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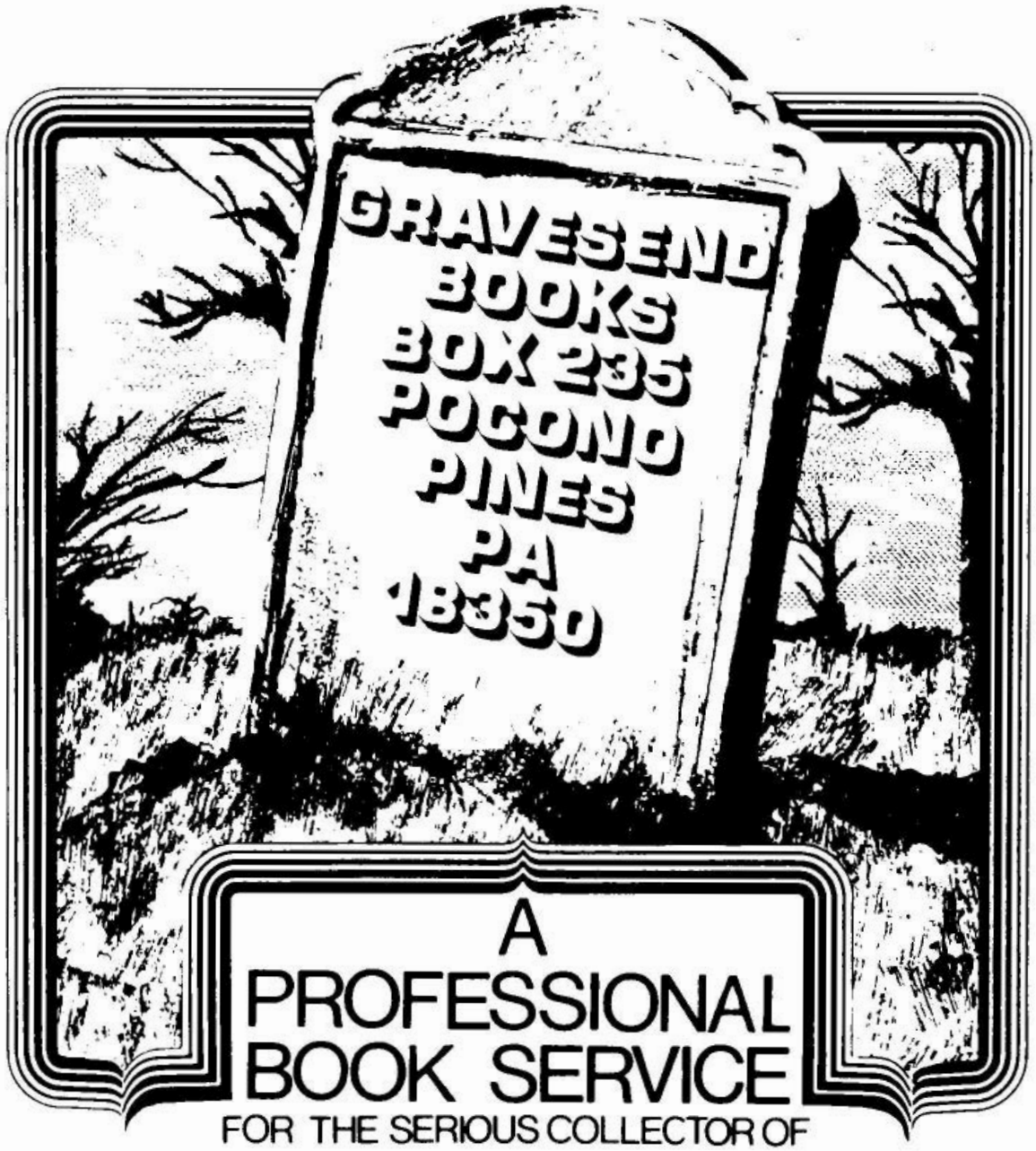
The Armchair Detective Reader Survey

Brian Garfield, Joe Gores, and Ross Thomas: The Making of "Hammett"



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Volume 17 **Number 2** **Spring 1984**

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On the cover: This illustration first appeared on the June 1935 issue of "The Black Mask."

THE UNEASY CHAIR

Dear TADian:

It has been several years sincethe following request last appeared in this column, but we have to do it now. No, it isn't a plea for you to rush out and clear the shelves at your local bookseller's (though that is *always* a good idea). Rather, it is a request for material. As you will read later in this issue, in an article outlining what we learned from the TAD questionnaire, some ofthe most desiredmaterial is in your hands . . and imaginations. The reviews, letters, and articles which fill our pages are *your* work. Only rarely is an article solicited, a review assigned. When there are only a handful of current (or, especially, retro) reviews, or a dearth of articles with bibliographies, when the letters column reflects the views of only three or four people, it means that our mail has been very light over the preceding months

I know that there has been a certain "failure to communicate" during some of the years past, a situation which has been corrected to the extent that there has been correspondence with potential contributors not only discussing possibilities but offering old-fashioned, sleeves-up editorial help as well.

The thing to remember, however, is that perhaps more than most other magazines, TAD is a reflection of its readers. It does not put too fine a point on the matter to say that TAD *is its readers!* That is one of the reasons behind the questionnaire which subscribers were asked to respond to, and it is undoubtedlyone of the reasons subscribersrespondedso well.

So we hope the mail will start to come in heavily once again, containing thearticlesand comments *you* want to see. If there are any questions or doubts, anything youwantto discuss beforecommittingyour efforts to the sometimes not tender mercies of the Postal Service, please feel free toget in touch with us.

One final request in this regard. Please include a line or two of biographical material. While many of our contributors are well known to you, most may notbe. We'dliketo correct that situation.

Until next time, then,

Best mysterious wishes,

Michael Seidman

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"VE VERE YOUNG THEN"

The Filming of *Hammett*

An Interview with Joe Gores and Ross Thomas By Brian Garfield

Joe Gores is a former San Francisco private eye who turned to mystery writing in the late 1950s. He quit full-time detective work in 1966, and his first novel, *A Time of Predators* (Random House, 1969), won the MWA Edgar Award. He is the only writer to have won Edgars in three different categories (the others were best short story and best series-episode teleplay). He has written screenplays and quite a number of teleplays, notably for the Telly Savalas *Kojak* series and for the 1984 *Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer* series with Stacy Keach, but is probably best known to aficionados of crime literature as the author of a growing series of "File" novels and short stories about San Francisco's DKA detective agency. Right now he and I are collaborating on a proposed movie script about two Dashiell Hammett characters—the detective partners Sam Spade and Miles Archer.

Joe and his wife Dori live on a Marin County hillside with a view of horse-pasture hills and distant mountains. At intervals, Joe commutes the 450 miles to Los Angelesfor meetings, script conferences, and othermotion picturebusiness

In 1975, Joe wrote the novel *Hammett* about that other former San Francisco private eye turned mystery writer. This novel was the basis for a movie produced by Francis Ford Coppola and abortively released in 1982. The actor Frederic Forest *(The Conversation, When the Legends Die, One From the Heart)* stars as the young Dashiell Hammett in 1928, when he was still writing short stories for pulp magazines. Hammett in real life had been a Pinkerton detective before taking up the typewriter. In Gores's novel, Hammett sets out to expose San Francisco's elaboratecorruption in order to discover thoseguilty of the murder of an operative who was his friend.

From the time Francis Ford Coppola first acquired motion picture rights in the novel for his American Zoetrope producing company, it took nearly seven years to bring *Hammett* to the screen. In an attempt to retrace some of the events of those seven years, I got together several times with Joe Gores and Ross Thomas. On the most recent of those occasions—January 10, 1984—I tape-recorded the conversation. The interview portion of this article consists of transcripts from that tape.

Ross Thomas worked in what he says was the occupation of public relations in Europe and Africa, and in election campaigns in the United States, before turning to writing with *The Cold War Swap* in 1966. Like Joe Gores's first novel, it won the Edgar award. Ross has written about twenty books, some of them under the pen name Oliver Bleeck. At this writing, the most recent is *Missionary Stew* (Simon & Schuster, 1983). Most of his novels contain dissections—very funny and very cynical—of human corruption: how elections are rigged, how the game of politics is *really* played, how the innocent are manipulated, how crooks operate. His wry, dry writing has no equal.

Ross and his wife Rosalie live on a hill overlooking the ocean at Malibu. The doormat outside the entrance to their house bears the legend "GO AWAY."

A while ago, my company acquired film rights in Ross's novel *The Seersucker Whipsaw* (1967). Ross wrote the screenplay—several versions of it—and I have had the pleasure (perhaps more mine than his) of working with him on the script. Our collaboration (that of producer and screenwriter)—along with similar work I've done with friends Donald E. Westlake and David Morell—has convinced me that I don't have what it takes to be a moom pitchah producer. In particular, working with Ross has had plenty of moments of lunacy ("Well, if they won't buy it set in Africa, why don't we set it in North Dakota?"), but at least it has been a little less adventurous than some of thosedescribedbelow.

The movie *Hammett* actually was filmed twice, as the reader will learn. Joe Gores wrote the novel (the basis for it all) and the first five drafts of the screenplay; Ross Thomas wrote the last severaldrafts including the final (shooting) draft for the second (i.e., the released) version of the movie. Between them, the two writers have quite a few amusing and horrifyingrecollections. Some of them are here.

Prominent in the history of *Hammett* is the redoubtable FrancisFord Coppola. I have never met him. He is 2½ months younger than I and is a former

UCLA film student who got a job with Roger Corman's shoestring movie company in the early 1960s. He produced, wrote, and/or directed a fairly witless student nudie movie (*Tonight For Sure*), a low-budget horror movie *(Dementia 13)*, and a sex comedy generally described as "zesty" and "campy" (*You're a Big Boy Now*). He wrote or co-wrote screenplays for *This Property Is Condemned* and *Is Paris Burning?* His first major work was directing the big musical *Finian's Rainbow* for Warner Bros. in 1967; it was overblown and unsuccessful. His next production was *The Rain People* in 1967, a small, sentimental charmer that no one noticed; it is a good littlemovie, I think, and is graced by the presence of Robert Duvall in a small but exciting part as a redneck (cf. *Apocalypse Now*).

Coppola's peak—both artistically and financially —seems to have occurred in the five-year period between *Patton* (1969, half a screenwriting credit) and *The Godfather, Part II* (1974, writer-director-producer). Within that period, he directed *The Godfather* and *The Conversation* and produced *American Graffiti*. But he also co-wrote *The Great Gatsby* (1974); consistency of quality is not his strong

Coppola lives in a rural Victorian house on a vineyard in Napa County. He grows grapes commercially and likes to cook pasta and to entertain; he seems to dislikebeing alone. Allegedly, he has been exploring the possibility of setting up a film studio—or perhaps an empire—in Central America. He has developed an avid fascination for electronic gadgets, particularly video equipment; he edited the seven-hour television version of the combined "Godfather" movies on Betamax videotape machines in his home and in Philippine hotels while he was directing *Apocalypse Now*.

Driven by what some say is a compulsion to control it all, Coppola founded American Zoetrope in the late 1960s andhas produced several films under its banner, including *Apocalypse Now, The Black Stallion,* and *One From the Heart*. At one time, Zoetrope had complete studio facilities in both Los Angeles and San Francisco. Coppola himself was publishing *City* magazine in San Francisco (which put out an issue devoted to Dashiell Hammett that has become a collector's item) and was acting as cinematic and financial godfather to an entire generation of *enfant terrible* filmmakers, among them George Lucas and Steven Spielberg. But Zoetrope's downs have beenas spectacular as its ups. The company has gone bankrupt more than once during the past fifteen years. At this writing it is an empty shell, and Coppola seems to have no connection with it. This corporate failure may account partially for the rudimentary release giventhe movie *Hammett,* which appeared in commercial playdates

Frederick Forrest as Dashiell Hammett undergoes an interrogation by R.G. Armstrong in a scene from "Hammett."

in a few cities but has never received a general nationwide release.

GARFIELD: What's the chronology of the movie?

GORES: I finished writing the second draft of the novel and the typescript went to my Hollywood agent in 1975. Francis Coppola saw it before the book was published. There's a kind of cachet to that—producers always like to see a book in manuscript or in galleys because it makes them feelthey're thefirst ones to see it.

Francis bought it at the urging of Fred Roos (Coppola's assistant and the eventual producer of "Hammett") and said he wanted me to do the screenplay. Two years later, he got a contract to us. It was 85 pages long.

I signed it, and he hired Nicolas Roeg to be the director.

Nicolas Roeg is English, a film director who began his career as a cameramanand cinematographer. He was second-unit cameraman on *Lawrence of Arabia* and photographed such films as *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *Far From the Madding Crowd*.

Roeg directed among others the Australian movie *Walkabout*, the Mick Jagger movie *Performance,* and the stylized science-fiction movie *The Man Who Fell to Earth* with David Bowie. He is regarded by some as a fascinatingdirector with a genius forimage and offbeat stories, and by others as an infuriating

purveyorof pretentiouscinematictedium

GORES: At this point, I hadn't been asked to write anything yet. There was no screenplay. I had dinner with Fred Roos and with Nicolas Roeg. Nick said, "We will work from the book and gradually work away from the book, and gradually we will end up withascreenplaythat*is*the book."

THOMAS: Could you say that again?

GORES: It's one of those classical director remarks. Whatit's supposed to meanis that you're working in a differentmedium so youhaveto approach thestory differently. What it really means is that you have to getaway fromthe sourcematerial so the directorcan put his own imprint on it. Nick's a very individual director.

GARFIELD: Judging by his directing style, I get the feeling he must have read one of those French *auteuriste* magazines.

The screenplay of *Apocalypse Now* is credited to John Milius and Francis Ford Coppola. The film was released in 1979. Ten years earlier, the original screenplay for the picture—suggested by but not adapted from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*—was written by John Milius. A comparison of that screenplay with the finished film has led some observers, including me, to wonder just how much "writing" Coppola actually did. The film is surprisingly faithful to Milius's 1969 script. The main difference seems to be that a bloody opening sequence featuring the Marlon Brando character doesnotappear in the finishedmovie.

GORES: So anyway, that night at a dinner party at Richard Brautigan's house, Nick and Brautigan allegedly got into a slight altercation over a point of grammar and Nick fell down the stairs and broke his ankle. Thenextday, when I showed upto work at the Fairmont Hotel, there was Nick with his foot up in theair. Nothing muchwasdonethatday.

Finally, some time later, Nick and I settled in to work at Zoetrope's flatiron building where Columbus, Kearny and Pacific streets come together in San Francisco. It's an incredible room, all gorgeously wood-inlaid. Francis had it built as a private apartment for when he had to stay over in San Francisco working on something. He did a good bit of the *Apocalypse Now* script there

"We will work from the book and gradually work away from the book, and gradually we will end up with a screenplay that *is* the book."

GARFIELD: Did Coppola pay much attention to the work you and Roeg were doing? Did he keep aoreast of it and supervise it?

GORES: No. When Nick and I started work on the script, Francis was in the Phillipines starting to shoot *Apocalypse,* so it was just Nick and me up on the top floor with our special keys to the elevator. We sat around anddrank gallons of teaand fought a lot and laughed a lot. I found him a great guy to work with.

I did a draft, and they read it. They told me that, while this was one of the best scripts they'd every read, it was also one of the most violent. I said, "Read an Agatha Christie, then. There are more people dying in an Agatha Christie than die in this script.'

I did two versions of the script for Nick. Then a year went by. Francis was still absorbed in *Apocalypse.* He hadn't even started to cast *Hammett.* Nick couldn't gethis attention.

Nick had been offered another job—he thought he was going to direct *Flash Gordon* for Dino De Laurentiis. He never did, as it turned out. But Nick likes to keep working. If he can't be directing a feature he does commercials. He just isn't the kindof person whocansit around waiting.

I was very sorry he quit. He was a terrific guy to work with.

More time went by. Then Wim Wenders was hired.

Wim Wenders (pronounced "Vim Venders") is still in his thirties andhas been a leading nameamongthe young West German directors of the 1970s and 1980s. Wenders seems enamored, if not obsessed, with old American movies—especially gangster pictures and the *film noir* mystery films of the 1940s—but he seems to understand them surrealistically, the same way Sergio Leone understands American Westerns: with a brutalized, romanticized, and highly inaccurate vision.

Wenders directed his first feature film at 25. His prolific output (seventeen movies in fourteen years) includes most notably *The American Friend,* based on a mystery novel by Patricia Highsmith but re-set in Hamburg. The movie has it aficionadoes; theysee it as an *hommage*to, and a respectable revival of, the classic Hollywood thriller style of forty years ago. Others have criticized it as imitative, self-indulgent, and boring.

I think of him the way I think of quite a few directors of our time—as a talented but overrated filmmaker with a good camera eye and a reverence for the tricks and gimmicks of his predecessors (Hitchcock *et al*) but a very poor sense of what

makes a storywork

GORES: I remember when Wim and Fred Roos and I spent a day driving around San Francisco and Marin, looking at locations. Fred took a picture of Wim and me leaning over the parapet where Bush Street passes above the Stockton Tunnel, that location Hammett made famous because that's where Miles Archer gets killed (in *The Maltese Falcon*), rightbeside thetunnelatthe mouthof BurrittAlley

Wim went back to Germany for three weeks, and, whenhe came back, Fred gave usprints of the photo. Wim looked at his and said, "Ah, vee vere young then "

GARFIELD: The good old days.

GORES: Wim and I spent the next two months in a room at Zoetrope that wasn't quite a cubbyhole—it would have been a cubbyhole, but it had a view of the street. We spent two months tape recording our reactions to the book.

GARFIELD: Your reactions?

THOMAS: What did you say about it? "I *love* it!"

GARFIELD: What reactions?

