually as supernaturally based as are the "whodunits" with a *deus* ending. The *deus* plays assume the supernatural label during and after the solution, while this type bears the supernatural appearance before the explanation.
9. Archibald prepares for belief in the existence of the ghosts by presenting them as actual beings long before he reveals that they are the spirits of dead people. The male ghost first appears in the second scene of the play (I.ii.386). He is scarcely more than a shadow. During the remainder of that scene and throughout the next two scenes, however, the man makes his presence and his powers increasingly obvious to the governess, Miss Giddens. Only after she describes the man's distinctive appearance to Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper, does Miss Giddens learn that the mysterious intruder is a spirit:

   > Miss Giddens. You know him?
   > Mrs. Grose. Quint. . . . He went [away].
   > Miss Giddens. Went where?
   > Mrs. Grose. God knows where. He died (I.iv.400).

10. Once the ghosts are accepted as the reason for the strange actions of the children, the chief concern becomes one of how to end the supernatural influence. The initial mystery question of "What is happening?" has been answered.
11. While *The Innocents* does not contain much representational sound, the action of the play is underscored with abstract, horrifying noises such as "a low vibration, beginning as an almost inaudible hum. . . an answering throb, deep and vibrating. . . powerful vibration, sharp, ringing. . . musical" (II.iii.436–38).
12. Elmer Rice and Philip Barry, *Cock Robin* (New York: Samuel French, 1929). Further references to this play will be noted in the text.
13. The inventive set may, in fact, be the product of the imagination of Jo Mielziner, who designed the scenery for the original production.
14. The collective detective is not peculiar to *Cock Robin.* In plays like *Ten Little Indians* and *The Ninth Guest,* in which everyone is suspect, the detective role is ill-defined out of necessity and can be viewed as being assumed by several characters (those remaining alive). However, neither of those plays displays the carefully linked pattern of *Cock Robin,* in which shifts of guilt lead to new characters assuming the detective function.
15. Fulton Oursler and Lowell Brentano, *The Spider* (New York: Samuel French, 1932), I.17–18. Further references to this play will be noted in the text.
16. It is not particularly significant that the best example of an environmental mystery is a procedural. The technique could conceivably be applied to any of the confined-mystery formulas with varying degrees of success.
17. One scene (II.i) takes place in a dressing room, and another (III.i) is placed in the theatre manager's office.
18. For example, N. Richard Nusbaum's *Incognito* played in Philadelphia in 1941, and Emmet Lavery's *Murder in a Nunnery* entertained Los Angeles audiences in 1942.
19. Wonder Woman was a red-white-and-blue cheesecake goddess who marshalled the powers of Mount Olympus against Hitler. A series of Sherlock Holmes films starring Basil Rathbone transported the Victorian sleuth to the time of World War II and depicted the master detective as foiling the villainous fascists.
20. Clare Boothe [Luce], *Margin for Error* (New York: Random House, 1940). Further references to this play will be noted in the text.
21. Herbert Ashton, Jr. used this pattern in *The Locked Room,* a mystery of the early 1930's.
22. "None of you is leaving!" (II.129).
23. "The Homicide Squad will. . . massage him with a hose. He'll come out a couple of inches shorter" (II.141).
24. Although two police officers are on duty, only one appears on stage.
25. "But when a guy. . . stands on his Constitutional rights to preach murder—there oughta be some Constitutional way to give *him* a military funeral" (I.13).
26. For example, the ghosts' ability to explain how Nazism could have been avoided in Germany is an ethnic slur against Teutonic names:

   > "Schicklegruber, that's Adolf's *real* name. His mother's name. His father never gave him one, as everyone realizes intuitively. Just think, history might have been different if he hadn't changed it to Hitler! . . . Heil Schicklegruber!" (I.104).

LETTERS

From Art Goodwin:

It seems to me that TAD has a couple of mysteries of its own to explain.

TADians have never been told the full details of how it came to pass that the San Diego academics became involved in the publishing of *our* magazine, nor why, suddenly, an entity known as Publisher's Inc. was on the scene, nor the reason for its precipitate pull-out.

The time has come for The Editor to go to the White Bear Lake branch of Cox's and get out his tin dispatch-box. The world *is* ready for the full story.

Unexplained Mystery No. 2 is the whereabouts of The Editor's 25,000-volume library, announced for sale in TAD several issues ago. Is it resting in the tent of some oil-rich sheik? (Say it ain't so, Al.)

I, for one, would enjoy seeing an eat-your-heart out book-by-book listing of that collection. I'm equally curious to know what items The Editor chose *not* to put up for sale.

By the way, I second the motion of Raymond D. Cooper that TAD start up an every-issue book-collecting department. It's needed.

Although I am a charter TAD subscriber, this is my first Letter to the Editor, aside from one brief note several years ago. So, let me ramble on a bit more while the spirit is with me.

During TAD's California Period one great leap forward was made—those great book jacket reproductions. But TAD also suffered a loss during that period, as well. Gone is that "family" atmosphere it once had. I think many would-be contributors have been scared off because TAD took on a too-professional look. The California years also resulted in a scholarly tone which may have kept other potential contributors away. I am happy to see that that dry-as-dust academic approach has been done away with, for the most part. (If I am never called upon to read another footnote, I shall die a happy man.)

The loss of that "family" feeling is also felt in the Book Exchange Department, which seems to have completely disappeared. And it's been a long time since I have read a letter which said "I am selling off my duplicates" or "I'm moving to a smaller apartment and must sell my collection. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for listing of books for sale."

I know that TAD can use all the revenue it can get and I fully agree that dealers should be charged for their ads, but I also think that TAD subscribers, offering their personal collections for sale, should be able to do so, for free, in their Letters to the Editor as they did in those early years. In fact, they should be encouraged to do so. Isn't that what our little fraternity is all about, spreading the good word?

A few years ago, someone—I'm too lazy to look it up and I apologize—wrote a most interesting article for TAD on the Detective Book Club, giving us a listing of all their offerings through 1973. I think it's time for an update. And this time, I'd also like the

author to give some attention, too, to those special offers DBC has made through the years: the all-Christie, all-Gardner, all-Van Dine books, and the like.

I think it would be nice if TAD dedicated some future issue to Grosset & Dunlap and to the sainted memory of A. L. Burt. Without these two reprint houses, most of us would never come across a hardcover edition of many of the crime classics of the first decades of this century.

My thanks to Otto Penzler and The Mysterious Press for their help in TAD's time of crisis. It's appreciated.

At least bits and pieces of the story about TAD's transitions of recent years have appeared herein, but perhaps a few comments from me might be useful at this point in response to Art Goodwin's queries.

When the Mystery Library project was formed by the University of California San Diego Extension, it was with a desire to become broadly active in the mystery field: lecture series, courses, seminars, movies, as well as the publication of reprint and original work were talked of. It seemed to me that TAD would be a natural and desirable complement to this broad interest. At the same time, if TAD went west, I could reduce my own work load by shifting all non-editorial responsibilities. This was very attractive to me, and I suggested that a transfer of ownership take place.

It was thus proposed that TAD become an official part of the Mystery Library. The University rejected this, however, which may have been the best thing that ever happened to TAD. As a result, neither the University nor "San Diego academics" were ever involved in TAD during its tenure in California. Publisher's Inc. became the owner and publisher, I was the editor, and that was that.

As has been indicated elsewhere, under Publisher's Inc. TAD continuously and persistently lost money, considerable money, while major changes (most, I believe, for the better) were made in the publication. However, any perceived changes in editorial content, any sense that TAD had gone "academic," arose not from planned or orchestrated changes but simply through the continuing practice of publishing what TAD readers wrote and submitted. If different readers submit material than before, or readers submit different material than before, and so so for whatever reason, TAD will tend to change. TAD has been, and will continue to be so long as I'm editor, a reflection of reader interests insofar as it contains what they write.

If TADians wish to read more letters, they must write them. If they wish to read more about golden age detective characters and stories, or more light-hearted material, or more whatever, TADians must write accordingly.

Several have indicated they feel that TAD has agreeably taken a more "fannish" tone in recent issues. If so, you did it!

Well, anyway, lose money TAD did in California, and I think it not useful here to go into the reasons for this. In August of 1978, Publisher's Inc. called it quits with TAD, and, to the great good fortune of all of us, Otto Penzler was there to take it over. Had he not been, I fear TAD would have died last year.

Otto's financial resources are no greater than those of Publisher's Inc.; I rather suspect they are less. So the economic viability of TAD in the form it now enjoys remains to be demonstrated; both more subscribers and more advertising revenue are needed.

But, as was the case under Publisher's Inc., I am not financially involved in TAD; like contributors, I serve without remuneration. I rejoice that TAD is presently in the hands of a publisher who knows and loves both TAD and mystery fiction, and I hope that we all together may fashion a publication that serves us well and pays its way.

As for the small matter of my library, it still resides in my basement, where it has overflowed all bookshelves into more than 40 boxes. Sale is now in the hands of a specialist in such matters, Richard Mohr of International Bookfinders (Box 1, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272). You will—and may already have done so—see advertisements in various places as Dick Mohr seeks a buyer. Anyone interested in specific details should contact him.

I might say that, as a sales tool, a complete catalogue (261 pages) of my library has been created. This is now in Dick Mohr's hands.

When sale does eventually take place, I may—as has been widely predicted—suffer severe withdrawal symptoms at the very least. If I can manage a typewriter from a fetal position, I'll write that story for TAD as well.

Stay tuned . . . —AJH.

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From Mike Nevins:

The Ellery Queen issue of TAD is truly a gorgeous one and I'm proud to have been part of it. Ron Goulart's description of the EQ comic book adventure "The Adventure of the Coffin Clue" (p. 197) sounds suspiciously like a genuine Queen short story, "The Adventure of the Invisible Lover," collected in *The Adventures of Ellery Queen* (1934). I wonder how many other EQ comic stories are adapted from works in the canon.

Shortly after receiving my copy of the EQ issue I happened upon one of the few missing items of information in my TV checklist, namely the name of the director of the *Alfred*

Hitchcock episode "Terror in Northfield," based on the Queen novelet "Terror Town." His name is Harvey Hart and he has more recently directed several episodes of *Columbo.*

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From Don Knight:

Re Queen's *Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes,* there are frequent references to its suppression by the Doyle estate, but never any explanation of why or how. Could we have a squib in TAD on this topic?

Mike Nevins responds: "The whole story about the suppression, as Fred told it to me, is in note 3 on page 221 of Royal Bloodline—*which you're welcome to print in TAD."*

That note reads: "Readers of 101 Years' Entertainment *will recall that Holmes is represented not by a single story but by four seperate deductions taken from four different tales and collectively entitled 'The Science of Deduction.' Through an oversight Queen's literary agent had secured permission from the Doyle estate to reprint only the first of the four passages, so that technically* 101 Years' *was in infringement of Doyle's copyright. Shortly after* Misadventures *was published, Dannay discovered the error and brought it to Adrian's [Adrian Conan Doyle's] attention. Adrian, who intensely disliked the concept of* Misadventures *but had no independent legal grounds for taking action against it, threatened to sue for the* 101 Years' *infringement unless* Misadventures *was voluntarily withdrawn from circulation. Since* 101 Years' *was by far the bigger seller of the two, Queen had to comply."*

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From Ev Bleiler:

I really liked the current color cover of TAD [Vol. 12, No. 3]. Real pop art—primitive, grotesque, eye-catching—and much more imaginative than some of the recent covers you've run. It probably cost a mint, though.