GORES: Wim would say, "Vut is Loew's Warfield?" and I'd say, "A movie theatre on Market Street," or he'd say, "I'd like to understand ze use of ze word 'punk'in 'punk and plaster,'" and I'd say it was 1920s slang for bread and butter. We went through the whole book like that, taping all this, and Anita Luccioni, the production secretary, had to transcribe allthe tapes. Weended upwith a stack thishigh.

Then Wim moved into the apartment house that Hammett had lived in, at 891 Post. Lots of cockroaches. The first thing he did was put a huge corkboard on the wall. Wim never likes to work without his corkboard and his three-by-five cards. He likes to know everything that happens each day that the script covers—regardless whether he's filming it or not—so he starts out and says, "Okay, vut vould Hammett do ze first day? He vould get out of bed." And he'd write that on a card and *Wham!* onto the corkboard. "Vut vould he do zen? He vould go in ze bathroom." He'd write *that* on a card. *Wham!* We ended up with *hundreds* ofcards on that corkboard.

GARFIELD: Maybe that explains the Busby Berkeley shot in the movie, looking straight down intothe toiletbowl while Hammett getssick into it.

THOMAS: That thing went thirty minutes on film before they cut it. Freddie [Frederic Forrest, who played Hammett in the film] coughed and hacked—it took twodays to shoot it

GARFIELD: He went a little overboard with a couple of those shots. The one looking straight up from under the typewriter, watching the typewriter mechanism and Hammett's face above it. .

GORES: Well, I did a new version of the script for Wim.

THOMAS: Why didn't you just give him the one you'd donefor Roeg?

GORES: I did give him the old script. I liked it. But hewanted a new one.

GARFIELD: At that time, he hadn't made a movie inEnglish, had he?

THOMAS: He shot *The American Friend* in English.

GORES: It was shot in Germany, but my remembrance is that it was in English. Dennis Hopper and therest.

THOMAS: I went to sleep in it twice.

GORES: Anyway. I did one draft for Wim. Then he decided he wanted a framework, where we'd start out with Hammett as an old man and then go back to a scene at the end of Hammett's writing career where he turns down a movie script—he's taken the guy's money and tried to write it, but he gives the money back and says, "I can't do it. I can't write any more." And then Wim wanted to go back into the story itself, as if this movie we're making is the story Hammett was trying to write, in his mind.

GARFIELD: A flashback within a flashback. A movie ahout a movieabout a movie.

GORES: Yes. I didn't think much of the idea. But I gave it my best shot. That was my second draft for him

By now it was 1978. We were in Las Vegas—I was doing a script for Paramount, and I was getting background on gambling in Las Vegas—and Wim tracked us down on the phone and wanted to come over there, and I said, "Well, Wim, we're leaving tomorrow."

"Verareyougoing?"

"We're going to Guadalajara to visit our son. He's in school there."

"I'd like to understand ze use of ze word 'punk' in 'punk and plaster,'"

"I villcometo Guadalajara!"

So Wim shows up at the Phoenix Hotel in Guadalajara, saying, "Vee haff to write ze script," and I go to work writing these changes in longhand on yellow legal pads. As fast as I finish each page, Wimgrabs it and runs downstairs and types it up on the old office manual. It's two in the morning and peopleare trooping through thelobby to the disco up on the roof—Wim is checking people into the hotel as he's trying to type—and we spent two days in that damnhotel. I never did get to seeGuadalajara.

We wrote a whole draft in those two days

GARFIELD: Wenderscould always get a job typing, [illegible].

GORES: No, he [illegible]. It came out kind of Germanesque. The [illegible] was very Teutonic and it was all "Down the [illegible] my coat throw" kind of sentenceconstruction.

Anyway, that was the third draft I did with Wim. I had done two versions of the novel and five versions of the screenplay, and I was all out of *Hammetts*. There are only so many ways you can seeone piece of material.

THOMAS: Don't kid yourself.

(*Laughter*)

GORES: They said, "We think maybe we need some fresh blood on this," while at the same time I was telling them I'd run out of ways to go and also was committed elsewhere, so it was a very amicable parting. I gracelessly bowed out.

In desperation, while he was waiting for them to bring in another writer, Wim tried to write a draft on his own. It had a scene in which Hammett grabs a bottle, breaks it across the bar and slashes a guy's throat with it, on screen. And this was replacing my "tooviolent"script!

This incident strikes me with a strong feeling of *déjà vu* in sinister reverse. There's a movie due to be released shortly after the time of this writing. I workedseveral weeks on the screenplay of it but then was fired when the producers and star belatedly decidedtheydidn't like my approach to the story.

What they wanted to include (among others equally charming) was a scene in which a man and a woman are shown making love, and in which just as the man reaches his climax the woman stabs him to death in the throat: we are treated to a graphic description of bloodspurting alloverthe pillow.

When I suggested thatsuchgrue didn'tbelong in a light-hearted Cary Grant sortof caper entertainment, that was when my employers decided I was "too soft."

"Wenders could always get a job typing,anyway."

GORES: After Wim had done his version of the script, Tom Pope was hired. He did two versions. He's got an "adapted by"creditonthe movie.

THOMAS: I never saw his versions.

GORES: I think he raised a stink with the Writers Guild. Anyway, then Dennis O'Flaherty came in. And then finally Ross.

GARFIELD: I thought there'd been more writers than that. Seventeen of themor something like that.

GORES: There were four writers but thirty-two different versions of the screenplay. O'Flaherty did eighteen himself. Most of them were written while they were shooting the first version of the movie up in San Francisco. They'd dressed several streets and built this enormous edge-of-Chinatown set just off thecorner of Unionand Hyde.

THOMAS: That was when they did the radio program with all those high-priced actors. Francis got all the good voices in Hollywood. [Reputedly Howard Duff's was among them.—BG] He brought them all up to San Francisco and they did it with soundeffects like an old radioprogram. A readingof the script with sound effects. A narrator reading the stage directions and so forth. Why they did this, I don't know, and whatcame of it, I don'tknow.

GARFIELD: Coppola doesn't read any more, does he? Everything's on tape. Video or audio. Maybe he wantedto listen to it so he wouldn't have to read it.

GORES: Anyway, after that they did the first shoot up in San Francisco. As I said, they'd dressed some streets and built this enormous set. They got permission to shoot in City Hall and on the old ferryboats tied up at the Hyde Street pier, and they went ahead and filmed about eighty percent of the movie. Wim would call me up periodically and say it was going great, looking good.

What we found outwas that none of the producers was there. Nobody was supervising the filming. Fred Roos was doing *The Black Stallion* over in Malta, and Francis was still busy cutting *Apocalypse*. When theygot together again, they realized Wim had spent nine or ten million bucks below the lineand he'd only shot eighty percent of the movie. This was supposed

to be a five-million-dollar picture, seven milliontops, totalnegativecost including bothabove the lineand below theline expenses.

GARFIELD: The *Heaven's Gate* syndrome. What happened then?

GORES: Well, finally somebody actually looked at the footage.

GARFIELD: I'd heard the filming was interrupted by the actors'strike.

GORES: No, this was before the strike.

THOMAS: The filming was interrupted by Francis looking at it. He looked at the eighty percent they'd shot, and he despaired.

GORES: He said, "It doesn't go anywhere. There's no story at all." And they shut the whole thing down.

GARFIELD: But wasn't that fairly typical of Wenders's movies? The lack of comprehensible story? Shouldn'tCoppola haveforeseen that when he hired Wenders?

GORES: I don't know. He'd seen some movie of Wim's and he'd liked it. I think that wasabout all he knewabout Wim.

GARFIELD: First Nicolas Roeg, then Wim Wenders. Two very European directors for this quintessentially American subject—Dashiell Hammett. I wonder why it didn't occur to Coppola to hire an Americandirector.

GORES: He was interested in seeing a quintessentially American story through the eyes of a very Europeandirector. I think he feltthiswouldinfuseit witha mythicquality. I have to say I reallylike Wim, he's a sweetheart guy, but I think the American system of filmmaking was a bit of a mystery to him then. Particularly the Francis system of filmmaking. Maybe it wouldn't be now—Wim's English is a lot better now, and God knows he'd been kicked in the teeth enough times. That's really what that little film he shot mostly over is Portugal, *The State of Things,* is all about.

Anyway, they shut down the production, uncompleted, in 1979, and this is where Ross blossomed. Overto you, Ross.

THOMAS: Theycalled me in about 1977, 1978, and wanted to know if I'd be interested in polishing some dialogue. I said sure, no problem. I always say that. But I didn't hear anything more from them.

Then, I think it was 1980, I got a call from Fred Roos.

People who know Fred Roos tell me he can be right across the table from you and you'll never hear a word he says. Reportedly he whispers.

They say this makes him an effective phone man because hesoundsvery confidential on the telephone.

. . . Wenders filmed *The State of Things* in black-and-white during the interval that Zoetrope was reassessing *Hammett* and deciding what to do with the 80%-completed film Wenders hadshot. *TheState ofThings* is a surrealistic filmthat seems to be about a group of lunatics from Hollywood trying to shoot an insane moviein Portugal. I have tried, andfailed, to sit through it. To me, it seems to bring a whole new meaning to the word *pretentious.* After Wenders completed his Portuguese venture, he returned to California to resume shooting *Hammett*, this time from a different script—Ross Thomas's.

THOMAS: Fred Roos asked if I'd come down and see him and Lucy Fisher, who's now a vice-president at WarnerBros. Then she wasin chargeof production atZoetrope. I wentdownthere,and they said, "We'd likeyou to look at this film. Wehave a littletrouble."

So they bought me a sandwich from the deli across the way, and I sat there eating it and looking at the eighty percent thathad been shot. I saw that they'd lifted a lot of lines directly from *The Maltese Falcon*, like the punk saying, "A crippled newsie took it away from him," and Spade saying, "The cheaper the crook, the fancier the patter." So forth. Lines anybody would recognize. I knew those would have to be taken out, but other than that it bore little resemblance to Hammett or to Joe's novel or to any otherthing I'deverseen.

So I said, "Well, you'vegot trouble."

Theysaid, "What we'd like you to do, we'd like a beginning and an end, see, and then we can use all this in the middle. What we really want are bookends. Then maybe you can write some new dialogue we can dub in, using the film footage we've alreadyshot. Whatcanyou do?"

I said I thought it might be possible. But I didn't think they could useall the footagethey had. They'd have to shoot some more. How did they feel about that?

They said, "Why don't youcome back in ten days? Francis will beherethen."

They offered me X amount of money, and I went home and got an idea. Mostly I got the idea by re-

"He was interested in seeing a quintessentially American story through the eyes of a very European director."

reading Joe's novel. I wrote thething in ten days. A treatment—an extended outline, withsome dialogue, based loosely on the novel. I used scissors and paste to keep what I could of the shooting script they had, trying to savesomeof the money they'dspent filming thatstuff, although most of it madeno sense at all.

GORES: Oh, boy. Some of the scripts that I read. In one ofthem, Hammett is having hisshoesshined by a black kid and Hammett looks down at the kid and says, "Spade! Sure!"and that'swhere the name Sam Spadecomes from. Canyou believethat?

THOMAS: I came in to meet Francis, and Francis brings them all in. There must have been fifteen people.

Francis taped it. When we had a meeting, Francis would often tape it. Then he'd send out transcripts. I'd comeout sounding likean illiterate stumbler, and then these polished sentences of Coppola would roll out. Much use of the subjunctive. Italianate. That's the way he talks. And mine would be, "Uh, well, yeah." I didn't realize I wasquitethat inarticulate.

At this particular meeting of fifteen people, I wasn't going to try and *tell* the story. I read it to them. Played allthe parts. I couldn't tell if they liked it.

Francis walked me out to the car afterward, and I said, "How'd you get into this mess?"

He thought I meant his studio, Zoetrope. He said, "You mean this?" I said, "Oh, no, I mean the movie." He said, "I don't know. It'sjust one of those things that happen."

GARFIELD: Like *One More From the Heart of Darkness.*

THOMAS: About four or five days later, I had a call from Lucy Fisher, and she asked, "Has anybody calledyou?" I said "No." She said, "We'd reallyvery much like you to do the script." I said, "Okay, no problem."

I did a few pages and took it down, and Francis said,"Great, it'sjustgreat."

I said,"You want me to go to screenplay?"

Hesaid, "No, notyet."

So I keptwriting a littlemore. I'd takeit downand Francis would look at it. "Great. It's just great." And I'd say, "You want me to go to screenplay now?" And he'd say, "No. No, no." So I'd say okay, and we'd do itagain.

Thenfinally hesaid, "Goto screenplay."

I wrote it. Then I got a call from Fred Roos, who says, "We'd like you to come down and havelunch with Nastassia Kinski, Freddie Forrest, and Raul Julia." I did. I had lunch with Nastassia Kinski, Freddie Forrest, and Raul Julia. Then Fred Roos took me over to Lucy Fisher's office. She was in a meeting, so we sat outside, Fred Roos and I, and then Lucy came out of her office and said, "Let's get married."

I said,"Uh, yeah, uh, whatdo you mean?"

She said, "We'd like you to go to work for us as our writer in residence at Zoetrope."

It seems Francis had this story he wanted me to write, starring Nastassia Kinski, Freddie Forrest, and Raul Julia. So I met with him and asked what the storywasthat hehadin mind,andhe said, "Miami... cocaine ... money ... *salsa* music."

Okay. Thenwhat?

He said, "That's it."

I said, "That's a hell of a story, Francis."

About a week later, my agent got a call. Tragedy hadstruck.Zoetropewasnear bankruptcy.

No film, no *salsa* music.

I thought that was it. But then I got another call from Zoetrope. This one said, "I'm Ron Colby, and I'm the producer of *Hammett.*"

So I went down to see Colby. He had a few suggestions for rewrites, and I did a polish, but I still had to keep that crap in there fromthe earlierscript. Then I had another call from Fred Roos, who said, "I'dlike you to havelunchwithWim Wenders."

I said okay. Then I asked Francis whowasgoingto direct.

He said, "Wenders. Because it's difficult to take a director off a picture. It doesn't do the guy you bring in any good, and it does a lot of harm to the guy you takeoff."

So I had lunch with Wim Wenders. I told him how I'd lived in Germany for a couple of years, and he talked about how he had lived in Malibu, and I was living in Malibu so obviously we had a lot in common.

After that, I didn't hear anything for a time—evidently Francis had lost interest in the film and it was shut down—but then Ron Colby called and said, "I want you to come down and see the latest production of *Hammett.*"

I said I didn't knowthey'd doneanyfilming.

He said they hadn't, not really, but they had this production, and he said, "It's your script."

It turned out to be a filmstrip. The art work had been done by the students in thejunior high school

"Actually, it was pretty bad, but it got Francis's attention because he didn't have to read anything."

down the street. They'd rounded up a few actors and the director of *White Dog* —?

GORES: Samuel Fuller.

THOMAS: Yes, Samuel Fuller, Colby himself, and a couple of secretaries. And they had put it on a video. I looked at it. I thought itwas prettygood

(*Laughter*)

Actually, it was pretty bad, but it got Francis's attention because he didn't have to read anything This way they got him to look at it and they got it started again. They got the money from Orion. They shot it all on the studio lot in Los Angeles and they brought it in for two-point-seven, or nearthat.

Theywere re-shootingalmost the entire picture, so seventy or eighty percent of the old footage was thrown out. They decided they didn't want Brian Keith [who had played a prominent role in the first version], so they had to bring in an actor to take his place. But the day before they were scheduled to shoot, they discovered, lo and behold, they didn't have an actor. So they called the actor who played the monster in *Young Frankenstein*—

GORES: Peter Boyle.

THOMAS: Yes, and he flew out the next day and they shot the picture with many vicissitudes.

They threw me off the lot once. They had a rehearsal where they ran through the script. It was the first rehearsal, and it was probably the last time they paid any attention to the lines as they were written. So Francis called me downto keepthe actors on the lines, to keepthem fromstrayingoff.

How I was to do this I had no idea, but I went down there and hung around for weeks until Freddie Forrest blew up. And Ron Colby came over to me andsaid, "I'm sorry,but you'dbetter go home."

So I went home. They called me the next day. They wanted me in a meeting totalk about yesterday.

It was in Francis's office—Colby andWendersand Roos and Freddie Forrest and Peter Boyle. And Francis says to Freddie Forrest, "I like this script. I really like this script. But more important, *The Chase Manhattan BANK likes this script!"*

But Freddie Forrest says, "You know what Ross does, don't you? He takes off his glasses and sighs Every time we get through sayin' the words, he takes off his glasses and sighs "

Then they went back and shot the rest of the picture. I don't think anyone interfered with them much after that. I know *I* didn't. And they finished the picture, and what you seeis what yousee.

What you see, I suppose, is in the eye of the beholder. Ross Thomas thinks it's "awful – but not as awful as it was." Joe Gores seems to think of it as a pretty good "B" picture, and taken in that light I think it is an enjoyable one. Some of the small parts and walk-ons—including Elisha Cook, Jr. as a venal cabbie and Ross Thomas himself as one of a group of corrupt politicans sitting around a big table—are most amusing. Hammett's dingy apartment and his prowls through Chinatown are photographed in rich smoky browns that are color photography's best answer to the mysterious shadows of *film noir*. The misty atmosphere is that of a studio movieset rather than of the real San Francisco, butthat artificiality is not necessarily a bad thing.

Evenafterbeing"fixed"by actors and director, the story conforms in several particulars to that of Joe's novel; the search for a missing Chinese girl triggers murder after murder, leading to the discovery of slimycorruption in high places, and DashiellHammett is an ideal character to carry this kind of story. Frederic Forrest, in mustache and short grey brush hair, bears a remarkablephysical resemblance to the Hammett we've seen in photographs taken at the time

But Forrest has no magnetism on the screen, and Hammett really should be played by an actor with star quality. Between that and Wenders's gimmicky photographic style, which never lets you forget that you'relooking at a movie, *Hammett* is a great deal less than a masterpiece. It lurches along an uncertain path, swayed first this way by Joe Gores's straightforwardstorytelling manner andthen anotherwayby Ross Thomas's wry, incisivehumor. The two qualities seem to quarrel with each other. They don't make a comfortable blend.