On the interior of the mag—I thought Clifford Jiggens's article was very good. He had a point, researched it well, and stated it clearly, without making extravagant claims. Also he developed it at just the right length.

Goldstone's article, on the other hand, I found very unpleasant. It seemed to be filled with personal animus, and much of it didn't make any great sense. It seems odd that a bookman would not know the difference between "scarce" and "rare." The terms are in common use, and I suspect that most collectors know exactly what Queen meant. As far as the choice of titles in Queen's Quorum goes, goldstone does not seem to have recognized that Queen has always had a flair (in both editing and collecting) for material with a flair.

This flair I don't find in Greene's supplement.

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From Frank D. McSherry, Jr.:

The Ellery Queen Issue of TAD is a warm and loving tribute to an author who deserves it as have few others in the history of the field. One can only agree, with enthusiasm, with the deep appreciation so well expressed—which makes the articles harder to rate than usual, most on the same subject, all with TAD's usual high level of quality.

First place goes to Nevin's "E.Q. on the Small Screen," valuable especially for its thoroughness, research, and notes on the quality of the episodes listed, helpful for fans who want to view the best but lack the time for all. "Captain Shaw's Hard-Boiled Boys," by Steven Mertz, rates second despite its short length because of the important light it throws on one of the great editors of the field, his opinions of some of his writers and a brief look at their lives. Hoch's review of books based on famous crimes of our times comes in third, with LaBorde's solid and scholarly work on detective plays following. Mary Groff's well-researched work on Edgar Lustgarten TV plays provides some interesting information not easily available otherwise, as does Chris Steinbrunner's account of E.Q. on the air. Only the short length of the many E.Q. articles keeps them from ranking with the rest; in fact, I doubt if any other issue of TAD has had so many articles on the same high average level of quality.

Prof. Lauterbach, who requests the jingle about the body snatchers, might be amused by two verses written by Black Bart, and left behind in the strong boxes of the Wells Fargo stagecoaches he robbed circa 1877: "I've labored long and hard for bread,/For honor and for riches,/But on my corns too long you've tread,/You fine-haired sons of bitches;" and one that constitutes a literary criticism of his work: "So blame me not for what I've done,/I don't deserve your curses;/ And if for any cause I'm hung/Let it be for my verses." When Bart, a model prisoner, swore off crime and arrived in San Francisco after his release from jail, a reporter asked him, "Do you think you will try to make a living writing poetry?" Bart replied, "Young man, didn't you hear me say I wasn't going to commit any more crimes?" Bart was popular in the papers, had never injured or killed anyone in the course of his criminous career, and, incidentally, was the hero of an early dime novel, *The Gold Dragon; or The California Bloodhound,* A Story of PO-8, The Lone Highwayman, by W. M. Manning, Beadle's Dime Library, Beadle and Adams, 27 February 1884, a point that might interest Mr. Hoch.

Prof. McAleer will be interested in Mack Reynold's parody-pastiche novelette, "The Case of the Disposable Jalopy," in *Analog Science Fact/Fiction* for October 1979, about a fat private detective and his assistant whose memory isn't what it once was as age brings hard times upon them both. They finally get a case—finding a disappearing inventor—on an evening when the assistant is "watching Fatso guzzling beer and reading the moth-eaten old paperbacks that purport to tell of his early coups as a sleuth. Currently, he's on one of the very first, the *Case of the Red Box,* a crime, if I recall correctly, and I probably don't, that involved a strawberry blonde prostitute. . . . It was then that the doorbell rang. . . . There were three of them and they didn't look like bill collectors. They ran in age from forty to fifty—just kids. I put the chain on, opened the door several inches, and said, 'You've got the wrong address. This is the home of Caligula, uh, that is, Tiberius, uh, I mean Claudius. Now, wait a minute, don't tell me, I know his name as well as my own. The same name as one of the early Roman emperors. Uh . . .' " Of considerable interest to Wolfe fans . . . Reynolds does a good job.

Dimedia has two more facsimile reprints of pulp novels coming out, due before year's end, *Master of the Death Madness,* a Spider novel (August 1935), and *Legions of Starvation,* an Operator #5 secret service novel (December 1934), at $7.95 each from Robert Weinberg, 10606 S. Central Park, Chicago, Ill. 60655. Pulp fans will also enjoy another item in Weinberg's catalogue, a fanzine reprinting hard-to-get pulp stories of all types, the first, in *Attic Revivals #1,* being Judson Philips's novelette "The Hawk," the start of a well-remembered series in *Flynn's Detective Fiction* featuring the Park Avenue Hunt Club from the January 27, 1934 issue. Pulpy but vivid and colorful, with an interesting crippled villain. Sixteen pages, including an interview with Philips, largely about his pulp work, and reproductions of two pulp covers in black-and-white, 8½ x 11, at $1.50.

TAD readers aspiring to be writers will be interested in another fan journal, this one featuring mystery fiction, *Skullduggery,* a quarterly edited by Michael L. Cook, 3318 Wimburg Ave., Evansville, Ind. 47712, $8 a year, digest-sized, mimeoed, 56 pp. The first issue is out now, with a good, grim short, "Strikes," by Barry Malzberg and Bill Pronzini, leading off . . . Included is an ad for the first of several promised indexes, John Nieminski's *The Saint Index,* at $6 plus $.75 postage and mailing expenses, done by the compiler of the excellent 1974 index to EQMM. (No payment for contributors to *Skullduggery* yet, but Cook says response has been enthusiastic and he has hopes . . .)

Almost forgot the address for Nieminski's Index—John Nieminski, 2948 Western, Park Forest, Ill. 60466. And speaking of guides, let me recommend a superb article by Will Murray in *Unicorn* for October 1979 listing "The Top 25 Shadow Novels"—not only Murray's personal opinion, but in the opinion of guest experts Robert Sampson, Frank Eisengruber, Jr., Robert Weinberg, and Al Grossman, with a listing of the best 25 Shadow covers by renowned fan artist Frank Hamilton. A brief description of each novel and comments on it with reasons for its being chosen accompany each nomination. Cover reproductions in b-and-w illustrate the article, which is a wonderful trip down nostalgia lane, as well as a most useful guide for readers and collectors to be the best of the Shadow novels. A work of TAD quality. ($1.50 from 3318 Wimberg Ave., Evansville, Ind. 47712.)

Also included in this adzine-fanzine is a listing of pen-names and a biblio of Dennis Lynds (who is also Michael Collins, creator of one-armed detective Dan Fortune, William Arden and John Crowe, as well as others), along with a listing of the Mike Shayne novels he wrote for *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine* almost regularly from September 1962 to February 1970, seven of the *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* novels and all but the first of the Shadow novels published by Belmont from 1964 to 1967; and an index to Dr. Yen Sin.

Coming, too, is another fan publication of interest to mystery and pulp fans, *The Duende History of the Shadow* by Will Murray and others, $7.45, with index, history of artists, editors, authors associated with the

magazine, discussion of the Shadow and his agents and foes and the novels, and two never-before-published works by Shadow creator Walter B. Gibson, an account of how the Shadow acquired his fire opal ring and the first Shadow novelette; from Odyssey Publications, P.O. Box G-148, Greenwood, MA 01880, due sometime in December.

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From J. R. Christopher:

It was nice to receive the Ellery Queen issue of TAD. Too bad no one did a checklist of the old *Queen Canon Bibliophile* fanzine to establish how impossible it would be to get even all the secondary materials. Speaking of which: let me mention a short article I did for *Jabberwocky: The Journal of the Lewis Carroll Society,* 6:2/30 (Spring 1977), 53–57. I intended a short article, anyway, and called it "Ellery Queen in Wonderland"—it was about "The Adventure of the Mad Tea Party" on TV which Mike Nevins praises in his article in this issue; the editor cut my first paragraph, if I remember correctly (I'm too lazy to dig my version out of my files), and ran it as a review.

Did I write about C. Daly King's Mr. Tarrant stories? I meant to, but I suppose I didn't get it done. Reading the 1977 Dover edition of *The Curious Mr. Tarrant* (1935) this past spring—and also reading "The Episode of the Absent Fish" in EQMM 73:4/425 (April 1979), 92–102—stimulated my memory. There's another story, "The Episode of the Perilous Talisman," published under the pseudonym of the Watson of the series, "Jeremiah Phelan," in *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction,* 2:1 (February 1951), 107–127. The latter is set soon after Tarrant's return from his seven-year quest (see the last story in the book), but it refers to an earlier story after his return in which he hired a new valet. By the way, surely EQMM cut King's usual list of characters (and possibly some cross references to other stories?), for the stories in the book and the one in F&SF have such character lists. It would be nice to see a complete collection of the stories someday—or, at least, a complete listing of them. (I've never seen a complete listing of the Thinking Machine stories, for that matter—some of them have never been reprinted.)

I haven't been reading the short stories that you and Otto Penzler have been reprinting in TAD (although a couple of them I'm going to get around to), but I'd like to suggest a variation for occasional appearance. What about printing a radio script occasionally? I don't know what happened to John Dickson Carr's old scripts, but Mike Nevins once (several years ago) played a couple of them to me that he has tapes of that—so far as I remember—have never been printed. Or perhaps some of the Ellery Queen scripts might be released by Fred Dannay. (I'm surprised some university press, interested in popular literature, hasn't started a series of books printing radio and TV scripts.)

By the way, I notice in Chris Steinbrunner's article he says that Dannay and Lee did all of the Ellery Queen radio scripts by themselves. Years ago in TAD 2:4, p. 270, Dean Dickensheet reported that Anthony Boucher and Denis Green occasionally served as "script consultants" for the EQ radio show. I'm not certain of the implications, but I assume it involved some type of four-way or three-way collaboration on some of the scripts.

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From Hillary Waugh (Exec. V.P., MWA):

I must brand as totally false the charge by R. Jeff Banks in his article "Spillane and the Critics" (TAD Fall '79) that Mickey Spillane has been denied membership in Mystery Writers of America.

In the first place, I have it on the authority of the late Dorothy Gardiner, former executive secretary of MWA, that Mr. Spillane had at least twice been invited to join but had failed to reply.

Secondly, inasmuch as the only requirement for active membership in MWA is to have been published in the field of mystery, there is no way Mr. Spillane could be kept out. Let's face it, his credentials are pretty overwhelming.

Lastly, I, personally, would be delighted to see Mickey Spillane become a member of Mystery Writers of America. He's about the only mystery writer of note who isn't.

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From Richard Brandshaft:

It seems to me that reviewers, including those in this magazine, have acquiesed in the sharp deterioration of mystery story plots over, say, the past 10-15 years. Before I expand on the point, let me give my viewpoint and define a subject for this letter.

I am more a casual reader of detective fiction than the kind of fanatical hobbyist TAD seems geared to. My main reason for reading TAD is the book reviews. Just because I am a more casual reader, and read fewer detective stories, the problem of finding the good books in the flood is if anything more acute for me than for the serious fan.

From this viewpoint, I want to talk about mystery reviews. I'd like to consider those stories in which a detective tries to identify a criminal by mainly intellectual effort. This is not to decry suspense stories, police procedurals, action-adventure, or sheer comic book level fun. (I'm a Modesty Blaise fanatic, and thoroughly enjoyed Hatchett.) But this letter is about the intellectual detective story.

Time and time again, critics have reviewed detective stories without mentioning how thin the plot is. True, complex plots are not as much in style now as they were decades ago, and it would do no good to pad out each review with a lament about how they don't make them like they used to. But it does no good to pretend everything is O.K. either.

One book which got good reviews in at least two publications had two subplots. In the main mystery "plot" the detective went around interviewing witnesses, and just didn't get around to the key witness until the end of the book—and then leaped to an unwarranted conclusion. In the other "plot," two lawyers took turns spending time with a woman who had been threatened by her ex-husband, known to be an armed, vicious psychotic criminal. Neither lawyer had a gun, or any idea of what to do if the criminal showed up.

I bought another book based on a favorable review in TAD. It had the "basic TV plot." In the basic TV plot, the detective goes around asking polite questions. When the end of the episode (or book) rolls around, the criminal identifies himself with an inept assault on the detective who was no danger to him. The basic TV plot never was confined to TV. With a little elaboration, it can be enough for stories that are primarily action-adventure. I doubt that Shell Scott would have solved many cases had the hoodlums just left him alone. (But as I recall, even Shell Scott relied in part on elaborations of the basic plot, such as "Only you knew where I was going to be when those gunmen shot at me . . .") With very little elaboration, the basic TV plot is a *Charlie's Angels* episode, not, I suggest, an intellectual detective novel.

True, many people don't consider plot the most important thing in a detective story, or even very important. So why not reviews that read something like:

> Ms. Doe's idealistic feminist detective is an addition to detective fiction we hope to see more of. Her characterization is excellent, the San Francisco locale is particularly well drawn. Unfortunately, the plot is little more than the basic TV plot.

After complaining about how some detective stories have no plot at all, it may be carping to object to faults in the plot. But another frequent fault is the story where a case can be made against any number of suspects, and *the* solution is the one the detective happens to think of last. This is by no means a new development. (Alan Grant once decided a man was guilty just because he had motive and opportunity. After Grant had spent most of the book chasing the wrong man, the local chief constable's teenage daughter turned up evidence that proved him innocent. Grant then thought of a motive for someone else, and leaped to the conclusion he was guilty. Having already bungled around long enough to fill a book, he turned out to be right.) But a long history doesn't make this kind of "deduction" any better.

Negative criticism is out of fashion these days, perhaps as a reaction to Newgate Callendar. But when the reviewer is kind to an author whose work hasn't quite turned out well, he is not only being unkind to the reader. He is also being unkind to the writer who does a good job, which is lost in the flood of lesser books.

If the characterization is excellent, the local is excellent, but the plot is nonexistent or doesn't make sense, let's not talk about *just* characterization and locale.

Let's develop a critical language for talking about plots. Besides the "basic TV plot" already mentioned, let's talk about "the straight line investigation" and the "TV ending."

In the "straight line investigation" the detective trips over a clue, leading to a further clue, leading to another with supernatural ease, with no false clues, red herrings, or any real effort. This is one step above the basic TV plot, and is sometimes used on TV.

In the "TV ending" the criminal clinches a very weak case by confessing, pulling a gun on the detective and running, or whatever. It differs from the basic TV plot in that the criminal panics after the detective has made a tentative identification. Since having enough evidence for a conviction just fall into the

detective's hands is a bit hard to arrange, the TV ending often caps off a straight line investigation.

The very fact that it is reasonable for me to suggest such terms shows what a sad state detective story criticism is in. Some equivalent should be part of the critical language already.

In reviewing intellectual detective stories, why not say whether they have as much plot as, say, a typical Nero Wolfe novelet. Or, alas, are closer to *Charlie's Angels.* Not all intellectual detective stories fit the formal mold, but the reviewer could mention whether the detective seems to investigate hard, or whether the leads just drop into his/her lap. Let's rate plots roughly on a scale that goes: complex; Nero Wolfe novelet; *Hawaii Five-O*; *Charlie's Angels.* This requires subjective judgment, but so does "excellent characterization."

Let's talk about basic TV plots, straight line investigations, TV endings, unwarranted deductions.

And if TAD gets tired of so much negative comment, and that forces more attention to reissues and less to new books, maybe this is as it should be. And maybe the author who does a good job will get more of the attention he deserves.

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From Alan J. Warren:

Thoroughly enjoyed the Fall '79 TAD; the pieces on Spillane were welcome and long overdue. Spillane's work may be admired or detested, but it should not be ignored, as many 'tec fiction aficionados seem content to do. Like it or not, the fact remains that Spillane's work is far better known to the general public than, say, the detective fiction of Ross Macdonald, for all that Macdonald may be the superior craftsman.

The only objection I have is to R. Jeff Banks's article "Spillane and the Critics," in which Mr. Banks sets the redoubtable Kingsley Amis up as a spokesman for the anti-Spillane faction. Banks errs by omission by not quoting from Amis's witty and insightful piece for *Playboy* (December '66), entitled "My Favorite Sleuths," in which Amis groups Spillane with Hammett and Chandler and concludes that: "Spillane is the best of the three cited—an unpopular view, which I would defend hotly. Legitimate shock and horror at the beastliness of [Mike] Hammer's universe should not be allowed to weigh against the technical brilliance with which the whole thing is stage-managed. Few novelists on any level can match Spillane's skill in getting his essential facts across palatably and without interrupting the action, in knowing what to leave out; and the impression received that the narrative is just tumbling out of the corner of Hammer's mouth at 200 words a minute is a tribute to real professional competence." Amis does conclude that, all this granted, Spillane's work is, finally, "stultifying," but presumably thinks even less of Hammett and Chandler. Oh, well. It might also have been helpful to quote from Ayn Rand, probably the most eloquent of the pro-Spillane spokespersons; her view that Spillane is brilliantly adept at plot structure may help to explain why many "highbrow" writers and critics think more favorably of Spillane than most mystery fans seem to.

In any event, the interview with Spillane was much appreciated, and the rest of the issue was as good as ever. Please keep up the fine work.

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From Bob Adey:

I've just received the Summer 1979 issue of TAD, and thought it very good indeed.

An excellent series of articles on Queen, with Douglas Greene's piece adding a couple more titles to my already overburdened wants list, and Ed Hoch's memories evoking recollections of my own first meeting with Ellery. A very chancy affair it was too. The local library, for reasons of economy, was in those days buying lots of Penguins, covering

From Randy Cox:

Fully two and one half weeks after TAD 12:4 appeared in the local bookstore (Fine Print Books) my copy arrived my mail. It certainly does pay to subscribe, yessuh!

I find myself hard put to describe this issue. A comparison of the table of contents with the previous Ellery Queen issue indicates there is half as much here (21 items to 10).* It isn't just quantity that makes the difference either.

I must admit I enjoyed the three Retrospective Reviews on page 274 (12:3) and so did the person who put together page 372 (12:4) for there they are again. Perhaps this is a hint that TAD is running short of material and contributions are being solicited.

I was glad to see the missing Chronology of Napoleon Bonaparte at last. Perhaps in the next issue (13:1? or 14:1 because of the great gap between article and letter of comment) there will be an explanation of the typographical botch that was made of the article on Per Wahloo and Maj Sjowall in 12:2 where page 175 continues on the *bottom* of page 176, and presumably, the two paragraphs which precede that part are intended to be read at the very end.

(There is an excellent article by Melissa Lowe on Sjowall and Wahloo in *Dast* 12:5 . . . translated by K. Arne Blom into Swedish from the English.)

I read the Mickey Spillane articles with interest (3 articles qualify this as a "Special Mickey Spillane Issue"????), but failed to be convinced by the defensive stance that Spillane is a writer one must not miss. I read *I, the Jury* last year and found it both peculiar and hilarious . . . peculiar because the stereotypical Spillane seems to be missing from that book, hilarious . . . well, just take my word for it. I wish there had been more information on the Mike Hammer comic strip and I wish someone had had more imagination in writing the captions to the illustrations which accompanied Max Collins' article. Gee! I liked that illustration on page 305 so much I'm glad you put it on page 310 as well, but didn't repeat the caption.

Interesting information on Brett Halliday in that extended footnote (page 306–307), but what is meant by "a formula somewhat like that Doyle evolved for the later Holmes novels"? Holmes was absent from a good part of *A Study in Scarlet* as well, hardly a "later" novel. There's only *one* Holmes *novel* in which he is present throughout. I won't insult anyone by mentioning the title. The method in *Study* and *Valley of Fear* is, of course, an influence of Gaboriau (and others).

I find it curious that so much emphasis is placed on the rarity of Victor L. Whitechurch's *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* in the Managing Editor's preface to "Peter Crane's Cigar" with no hint that it is, of course, the rarity of the *first edition* that is meant. The book was reprinted under a slightly different title (*Stories of the Railway*) with an introduction by Bryan Morgan and reviewed in the pages of TAD by Ed Lauterbach (TAD 11:4, pp. 402–403), but there is no mention of this either. Actually, since the book is still available, I question the reprinting of a story from it when there are so many other *really* unfindable stories that could be reprinted.

Since E. Lynne Van Buskirk has mentioned the appearance of the story of Madame Sara in both TAD and the Castle edition of *Rivals of Sherlock Holmes,* I need not point that out as well. Perhaps 3 out of 5 rare stories isn't too bad an average in making some titles more available. Has anyone noticed that one of the Old Man in the Corner stories ("The Glasgow Mystery") in that collection does not appear in any of the books about The Old Man . . . at least not in its present form? It's the story Baroness Orczy mentions in her autobiography as having been responsible for her receiving much critical fan mail, due to an error in that story.

Let's have more lists of digest sized magazines like the one compiled by Michael Masliah, but let us eventually have a revised and (fairly) complete list published in one place for handy reference. I would also suggest some indication be given as to publisher and date of last issue as well as the date of the first.

As usual, Frank McSherry's letter was filled with fascinating information and addresses of (fairly) offbeat things to order. I will have to add my name to the small group who ordered the Charlie Chan comic strip reprints from Tony Raiola . . . or I will as soon as I can write my check.

I certainly hope Marc Olden writes better than his conversation with Randisi would indicate. Every answer was completely unsurprising and is "low-rate" really a verb? Pfui. Ask Nero Wolfe.

Based on the books I've seen advertised in TAD recently, I would vote in the negative to the suggestion that books be ordered through the magazine. Even if it is expanded to include books reviewed, it seems to be too much of a gimmick. I have sources for any new books anyway . . . I just order them through the St. Olaf Library—usually ordering a second copy at the same time *for* the Library.

And that, I guess, is all for now . . .

*That's excluding the regular departments, of course. The asterisk used here to indicate a footnote should not be considered a relation to the one on page 314 which leads nowhere. That one I presume was meant to lead to a note explaining who Peter Gunn was. There are also a number of items (Purcell's article on Rufus King, for example) which were left off the table of contents . . . I suppose to make up for the earlier example of 12:2 where one author is given on the table of contents and another on the article.