Hammett is an interesting but not fascinating example of the period-piece crime movie—a skewed 1980 view of a 1928 that existed only in pulp magazines. Perhaps the main thing wrong with it is that it is a partly satisfactory "B" second-feature movie that just happened to cost nearly $15 million when it shouldhave beenmade forone tenth of that amount of money. If that had been done, the distributors mighthavebeenableto afford togive it a modest nationwide release so that mystery fans and Hammett admirers might have had a chance to see it in theaters. As it is, they can see it on their small homescreens. A videocassetteversionis available.

THOMAS: It opened to wild acclaim in The Valley.

GORES: Yup. We're sitting here just rolling in royalties

THOMAS: It's become a cult film faster than anyone expected. Or wanted. It's shown in such places as the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and one or two film schools.

GARFIELD: Thank you both very much. □

Short notes..

Roots of Detection (Ungar, $6.95), edited by Bruce Cassiday, is an anthology of deductive fiction written before Holmes. It's neither exciting reading nor particularly fresh in its selections, but it does serve as a useful reminder of deductive fiction's origins. Most of the selections are excerpts—from such sources as Herodotus, *The Apocrypha, The Arabian Nights,* Voltaire's *Zadig,* Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham,* Dickens' *Bleak House,* Mrs. Henry Wood's *East Lynn,* and Gaboriau's *Monsieur Lecoq.*

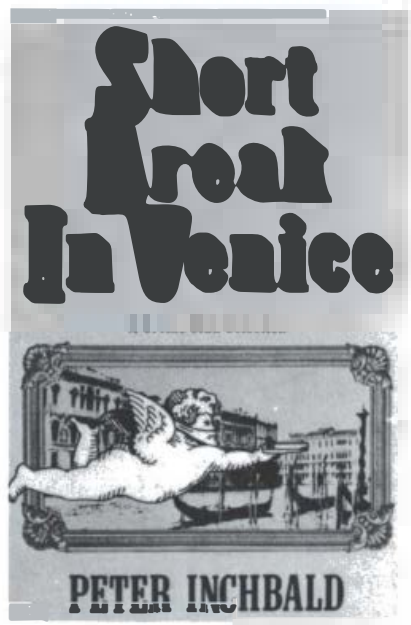
The longest-running series under a single author's byline is Leslie Charteris's "The Saint," which has been appearing since 1928. It must be admitted, of course, that most of the writing in recent years has been done by others, and such is also the case for the latest, ***Salvage for the Saint*** (Doubleday, $11.95), the work of Peter Bloxsam from a teleplay by John Kruse. This has not the wit and engaging fairy-tale *élan* of the early years of the series. It is rather a very light confection, perhaps an hour's skimming read and acceptable diversion as such. The caper has to do with a hoard of stolen bullion, murderously sought for by the French gang once imprisoned for stealing it. A wealthy gentleman, blown up in his speedboat, seems to have been an uncaught gang member; his wife and the Saint are caught in the toils of the hunt, and the Saint's larcenous instincts are aroused.

The fifth of Bartholomew Gill's novels about Inspector Peter McGarr of the Dublin police is ***McGarr and the P.M. of Belgrave Square*** (Viking, $13.95). This is a complex, atmospheric tale of Dublin and murder, with roots in the I.R.A. and you'll not quickly forget it. An antique dealer is murdered; his wife seems oddly, mutely distant from the event. A painting, valuable but of questionable pedigree, is missing. McGarr's wife probes the pedigree while he sets explosive events in train. And the P.M.?—ah, there's a character you'll be intrigued to meet.

Reginald Hill's ***A Fairly Dangerous Thing*** (Foul Play Press, $12.95) went eleven years awaiting an American publisher. It could have gone longer. Hill has done some fine work, but this attempt at black comedy misses. Joe Askern, uninteresting schoolmaster with libidinous preoccupations, is blackmailed into assisting in the burglarious invasion of a stately home. His various girlfriends, strong arm nasties, sundry alleged students, the local pornographer, and an inconvenient policeman populate the proceedings.

Short Break in Venice by Peter Inchbald (Doubleday, $11.95) completes a trilogy about Insp. Franco Corti of the London Art and Antiques Squad. In Venice on vacation, he's drawn into an affair involving assaults on art dealers. All dealers prove to be Jewish; terrorism seems the name of the game, and several intelligence types take an interest. Corti is more than interested when his old nemesis, Max Silverman, hoves into view. Could a crew of terrorists and Silverman be tied into a nice incarcerated package? Worth a try, thinks Corti. Average criminous fare.

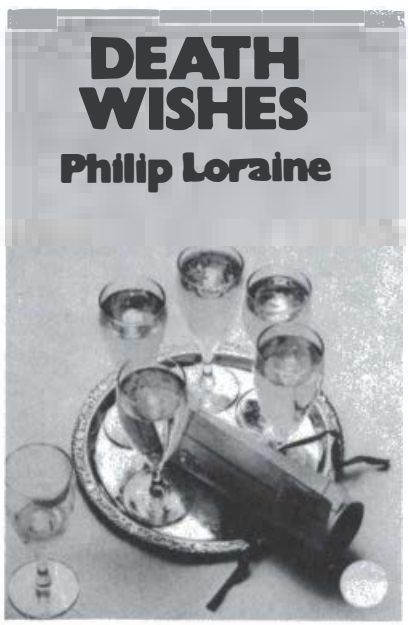
Susan Kenney's debut, ***Garden of Malice*** (Scribner's, $13.95), falls into the romantic suspense subgenre of which I am not overfond, featuring a heroine who repeatedly imperils



herself. But this tale is readable enough and overcame my prejudices sufficiently to keep my attention to the end. Roz Howard, just launched on a professorial career, has the chance of a lifetime: to go to England and edit for publication the recently discovered correspondence of a famous author. To Montford Abbey she goes, where the author's son lords over a trembling array of inhabitants, where evil lurks, where someone is systematically destroy-

ing the famous Abbey gardens. What has everyone to fear in the author's letters, and who, finally, is akiller?

Rampant greed, incest, adultery, homosexualencounters—a mostun-appetizing stew in ***Death Wishes*** by PhilipLoraine(St. Martin's,$10.95), though treated with discretion. EdwardWalden,fabulouslywealthy, dies in his French villa. Maggots gather for the reading of the will. Catherine, daughter of Edward and his long-estranged wife and only once in his presence in seventeen years, alsoarrives. Who will inherit,



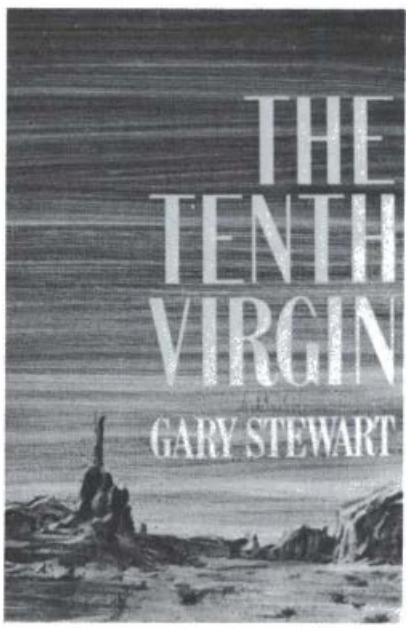
and who will do what to rearrange the odds? A smooth and readable tale, though at bottom without an attractivecharacter.

You may find yourself more working to keep track of characters in ***The Club Paradis Murders*** by Claire McCormick (Walker, $12.95) than enjoying the action. This, the second John Waltz mystery, takes place on Tahiti. An Australian pill-pusher is murdered. The vacation-ing Waltz is his bungalow mate; suspicion and murkiness descend. Club Paradis denizens and sundry indigenous characters seethe around the island, more corpses turn up, and the reluctant sleuth eventually figures out whodunit. Not notable.

I'm frankly of two minds about ***The Tin Angel*** by Paul Pines (Morrow, $13.95). On the one hand, it's a fresh and evocative look at New York City sliced at edges joining the jazz scene and the under-world of drug-dealing. On the other, it seems overall a bit unfocused, unresolved. Pablo Waltz and Miguel Ponce own a Village jazz club. Ponce is killed along with two policemen, and $50,000 in club money—to finance a drug buy?—is gone. Pablo is compelled—against the advice of all—to find out what Miguel was up to, who killed him, and who has the money the club needs to survive.

Although the basic course of ***Double Crossing*** by Erika Holzer (Putnam, $13.95) is quite predict-able, suspense is maintained at a remarkably highlevel. An American surgeon, known for his skill and humanitarianism, is now captive to his public image and to a crime of his youth. Soviet Intelligence plans to prey on these failings, while a Russian doctor sees an opportunity —finally, after a lifetimeof planning —to reach freedom in the West. Blood and ambition tie together the actors, all credible and limned by the author in broad and effective strokes.

Action adventures have prolifer-ated in paperback in recent years, beginning with the "Executioner" and "Destroyer"series around 1970. Blood and sex have so abounded in these types that some books fall out of our genre and into pornography. The latest arrival on this scene is the Viking "Cipher" series by Rick Spencer about Eric Ivorsen, mathematician. In ***Icebound***(Signet, $2.50), Ivorsen is hunting computer records left by his father and his super-scientist colleagues. The records relate to a forecasting technology of enormous impact, and naturally the ungodly (in two forms) are also determined to have them. In ***All That Glitters*** ($2.50), Ivorsen's efforts to extend the Cipher'spredictions take a backseat to a scheme to steal and counterfeit Egyptian antiquities into which he accidentally becomes ensnared. These are acceptable novels of their



type, with offensive mattress acrobatics kept to a minimum.

A promising debut is ***The Tenth Virgin*** (St. Martin's, $14.95) by Gary Stewart, who was raised a Mormon and is now a professor of theatre in Indiana. *Virgin* is notable for its uncommon setting—Salt Lake City—and its even more un-common milieu—the Mormon culture, religion, and organization. The picture is a grim one: deadly sectarian intrigues and corruption

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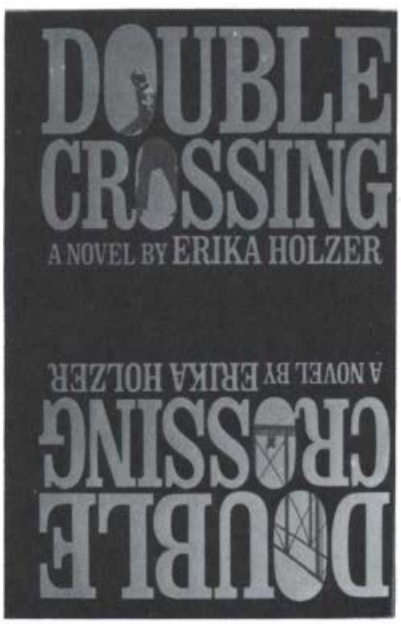
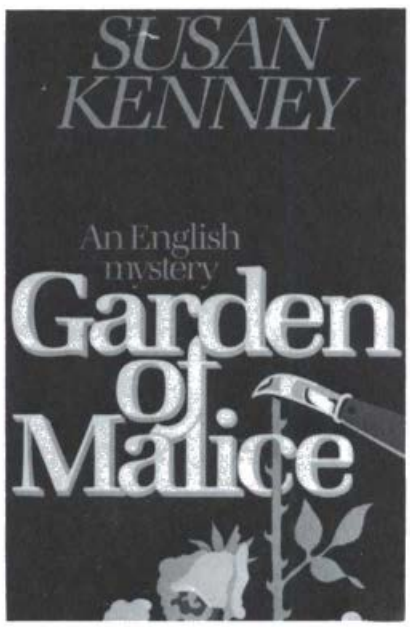
reaching to the top of the church. Gabe Utley, N.Y.C. private eye, returns to his home city after twenty years to find the missing daughter of a former classmate. Then the killing starts. A good beginning for Utley and Stewart; perhaps next time the dialogue won't be so pointlessly profane.

The latest of Mignon Warner's stories about clairvoyant Edwina Charlesis ***Devil's Knell*** (Doubleday, $11.95). Mae Holliday turned up in the village of Little Gidding, took a job as a shopkeeper, inherited the property from the owner, and aroused affection in not a single village breast. Then she's found in a church, a stake driven through her heart. Whispers of a witches' coven drift around, but the police are shy of both motive and real suspects. The dead one had consulted Mrs. Charles briefly, and so she remembers, inquires, deduces. Pleasant novel, forgettable.



Eric Wright, English-born teacher and TV writer in Toronto, debuts as a novelist with ***The Night the Gods Smiled*** (Scribner's, $12.95). This features Insp. Charlie Salter of the Toronto police, a complex and well-fleshed character who carries this tale of a murdered academician. Salter fell from political favor and was put in charge of trivia. The murder case, originating in Montreal, seems suited to his organizational Siberia, but he makes of it much more than expected. Insecure, rusty, troubled of family life, overweight; these Salter might be. But he turns up a killer, and he'll be worth watching if—as I hope—Wright brings him back for an encore.

Jim Thompson: The Killers Inside Him by Max Allan Collins and Ed Gorman (Fedora Press, 3840 Clark Road S.E., Cedar Rapids, Iowa; $8.00) is to my knowledge the only extended study of this little known or remembered author (1906–1977).



It includes a reminiscence by and interview with Arnold Hano, Thompson's editor at Lion Books; an interview with his widow, Alberta; a heretofore unpublished Thompson short novel ("This World, Then the Fireworks"), which is rather inconsequential, though darkly suggestive in the Thompson vein; and a brief survey by Collins of the Thompson corpus. A useful addition to the criminous reference shelf.

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THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE READERS' SURVEY

By Michael Seidman and Otto Penzler

Ivory Tower Syndrome in not found listed in the *Merck Manual* or other major medical texts. It is, nonetheless, a serious degenerative disease endemic to publishers, editors, and others of their ilk. The patient presents a near-totaldisregard for his or her readers, manifesting a senseof positive knowledge of what is best for the audience. The prognosis is never encouraging: a slow death, not for the person, but for the journal or line of books under the diseased's control. Thereis, however, both a preventativeand a curefor thisdisturbingailment.Paying attention.

Because *The Armchair Detective* is so much by and of its readership, we've been able to stay healthy Knowing of that health, of course, often leads to a senseof well-being which in turn leads back to Ivory Tower Syndrome. We *knew* we were doing it right, so why worry? Fortunately, managing editor Kathy Daniel wanted assurances from you, not from us, that we were on the right track with the mix of articles, columns, and reviews which make up each issue of TAD. So she developed the questionnaire which was sent to subscribers, and thenspent weeks tallying, collating, and analyzing the returns. Some of whatwe learnedsurprised us; some(most) pleased

us. One thing, though, was decided early on: because you had taken the time to respond, we were going to let you know the results, regardless of how they made us feel. Or look.

The first result was one that made us proud . . . as it should you. We mailed 1800 questionnaires. We received 847 completed forms back, for a 47% response rate. Given the fact that most mailings by specialty publishers receive only a 10% response, we were understandably pleased. The fact that you care enough about *The Armchair Detective* to take the time to answer some difficult questions says a lot about both of us . . . all of it good. But enough back-patting! What have we learned about ourselves?

Well, by a large margin, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is the favorite author of TADians, followed by Dame Agatha Christie and the untitled but nonetheless masterful Raymond Chandler. The twenty favorite authors were selected by asking you to name your five favorites in order of preference and then awarding five points for a first place mention, four for a second, three for a third, two for a fourth, and one for a fifth. The final list:

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	1	363
Agatha Christie	2	313
Raymond Chandler	3	286
Dorothy L. Sayers	4	275
Rex Stout	5	253
Dashiell Hammett	6	193
Dick Francis	7	152
John Dickson Carr	8	140
Ellery Queen	9	140
Robert B. Parker	10	124
Ross Macdonald	11	123
Edmund Crispin	12	108
John D. MacDonald	13	104
P. D. James	14	101
Ngaio Marsh	15	90
Ruth Rendell	16	70
Ed McBain	17	65
Josephine Tey	18	64
Emma Lathen	19	60
Elmore Leonard	20	60

What was particularly interesting is that, of the top ten authors, eight are no longer producing. There were no espionage writers named in the top twenty, and only one thriller writer, Dick Francis. Seven of the twenty might be included in the hardboiled school, the rest work in the various "puzzle" formats (And we are not going to get into the whole question of classifications at this point . . . something which challenged us quite a bit as we were going over the figures.)

Given these favorites among the writers, who did you choose as your favorite characters? Eighty-four different characters were mentioned, and the question was scored simply: one vote, one point given.

Sherlock Holmes	1	52
Philip Marlowe	2	25
Peter Wimsey	3	23
Nero Wolfe	4	21
Travis McGee	5	11
Gervase Fen	5 (tie)	11
Lew Archer	7	10
Miss Marple	7 (tie)	10
Hercule Poirot	9	8
Ellery Queen	9 (tie)	8
John Appleby	11	7
Spenser	11 (tie)	7
Archie Goodwin	11	7
"Bony" Bonaparte	14	6
Insp. Jules Maigret	15	6
Henry Merrivale	15 (tie)	5
George Smiley	15	5
Tommy Hambledon	18	4
Bernie Rhodenbahr	18 (tie)	4
Dr. Thorndyke	18	4

Sherlock Holmes dominated the voting here, with twice as many votes as the second favorite character, Philip Marlowe. Several characters were named whose creators did not earn a place on the top twenty authors' list, such as George Smiley and Tommy Hambledon (the only spies on the list), Bernie Rhodenbahr, and "Bony." Agatha Christie and Rex Stout both had two of their creations chosen. Five of the characters are hardboiled.