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them in some sort of laminated plastic and pushing them out to the borrowers. If, as so often happened, the choice of my reading material was left to my mother, I would ask her to get for me a selection of the green Penguins, easily distinguishable through the laminated covers. Authors like Carr, Christie, Brand were obvious names to go for, but she would also play the field on odd occasions. And so it was that for some weeks, with various renewals, a book called *The Chinese Orange Mystery* lay at the Adey household and received little regard. Then with heavy fines imminent I reluctantly took it up and began to read. Within a couple of chapters I was hooked—and have been ever since. But what, I keep asking myself, if she had not haphazardly chosen that particular book, or what if I had returned it unread. Sometimes I shudder at the thought.

John McAleer asks about the White Circle Crime Club paperbacks and Stout's appearances in them. The series began in the thirties (the earlier numbers were dust wrappered) and lasted throughout the war until the late fifties when they were replaced by the Fontana name. There were over 300 of them in all (with a similar number in the companion White Circle Mystery series), and several Stouts were among them. I don't have a complete list but do have numbers 205c (*Too Many Women*), 269c (*Out Goes She*) and 295c (*Murder by the Book*). I also have a record that *The Broken Vase* appeared as both number 185c and 270c, and that *Even In the Best Families* was number 273c. *The Second Confession* also appeared in the series and so, I'm quite sure, did several others.

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From David Henige:

In the course of trying to secure mysteries via interlibrary loan I have often been chagrined to learn how few works of several authors (including Herbert Adams, John Austwick, Douglas Browne, Victor Gunn, Osmington Mills, and Clive Rylands) are recorded in the standard union lists as being available in the U.S. or Canada. It is of course possible that some libraries have these but have not supplied this information to the appropriate clearing house, but the effect, inability to secure them, remains the same.

Admittedly, none of these authors is usually considered to be among the first rank, but their works are by no means without merit. Because of this I propose to write an article for a library-oriented journal in which I would advocate the establishment of a system similar to the British Joint Fiction Reserve. Under such a scheme particular libraries would be responsible for collecting all the works of certain authors, although they could purchase more widely if they chose. A mechanism of this kind would, I think, have several advantages. First, it would help recognize and identify gaps. Then it would encourage libraries to fill these in a systematic way which would prevent uncontrolled duplication. Finally, it would enhance the availability of such works to those who are readers, but not collectors, of the genre.

I imagine that some readers of TAD would have thoughts on the advisability and feasibility of such a project, as well, perhaps, as other suggestions that might be appropriate. I would much appreciate hearing from these readers. My address is: David Henige, Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI 53706.

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From Mike Avallone:

Is Max Collins kidding or is he truly Spillane-brainwashed? I leave him to all his opinions about the Spillane Frankenstein as applied to books but when it comes to movies, he simply is stepping up to the plate in another league. All the Spillane films, when considered as to their aims, intentions and ambitions, were resounding flops, both at the box office and critically—which is why producers stopped making them and no other private eye character had a chance of being filmed until the *Harper* revolution of 1965. I don't mind any of that but when Max claims *Kiss Me Deadly* was the finest Eye film ever made, then I must rise to the defense of my dead Hollywood friends. Apart from his blasphemy of Bogie's Black Bird, clearly he never saw *Murder, My Sweet, The Dark Corner, Lady in the Lake, The Big Sleep, Riff-Raff,* which starred Pat O'Brien as a private cop named *Mike Hammer* (1948!), by the way—any of which make *Kiss Me Deadly* the unfulfilled B it is. In fact there are a hundred Hollywood B flicks which undercut the Ralph Meeker Mistake by several light reels. *I, the Jury, My Gun Is Quick* and *Kiss Me Deadly* are all so uneven, out-of-sync with the Spillane vigors and strengths that one came away from them with a feeling of anger and frustration. *The Girl Hunters* is so marred by Spillane's truly amateur brand of acting that it can only be regarded as an interesting exercize in Author Ego, about which I know a great deal. Oddly, the one Spillane flick worth talking about is that non-Hammer *The Long Wait,* which at least had the veteran benefits of Anthony Quinn and Charles Coburn and was a stallion of a far different hue. Most of the folks I sat with in one of those Forty-Second Street grind houses in 1954 laughed all the way through *Ring of Fear* as Spillane played himself for obvious laughs.

Max is right about the Comden-Green parody in *The Bandwagon*—it truly is a gem and when I saw that at Radio City in the summer of '53 I was half-way through writing *Dead Game.* Believe me, I almost gave up Ed Noon on the spot because Comden and Green caught all the laughability and silliness forever in ten minutes of sheer parodic magic. As a Spillane send-up, it is right on target.

Further—Biff Eliot was a fine actor and only pre-figuration and conceptions mar his performance—on the audience's part, that is. Robert Bray was bland and Broadway-trained Meeker was merely doing the familiar I'm-Legit-But-I'm-Working-In-Films-To-Earn-A-Buck job. Great Waxman music and a few good scenes do not an *oevre* make—as a package, the Spillane flicks are collosal failures and no amount of Monday Morning Quarterbacking can change that. Sorry, Max—I not only disagree with you but won't even grant you your right to be wrong. Did you ever see—also—*P.J. Marlowe, Warning Shot*—any of these, despite overall lack of fulfillment, make *Kiss Me Deadly* a laughable choice for Best Private Eye Film.

Kirk Douglas was the perfect Mike Hammer, as to look and style and forcefulness. Douglas would have been the quintessential Mike. I can see him now tearing the arm off a hood or pulling a girl's hair.

I ran into Der Micky on Times Square in '63 as he was about to enter a restaurant, complete with pistol-packing bodyguard. He was more than courteous and better than kind—and the image of him still persists. A man whom most of the world read but whose own mystery writing colleagues wouldn't give the time of day. So carried the Chip and he has used it ever since in all his interviews, confrontations and spoken quotes on the subject of Writing. I could never get him to join Mystery Writers of America. His file card down at the office bore a cryptic notation—"DON'T FOLLOW UP!" I never found out who wrote that. Not that it matters.

I enjoyed this Spillane issue of TAD, even though the craft part of me knows you made a mountain out of a molehill. But none of us can deny the extraordinary impact of one writer and one fictional character on the mystery field. I will still beat the drums for *I, the Jury*—as I said, the only time the White-Heat-Judge-Jury-Executioner Motif really worked, but the rest of them only boil down to graphic pages of two or three. All through my own career I've been saddled with the Junior League Mickey Spillane, The Three Eye League's Mickey Spillane, Spillane-Imitator nonsense sort-of-review by undiscerning, got-to-make-a-deadline critics and it is to laugh. Noon is a shrinking violet compared to Hammer and any similarity beyond the First Person technique of story-telling would truly have to be reached for. Ask anyone with an I.Q. higher than 85. Chandler called the Hammer series "a writer masturbating in print" and that's too harsh but if you knew the Great One, you would understand what he meant. So Mickey says he didn't understand *The High Window. Sic transit gloria mundi*—I wish I had written it.

Mike Barson's interview was splendidly done, not incidentally. Apart from the excellent approach shot, it reveals the man and the writer in all his confused, rich and aggressive glory.

And I too am nuts about *The Raven* and *Gunga Din.*

Mickey and I have that much in common, at least.

P.S. In 1963, sick of being compared to Mickey, I pitted Vince Devlin, a Hammer-image private eye against Ed Noon in *There Is Something About a Dame.* The climax is a classic face-to-face shootout with two schools of men, two schools of writing, meeting head-on. No one, not even Tony Boucher, saw fit to mention that point in their reviews.

P.P.S. Spillane's original title for *The Big Kill* was *The Big Stiff.* Dirty-minded editors of those golden days read a different meaning into that so it was dropped. In 1977, my *Blues for Sophia Loren* was printed in England. The title was changed to *The Big Stiffs,* one of the chapter titles, which refers to the statuary of Rome. What Price Editors?

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The Failure of Two Swiss Sleuths

By Kay Herr

The little country of Switzerland, often a setting for international intrigue, is also the home of two detectives created by the contemporary Swiss author Friedrich Dürrenmatt. While entertaining and suspenseful as one expects a good detective story to be, the tales are different from most because of the rather unusual twist in the concept of reason, that human talent so vitally important to the detective story.

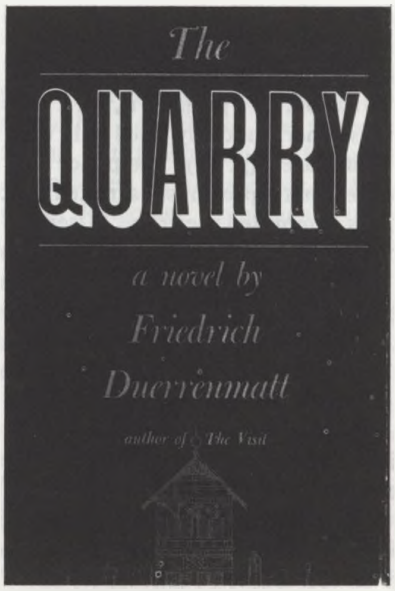
Dürrenmatt is one of the few Swiss authors with an international reputation and is known primarily for his stage and radio plays, many of which have a very suspenseful atmosphere. Some consider Dürrenmatt a negative and rather frightening author because of the absurdity and chaos he exposes through his writing. However, the negative aspects should serve as an encouragement to the reader or spectator to make an affirmation of life rather than a nihilistic denial. Through an exposé of the limitations of human ability to reason may emerge a better understanding of this ability and perhaps even a greater degree of reasonableness. In Dürrenmatt's works, man is a creature of free will, free to choose to act negatively or positively, in accord with or in opposition to time-honored values.

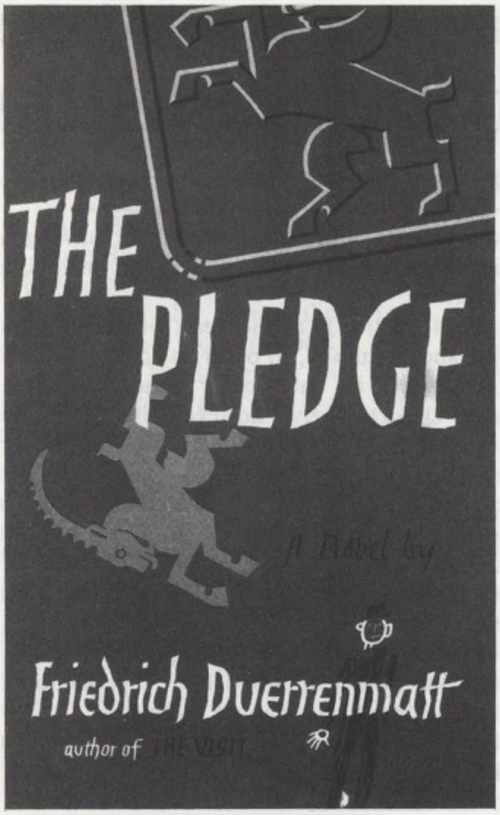
The three detective stories Dürrenmatt wrote must be understood as an integral part of the totality of his writings; indeed, they may be rather special. In a lecture titled "Problems of the Theatre" delivered in 1954, Dürrenmatt made the following remarks after criticizing the state of modern theatre and literature which, in his view, gives little genuine encouragement to experimentation and is the stagnant victim of critical expectations: "How does the artist exist in a world of education and of alphabets? A question which oppresses me and for which I have no answer. Perhaps it is best if he writes criminal novels, expressing art where no one suspects it. Literature must become to light that it no longer weighs anything on the scale of present day literary criticism. Only in this way can it become weighty again."[1]

The Judge and His Hangman, *The Quarry*, and *The Pledge* were written early in Dürrenmatt's career, and they are generally neglected by scholars despite the strong thematic connections with other works, both prose and drama. As one might anticipate, the concern in the detective stories in one of justice, a predominant theme in Dürrenmatt's early works such as the plays *The Visit* and *The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi*. In more recent works, power politics and power structures have gained prominence, although the concern with justice is ever present.