After voting on writers and their characters, you were asked which books you like best. There were 460 titles mentioned in answer to question three, in which you were asked to choose three books, and we scored it as we did the first question: three points for a number one choice, etc. The twenty favorites, with ties as noted, are:

The Hound of the Baskervilles	1	127
The Maltese Falcon	2	89
The Big Sleep	3	71
Gaudy Night	4	49
And Then There Were None	5	42
Farewell My Lovely	6	32
The Murder of Roger Ackroyd	6 (tie)	32
The Nine Tailors	8	30
Daughter of Time	9	28
Murder on the Orient Express	10	22
The Long Goodbye	10 (tie)	22
A Coffin for Dimitrios	12	21

The Moonstone	[illegible]	[illegible]
The Doorbell Rang	[illegible]	[illegible]
A Study in Scarlet	14 (tie)	18
Too Many Cooks	14 (tie)	18
The Last Good Kiss	17	17
Trent's LastCase	18	16
TheGlass Key	[illegible]	[illegible]
TheLady in the Lake	19	[illegible]

As might be expected, the authors chosen as favorites, and whose characters had been selected as favorites, dominate this list: Conan Doyle has two titles on the list, Hammett two, Chandler four, Christie three, Stout two, and Sayers two. Only one espionage novel was named, *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, and Eric Ambler, along with Wilkie Collins, James Crumley, and E. C. Bentley, had books named as favorites whilenothaving ranked in the two previous questions.

Most, if not all, of the "winners" have received extensive coverage in our pages, so it was satisfying to realize that we were talking about the writers, characters, and books you were interested in while continuing to give exposure to the up-and-coming and the nearly-forgotten. That being settled, it came time to studyyour reactions to the magazineitself

Reviews (especially current), interviews, and bibliographies led the list of things you wanted more of in TAD. The top three responses to the question, "What would you like to see less of in TAD?" were: No answer, "Rex Stout Newsletter," and "Dorothy L. Sayers Newsletter." So, in order to meet the demand, the two newsletters will now appear on an annual basis. We feel that Stout and Sayers are of sufficient interest to be covered regularly, but we will reduce that regularity.

How, though, to give you more of what you want? As is mentioned in "The Uneasy Chair" in this issue, and as readers who have been with us for a while know, the material we publish is submitted by *you*. When and where we can, we do solicit pieces from people, but to do the entire magazine that way reduces its effectiveness as the voice of mystery, and starts leading us back to the position of producing a magazine which answers our needs and likes, not yours. Certainly, in certain areas we will try to answer the demand: information about events in the mystery world, about bookstores, and, in certain instances, checklists, can be found. When weknow a contributor is going to be somewhere near a writerof interest, we can attempt to get an interview. And we will. However, we cannot write the letters to the editor. We cannot write all the reviews. And we cannot write all the articles. For that, as always, we turn to you.

Some intriguing sidelights to this part of the survey. Four percent asked for more letters; four percent for fewer. Eight percent asked for more scholarly articles; eight percent for fewer. What about scholarly letters,however?

So...it would seem that we have, so far, avoided Ivory Tower Syndrome. In those instances in which we have, apparently, gone overboard (i.e., the newsletters), we are moving to correct the situation. The question of balance, which is all-important to every editor, has been met, we think. For everyone who wants more of something, there are those who want less of the samething.

We cannot, and will not, ignore any aspect of the mystery. We can understand, and appreciate, the thought from many of you that the reviews of the mystery as it appears in the electronic media should perhaps be curtailed. These media are increasingly important, however—as markets for the writers currently at work, and as a showcase for new talent and direction—and thus must be considered on a regular basis.

The question of how often *The Armchair Detective* oughttoappearwas raisedoften, withthe suggestion that we publish bi-monthly, or even monthly. We'd like nothing more, but it just cannot be done now. That, unfortunately, means that we cannot be assured of having reviews and publication lists appearing more closely to the release date of the books. It might be possible to project publication dates from publishers' catalogues, but they are subject to radical and unannounced change. Since TAD's lead time is between four and six months, it is simply not possible to get books reviewed at the time they will be in the stores, a problem compounded by the fact that we cannot get early review copies from the publishers. This means that we usually see the book at the same time it becomes available to you. Of course, if you read a good review of a book that has gone out of print between the time we went to the typesetter and the time we appeared, you *could* try complaining to the publisher

The information we've been able to put together from your responses thus far has been extremely helpful to us, and we expect that, as further study is given to the forms, we will continue to learn more—about you, about us, and about how to better fulfill your needs and expectations. Our intention is to see to it that *The Armchair Detective* continues to be the journal of record in the mysteryworld. That so many of you are so obviously willing to help us in that effort is a pricelessreward.

We thank you. □

This report could not have been compiled without Kathy Daniel. All the work was hers. More than anyone's, hername belongs onthis effort

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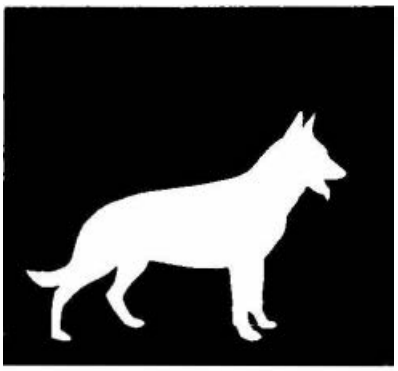


Of Metzger's Dog

By Julie Smith

Though a mystery may be funny—and many of the best of them are—a thriller mustn't be. Publishing wisdom seems to hold that thriller fans like their thrills undiluted by levity. Unless, of course, the book in question happens to be written by Donald E. Westlake. It would seem sometimes that, if there is a genre devoted to the comic thriller, it's the sole and exclusive property of Westlake. Or at least it used to seem that way, until Thomas Perry's *Metzger's Dog* was published last fall.

This hilarious book is about three men—named Immelmann, Kepler, and Chinese Gordon—and a woman, a cat, and a dog who acquire a CIA manuscript on psychological warfare, try to sell it back to the feds, suffer the old doublecross, and plot revenge. Consider this passage:

Kepler said "...The fact that the CIA lets the Mexican government tell it how to take over Mexico City should suggest to you that these are not people we can handle with much confidence. Not only did they behave in an ungentlemanly manner with the Mexicans, but the man who let us get these papers managed to live two whole days afterward. Writ large across every page is: These Are People Around With Whom Thou Shalt Not Screw."..

"I wish you'd listen to Chinese," [Margaret] said. "You're both being silly. We don't want to do anything as drastic as this contingency plan. We just want to remind him that we have it and understand it and that we can think of some vivid ways to reveal it."

Immelmann said, "When you say not drastic, what do you mean?"

"It's little enough to ask," she said.

"But what is it??"

"Just close down Los Angeles for a day... It'll make us all feel so much better."

This from a man who claims never to have read a word of Westlake before he wrote it. A man whose previous book, *The Butcher's Boy,* won the Edgar for best first novel of 1982 and who, at the time, "knew roughly what the Edgar was." Who is this Thomas Perry? That's the question his agent, Lurton Blassingame, asked when Perry wrote him about possible representation for *The Butcher's Boy*. Perry hadn't thought to tell him.

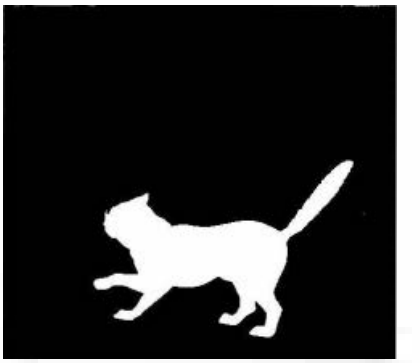
He's a cat lover, for one thing. He'll tell you that right off. But if you've read *Metzger's Dog*, which portrays Gordon's cat, Dr. Henry Metzger, as master criminal of the century, the only being on the planet capable of outwitting Chinese himself, you already know that. However, you probably wouldn't guess that Perry's own felines, in his opinion every bit as diabolical as Dr. Henry, are named Debbi, Bunny, and Betty (he says he didn't name them).

Perry would seem a complicated man—*The Butcher's Boy*, a hunter-hunted tale of a female data analyst on the trail of a mob assassin, is as hardboiled as *Metzger's Dog* is whimsical. Both books are told in multiple viewpoints, and the author seems equally at home in the mind of a young lady civil servant, a heartless killer, an ex-mercenary who seems to have memorized the dictionary, a man who has eaten armadillo, and a proctologist's daughter turned moll. Perry must have a very dark, murky side, and a wonderfully zany one. But the casual acquaintance won't get a glimpse of what must be a rich and full inner life. What he'll see is a modest man with a gentle voice, telling a story that's simplicity itself.

Perry comes from an academic family—his father is a retired superintendent of schools; his mother, also retired, was chairman of the English department in a neighboring school; his brother is an anthro-

Julie Smith is the author of DEATH TURNS A TRICK. *Her new novel, also featuring Rebecca Schwartz, is* THE SOURDOUGH WARS, *scheduled for a June 1984 publication by Walker & Co.*

and Perry's Cats



pologist; and his sister taught English before her first child was born. He grew up in Tonawanda, New York, on the Niagara River, majored in English at Cornell,and earned his Ph.D., also in English, at the University of Rochester. After graduate school, he worked briefly as a commercial fisherman and then entered academe himself, at the University of California at Santa Barbara. His job was assistant to the provost of the College of Creative Studies, which means, he says, "I was administrator of a small honors college."

At Santa Barbara, he met Jo Anne Lee, who taught English at the same school, and married her in 1980. That same year, he got a new job at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, as assistant coordinator of the general education program, which sets requirements for undergraduate degrees. "And that means," he says, "they give you a longtitle instead of a lot of money."

Writingissomething hehasdone on a regularbasis for about ten years, more or less taking it for granted. "It's the English major's disease," he says. "Sort of the other half of reading. I didn't really have any strong ambitions toward being published; I just wrote. It's a fairly common thing to be doing. MordecaiRichler wasasked why he became a writer, and he said it seemed more interesting to ask how someone becomes a manufacturer of frozen chicken breasts—that'smuchmore imaginative."

BeforePerry "happened to get onto something that looked as if it might be of interest to other people to read"—namely, *The Butcher's Boy*—he completed what he calls "a couple of other book-length manuscripts." But he thought "they didn't look like anything I'd be able to sell to anybody. The first was a sort of science-fictiony story and the second was in the mode of H. Rider Haggard. The main thing I was trying to do was write something that wasn't boring."

The fact that Perry ended up in the mystery genre—more or less—was, as he puts it, "kind of accidental." He did his dissertation on William Faulkner, learning in the course of it that Raymond Chandler was one of Faulkner's favorite authors. "So I looked into it," Perry said, "and I kind of got hookedon mysteriesmyself."

Yet he hasn't read widely in the genre. Asked about his own favorites, he can summon to mind only Martin Cruz Smith's *Gorky Park* and the works of John LeCarré (but not *The Little Drummer Girl,* which he couldn't finish). He speaks more enthusiastically of Evelyn Waugh, Calvin Trillin, and Garrison Keillor, (who is better known for his radio show *Prairie Home Companion* than for his short stories).

Indeed, Perry's goals as a writer seem to have little to do with love of one genreor another or with desire for success or money. "I always wanted to be able to write," he says, "but, when I was a kid, being a writer always seemed like a fairly distant thing. I don't think I really had any expectations of selling anything." Even now, he will admit only to a vague desire to become a full-time writer. "You have to wait and see what happens and what's possible before you decide what you're going to do." After the success of his first two books, he "didn't even buy a word processor," preferring to continue his road-tested method of hand-scrawling his first draft and retyping on his IBM Selectric, between 11 A.M. and 6 P.M. on weekends.

His writing goal is to challenge himself—to try to do something different every time, to think up "things to make it interesting." And so he made the protagonist of *The Butcher's Boy* a woman, and he made *Metzger's Dog* funny, and in between he wrote " a real dark one" that his publisher rejected. "There are so many interesting things you can do," he says. "You begin to look at what you're writing about as some description of all of life. We don't really know what's going on around us; we're always developing strategies to find out "

Perhaps to the disappointment of his fans, but completelyinkeepingwithPerry'swritingphilosophy, he doubts he'll ever bring any of his characters back – with the possible exception of Ben Porterfield, the ruthless CIA ace in *Metzger's Dog*. Porterfield, he says, is tempting because he's useful in keeping a story moving: "It's plausible he mightknow anything and be able to do anything."

With a series character, Perry feels, "some of the temptations could be distracting. You never want to do thingsthat arethe easiest. I certainlydon't want to end up writing the same book twenty years later; I'm new enough at it that I want to see how much i can learn."

The book he's working on now is "quite a bit darker and more cynical" than either of his first two. "The characters are morally ambiguous at best; I'm playing around with it, trying to make it sort of funny in a cynical sort of way." Other than the fact that gun-running is the main plot element, Perry will say no more because he can't. "A lot of the plot hasn't evolvedyet."

And therein, of course, is a key to the way he works. He says he didn't know what *Metzger's Dog* was going to be about until he wrote the first scene, in which Chinese Gordon discourages a trio of burglars in a most ingenious way, even though Chinese "knew it wasn't fair and there would be resentment, there might even be consequences he couldn't imagine." What he does is, he drops Dr. Henry Metzger on them. And indeed there are consequences. Even though Chinese predicted them, when the cat takes his revenge, he is deeply hurt: "He couldn't believe Dr. Henry Metzgercould be so mean spirited."

As he was writing the scene, says Perry, he simply "hit a notion of the character and his relationship with the cat." Though Dr. Henryis probablythe best character in the book, he isn't really integral to the plot, nor is his relaitonship with Chinese. A writer's mind is a funnything.

But enough about Perry. His fans probably have only the mildest interest in the man himself, compared to the burning question they really want answered – the identity of the real Dr. Henry Metzger Since Chinese Gordon, Immelmann, and Kepler are all namesof historicalcharacters (a Britishgeneral, a Germanflyingace,anda pioneerGermanastronomer), it follows that so must Dr. Henry Metzger be. Doesn't it? Yet research has consistently failed to turn him up. Perrysays there's a reasonfor that:

"It's a made-up name. I gave the others famous names to amuse Jo, the same way I named a whale in *Metzger's Dog* Jo-Jo, the Madcap Joker of the Sea. Dr. Henry Metzger just sounded like a ridiculous name for a cat and a good name for a doctor." This, perhaps, is Perry'szany side, comingout at last; or is ithisdark one? □

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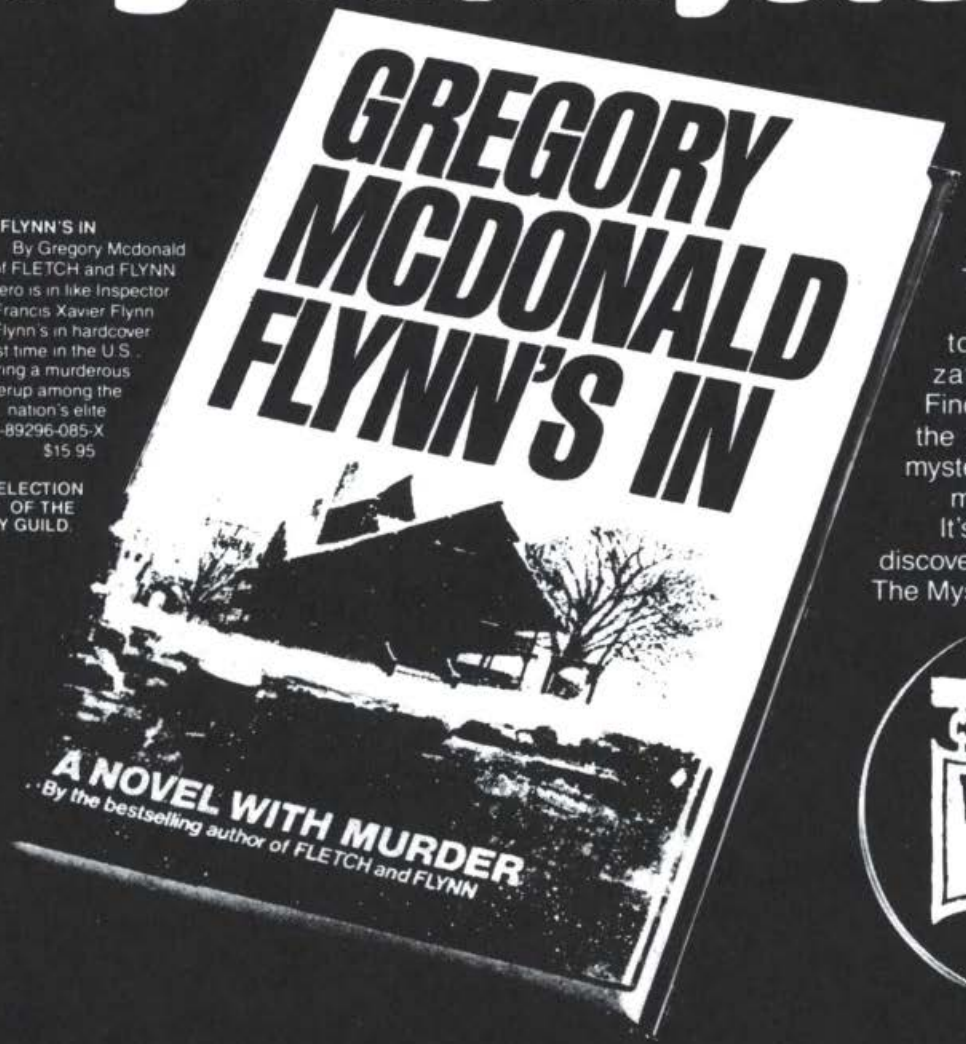

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Lost Among The BLACK MASK Boys

By William F. Nolan

As a professional writer, his work record was impressive: six published novels, one of them acknowledged as a twentieth-century classic, more than forty printed shortstoriesand novelettes, uncounted newspaper columns, reports, essays, and reviews—and nearly a hundred screenplays sold to major Hollywood studios. Yet, today, Horace Stanley McCoy is a lost name among "the *Black Mask* boys." There is *no* entry for McCoy in *The Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection.* Crime scholars resolutely ignore him, and Thomas Sturak's biography, announced several years ago, has never been published.