Indeed, justice is at the heart of every detective story, and, naturally, in order to achieve justice the detective uses his intellect or reason to solve the crime. Unfortunately, however, in Dürrenmatt's work human ability to reason can cause problems for the individual and mankind as a whole. Dürrenmatt expresses the limitation of reason, but behind this effort is the hope that man will be able to employ this ability more wisely by understanding it better. Of all types of writing, the detective story best challenges the reader to use his own reasoning powers as he follows the unfolding tale to its generally successful conclusion, best exemplified in the supreme rationalist among detectives, Sherlock Holmes.

For Durrenmatt's Dr. Matthai, lawyer and state police detective in Zurich, Switzerland, things do not proceed so smoothly in *The Pledge*,[2] which has the subtitle *Requiem for the Criminal Novel* and is set as a frame story told by Dr. H., the former chief of the state police. The story was first written as a screen play for a movie. In his work and in his very solitary private life, Matthai had created a totally ordered world based on reason and devoid of emotion. These very rigid attitudes did not make him very well liked by his colleagues, but he was well respected as a fine detective. In describing himself retrospectively,





Matthai comments, " 'I did not want to confront myself with the world. I wanted to overpower it like a routine but not suffer with it. I wanted to remain superior to it, not lose my head, and rule it like a technician.' "

Nothing disturbed Matthai's ordered life until the case of Gritli Moser, a young child who had been sexually molested and murdered in the woods. After telling the parents of Gritli's murder, Matthai promises the mother that he will find the killer; but the motivation of his pledge is not purely that of compassion, rather the desire to escape an uncomfortable situation: " 'I promise it, Mrs. Moser,' said the Commissioner, suddenly filled only with the wish to leave that place" (p. 41). The police and villagers are convinced that a previously-arrested peddler, von Gunten, has committed the crime. After von Gunten has been taken into custody and is in the hands of an eager, young detective, Matthai comments, " 'Whether he is guilty or not, order must prevail' " (p. 46). Then without Matthai's knowledge, the peddler is interrogated for twenty-four hours and finally confesses to the murder to Gritli Moser. Shortly thereafter the accused finally hangs himself. The police had demanded and obtained an apparently neat and reasonable conclusion to the case, but their particular logic led to what is revealed to be a grave miscarriage of justice. Motivated by his promise, a certainty of von Gunten's innocence, and a concern for the safety of other children, Matthai gives up his official position and an assignment to Turkey and prepares to entrap the true criminal through a private pursuit of justice.

Overnight, Matthai's well-ordered world is turned upside down, and he is a changed man outwardly. The rational and conservative Matthai begins to smoke and drink, and his superior, Dr. H., says of him, " 'The man was completely changed, as though he had taken on another character overnight. . . .' " (p. 114). All Matthai's energy, concentration, and faith are now devoted to his ability to reason, in his plan to catch the criminal who had escaped justice.

But his reasonable plan is not brought to fruition. Matthai is prevented from catching the criminal by a capricious act of chance, for the murderer died in an auto accident while on his way to kill another child whom Matthai had set up as bait. Dr. H. had stated at the beginning of the novel, during a discussion of the detective story genre, " 'An event cannot always proceed like a calculation because we never know all the necessary factors, rather only a few and mostly incidental ones' " (p. 19).

The realization which *The Pledge* illustrates and to which the reader can come is summarized by Dr. H. when he says, " 'The worst thing happens sometimes, too. We are men, and we have to reckon with that and arm ourselves against it. Above all, we have to become clear about that so that we do not wreck on the absurd, which is necessarily revealing itself ever more clearly and powerfully, and so that we will to some extent establish ourselves comfortably on this earth if we humbly calculate that fact into our thinking. Our intellect illuminates the world only poorly. Everything paradoxical is located in the twilight zone of its boundaries' " (pp. 212–13). In other words, this story reveals that dependency upon reason is fallacious; chance can easily intervene and disrupt the reasoning process. The failure of reason reveals the presence of the absurd, that disorder behind the world and its events which man can neither fathom nor control.

The story is concluded successfully in that the crime is solved and retribution is gained, for the murderer dies at the hand of fate. But the work of the detective is not successfully concluded. The revelation of disorder and the failure of his reason destroy Matthai. The police psychiatrist had predicted that Matthai would go mad if he were not to find the murderer. While Dürrenmatt does not tell us exactly what happens to the detective, it is certain that he is a broken man: ". . .the old man clenched his hands into fists, shook them, and whispered, spitting out the words jerkily and with his face transfigured by an immense faith: 'I am waiting, I am waiting. He will come, he will come' " (p. 14). Matthai had failed, and he could not comprehend that fact. There was no room for chance in his world view.

Chance serves as the catalyst for Dürrenmatt's other two mysteries, in which the Bern policeman Commissioner Bärlach appears. After a chance encounter with a man called Gastmann, the two make a wager regarding the detection of crime. Gastmann bets that he can commit crimes which cannot be proved because of the very confusion and chaos in human relationships and the world. Bärlach accepts and understands the inevitable interference of uncontrollable forces in the orderly proceeding of human events, and he would deny the superiority of reason. However, he sees this chaos as a deterrent to crime rather than an encouragement. This is the cause of the story that becomes *The Judge and His Hangman.*[4]

There follow forty years of frustration for Bärlach, during which time he is, indeed, unable to prove Gastmann guilty of any crimes. Ultimately, however, through Bärlach's private pursuit of justice and complex machinations, retribution is gained. Bärlach becomes both judge and hangman, and Gastmann is punished by death. Yet Bärlach was never able to succeed in an official sense. The reasoning powers of the detective were thwarted by the chaos of the world.

At the end of this novel, Bärlach is critically ill and close to death; but Dürrenmatt does not yet permit him to die, for there is still one more criminal to be brought to justice—the evil and nihilistic Dr. Emmenberger of *The Quarry.*[5] By this time, Bärlach is hardly a match for a Travis McGee or a Lew Archer. The retired detective is hospitalized, and, as he reflects upon his career as a policeman, he is depressed by his belief that the formalities of officialdom have inhibited his pursuit of criminals. While lying in his hospital bed, he happens to glance at an issue of *Life* magazine. This puts him upon the trail of the totally free and evil Emmenberger, who rejoices in being beyond the norms of society and experiences an intense exhilaration when operating on patients without narcotics.

Bärlach's physician describes Emmenberger's devilish reaction when he, as a young medical student, had operated without anesthetic in an emergency situation: "'It was as if something devilish popped out of his eyes, a kind of unrestrained joy in torturing. . . .'" (pp. 29–30). Thus began Emmenberger's sordid career, which eventually led him to a concentration camp where the evil in him nourished itself on the hope his victims cherished. He had escaped recognition and retribution after the war and was now operating the very prosperous sanitarium Sonnenstein and preying upon the hopes of his wealthy patients.

In a manner similar to the attraction to and pursuit of Gastmann, Bärlach is drawn to Emmenberger and makes the decision to pursue justice on his own. He decides to go to the sanitarium as a patient in an effort to entrap the doctor. Bärlach's motivation is indeed admirable, but his plan is quite foolish. Not only does he fall into Emmenberger's clutches, but an appealing eccentric named Fortschig, who had been willing to help the Commissioner, is murdered because of the threat the investigation represents for Emmenberger.

The climax is reached in the confrontation between an ill and weakened Bärlach and Emmenberger, who is in total control of the situation. The Doctor explains his free, nihilistic, and evil philosophy of life to the detective and challenges Bärlach to offer a defense of his own humanistic beliefs. Bärlach fails to reply, and Dürrenmatt does not explain this very uncomfortable silence. Perhaps, in view of the detective's desperate situation, his hesitation is the result of physical weakness. Fear and doubt would be very understandable feelings, for the Commissioner is not a young idealist but rather a defeated and dying man.

Bärlach is in the throes of despair to which he had also momentarily surrendered on the way to Sonnenstein. Whatever the cause for Bärlach's failure to respond to the challenge thrown out by Emmenberger, the defeat by the evil he represents is only temporary. Dürrenmatt rescues Bärlach and destroys Dr. Emmenberger through the *deus ex machina* entrance of the Jew Gulliver, a surviving, justice-seeking victim of one of Emmenberger's crimes against humanity. Bärlach's failure to entrap Emmenberger arose from his human infirmity.

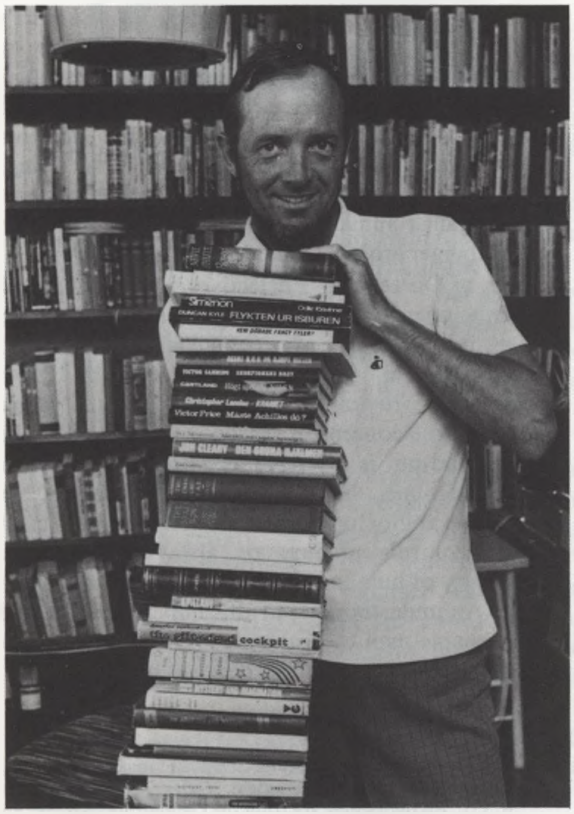
Both of Dürrenmatt's detectives, Dr. Matthai and Commissioner Bärlach, are ex-policemen who decide to seek justice outside of official channels. Both had been successful in their careers but had also experienced frustration. In each of the three mysteries, the concept of reason is not simply in the background nor is it lauded as with Nero Wolfe or Sherlock Holmes. It is mentioned and discussed, but the human ability to reason is viewed as imperfect. It cannot control, predict, or always unravel the complexity of human events, although the attempt is noble. An understanding of this imperfection would better enable man to deal with his existence and his world when it disappoints or deceives him.

Notes

1. *Theaterprobleme* in *Theater-Schriften und Reden,* ed., Elisabeth Brock-Sulzer (Zurich: Verlag der Arche, 1966, p. 131. All quotations are from the German editions and are translated by the author.
2. Trans., Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Knopf, 1959).
3. *Das Versprechen: Requium auf den Kriminalroman,* 4th ed. (Zürich: Verlag der Arche, 1962), p. 129.
4. Trans., Cyrus Brooks (London: Four Square Books, 1961). The German edition is *Der Richter und sein Henker,* 7th ed. (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1964).
5. Trans., Eva H. Morreale (New York: Grove Press, 1961). The German edition is *Der Verdacht,* 5th ed. (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1962).