Horace McCoy's current obscurity is ironic since he, of all the *Black Mask* boys, most wanted to achieve genuine fame and fortune. At one point in his career, he actually *was* famous (in Europe), and he certainly earned a small fortune at the studios—yet he died broke, and his overseas fame was never matchedonAmericanshores.

McCoy's epicrags-to-riches sagabegan in the small township of Pegram, in the hill country of Tennessee, twenty miles west of Nashville. One of four children, he was born here, in a cabin, on April 14, 1897, to Nannie Holt and James Harris McCoy. His parents were "book-rich and money-poor." Horace McCoy's father taught in a country school, and his attractive Irish mother had been a scholarship student who retained a lifelongpassionfor literature.

McCoy spent the early years of his childhood in Nashville, growing up (as he later recalled) "in a house filled with books." Always aggressive, at six he was selling papers to earn his own spending money and, at sixteen, had quit school to work as an auto mechanic and travelingsalesman. Healsodrovecabs in Dallas and NewOrleans.

After his family moved to Dallas, McCoy joined the Texas National Guard in the spring of 1917. He was twenty and anxious to see combat in the First World War.Early in 1918, he arranged a transfer to a Motor Mechanics regiment in Georgia, where he received instruction as an aerial observer. By July of 1918, he was overseas as a member of the American Air Service, stationed near Romorantin on the Normandy plain of central France. During thatsame month, young McCoy saw action over German lines as bombardier and aerial photographer in a bomb-laden De Havilland.

These big, relatively slow-moving aircraft proved to be easy targets for enemy fighters—and, on August 5, his observation plane wasattacked by four swift German Fokkers. The pilot was killed, and McCoy had to take overthe dualcontrols. Although twice wounded by machine-gun fire, he shot down one of the enemy planes and managed to fly the bullet-riddled D.H.4 back to its home base. For this heroic exploit, McCoy was awarded the Croix de Guerre.

A young Red Cross nurse from California was attracted to the wounded hero, and they had a brief, passionate affair. Out of the hospital, McCoy dreamed of further glory as a fighterpilot—and told his parents, in a letter from the front: "I lovea battle, and am willing to go anywhere to get into one."

November of 1918, he had qualified as a pilotand eagerly awaited his chance to become a lieutenant commanding his own plane in a pursuit squadron. But the war ended, and he never got his assignment. It was a blow to his fightingspirit, and he bragged(in anotherletter) that had he beenallowed tofly against

the enemy he would have "outshone Rickenbacker" (Eddie Rickenbacker, the top American ace in World War I).

Years later, in *Black Mask,* he would write: "The air was the last outpost of chivalry [and] romance."

Even as it stood, however, his war record was outstanding. He had survived four months of combat, logging a total of 400 hours over enemy lines, had been wounded again, and had won another medal.

As his early love of flying found expression here in France, so did his early love of theatre. Before he returned to the United States, he functioned as publicity director (or "flack") for a small theatrical service troupe. McCoy toured Europe with their song-and-dance review, "The Romo Follies of 1919."

Discharged as a corporal, he was back in Dallas by late August of that year, at 22, with plans "to become a writer."

That fall he talked himself into a job as a sports-and-crime reporter with the *Dallas Dispatch,* where he spent eight months "learning the newspaper game." Brash and confident, when he couldn't find enough sensational stories to cover, he made them up.

His bold, dramatic reporting caught the eye of an editor at the more prestigious *Dallas Journal.* He was hired there in the spring of 1920 as sports editor (a position he would hold for more than nine years).

Although his starting salary was only $35 a week, this job provided McCoy with the base he needed to "run with the rich." A dedicated social climber, he aspired to an upper-class life and used his editorial clout to involve himself with the town's wealthy sportsmen. An extraordinary athletic talent paid off for him; he was a cornpetitive swimmer and played expert tennis. He also won local championships in golf and handball. A friend of the period declared that "Mack was consumed with ambition. He always had big ideas."

In July of 1921, he married Loline Scherer, and, three years later, they had a son, Stanley. But McCoy found that fatherhood and family life did not appeal to him; he was restless, nervous and impulsive, constantly driven to explore new areas. A stalwart six-footer, having inherited his mother's dark, Irish good looks, he cut a ruggedly handsome figure in Dallas society circles and was noted for his flamboyant taste in clothes. He owned a dozen suits and 35 dress shirts and considered himself a "dandy." His flamboyance led him into joining the Dallas Little Theatre in 1925. A natural actor, he quickly mastered this new craft and won national attention for his stage performances over the next few seasons. An actress he worked with in Dallas summed up the McCoy of this period: "He was alert, romantic and sure of himself."

McCoy loved big, flashy automobiles but could not really afford to own them. In fact, his steadily mounting debts forced him to look for "some other way to bring in the bucks." In 1927, in order to supplement his modest newspaper income, he turned to pulp fiction.

His earliest market was *Black Mask.* Late in 1926, Joseph Thompson "Cap" Shaw had taken over the magazine's editorial reins and was looking for writers who "knew how to turn out swift, hard-boiled stories." In McCoy, he found such a writer—and Shaw purchased a gaudy South Seas adventure tale, "The Devil Man," for his December 1927 issue.

At thirty, Horace McCoy had joined the *Black Mask* boys—and over the following seven years he would sell Joe Shaw sixteen more stories. Fourteen of these involved the adventures of Captain Jerry Frost, a tough Texas Ranger who leads a group of Air Border Patrol daredevils known as "Hell's Stepsons." Unhappily, these stories fall victim to McCoy's penchant for overt melodrama and arch, self-conscious characterization. Frost was given to awkward, stream-of-consciousness declarations about the meaning of Good and Evil, Life and Death. . .

> He had no illusions about death . . . When fighting men go, they go with tight lips and keen eyes. There is little beauty in death for them. They leave that to the poet. No angelic symphony, no fluttering of spirit, no singing heart—just plain, unvarnished death.

Although Shaw sent back most of McCoy's hastily written manuscripts for revision and polish, he failed to blue-pencil these literary side trips, and McCoy remained guilty of such stylistic excesses throughout his writing career. But Shaw liked McCoy, who could write the kind of tough dialogue *Black Mask* was noted for:

> He selected a panatela, bit off the end, picked up a miniature elephant from the desk. He pressed a little button on the side until the trunk glowed red. He lighted his cigar with it, put the elephant back on the desk.
>
> "Neat," I observed.
>
> "Yeah." He smiled. His teeth were white, even. "I like neat things."
>
> "I know it," I told him. "That's why I'm here. Somebody staged a neat job on the boulevard an hour ago."
>
> His eyebrows crawled up. "Yeah? What kind of a job?"
>
> "Somebody got Johnny Purdue."

By September of 1929, McCoy had been forced to leave his newspaper job. Whether he quit under pressure or was actually fired is not clear, but he *did* admit that many of his unpaid creditors were "hounding" the publisher of the *Journal,* trying to extract some of the money McCoy owed them.

His marriage had also ended, and he was, as he put it, "at loose ends." In January of 1930, he found

a fresh outlet for his energies, as editor of a local literary magazine *The Dallasite* (described by one of its founders as "a Texasversion of *The New Yorker*").

McCoy tackled this new job with verve and determination, quickly becoming a "crusader," exposing graft and corruption in the Dallas police department and attacking the local papers as "gutless." In addition to his firebrand editorials, he wrote sports columns, gossip, memoirs, reviews, and short stories for the publication, but *The Dallasite* failed to attract advertisers, expiring after the April 1930 issue.

Two months later, in keeping with his courtship of therich, McCoyeloped with a youngdebutantefrom a wealthy Dallas family—but this reckless marriage was quickly annulled when the young lady's parents learned about the elopement.

McCoy was now living in a run-down, three-story stucco house he called "the Pearl Dive" (because it waslocatedonPearlStreet)withfiveother"bohemians" —two architects, a musician, and two painters. Here he labored at pulp fiction for *Black Mask, Battle Aces, Action Stories, Detective-Dragnet Magazine, Man Stories, Western Trails,* and *Detective Action Stories*. His air-adventure tales were particularly popular, and he did indeed shoot down more enemy planes than Rickenbacker. What he'd missed in the skies of France he made up for in the pages of *Battle*

These gaudytaleswereslammedout carelessly, for eatingmoney, and he never revised his manuscripts unless an editorasked him todo so. But, despitelong hours at the typewriter, and steady sales, he knew he could not continue to survive on low-paying pulp rates.

Flying was still a passion, and to divert himself during this period he often borrowed planes from rich Dallas friends. He reportedly smashed up a "Jenny"bi-plane trying for a local altitude record in 1930.

By the spring of 1931, he had decided to leave Dallas. Impressed by a McCoy stage performance, an MGM talent scout offered to set up a Hollywood screentest. McCoyeagerly agreed, driving out to Los Angelesin May "for a go at the movies."

But the screen test failed to generate work—and during that first year in California, as the Great Depression ravaged the country, McCoy became, by his own admission, "a road bum." He slept in wrecked cars in junkyards or on park benches, picked fruit and vegetables in the Imperial and San Joaquin valleys, worked as a drugstore soda jerk and as a bodyguard and strikepicket—and later claimed to have been hired as bouncer for a marathon dance contest in Santa Monica. This experience provided thebasis for an original screen story he submitted to thestudios, called"MarathonDancers"

Based in Hollywood, working as an extra, he began to get some bit parts in films such as *TheLast Mile* (1931) and *Hold the Press* (1932)—in which he played"a tough newsman."

He found the life of a Hollywood extra to be degrading and hopeless, however, and by the close of 1932 he had abandoned the idea of screenacting. He signed on as a contract writer with RKO, beginning what he later termed "my notable career as a studio hack."

"He was married (for the third and last time) in November of 1933 to Helen Vinmont, the daughter of a wealthy oil magnate. Helen's father, though, did notapprove of the marriage, and thenewlywedswere forced to live on McCoy'ssalary as a screenwriter.

In addition to fulfilling his script assignments, McCoy had managed to finish a draft of his first novelbased on his "Marathon Dancers" screen idea. He was excited about the project and told his wife that it was "the best damn thing I've done yet." Indeed it was. In fact, Horace McCoy would never write anything as fine again. *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* became his masterwork, a hard, cynical, lyrical portrait of a failed actress, Gloria, who from the depths of despair talks her dance partner into killing her during a nightmarish marathon dance contest in California.

McCoy had visions of earning "big money" from the novel and wrote to a Texas friend: "Here's one baby who's had his fill . . The minute I get my hands on fifty grand I'm thumbing my nose at these bastards here."This was the sum of money he felt he needed in order to say "the hell with Hollywood" (a title he used for one of his Californiashort stories).

Published in 1935, *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* sold 3,000 copies that year, actually a very respectableshowing for a firstnovelinthe Depression, but far below the figure McCoy had hoped for. Hollywood scripting would remain his primary source of income.

The last Frost adventure tale for *Black Mask* was printed in the October 1934 issue, and, although Joe Shaw kept asking for new work, McCoy had finished with pulp writing. Captain Jerry Frost had become a popular character with *Black Mask* readers, and Shawhated to lose one of his "boys."

Despite the fact that Shawcredited him with being "one of the writers who helped establish the *Black Mask* standard," McCoy's Frost stories were far below Dashiell Hammett's trail-blazing fiction. Nevertheless, they *were* a full notch above the crude, melodramatic work of such regulars as Carroll John Daly and Erle Stanley Gardner. McCoy was never the painstaking craftsman that Shaw justly proclaimed Hammett to be, and he had steadfastly refused to take his pulp writing seriously. With *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* he proved that he was capable

of truly superior fiction.

Having "graduated" from the pulps, McCoy was now claiming kinship to John O'Hara and Hemingway. In Hollywood, after the publication of his first novel, his friends began calling him "Horses" McCoy. In 1936, he was the best-known "B" picture writer at Republic, which did *not* please him. "Dammit, these bastards never give me a shot at the 'A' pics," he complained. "They always hand me the second-string jobs."

His complaint was justified. The films he worked on in the 1930s were strictly low-budget, "bread-and-butter" productions, bearing titles such as *Island of Lost Men, King of the Newsboys, Undercover Doctor,* and *Parole Fixer.*

During 1936, between these hack screen jobs, he completed his second novel, *No Pockets in a Shroud,* featuring a tough Irish crusading news reporter, Mike Dolan. This character was an idealized version of himself—and the novel was based directly on McCoy's life in Dallas (including his Little Theatre experiences). He later referred to it as "my auto-biography." Hopelessly melodramatic, totally lacking the control and objective power of *Horses,* this new novel was a misfire with U. S. publishers, and McCoy was forced to sell the manuscript to a British firm in order to get it printed.

His third novel, *I Should Have Stayed Home,* was almost as bad—an overwrought, blackly cynical attempt to dramatize his bitter experiences as a Hollywood extra. Although Knopf published it in the U. S., the book failed to generate much critical enthusiasm. The *Saturday Review* rendered a caustic appraisal: "Horace McCoy hates Hollywood, not enough to stay away from it, but enough to get all the bile out of his system in a . . . bitter, name-calling novel."

Frustrated and angry, McCoy resigned himself to his "dark fate" at the studios and signed with Paramount in 1937. In less than three years, he turned out sixteen original scripts. By 1942, he was at Warner Bros., where he scripted *Gentleman Jim,* a major boxing film for Errol Flynn. Once this job was completed, however, he sank quickly back into what he called "the bottomless muck" of "B" films

In 1945, a son, Peter, was born to the McCoys; a daughter, Amanda, had been born five years earlier. The burdens of fatherhood weighed on McCoy, particularly since his career as a screenwriter was faltering. Late in 1946, he confessed to a friend that he was "out of work and absolutely deadbroke."

A further burden was his growing fear that he'd lost the ability to write good prose. In near panic, he tackled an ambitious new novel set in the 1930s and featuring a ruthless criminal protagonist.

But the pages came slowly—and McCoy was bogged down with the manuscript in February of 1947 when he received some startling news from France. In Paris, he had been discovered by Sartre, Malraux, Gide, and de Beauvoir, who declared that *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* was "the first existentialist novel to have appeared in America." Based on new translations of his three novels, McCoy's reputation soared, and European critics were ranking him alongside Steinbeck, Hemingway, and Faulkner.

This sudden wave of critical acclaim from overseas gave McCoy the ego boost he desperately needed. In a letter, he admitted that he had allowed himself to get "fat, from too much food and booze." He wanted, more than ever, to get away from screen work ("I want to forget this whoring"), and he expressed a strong desire to move to Connecticut and live "a quiet, rural life" working on novels.

By Christmas of that year he had completed his new book. "I feel like Lazarus up from the grave!" he told his agent.

His editors at Random House were enthusiastic about *Kiss Tomorrow Good-bye,* which they published in May of 1948. This novel was, for the most part, the author's best since *Horses* and reflected the talent and hard work that had gone into it.

In his best moments, McCoy achieves a superb blend of toughness and tension, far beyond his *Black Mask* level:

> He took a step backward, uncradling his Winchester in a vague, instinctive sort of way, and I shot him in the stomach. He had the Winchester and I wasn't taking any chances with him. You can shoot a man in the head or in the heart and he may live long enough to kill you, it is possible; but if you hit him in the stomach, just above the belt buckle, you paralyze him instantaneously. He may be conscious of what is happening, but there is not a goddamn thing he can do about it. I saw the bullet go into the little island of white shirt that showed between his vest and his trousers. The Winchester spilled out of his arms and he went down . . . sprawled in a heavy heap like a melted snow

Yet, in his attempt to inject both hardboiled *and* intellectual elements into his criminal narrator, McCoy stumbles badly. This diamond-hard tough guy, Ralph Cotter, is a university graduate with his very own Phi Beta Kappa key, as McCoy ham-handedly reminds us, allowing Cotter's dialogue to bear chenough to make the reader cringe:

> "It's not the kind of *coup*—if I may dignify it with such a classical term—that pleases me. To gratify my colossal ego a triumph must deliver rich, rounded satisfactory nuances that contain intellectual as well as physical components . . ."

Three months after the publication of his new book, McCoy was stricken with a severe flu attack which damaged his heart. He lost 32 pounds and was

bedridden for over a month.

Prior to this illness, he'd been working very hard, having delivered a revised version of his earlier novel, *No Pockets in a Shroud,* to the editors at New American Library; they had agreed to issue the first American edition as a NAL paperback.

Although McCoy considered *Kiss Tomorrow Good-bye* as a symbol of his "re-birth" as a serious writer, several critics disagreed. *Time* called him "a literary caveman," describing *Good-bye* as "one of the nastiest novels ever published in this country."

Ironically, this review may have inspired Warner Bros. to purchase screen rights as a vehicle for tough guy James Cagney, who was looking for another "really nasty" role. The film was released in 1950 and boosted McCoy's reputation in Hollywood.

"I have been making some very solid movie money," he told an Eastern friend who inquired about his proposed move to Connecticut. "I just can't afford to leave now."

Early in 1951, McCoy hit a $100,000 jackpot with the sale of an original story, "Scalpel," to Hal Wallis Productions. He immediately took his wife and children on a trip to France, where he was hailed in Paris as an American genius. ("I've met all the French intellectuals [and] I'm their darling boy.") By the fall of that year, back in the States, McCoy was working on a major "A" film production, *The Lusty Men,* dealing with the lives of professional rodeo riders. Always a meticulous researcher, he traveled the nation's rodeo circuits for five months to guarantee the authenticity of his script.