IWAN HEDMAN: An Interview

By Caleb A. Lewis



My uncle, who was a physicist at UCLA, told me once that he had made a discovery that would have placed his name in all the textbooks. He was slow in writing it up, however. Subsequently, a physicist in India operating independently made the same discovery—and wrote it up first. Happily for TADians, Al Hubin was first all the way with The Armchair Detective. *But not by all that much, as we learn in the interview which follows with the editor/publisher of* DAST, *the Scandinavian equivalent of TAD. Once again, ideas were sparked independently in widely separated countries.*

I = *Interviewer.* **H** = *Iwan Hedman*

I: What started you publishing your magazine *DAST*?

H: The idea just came to me suddenly during the summer of 1968. I had started to collect books seriously in 1959 and, during the next nine years, I had been writing fan letters to many famous authors in England and the U.S.A. Some answered my long letters; some did not; but most of them did. I think that was one of the big reasons I started *DAST*; I wanted to spread the information I got from authors, publishers, and agents all over the world. I had a lot of interesting information about coming books, old books, biographical notes, etc.

One day a Swedish publisher said, "Iwan, why don't you start a little magazine of information? You know so many people, the magazine should be popular among all book collectors. I'll supply you with all the new information from our firm. You collect the rest, write it up, and we'll print it. What do you say?" I did not hesitate for a moment.

I: When did *DAST* start? And did you know about TAD then?

H: The first issue of *DAST* was published in September 1968, and it was stencilized [printed] in 100 copies of about 20 pages. Now it is very rare and collectors pay a lot of money for the first issues. Then I sent them to my friends, relatives, and those collectors that I knew. The response was good and,

Iwan Hedman at the typewriter on which *DAST* is produced

during that first year, I got about 100 readers in Sweden in England. The first two years I sent them free, but later on I had to get paid for the postage.

No, I did not know anything about TAD until I had had some issues published of my own *DAST*. When I heard about it, I subscribed to TAD. Unfortunately, I could not get the first two issues and so I had them photocopied later on. Now I do have a complete collection of bound TAD.

I: What happened next?

H: From 1968 'til 1977, the number of members increased by about 100 new members each year. At the present time I do have 1,000 members all over the world—and you must notice that *DAST* is published in a very little country named Sweden *in Swedish*. But I have to admit that some articles are in English (about one in each issue). Almost all Swedish publishers thought *DAST* was a very good idea and they helped me in many ways. They send me all their books and review purposes, and they do send me money to help with printing costs and paper costs.

Very soon I started to write to foreign publishers in England and the U.S.A., but to tell you the truth only the English publishers did what they could to help me with books, biographies, photos, and so on. Only a few American publishers were helpful: Harper and Row (Joan Kahn), Doubleday, Putnam, and McKay. But I'll not complain at all. It's a long way from the U.S.A. to little Strangnas in Sweden.

I: Are *DAST* and book collecting a profession or a hobby?

H: Hobbies. I have always had book collecting as a hobby, and I had some 500 books when I started the real collecting in 1959. I became a professional soldier in the Swedish Army when I joined in 1950. I am now a captain and have been training medical men since 1965. I am very glad to tell you that I will get my pension in 1981 when I will be 50 years old. Then I'll give *DAST* 100% of my time.

I: What about your own collection of books?

H: Well, my library contains now about 18,000 books. Books are everywhere, and I find it difficult to store more. My office is in the cellar in our garage, which I have rebuilt as an office. I have an antiquarian bookshop in the cellar, with about 2,000 books.

I also have a book publishing company with my wife, called *Dast Forlag Ab*. My own books are published there. So far I have had four books published.

I: How do you find time for all that?

H: You have to give each project some time each day in order to be effective. For example, my book about mystery fiction published in the Swedish language [*Dectare Och Thrillers På Svenska 1864–1973*] lists about 20,000 titles in 380 pages. I told myself to write at least three pages each night. In alphabetizing the title index, I did about 200 per night. The book was ready on time and, by now, it is almost sold out. It's a Swedish book similar to Al Hubin's *The Bibliography of Crime Fiction, 1749–1975*.

I: You seem to have a lot of things in common with Al.

Iwan Hedman with Desmond and Joan Bagley

H: Yes, yes, and another yes. It is almost frightening how two people living so far from each other have so many things together.

I'll admit I have been inspired by his work to many times but, even if he hadn't been doing what he does so well, I know I would continue my work here in Sweden.

Another thing we have had together in assembling pages in order to make a *DAST* or TAD. One Monday morning at my job I was asked what I had done the day before. My friend was surprised when I told him, "I have been walking around our dinner table 500 times."

I: Where can one find your *DAST* magazine today?

H: You can find it in the whole of Scandinavia (Sweden, Denmark, and Norway—Finland, too), England, Germany, Italy, Austria, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Romania, Russia, Australia, Japan, and the U.S.A.

I: Describe your subscribers.

H: You can find a *DAST* subscriber almost everywhere. Let's take Sweden. We have doctors, professors, authors, men working in the woods, lawyers, dentists. . .many are women. . .most are college graduates. Most read and speak English.

Many famous writers have been writing for *DAST*. Almost all Swedish authors do. K. Arne Blom and Jean Bolinder have been contributors to *DAST* since the beginning. Many interviews appear and a lot of authors from MWA have been "portraited" here.

I: *DAST* must have led you into other activities in the mystery field.

H: A few years ago I started editing a thriller series, Hedman Thrillers, for Hemmets Journal, a Swedish publishing company. I choose the best thrillers I can find; they translate them; and I do the bio-bibliography of each author. So far there are twenty books in the series, including volumes by Brian Garfield, Richard Neely, Walter Wager, and Robert Fish.

I: How does your family view your work?

H: I have a very tolerant wife, Inga. She likes what I am doing and she helps in every way she can. Of course, it must be boring to have a husband sitting in the basement *every night* from 1800–2200.

My children like what I am doing too, but they don't read as much as I did at the same age. Eva, age twelve, is very interested in *DAST*. She helps me with each new issue. She reads a lot and is a collector of autographed books.

I: What's the future for *DAST* in its second decade?

H: I think there is a good future for *DAST* as collecting mysteries becomes more and more popular here. In fact, it is becoming most difficult to find books in good condition anymore. Mystery books have had a bad name here but, since *DAST* began, their reputation is growing. More and more libraries are subscribing to *DAST* to keep up with new books and authors.

But I wish we had something like The Mystery Library here in Sweden. I think that would be most valuable for the genre.

I: What are *your* plans for the future?

H: Mysteries and more mysteries. New Books. *DAST* and more *DAST*. And 1981!

The cover of Iwan Hedman's bibliography of mysteries published in Sweden, 1864–1973.

CRIME AND CHARACTER: Notes on Rex Stout's Early Fiction

By David R. Anderson

"Secrets" (1914), an early Rex Stout short story, opens with Moorfield, a New York lawyer renowned for his honesty and perspecacity, recalling his first interview with the beautiful but dangerous Lillian Markton. As he reconstructs that fateful exchange, Moorfield utters a very important remark:

> . . .I stooped to pick it [a cigar] up. Thus I missed three or four valuable seconds which, however trifling they may seem to the average mind, will be recognized as all-important by the student of crime and character.[1]

"Crime and character" slip out together as if they were two matching terms of one proposition. And so, in effect, they are. To study one, Moorfield clearly assumes, one must study the other.

A moment's reflection will convince readers of the Nero Wolfe saga that Moorfield's assumption remained important to Rex Stout in later years. Those who have not yet seen Stout's posthumous *Justice Ends at Home and Other Stories,* however, will be interested to discover that an interest in "crime and character" runs throughout his earliest fiction. As early as twenty years before the publication of *Fer-de-Lance* (1934), Rex was, consciously or unconsciously, discovering the important connections betwen insight into human character and crime-solving.

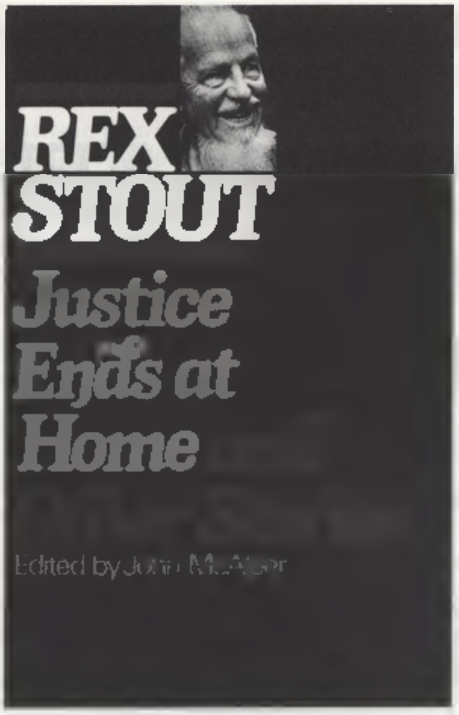
Like Wolfe and Archie, Moorfield makes it a point "never to defend the confessedly or obviously guilty" (p. 153). Consequently, for him "one of the greatest handicaps under which an attorney labors" is "getting a line on the character of his client" (pp. 152–53). To solve this problem, Moorfield uses a painting which he props inside his roll-top desk where a prospective client cannot help but see it. After one look at the canvas, any mind is shocked into a revelation of its true character:

> By its very crudity, its primality, the thing was infallible, never failing to shock the mind into a betrayal of its most carefully hidden secrets (p. 154).

Such an obviously mechanical device as a painting that is a truth-gauge is just one sign that this story belongs to the early Rex Stout. Most detectives are forced to do without a painting like Moorfield's; nor do they have any better luck than Archie with Wolfe's borrowed maxim, *vultus est index animi.* Insight into character is, nevertheless, one of the hallmarks of the ratiocinative detective. Holmes, Poirot, Maigret, and Van der Valk all wield a hypersensitivity to personality. That same quality characterizes the detection done by Wolfe and Archie.

More than once the solution to a case in the Wolfe saga depends upon either Nero's or Archie's insight into character, for knowledge of a person's character leads to the ability to predict how he will act in given circumstances. Such is the method by which Wolfe and Archie conclude perhaps the most exciting story of their career, *In the Best Families* (1950). Confronting their arch-enemy Arnold Zeck, Wolfe and Archie leave a revolver open to the hand of Barry Rackham, over whom Zeck exercises a fearful hold. Then, attacking Zeck, they depend on Rackham to seize the opportunity to rid himself of Zeck by snatching the revolver and shooting him. When Rackham does exactly that, Archie and Wolfe are rid of their nemesis and of Rackham, who is gunned down immediately by Zeck's security men.

The careful reader of *Justice Ends at Home and Other Stories* will see Rex experimenting with narrators and other characters who succeed because of their ability to make snap judgments about others —judgments which are always vindicated by the event. When he is not showing the importance of



accurately judging character, Rex is often showing what kind of trouble a person can get into if he does not observe carefully, and sift thoughtfully, the behavior of those around him.