He was also working on *Scalpel* as a novel. The rodeo film was released at the same time that *Scalpel* was published, and 1952 proved to be one of his most successful years; his novel became a bestseller, and his film proved itself a box office winner.

The protagonist of *Scalpel,* Dr. Thomas Owen, was McCoy's fantasy portrait of what *he* had dreamed of becoming as a young man in Dallas. In the *Saturday Review,* W. R. Burnett described Owen

> big, strong, handsome, virile...a university graduate...a fraternity man and a great athlete...well versed in literature...an expert on expensive automobiles...[and] a personal friend of Picasso. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary bravery in World War II...is a gourmet, knowledgeable about woman's clothes...a connoisseur of wine...a great surgeon [and] a genius with a scalpel...

But the amazing Dr. Owen also thinks of himself as a "phony"—and this, too, fitted McCoy. More than once, to interviewers, he admitted to "over-dramatizing myself."

The success of McCoy's first hardcover bestseller prompted his publishers to arrange an advance of $7,500 (on a hardcover-paperback deal) against a novel to be called *The Hard Rock Man.* (Although McCoy never revealed the origin of his idea, it was probably inspired by the cover story, "Hard Rock" by Victor Shaw, featured in the issue containing McCoy's first *Black Mask* tale.)

McCoy was just getting underway with this manuscript when he suffered a serious heart attack. But he rallied to complete the first section by the fall of 1955.

His editors were enthusiastic about the novel's potential as a bestseller. Concerning a legendary, ultra-tough dam-builder, known as "the greatest construction boss in the business," *The Hard Rock Man* marked a return to McCoy's two-fisted *Black Mask* style.

The book was never completed.

On December 15, 1955, McCoy was struck down by a final heart attack, dying in his Beverly Hills home at the age of 58. Perhaps he had been pushing himself too hard; at the time of his death, beyond his work on the novel, he'd been planning to direct (as well as script) a film called *Night Cry,* on pro wrestling, and he was also actively engaged in his new hobbies of photography and oil painting.

Typically, he died broke, having spent his money as fast as he'd earned it. His widow was forced to sell his books and his prized collection of jazz recordings in order to pay outstanding debts.

McCoy once observed that his protagonists were always "guys who get pushed around by destiny." He felt that way about himself. As Thomas Sturak has observed:

> Throughout his life, McCoy struggled...to fulfill a heightened conception of himself as an artist. The clash of this romantic illusion and the inexorable realities of time and existence resulted in deep feelings of guilt, self-doubt and self-division.

Yet, despite an inability to meet his own high standards, he *was* an original.

Critic John Whitley best sums up McCoy's special talent:

> At his best he had a vigorous style, a keen ear for dialogue and a robust sense of the dark underside of the American dream [exemplified by] . . . the marathon dance contest of his first novel, captured with a brilliant intensity never repeated in his later work . . . His characters were individualistic, tough, and doomed.

As, indeed, was Horace Stanley McCoy.

[redacted]

They Shoot Horses, Don't They?
New York: Simon & Schuster, 1935

No Pockets in a Shroud
London: A. Barker, 1937
First U.S. edition, revised: New American Library (paperback), 1948

I Should Have Stayed Home
New York: Knopf, 1938

Kiss Tomorrow Good-bye
New York: Random House, 1948

Scalpel
New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1952

Corruption City
New York: Dell, 1959 (an original paperback edition of a 1950 McCoy screen treatment written for Columbia Pictures)

II. *Short Fiction*

The "Jerry Frost" stories in *Black Mask:*

"Dirty Work"	September 1929
"Hell's Stepsons"	October 1929
Renegades of the Rio"	December 1929
"The Little Black Book"	January 1930
"Frost Rides Alone"	March 1930
"Somewhere in Mexico"	July 1930
"The Gun-Runners"	August 1930
"The Mailed Fist"	December 1930
"Headfirst into Hell"	May 1931
"The Trail to the Tropics"	March 1932
"The Golden Rule"	June 1932
"Wings Over Texas"	October 1932
"Flight at Sunrise"	May 1934
"Somebody Must Die"	October 1934

Non-Frost McCoy stories in *Black Mask:*

"The Devil Man," December 1927
Anthologized in *Best Short Stories from the Southwest* ed. Hilton R. Greer (Dallas: Southwest Press, 1928)

"The Mopper-Up," November 1931
Anthologized in *The Arbor House Treasury of Detective and Mystery Stories from the Great Pulps* ed. Bill Pronzini (New York: Arbor House, 1983)

"Murder in Error," August 1932

Other McCoy pulp stories:

"Rustling Syndicate," *Brief Stories,* March 1928
"Killer's Killer," *Detective-Dragnet Magazine,* December 1930
"Orders To Die," *Battle Aces,* December 1930
"Night Club," *Detective Action Stories,* February 1931
"Death Alley," *Detective-Dragnet Magazine,* March 1931
"The Sky Hellion," *Battle Aces,* May 1931
"A Matter of Honor," *Men Stories,* July 1931
"Juggernaut of Justice," *Detective-Dragnet Magazine,* August 1931
"A Pair of Sixes," *Western Trails,* August 1931
"The Passing of Nowata," *Western Trails,* August 1931

NOTE: McCoy is reported to have sold fiction to *Lariat,* and it is likely that he had other pulp stories printed in the 1930s, but data is not available.

Miscellaneous Fiction

"Brass Buttons," *Holland's Magazine,* March 1927
"The Man Who Wanted To Win," *Holland's Magazine,* July 1927
"A Rosicrucian," *Dallasite,* October 19, 1929
"Kid's Christmas," *Dallasite,* December 21, 1929
"The Sky-Horse," *Southwest Review,* April 1930
"The Grandstand Complex," *Esquire,* December 1935 (anthologized in *Stories for Men,* ed. Charles Grayson, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1938)
"Flight for Freedom," *Woman's Home Companion,* January 1943
"The Girl in the Grave" (no magazine printing) (anthologized in *Half-a-Hundred Stories for Men: Great Tales by American Writers,* ed. Charles Grayson, Philadelphia: Blakiston, 1945)
"Destiny and the Lieutenant," *This Week,* July 25, 1948
"They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" (no magazine printing) (anthologized in *Stories for Men: The Fourth Round,* ed. Charles Grayson, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1953; NOTE: this was the original short story version of McCoy's first novel)
"Death in Hollywood" (no magazine printing) (anthologized in *Mystery & Detection Annual 1973,* ed. Donald Adams, Beverly Hills, Calif.: Adams, 1973; NOTE: this was one of the unsold stories McCoy wrote in his early Hollywood years)

III. *Films Written by McCoy*

An unproduced McCoy screenplay, ***I Should Have Stayed Home*** (based on his third novel), was published in 1978 by Garland in New York, edited by Bruce Kupelnick. No other McCoy screenplays are known to have been printed

Film credits on nearly all of McCoy's produced screenplays were shared with other writers—but I have included only film *titles* in this basic listing. (Studio credits are also eliminated.) Beyond the 34 listed titles, McCoy worked on

morethanfiftyotherfilms.Titlesofthesearenot available.

It should be noted that two McCoy novels have been filmed which were *not* based on McCoy screenplays: *Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye* in 1950and *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* in 1969.

Known screenplays by McCoy, with film title and year of release, include:

Hold the Press, 1932
PostalInspector, 1936
The Trail ofthe Lonesome Pine, 1936
Parole! 1936
Dangerous To Know, 1938
HuntedMen, 1938
Kingof the Newsboys, 1938
Personsin Hiding, 1939
Parole Fixer, 1939
Television Spy, 1939
IslandofLostMen, 1939
UndercoverDoctor, 1939
Women Without Names, 1940
Texas RangersRideAgain, 1940
QueenoftheMob, 1940
WildGeeseCalling, 1941
Texas, 1941
Valley of theSun, 1942
Gentleman Jim, 1942
Flight forFreedom, 1943
Appointment in Berlin, 1943
There's Something About a Soldier 1943
TheFabulous Texan, 1947
Montana Belle, 1949
TheFireball, 1950
Bronco Buster, 1952
TheLustyMen, 1952
TheWorldinHisArms, 1952
TheTurning Point(basedon *CorruptionCity*), 1953
BadforEachOther(basedon *Scalpel*), 1954
Dangerous Mission, 1954
RageatDawn, 1955
TheRoadto Denver, 1955
Texas Lady, 1955

IV. *McCoy's Nonfiction*

I havemade noattempt to list McCoy'suncounted pieces of nonfiction. He was a newspaper reporter and sports editorfrom 1919 into late 1929 and contributed a sizable mass of material during these years to the *Dallas Dispatch* and the *Dallas Journal*. McCoyalso contributed heavily to *The Dallasite* in 1929-30 and wrote two essays for *Esquire*. Additionally, he provided sports copy for a local Dallas radiostationandfor severalyears in the 1950swrote record reviews for the Los Angeles *Daily News*

At least one piece of McCoy's short nonfiction has been anthologized: "I Wish I Were a Writer" in *Hello, Hollywood!* ed. Allen Rivkin and Laura Kerr (New York Doubleday, 1962).

V. *Source Material on McCoy*

The McCoy papers are held at U.C.L.A., in Special Collections. They provided the base for Thomas Sturak's unpublished dissertation (see below). In this dissertation, Sturak includes extensive chapter notes, listing all newspaperand magazineinterviews andbiopieceson McCoy.

Here, for reasons of availability, I havechosen to limit mylistingof sourcematerial tobookitemsonly.

Thomas Sturak remains the leading authority on Horace McCoy's lifeand works—and deserves much credit for his painstakingresearch. Mydebt to him is obvious.

Coates, Robert M. "Afterword: Life and Death," in *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (paperback edition). New York:Avon, 1966.

Grayson, Charles. Brief biographical preface on McCoy in his anthology *Stories for Men* see Miscellaneous Fiction).

Pronzini, Bill. Biographical preface, "Horace McCoy: The Mopper-Up," in his *Treasury of Detective and Mystery Stories From the Great Pulps* (see Non-Frost Stories in *Black Mask).*

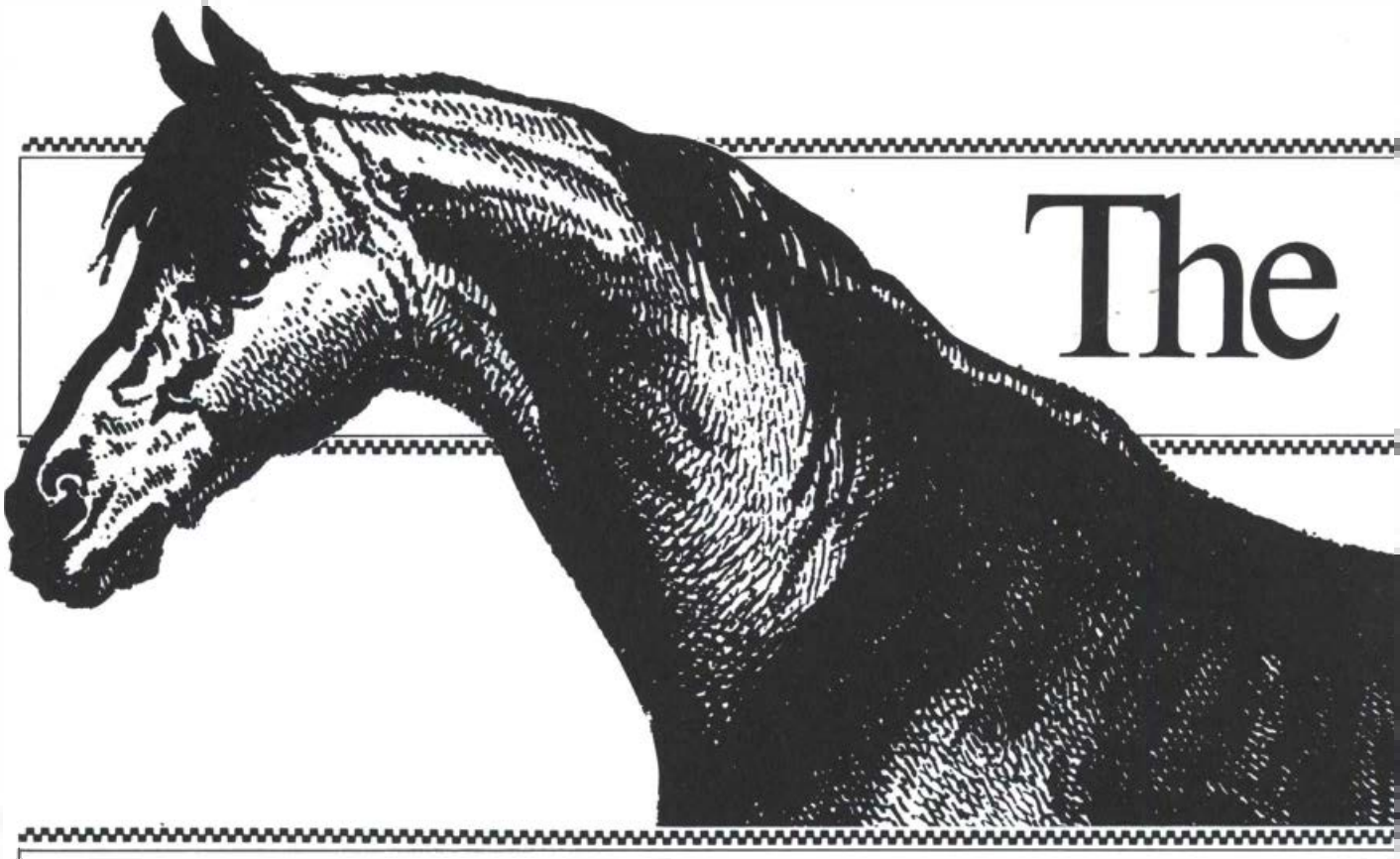
Sturak, Thomas. "The Life and Writings of Horace McCoy: 1897-1955," UCLA dissertation, 1966. Unpublished. NOTE: Chapter 5, "Making His Way," was printed as "Horace McCoy, Captain Shaw, and the *Black. Mask"* in *Mystery & Detection Annual 1972,* ed. DonaldAdams (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Adams, 1972).

_____. "Horace McCoy's Objective Lyricism," in *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties,* ed. David Madden Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968.

_____. Preface to "Death in Hollywood," in *Mystery & DetectionAnnual 1973.*

Whitley, John S. Untitled critical commentary as part of "McCoy, Horace," entry in *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers,* ed. John M. Reilly. New York· St. Martin's Press, 1980

NOTE: A jacket bio from the first edition of *Kiss Tomorrow Good-bye,* "About the Author," was also helpful, as was E. R. Hagemann'scompilation of Jerry Frost stories in his *Black Mask* index published by Bowling Green Popular Press. □



The

By Paul Bishop

Mystery writers have long used sporting backgrounds to add color and life to the exploits of their fictional detectives. Baseball, football, basketball, and hockey, along with almost every other form of athleticendeavor, haveallhad their chance to inspire the vocational descendants of Sherlock Holmes. A review of sports mysteries,though, showsthat, of all sports, horse racing is the odds-on favorite when it comes to choosing a sporting backdrop for fiction's murders, mayhem, and other criminal activities, making it not only "the sportof Kings" butalso "the sport of sleuths."

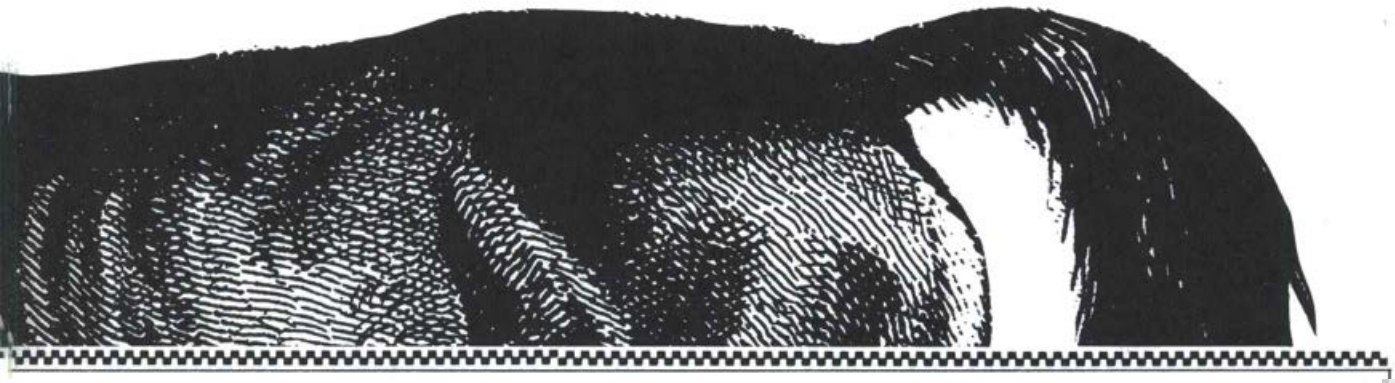
The beginnings of race settings in mysteries can be traced as far backas the masterdetectivehimself, Sherlock Holmes. Although proclaiming that he was "not a racing man," Sir Arthur Conan Doyle dropped his famous creation up to his calabash in a case of horsenapping in thestory"SilverBlaze"(from *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes,* 1894). Critics blasted Doyle's lack of racing knowledge, citing error after error in the story's racing lore and missing the point altogether that, even if it were not accurate, thestorywas dramatic, well written, and thoroughly entertaining.