In "The Rope Dance" (1916), Rick Dugget loses his eight hundred dollar stake because he cannot tell a sharpie when he sees one:

> Rick liked the man from Kansas. He appeared to be an outspoken, blunt sort of fellow who liked to have a good time and knew where to go for it. Lucky thing to have met up with him. Mighty pleasant to have for a companion a chap from the right side of the Mississippi (p. 4).

When Rex wanted to teach a lesson, he was not above rubbing in a man's mistakes.

In "An Officer and a Lady" (1917), Bill Farden burglarizes the bedroom of a sleeping child. When sentimentality replaces "vigilant tredpidation," he gets a nasty surprise:

> Expensive trinket, that. Absurd to trust a child with it. No doubt she was very proud of the thing. He put it down again, spared even the impulse to put it in his pocket. He knew it would be useless to debate the matter with himself. What burglar would take anything from a sweet helpless child like—
>
> *"Hands up!"* (p. 26)

Lazy Garway Ross of "The Pay-Yeoman" (1914) entrusts his duties to James Martin. The result: Martin purloins eight thousand dollars of the Navy's money, and Ross has to come up with the balance himself. His discovery of the theft dumbfounds Ross, and Rex uses the incident as an excuse for a solemn lecture:

> He was conscious of an immense incredulity. This was not based on any real knowledge of Martin's character or belief in his honesty, but originated in and proceeded from the paymaster himself. His mind, limited by its own habits, was incapable of registering so sudden and complete a reversal of conception (p. 62).

The idea implicit in the passages quoted above becomes explicit here. A person who has "no real knowledge of. . .character" is likely to find himself in trouble.

Who can ascribe to coincidence the fact that all of these examples of bad judgment, the direct result of poor character analysis, occur in the context of a crime? Clearly, a relationship had begun to solidify in Rex Stout's mind between detection and perception. Victims of crime are those whose minds are limited by their own habits. Solvers of crimes, as other stories in this collection suggest, are those who understand other people's characters, and who apply that insight to the problems posed by the crime.

In "A Professional Recall" (1912), Dudd Bronson swindles two rapacious lawyers (lawyers in Stout are usually rapacious, Moorfield and Nathaniel Parker being two exceptions) because of his perceptive diagnosis of their ruling passion—greed. Here Bronson is legally the criminal, but morally, the story suggests, he is actually a Robin Hood. By pretending to be both himself and his brother, Dudd manages to receive damages out of one of the lawyers' pockets. To put the icing on an already elaborate cake, just as they are leaving the bank where the swindle has been completed, Dudd squeezes fifty dollars out of his prey:

> "Mr. Devlin," says I, "I'm a poor man. Whether I get that twelve hundred I don't know. But I got some friends in Pittsburgh what's got it, and if you'll let me have that fifty back for railroad fare I'll make it a hundred when I settle up."
>
> Devlin blinked hard, and I thought he'd jumped it. But bein' a grafter, that hundred looked too good to lose. He pulls out a big black wallet, counts out five tens, and hands 'em to me careful-like (p. 150).

Dudd slowed down his getaway for an extra fifty, but his knowledge of a lawyer's character made it a safe bet.

The most striking instance in the early Stout of insight into character helping to solve a crime occurs in "The Heels of Fate" (1917). To emphasize the importance of psychological insight, Rex endows the hero of this story, Dal Willett, with a deep knowledge of both human nature and the nature of an animal—

the horse. The narrator's description of Dal singles out his most important quality:

> He was a tall, loose-jointed man, about forty then, with a red leathery countenance and keen little gray eyes; and as I gradually discovered, he was an extraordinarily observant fellow, with a sharp knowledge of humans and understanding of them . . . (p. 96).

Like Nero and Archie earlier in this essay, Willett finds himself confronted with the problem of how to dispose of an evil, predatory crook without committing legal murder. Dal's knowledge of human character makes him the first to see that Gruber is a villain, and his knowledge of equine character leads him to a Wolfeian solution to his dilemma. Willett knew horses, and he knew that Mac (short for Machiavelli) was in a foul mood the day Gruber wanted to rent a horse. To prevent Gruber from exposing John Hawkins and ruining his daughter, Dal sends Gruber himself into the stable to lead out Mac. The result: Gruber's skull is smashed by a kick from Mac's iron-shod heels, John Hawkins is safe from blackmail, and Dal is legally innocent of murder:

> "Of course I knew," he said with a certain grimness. "And I sent him back there. But somehow I don't feel responsible" (p. 110).

To solve a crime, the detective needs to meet his quarry, assess his character, predict how he will act under circumstances guaranteed to expose him, and then engineer those circumstances. This is often Wolfe's *modus operandi*, and it is foreshadowed here by a country horse-dealer.

By collecting Rex Stout's early short stories, John McAleer has done more than just tickle an enthusiast's fancy. These early pieces show Rex exploring the connections between crime and character, gradually working through to a conviction that crimes cannot be solved without a prior observation of, interest in, and speculation upon, human nature. Wolfe, with his fondness for Latin tags, might have explained it this way: *Homo sum. Humani nihil a me alienum puto.*

Note

1. Rex Stout, *Justice Ends at Home and Other Stories*, ed. John McAleer (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), p. 155. Further citations will be from this edition and will appear in [illegible]

Some of My Best Friends Are Books

By Mary Groff

The San Francisco Mystery Bookshop is run by Bruce and Carol Taylor in the Noe Valley section of San Francisco. They are also the parents of a son (6) and a daughter (9), and Carol is one of those rare and unusual people—a native San Franciscan. Bruce was born in 1944, the year that one of his favorite authors published *Five Murders*, a collection of five pulp stories by Raymond Chandler, in an Avon paperback, for the fantastic price of 25¢.

Bruce's interest in mysteries originally began when he was about ten years old and read, for the first time, Ellery Queen and Sherlock Holmes. He was afflicted immediately with that incurable disease from which we all suffer in varying degrees. Sometimes this can be quite painful and can rarely be arrested, nor can antidotes be offered without causing deep offense. Bruce still remembers clearly his reaction to the damp gloom of Dartmoor and the fear-shrouded Baskerville Hall. The cheerful side of this was that his vocation was revealed to him, not in a blinding flash such as a Saint might receive but slowly, page by page.

When Carol returned to her native city in 1975, after some years of wandering around the United States, she mentioned that there was a tragic lack in San Francisco. Bruce, ever alert, realized at once what she meant, and in September of 1976 the shop opened with beautiful carpentry done by a relative. The place flourished from the very first moment and has always been awash with the goodwill and interest of Bay Area readers and collectors as they support this lifeline.

The first books were mainly composed of their own collections and some other low-priced reading copies and paperbacks. Bruce's top lip is inclined to quiver a bit as he mentions selling his Hammetts and Chandlers in first editions, as they all went within the first month. After a few weeks, they realized that they had started something important and more books must be found. Bruce and Carol say that the

majority of the stock has been located in thift stories, garage sales, other dealers from other States and also trades with customers. They offer new fiction and general mystery reference works, and they also like to receive wants lists from customers.

Carol supervises the shop on Fridays, and this is mostly a general-interest time for buying and for mystery news. Saturday is inclined to be hard-boiled, and occasionally ties are worn along with the almost compulsory trench coats. Bruce has always managed to avoid the temptation to put anything around his neck, as he prefers a casual line of current fashions. There is no particular dress rule for Friday afternoon, and gun-molls and vicars' wives are made equally welcome.

Both of the Taylors read a great deal to try and keep up with the Bay Area writers. This can be difficult, since the prolific Bill Pronzini, Collin Wilcox, Joe Gores and many others are resident in San Francisco and the surrounding communities. Occasionally the amusing and lovable Jim Lamb (*Nickel Jackpot*, etc.) comes in to count the number of his books on the shelves.

Many of the customers are regular ones, and some even have a routine. John Ballard comes into the shop at least once a week, and his major feature is hard-boiled. He is particularly proud of his collection of Joe Gores signed first editions, and his most treasured volume is *The Agony Column* by Earl Derr Biggers (1916). Another frequent customer, Gary McDonald, collects just about everything and consequently is not a typical bookman, as collectors tend to specialize. His special pride are his first edition Hammetts, and his profession is a research chemist. The customers fit into so many moulds and lifestyles that they are difficult to define: mothers, typists, lawyers, accountants, carpenters, policemen, even writers.

The Taylors are becoming used to fame and fortune, as they have been interviewed by two of the local newspapers and have appeared on television. The most recent appearance was by Bruce when he acted in a short play to be shown before a Saturday night film show, *Creature Features*. John Stanley, the producer, writes a short scene before he interviews local celebrities to introduce the film that he will have that night. When he took this over from Bob Wilkins in March 1979, he decided to write "The Adventure of the Persian Slipper" to celebrate visiting Baskerville Hall, a Sherlock Holmes room located at The Holiday Inn on Sutter Street. This met with a favorable reaction from his half-million viewers, some living as far away as Hawaii and Idaho, so he continued this type of introduction. For the Taylors he wrote *Little Shop of Murders* and used quite a few quotes from hard-boiled writers and even one from Shakespeare, which does prove what an educated bunch we all are, or try to be! John collects pulp writers, so he was familiar with the atmosphere and the street-wise conversations of this genre. The film took four or five hours to make on a very hot July day, and the most exhausted person must have been Ron Willis, the cameraman, as he stood rigidly for minutes on end holding a heavy camera at shoulder level.

Asked about some of his future plans, Bruce immediately replied, "Survival," but he did add that he hopes to retire in about fifteen years from his regular employment as a salesman and then to keep the shop open for a regular working week. He said that he is extremely happy to spend most of his weekends and leisure time among mystery books and mysterious people. He does prefer hard-boiled but will read very well-written English mysteries. They can be excellent on occasion, and one of his favorites is the recently-published *Invisible Green* by John Sladek. Carol's reading tastes are more catholic, and she particularly enjoyed John Franklin Bardin's books. She too tries to keep abreast of the local writers and their multiple talents and really enjoys books that are written by friends. The Taylors are regular attendants of the Mystery Writers of America dinners held each month either in San Francisco or across the Bay in El Cerrito; they also go to the dinners given by the local Sherlock Holmes society.

Asked about his favorite writers, Bruce Taylor replied that he considered Tony Hillerman to be "the greatest living American writer," while probably Cornell Woolrich is the greatest living dead one. For how can Woolrich ever really die? If he could ask Hillerman only one question, it would be, "What in your background allows you to speak with such authority on several Indian cultures?" And if Woolrich could reply, Bruce would ask, "Was it really that bad?" He considers Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time* to be the most over-rated mystery but has enjoyed some of her other books.

Carol and Bruce are both very firm in their beliefs that "books are important," and they enjoy meeting collectors and dealers from other states and other countries who visit the shop. During working hours they are always ready to help find rare editions, to give mystery facts or to help beginners get started on a fascinating new life of collecting.