Much more of a "racing man" and sometimes considered thekingof thrillerwriters, Edgar Wallace led as extravagant and adventurous a life as any of theuncountedheroeshecreated. Sometimesknownto lose more than $500 a day at the track during the 1930s, Wallace never let his lack of skill at picking ponies diminish his enthusiasm for the sport itself. Among his prodigious output, he wrote several racing-backgroundmysteries, including *The Twister, The Green Ribbon, The Flying Fifty-Five,* and perhaps the best of his racing mysteries, *The Calendar,* about a jockey out to clear himself of race fixing charges.

The horseracing mystery also flourished duringthe Golden Age of detectivefiction, with writers such as S. S. Van Dineand ElleryQueen taking up the reins. Van Dine is currently enjoying a resurgence of popularity, making his *The Garden Murder Case,* featuring the sophisticated PhiloVance, a scarceand expensive commodity. Van Dine showed off his knowledge ofracinglorein this novel, in which a big

 Paul Bishop is the editor of THE THIEFTAKER JOURNALS MYSTERY NEWSLETTER. *His stories and articles have appeared innumerousnational magazines.*

Sport of Sleuths



race called the Rivermont Handicap (a thinly disguised version of the first Santa Anita Handicap, the $100,000 added purse of which made a big impression during the depression era of the '30s) provides the focal point for murder in high society.

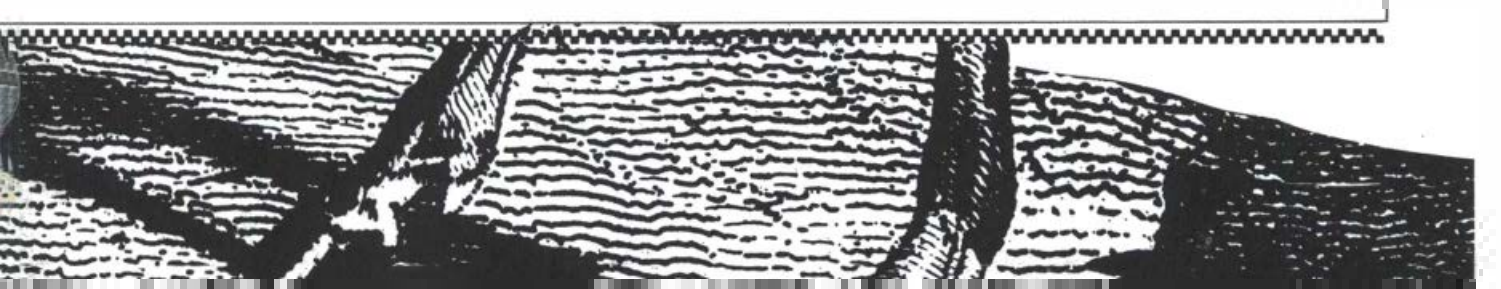
In 1940, writer-detective Ellery Queen finds himself in Hollywood to write a screenplay with a horseracing background. Knowing nothing of the sport, Queen goes to Santa Anita to do some research and winds up solving a case involving the shooting of the favorite. Recorded as the short story "The Longshot" (included in *The New Adventures of Ellery Queen*, 1940), the fictional case is another instance of racing accuracy taking a back seat to ingenious plotting and storytelling.

For some writers, though, accuracy and top-notch storytelling are not mutually exclusive. English journalist Nat Gould turned out hundreds of novels and stories with racing backgrounds before his death in 1919. Most of his stories contained the elements of good mysteries, and Gould could always be relied on to provide virtue with the ultimate triumph over vice.

The best known and most qualified writer in this genre is Dick Francis. Since 1962, he has written an average of one novel a year which has received world-wide acclaim from the public and critics alike. It is well known that, before turning to writing, Francis was one of England's greatest steeplechase jockeys, with a career spanning ten years, from his first victory aboard Wenbury Tiger in 1947, to 1957, when his last professional victory came while riding Crudwell. During that time, his career was studded with spectacular achievements, including being named England's champion jockey and being asked to ride for the Queen Mother. His dedication and winning ways always placed him in high esteem with owners, trainers, and his peers.

During the summer of 1956, while he was still riding, Francis started to write his autobiography at the casual suggestion of a friend. The project soon became derailed when he found out about an English racing rule (since changed) stipulating that professional jockeys could not appear in print. After hanging up his riding boots, though, Francis returned to the work which eventually became his first published book, *The Sport of Queens*, published by Michael Joseph, for whom Francis had occasionally ridden. The book was an immediate success, and a

Before turning to novels, however, Francis was approached by the editors of *The Sunday Express* newspaper, who asked if they could use his byline on a series of staff-written articles. Francis agreed but asked to write the articles himself. His first efforts



were accepted, and he went on to become a mainstay on the paper's sports page until 1973. Francis attributes his success as a novelist to thoseyearsspent with the newspaper, writing for a medium which demanded concise, disciplined writing and deadlines that allowed no room for rewriting at a leisurely pace.

But newspaper writing could not provide the income to which Francis had become accustomed as a top jockey, and, faced with the prospect of a "threadbare carpet and a rattle in my car," he produced his first novel, finding it to be "the most difficult thing I had ever attempted." Nevertheless, *Dead Cert* hit the bookstores in 1962, and Francis has

Although all of Francis's 22 novels are top notch (most critics agree that even a sub-par Francis novel isstill superior to those of many other thriller writers at the top of their form), therearesome whichstand out above the rest—*Nerve* (1964), a taut psychological tale with one of fiction's most memorable villains, *Odds Against* (1965) and *Whip Hand* (1979), which both feature ex-steeplechase jockey turned private eye Sid Halley (Francis's only continuing hero) and which became the basis for the television series *The Racing Game* seen a couple of seasons ago, and *Reflex* (1980), perhaps his most ambitious and successful noveltodate.

It is difficult to say exactly why Francis's novels have been so popular evenwith readers whoclaim to have no knowledge of or interest in horse racing There are certainly other writers who can handle action scenes as well or create characters with as muchdepth and life, but thereis nobody who putsall the ingredients together in the same way. His pacing is impressive, and perhaps it isn't too farfetched to supposethat he is ableto pace a novelso wellbecause of what he learned about pacing a horse through a race. The metaphor works even better when you take into account that he was a steeplechase jockey, that his races were not just a flat-out run around an oval but a series of buildups to various hurdles until the final breakneck stretch.

John Welcome, a well-known author of racing mysteries and straightracing stories in his own right, collaborated withFrancis in editingthree anthologies of racing mystery short stories, *Best Racing and Chasing Stories, Volumes 1 and 2* and *The Racing Man's Bedside Book*. Welcome (a pseudonym for John Needham Huggard Brennan), who is a solicitor, writer, racing enthusiast, and a past Senior Steward with the Irish National Steeplechase committee, centered most of his early racing mysteries around ex-amateur steeplechase rider turned secret agent Richard Graham. Although the stories make forgood reading, theydon'thave thedepth or feeling for the sport as do some of his later novels such as *Grand National* or *Bellary Bay,* which are both excellent.

From the pen of journalist Michael Maguire sprang three novels which recorded the career of onetime investigator for the Turf Security Division turned stud farm manager Simon Drake. The three books,*Shot Silk, Slaughter Horse,* and *Scratchproof,* were good novels but suffered at the hands of the critics, who constantly compared them to the works of Dick Francis. In his secondnovel featuring Simon Drake, Maguire created a story around the kidnapping of General O'Hara, a star British bloodstock horse, long before the very real kidnapping of Sheergar lastyear.

American Jack Dolph created the character of the not-so-eminent Dr. James Cardigan Connor, or just plain old "Doc" Connor to his cronies, in a series of books during the late 1940s and early 1950s. "Doc" Connor considered himself to have a very casual practice which seemed to limit itself to "patching up old ballplayers, fixing fighter's hands, spraying actor's throats and treating sundry local characters." His friends at the racetrack he frequents also swear by him as an expert on horses' gimpy legs and bucked shins, a facet of his practice to which Doc claims to be"completely devoted." With his easygoing lifestyle, Doc has plenty of time to find himself mixed up in an underworld of fixed races, crooked jockeys, touts, tipsters, crooked betting schemes, and murder, both human and equine.

Author Dolph himself found time to pursue all the things he enjoyed with co-existing careers in horse training, writing, theater, sports, and his first love, music. His novels involving Doc Connor are written in the tough, hardboiled style popular in the '50s but manage to rise abovetheir contemporaries due to the soft touches of humor that pervade them, a humor which seems to stem from Dolph's own personality. A checklist of Dolph's books should include *Odds on Murder* (1947), *Murder Makes the Mare Go* (1948), *Murder Is Mutual* (1948), *Hot Tip* (1951), and *Dead Angel*(1953).

Some writers of horseracing mysteries, such as Frank Johnston, have gone to great lengths to stretch thereader's"suspensionof disbelief." In *TheStrangest Grand National,* Johnston gives us a caper in which fourarmy buddies set out to win the Grand National steeplechase by grafting—I kid you not—kangaroo glands intotheirrunner, and at thesametime pulloff a bettingcoup which will wipe out the bookies. The book actually reads better than it sounds, but I have nevercome across a more outrageous plot.

Many established mystery writers have given their series sleuths one-shot excursions into the world of the track. In 1962, Erle StanleyGardner sent Perry Mason to an unnamed racecourse to solve *TheCase of the Ice Cold Hands,* wherein a client asks him to

cash in five winningtickets on a fifty-to-onelongshot. Tough-guy detectives Shell Scott and Mike Shayne have had their day at the races in *Dead Heat* (by Richard Prather,1964) and *Nice Fillies Finish Last* (by Brett Halliday, 1965), respectively, and the prolific John Creasy, writing as J. J. Marric, involved the popular Commander George Gideon in a plot to slow down every horse in the Epsom Derby, except one, by drugging thefeed supplies in *Gideon's Sport* (1970). Writing under his own name, Creasy put Superintendent Roger West on the track of a killer in *Death of a Racehorse*

Sexton Blake, one of England's most popular fictional sleuths, has had many different writers plot out his career, some of whom have let him loose on the racecourse. In *Murder Goes Nap* by Rex Dolphin, Blake sets out to solve the vicious wreckings, arsons, and sabotages of ex-steeplechase jockey Kit Lennox's string of betting shops, and in *An Event Called Murder* by Martin Thomas, English show jumping is the scene for foul play. Both Dolphin and Thomas have written other, non-Sexton Blake, turf mysteries such as *Ride the Man Down* by Dolphin and *Death and a Dark Horse* by Thomas, the latter featuring "Splash" Kirby, a friend of Sexton Blake's in a case of his own

There are also horseracing-related mysteries by other, lesser-known writers. A. C. H. Smith gave us an unusual book in 1977 entitled *The Jericho Gun*, allaboutusinga stolenrnachine thatturnssoundinto a weapon to affect the outcome of races. Andearlier, in the 1950s, Shayne Morris lay down the story of a gang of American crooks after a secret treatment which could revolutionize breeding by producing a horse that can run equally as well on hard or soft going in *The Golden Hooves*. These are just a few of the titles in a mystery genre which, it should be obvious by now, is nowhere near as small as might be imagined.

In a recent conversation with author and eminent mysterycritic Jon Breen, who is responsible for his own horseracing mystery *Listenfor the Click*. (1983), he expounded on two possible reasons for why horseracing has become so popular with mystery writers.

The first reason, he claims, is a sentimental one, showing that race handicapping and rnystery novels have a lot in common. A good mystery story will present.the reader with several suspects from which he must pick the guilty party. Comparatively, the race bettor must pick a winner from the field of starting entries. And just as a mystery provides the reader with clues to the villian's identity, so too does a horse's past performance provide evidence as to its possible running form. Using this evidence, the bettorshould be able to look back at the record if his choice were wrong and see the clues that should have tipped him to the right horse if only he had been perceptive enough to pick them up. Similarly, a mystery reader, who is baffled until the detective's telling denouncement, should be able to go over the novel's textand realizethat the author's villain is the only possible choice given the clues available. Breen hedges hisbets on this theory, though, by statingthat "pickinghorses is a farless exact sciencethan picking a murderer in a fair-play detective novel, since detective novels are crafted by men and women and horseraces arecrafted by fate, chance, or God."

With an eye to the cynics, Breen's second reason claims that, no matter how well policed modern horseracing has become, there is still the stigma of fixes, bribes,dopings,and gangsters leftoverfromits past, causing it to become the sport most often associated (alongside boxing) with underworld connections. These vestiges from a shady past, coupled with a little poetic license, have turned horseracing into high-quality grist for the writer's mill.

Whatever the reasons are, though, one thing is certain—horseracing has remained a favorite of mystery writers and readers throughout a long and amicable history which has brought yet another fascinating facet to"the sportof sleuths."

A CHECKLIST OF TURF MYSTERIES

The following checklist of turfrelated mystery novels contains most of the major and manyof the minor entries inthegenre. TheDick Francis titles havebeen included for the sake of completeness, but, with over 130 titles having flowed from his pen (99.9% of them turf mysteries), the Nat Gould listing is somewhat incomplete due to the lack of an accurate bibliographicalsourceforhis works

V.S. ANDERSON: *King of the Roses*

EVELYNANTHONY: *TheSilverFalcon*(Gothic/mystery)

LINDSEY ARMSTRONG: *Spitfire* (romance/mystery)

MEGAN BARKER: *Black-EyedSusan*(Gothic/mystery)

FRANK BARRETT: *JockeyClub Stories*

JON BREEN: *Listenforthe Click*

FRANKBRENDON: *LandedOdds*

CHRISTOPHER BUSH: *TheCase ofthe Jumbo Sandwich*

JOHN CREASY: *Death of a Race Horse*

RONCUNNINGHAM: *TheJockey*

COLIN DAVY: *Shrimp Harris, The Twisters Double, Triple Crown*(and others)

BORDEN DEAL: *Bluegrass* (romance/mystery)

STEPHEN DOBYNS: *Saratoga Longshot, Saratoga Swimmer*

JACK DOLPH: *Odds on Murder, Murder Makes the Mare Go, Hot Tip, Murder Is Mutual, Dead Angel*

REX DOLPHIN *Ride the Man Down, Murder Goes Nap* (and others)

CHARLES DRUMMOND: *Death at the Furlong Post, The Odds on Death*

FRANCIS DUKE: *The Gold Cup Murder*

JOHN DUNNING: *Looking for Ginger North*

BRENT EDMUNDS: *Ride a Dead Horse*

NORBERT FAGAN: *The Crooked Mile, One Against the Odds*

DICK FRANCIS: *The Sport of Queens* (autobiography), *Dead Cert, Nerve, For Kicks, Odds Against, Flying Finish, Blood Sport, Forfeit, Enquiry, Rat Race, Bonecrack, Slayride, Smokescreen, Knockdown, High Stakes, In the Frame, Rish, Trial Run, Whip Hand, Reflex, Twice Shy, Banker, The Danger*

Editor with John Welcome: *Best Racing and Chasing Stories, Best Racing and Chasing Stories Volume Two, The Racing Man's Bedside Book*

J. FAIRFAX-BLANEBOROUGH: *Gypsy's Luck, Flying Cloud*

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER: *The Case of the Ice Cold Hands*

WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT: *Come Die With Me*

MICHAEL GELLER: *Thoroughbreds*

BARTHOLOMEW GILL: *McGarr at the Dublin Horse Show*

NAT GOULD: *The Runaways, The Rajah's Racer, The Outcast, The Old Mare's Foal, Thrown Away, The Rider in Khaki, Fast as the Wind, The Dark Horse, The Double Event, The Silken Rein, A Dead Certainty, The Roar of the Ring, The Magpie Jacket, A Gentleman Rider, King of the Ranges, A Racecourse Tragedy, Banker and Broker, The Miner's Cup, Only a Commoner, The Famous Match, Racecourse and Battlefield, The Story of Black Bess, The Three Wagers, In Royal Colours, Warned Off, A Near Thing, Blue Cap, A Stable Mystery, Bred in the Bush, Landed at Last, The Boy in Green, The Pace That Kills, A Rank Outsider, Running It Off, Raymond's Ride, Second String, Settling Day, A Racing Sinner, Broken Down, The Gold Whip, Golden Ruin, Stuck Up, A Bad Start, Beating the Favorite, Beating the Record, A Brilliant Season, The Buckjumper, The Chance of a Lifetime, Charger and Chaser, The Dapple Grey, The Doctor's Double, A Gamble for Love, A Great Surprise, Wild Rose, Horse or Blacksmith, In Low Water, Jockey Jack, A Lad of Mettle, The Lady Trainer, Life's Web, The Little Wonder, Lost and Won, The Major's Mascot, A Northern Crack, Not So Bad After All, One of a Mob, A Race for a Wife, The Rake, Riding to Orders, Seeing Him Through, The Selling Plater, The Smasher, Sold for a Song, A Sporting Squatter, Sporting Stories, The Steeplechaser, A Straight Goer, The Top Weight, Trainer's Tales, Who Did It, The Wizard of the Turf, Won on the Post, The Magic of Sport* (autobiography), *On and Off the Turf in Australia* (autobiography)

Other: *Town and Bush* (notes on Australian racing), *Sporting Sketches*

NAT GOULD, JR.: *Stable Star*

FRANK GRUBER: *The Gift Horse*

ARTHUR P. HAGEN: *The Day the Bookies Took a Bath*

BRETT HALLIDAY: *Nice Fillies Finish Last*

MICHAEL HARDCASTLE: *The Chase*

JOSEPH HAYES: *Winner's Circle*

GORDON HOLT: *The Stables to £1,000,000*

FRANK JOHNSTON: *The Strangest Grand National, Million Dollar Gamble, The Trodmore Turf Mystery, The Dope Specialist, Turf Racketeers, Prince of Turf Crooks* (and others)

DEAN R. KOONTZ: *After the Last Race*

ROBERT KYLE: *Nice Guys Finish Last*

LAWRENCE LARIAR: *Win, Place and Die*

JACK LETHERBY: *Murder Lays the Odds*

ERNEST LEWIS: *High Mettle Racer*

MICHAEL MAGUIRE: *Shot Silk, Slaughter Horse, Scratchproof*

DAVID MARK: *Long Shot*

DAN J. MARLOWE: *Operation Drumfire*

J. J. MARRIC (JOHN CREASY): *Gideon's Sport*

EDMUND MCGIRR: *A Hearse With a Horse*

DONALD MCKENZIE: *Cool Sleeps Balaban*

BOB MCKNIGHT: *Murder Mutuel*

STELLA MILES: *Saddled with Murder, Murder Knows No Master, Murder at the Arab Stud*

ARTHUR MILLS: *The Jockey Died First*

SHAYNE MORRIS: *The Golden Hooves*

JOHN NEWBURY: *Out to Win*

OSCAR OTIS and EUNICE WALKER: *The Race*

CHARLES PALMER: *Murder at the Kentucky Derby*

STUART PALMER: *The Puzzle of the Happy Hooligan, The Puzzle of the Red Stallion*

HUGH PENTECOST: *The Homicidal Horse, The 24th Horse*

JUDSON PHILLIPS (HUGH PENTECOST): *Murder Clear, TrackFast*

KIN PLATT: *The Princess StakesMurder*

SIDNEY E. PORCELAIN: *The Purple Pony Murders*

RINARAMSEY and J. OTHOPAGET: *Long Odds*

The Disappearance of Penny

DEXTER ST. CLARE: *SaratogaMantrap*

JAMES SHERBURNE: *Death's Pale Horse, Death's Clenched Fist*

A. C. H. SMITH: *The Jericho Gun*

J. C. S. SMITH: *Jacoby'sFirstCase*

MARTIN THOMAS: *An Event Called Murder, Death and a Dark Horse*

GERALDVERNER: *Jockey*

HENRYWADE: *A DyingFall*

EDGAR WALLACE: *The Calendar, The Flying Fifty-five, The Twister, The Green Ribbon, Grey Timothy, Educated Evans, More Educated Evans, Good Evans*

Note: Edgar Wallace loved the track and horse racing, so in his prodigious output there could be several other turf-related mysteries. The above are his best-known in the genre.