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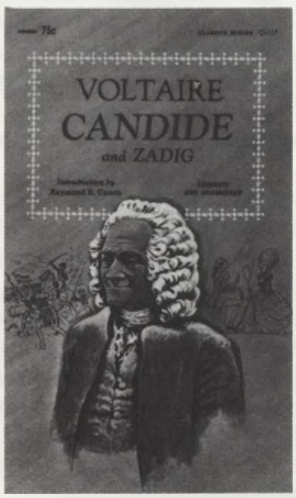
ZADIG AS A JEW: An Early German Tale of Detection

By Armin Arnold

In 1827, Wilhelm Hauff published a story entitled "Abner der Jude, der nichts gesehen hat" ("Abner, the Jew, who has seen nothing"). While the German *crime story* has a long tradition and goes back at least to August Gottlieb Meissner (1753–1807), Christian Heinrich Spiess (1755–1799) and Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), Hauff's story is probably the first *tale of detection* in German literature.

Hauff was born in Stuttgart in 1802. He studied theology and philosophy, received in Ph.D. in 1825 and died, less than 25 years old, in 1827. He is considered to be one of the leading authors of the later romantic period, and there have been many editions of his works—the latest in 1970. He wrote one of the first German historical novels inspired by Walter Scott; in a second novel he parodied the popular love story of the time; he also wrote poems and a considerable number of "Novellen" and essays. But today he is mainly known for his three cycles of fairy tales: "Die Karawane" (six tales), "Der Scheik von Alexandrien und seine Sklaven" (four tales) and "Das Wirtshaus im Spessart" (four tales). These fourteen stories are by no means addressed to children; they are quite satirical and full of hidden and double meanings.



"Abner, the Jew, who has seen nothing" is the second story in the second cycle. Hauff borrowed the contents from the third chapter of Voltaire's novel *Zadig* (1747). Hauff must have had Voltaire's text at his elbow, because the two versions correspond in too many details as that Hauff could have read Voltaire's story and then rewritten it from memory. Such plagiarism was legitimate at the time; it would have been quite easy for Hauff to change the decor of the story in such a way that his source could not so easily have been identified. Hauff made only one major change: Zadig was turned into a Jew and given all the traits by which—in the eyes of most Germans at the time—A Jew was characterized; hence, Hauff's story has strong antisemitic overtones.

Hauff was no more a racist than most German authors of the nineteenth century. He had passed his exams as a Lutheran pastor; religious tolerance was not ones of the virtues of the time, and Hauff probably felt even less sympathy for Catholics than for Jews. While most Protestants hated Catholics (in 1848 the Protestants and Catholics fought a civil war in nearby Switzerland), lower-class Jews were—as a rule—rather despised than hated. Here follows a list of anti-Jewish cliches prevalent in German literature of the nineteenth century: except for the members of and ruthless; they have no hearts, except for the members of their own families; their life's ambition is to get as much money as possible—by any means whatever. A Jew has no patriotic feelings. Once he has become rich, he sets his ambition on marrying his children off to members of the Christian upper classes; in order to achieve this purpose, he is willing to have his children baptized and to provide them with large sums of money. Hauff describes a rich and powerful Jew of this kind in his short novel "Jud Suss" (1827).

In German literature of the nineteenth century, one often finds a comical side to Jews as well—especially lower-class Jews: sometimes they become *too* sly; their schemes backfire; instead of collecting money they have to part with it; this parting is

accompanied by a flood of tearful words spoken in a queer syntax and containing typically Jewish expressions which Germans have always found hilarious. "Abner, the Jew, who has seen nothing" is a satire about a Jew, an amateur detective, who is much too intelligent for his own good. The first two paragraphs are characteristic of the spirit of the story:

> Jews, as you know, we meet everywhere, and everywhere they are Jews: sly, with keen eyes for even the smallest advantage, crooked; the more they are mistreated, the more crooked they become; they themselves are quite aware of their crookedness—and proud of it. Nevertheless, it occasionally happens that the very slyness of the Jew turns out to be his undoing. This is proven by the case of Abner who, one evening, went for a walk outside the city walls of Marokko.
>
> There he ambles, a pointed hat on his head, wrapped up in a modest coat which is none too clean; from time to time he takes some snuff out of a golden snuff box—secretly, because he doesn't want the box to be seen; he strokes his pointed beard. Incessantly his eyes are on the move, full of fear and worry and full of greed and hope to discover something—something which could be turned into money. Nevertheless, his constantly changing face radiates satisfaction; business must have been good today. And so it was. By profession Abner is a doctor, a merchant—in fact, anything that makes a profit. Today he has sold a slave with a hidden defect; he has bought a camel's load of rubber—at a very cheap price; and he has mixed the last drink of a rich, sick man—not with a view to the latter's recovery, but the last drink before the latter's death.

The same things happen to Abner which had happened to Zadig. The emperor's horse has run away and the emperor's servants come looking for it and ask Abner whether he has seen the horse. He describes the animal in detail, but then insists that he had not set eyes upon it. Almost simultaneously, the imperial eunuchs come running, looking for the lap dog of the empress. Again, Abner describes the animal to a dot, but then insists that he has not seen it. Abner speaks a low-class Jewish-German jargon, and there is a good measure of comedy in every line he speaks.

Like Zadig, Abner is arrested; since he has described the animals, he must have seen them; since he does not want to admit it, he must be in league with the alleged thieves; at least this is what the servants think. Both stories make fun of the forms of justice under absolutism: Zadig is given no chance to defend himself; he is condemned to be beaten and exiled to Siberia. By good luck, the two animals are found in time; Zadig's punishment is reduced to a fine of 400 ounces of gold. Only *after* he has paid the fine, is he allowed to defend himself and to enlighten the court. Abner, on the other hand, is heard by the emperor himself, but only *after* Abner has received fifty strokes on his feet. He tells the same story as Zadig: from the prints in the sand he had concluded that the dog was a female, had thrown a litter a few days ago, had long ears and was lame on one leg. While Zadig had said nothing about the dog's tail, Abner concludes that the dog must have had a long and bushy one. As to the horse, the broken branches and leaves tell Zadig and Abner about the size of the horse, the length of its tail and the color of its hair. The hooves must be of silver since the two detectives find traces of silver on a stone, and the stirrups must be of gold since a touch of gold is found on the side of a rock which the horse had passed.

While Zadig speaks to the point, Abner tells a flowery tale, full of deviations and exaggerations; in fact, the reader learns almost as much about Abner's character and his way of thinking as about the horse and the dog. In the end, the emperor has to interrupt Abner; the Jew is fined a hundred "Zechinen" (doubloons), but has to pay only fifty, since the fifty strokes Abner has received are taken into account.

Zadig and Abner both decide to be more careful with their words in the future. But what happens? Zadig observes an escaped prisoner running past his window. When asked he denies having seen the prisoner. However, it can be established that he has, in fact, seen the prisoner, and Zadig is fined 500 ounces of gold. Abner, on the other hand, is asked whether he has seen the emperor's slave who has escaped. Abner has not and says so honestly, but nobody believes him. When put under pressure, the Jew points to the mountains; but the slave had fled towards the sea. Subsequently, Abner is arrested and condemned to a hundred strokes and a hundred "Zechinen." The court jester tells Abner that he should be proud to suffer—bodily and financially—with the emperor—every time the latter loses something. Of course, there is a hidden meaning here which most readers at the time understood: Whenever the rulers make a mistake, the Jews have to pay for it.

While the reader tends to feel sympathy for Zadig, Hauff has drawn Abner in such a way that the Jew stirs up no pity; one just laughs about his speeches and feels that he well deserves what he is getting. It is more than ironical that the tale of the horse and the dog which Hauff took from Voltaire and changed into a sort of antisemitic detective satire did, in fact, originate in Jewish literature of the third century—as explained by Régis Messac in *Le "Detective Novel" et l'influence de la pensée scientifique* (Paris: Champion, 1929, pp. 17–29).

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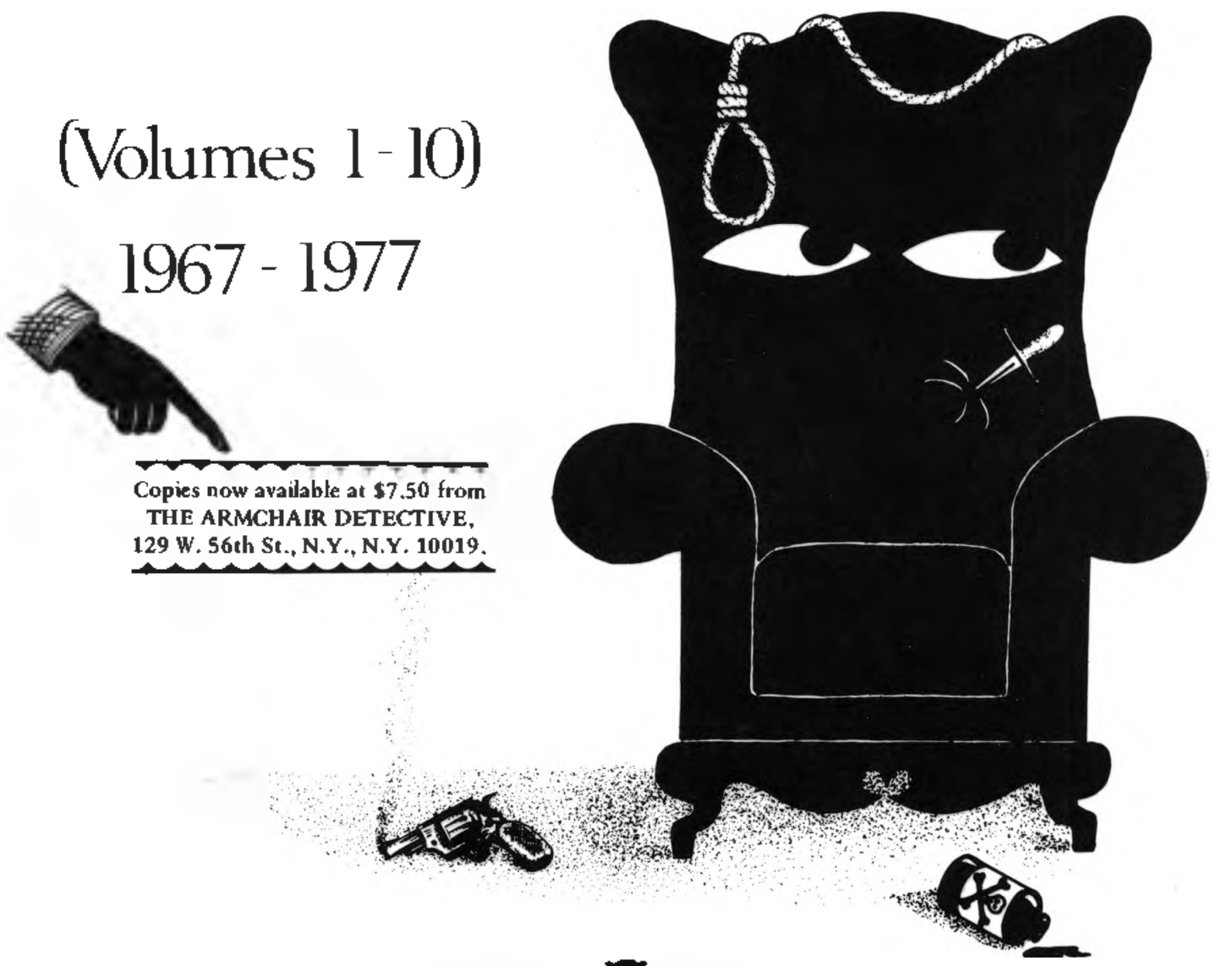

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