JOHN WELCOME: *Run for Cover, Hard to Handle, Wanted for Killing, Hell Is Where You Find It, On the Stretch, Go for Broke, Red Coats Galloping, Mr. Merston's Hounds, Mr. Merston's Money, Grand National, Bellary Bay*

Editor: *The Welcome Collection: Fourteen Racing Stories* (see also the Dick Francis entry)

LIONEL WHITE *Clean Break* (also published as *The Killing*)

EDWARD WOODWARD: *Black Sheep, Bill Marshall— Turf Sleuth,RaceGang*

Aside fromthe aforementioned collections of turf mystery short stories by Dick Francis and John Welcome, there havebeen a number of other short-story ventures intothis genre

Again the best examples come from Dick Francis, who breaks the first-person narrativetradition of his novels to write here from the third-person perspective (with the exception of the edited version of *Dead Cert,* which comprises the climactic mini-cab chase from his novel of the same name, appearing in his *Best Racing and Chasing Stories*collection).

MARGARET AUSTIN: "Mom's Second Case" *(Ellery Queen'sMysteryMagazine,* July 1962)

JON BREEN: "The Circle Murder Case" (an S. S. Van Dine satire) and "Breakneck" (a Dick Francis send-up) (both storiesincludedin *Hairof theSleuthhound* by Jon Breen)

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE: "Silver Blaze" (included in *The Memoirsof Sherlock Holmes*)

DICK FRANCIS: "Twenty-One Good Men and True" (included in *Verdict of 13* edited by Julian Symons), "Carrot for a Chestnut" (included in *Ellery Queen's Faces of Mystery* edited by Ellery Queen), "Nightmares" (included in *Ellery Queen'sSearches andSeizures* edited by Ellery Queen), "A Day of Wine and Roses" (*Sports Illustrated,* May 1973; also published as "The Gift" and "TheBigStory"inother publications), "Day of the Losers" (*Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* September 1981), "The Royal Rip-Off at Kingdom Hill" (*Classic Magazine,* June/July 1976)

FRANK GRUBER: "Murder at the Race Track" (*The Saint Detective Magazine,* September 1955), "Oliver Quade at the Races" (included in *Brass Knuckles* by Frank Gruber)

BRETT HALLIDAY: "Death Goes to the Post" (*The Saint Detective Magazine,* January 1954)

MICHAEL MITCHELL: "The Inside Track" (*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine,* August 1981)

HUGH PENTECOST: "TheMan with Sixteen Beards" (*Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* December 1962)

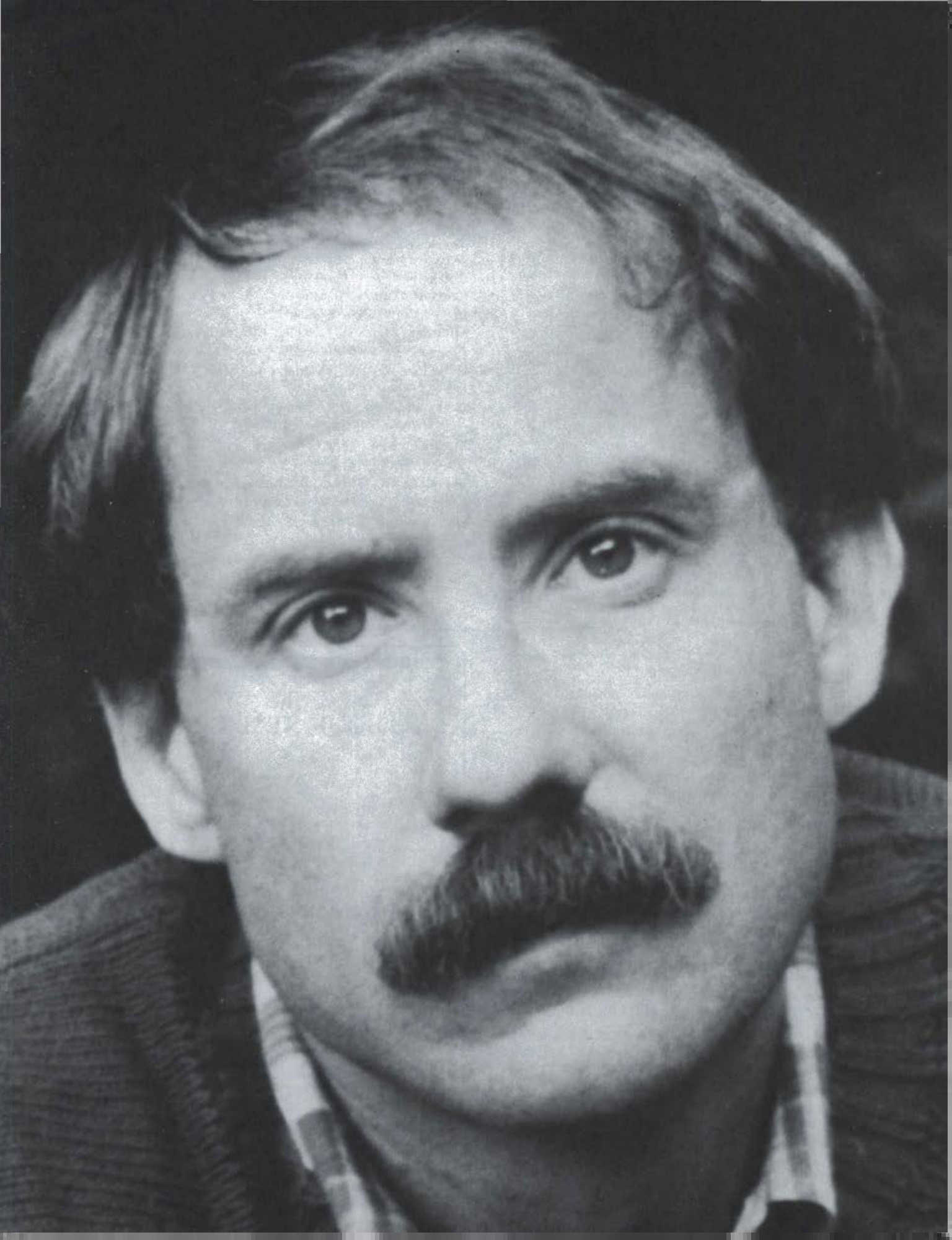
BARRY PEROWNE: "Raffles and the Angry Banker" (*The SaintDetective Magazine,* July 1958)

ELLERY QUEEN: "The Long Shot" (included in *The New Adventuresof ElleryQueen*)

IRWIN SHAW: "Tip on a Dead Jockey" (included in *Tip on a DeadJockey andOther Stories* by IrwinShaw)

DAN SPROUL: "The Legacy" (*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine,* August 1981)

If any reader has corrections, additions, questions regarding further information on other aspects of "The Sport of Sleuths," please contact me at 31 Tahquitz Drive, Camarillo, Calif. 93010. □



An Interview With JAMES ELLROY

By Duane Tucker

With only three novels behind him, James Ellroy must already be considered a major hardboiled writer, an appraisal borne out by the plaudits earned by his first two books. *Brown's Requiem* (Avon, 1981) was nominated for a Private Eye Writers of America "Shamus" award; *Clandestine* (Avon, 1982) was nominated for a Mystery Writers of America "Edgar" and won a bronze medal from the *West Coast Review of Books*. His third novel, *Blood on the Moon* (Mysterious Press), was just published.

All three novels are Los Angeles-set and feature violent, sexually-driven heroes, men who are perilously unsympathetic. Beyond that, they differ markedly in texture and scope. *Brown's Requiem* is the story of Fritz Brown, an ex-cop car repossessor and a "private eye" in name only, accurately described by a minor character as an "urban barracuda." In his early thirties and alcoholic, he has never investigated anything beyond delinquent car payments and when the book opens is nine months into a frightening sobriety, waiting for something to happen. Something does happen—a real "case"—and Brown is thrust into the middle of a pervasive spiral of murder, arson, and welfare fraud. He unravels the mystery, opportunistically seizing upon it as a means to avenge his sleazy life, line his pockets, and earn the love of

“I’m interested in people who tread outside the bounds of conventional morality; displaced romantics ill at ease in the 1980s . . .”

the woman who hovers at the case's center. In the end, he is rich with blood money but has lost the woman. He has reached for the best within himself, bringing up the most brutal along with it. Winner take nothing.

Clandestine is a long novel set in L.A. in the early 1950s. The hero, Fred Underhill, is a young cop who hustles golf for quick money and lonely women for one-night stands. When one of his overnight paramours is found murdered, Underhill, in a rare moment of remorse, begins an investigation. Soon his real motives surface: he wants glory and promotion to the DetectiveBureau.

Underhill's ambition gets him (temporarily) what he wants—but the price in innocent lives destroyed is great. Along the road toward the capture of the killer, he falls in love, and the relationship between Underhill and Lorna Weinberg, a crippled Deputy D.A., provides the depth and scope which make *Clandestine* a major departure from *Brown's Requiem*.

Blood on the Moon, a contrapuntally structured, present-day thriller, told from the viewpoints of a psychotic mass murderer of women and the womanizing police detective obsessed with his capture, is a thematicand stylisticdeparture from bothof Ellroy's previous books, a relentless story of a twenty-year reign of terror. Just published, it reads like Cornell Woolrich out of Joseph Wambaugh out of tabloid journalism and seems certain to arouse controversy forits graphicdepiction of L.A. cop/criminal life.

I met with James Ellroy at his furnishedbasement "pad" in a large house adjoining a golf course in Eastchester, New York. He is a tall, strongly built man of 36 who sports loud, preppy clothes and a continual grin. While we spoke, his landlady's Siamese cat stared at us with what Ellroy called "ikon eyes."

DT: Thank you forconsentingto this interview.

JE: Thank *you* for the opportunity to flap my jaw on my two favorite subjects—my books and myself.

DT: Ha! Getting down to business, you'vecovered a great deal of both narrative and stylistic ground in the course of three novels. *Brown's Requiem* was a tightprivateeye story, *Clandestine* a long, discursive period tableau, *Blood on the Moon* a psychological thriller *cum* police procedural. Most young genre writers stick to one formula. You haven't. Why?

JE: Quite simply, the story lines of my three books *required* different styles, and I simply put on paper what the story dictated. The story always comes first with me, and *it* dictates thethrust of my characterizations. As for the diverse thematicmaterial contained in my books, again the story dictated theme and moral substance. Beyond that, of course, I was looking for the strongest possible voice. For now, I think I'vefoundit.

DT: The voice of *Blood on the Moon?* Multi-viewpoint third person? What you might call a "neo-noir" urbanhorrornovel?

JE: Well put. Correct on all counts. I've just finished my fourth novel, *Because the Night.* In it, I refined many of the themes of *Blood on the Moon*—deepened them, refining my style in the process. All good writers have a thematic unity embedded in their subconscious. Mine is deeply intertwined with a knowledge of crime fiction exigencies: plot complexity, pace, and suspense. The third-person crime novel allows the reader to inhabit the minds of both hunter and hunted, and, in the case of my two new books, it allows *me* to develop suspense through characterization, sincethe killer's identity is revealed early in the story. A sense of impending doom pervades both *Blood on the Moon* and *Because the Night,* which are structured contrapuntally: killer-cop, killer-cop, and so on. The reader knowsthatthe two forces will converge, but at what point in the story? *And how?*

DT: A moment ago you mentioned "theme" and seemed to imply that it "came to you" coincidentally to your developing a viableplot. Do—

JE: No, you're mistaken. My themes emerge from my plots and are intrinsic to them. It's interesting. I've been writing for five years, and only recently have I reached the point at which I can say: "These

“If my mother hadn’t been murdered, I might have become a writer of Disneyesque kiddies’ parables.”

are the things that concern me as a writer and a man.’

DT: Ha! Well, what are they?

JE: Ha! yourself. You’ve just given an unabashed gloryhound a soapbox. Thanks, Daddy-O.

DT: That’s what interviews are all about. Well?

JE: I’m interested in people who tread outside the bounds of conventional morality; displaced romantics ill at ease in the 1980s; people who have rejected a goodly amount of life’s amenities in order to dance to the music in their own heads. The price of that music is very, very high, and no one has ever gotten away without paying. Both cops and killers fall into that category, to varying degrees, walking the sharpest of edges between their own music and the conventional music of the world that surrounds them. Think of the potential conflicts. A modern-day policeman, equipped with technology and a pitch-black skepticism, a man who would have been a good medieval warrior, meets a psychopathic killer who maneuvers in the real world yet is fueled by an indecipherable, symbolic language—in other words, pure insanity. I’ve given you an admittedly extreme example, and a brief synopsis of *Blood on the Moon*. Within that framework, though, think of the opportunities to explore psyches and moral codes under incredible duress. Think of how precious physical sacrifice and human love stand out when juxtaposed against the severely contained universe I just described.

DT: One which you yourself describe as extreme, though.

JE: Extreme only because its facts are made explicit. Beyond that, highly prosaic, even vulgar. Eschewing the tabloids completely, pick up a copy of any newspaper. You’ll find elliptically worded accounts of psychopathics laughter in most of them.

DT: A frightening thought. Is there a salient motivating factor in this “universe” of yours?

JE: Yes, sex. I’ve gone back and read through my four novels recently and was astonished how close to the surface it has been from the beginning. In this specific “universe” you just mentioned, the dividing point is obvious: in the hellish unreality of the psychopath, sex is a weapon; in the displaced romantic cop’s quasi-reality, it is the love of unattainable women, unattainable only because the cop would have to submit to vulnerability to earn their love, which of course he would never do. Again, one example, and an extreme one. Pauline Kael once wrote, “Sex is the great leveler, taste the great divider.” As these themes become more dominant in my work, I’m going to have to learn to offset them in subtle variations, and, in general, infuse this so called “universe” of yours with a greater degree of recognizably human behavior. Literature is tricky, Daddy-O. Just when you think you’ve got something down pat, you realize you have to shift gears or go stale. Tricky.

DT: Shifting gears slightly, do you have an overall goal or ultimate goal as a writer?

JE: James M. Cain said that his goal was to “graze tragedy.” My goal is to hit tragedy on the snout with a sixteen-pound sledgehammer.

DT: In other words?

JE: In other words, I want to develop a finely delineated tragic vision and sustain it throughout my career as a crime novelist, producing better and better books as I go along.

DT: What about your background? Can you give me a brief bio?

JE: Sure. I was born in L.A. in ’48. My father was sort of a Hollywood fringie—an accountant for the studios and a small-time entrepreneur. My mother was a registered nurse. I was an only child. My father taught me to read when I was three, and books became my life. All I wanted to do was read.

When I was ten, my mother was murdered. A man picked her up in a bar and strangled her. My reading took on a distinct focus: mysteries and the crime documentaries. I read them by the truckload. My mother’s killer was never found. By the way, *Clandestine* is a heavily fictionalized account of her murder—a fact-fiction pastiche.

My voracious reading continued into my teens, my taste maturing as I got older. I started out with the Hardy Boys and Sherlock Holmes, then went on to Nero Wolfe and Mickey Spillane, with hundreds of junk books devoured along the way. When I was fifteen, my father, whowas elderly,became seriously ill. I exploited his infirmity and ditched school at every opportunity, stealing detective novels from Hollywood area bookstores, reading them in Griffith Park and daydreaming about becoming a hotshot novelist myself.

In '65, I was kicked out of high school for fighting and truancy. My father signed for me to join the Army. He died when I was in basic training. I hated the Army. They took away my Nero Wolfe books and made me get up at 5:00 A.M. and do push-ups. I capitalized on my father's recentdemise and faked a nervous breakdown, securing an unsuitability discharge.

I returned to L.A., to the old neighborhood, and got strung out on booze and dope. Now I had *two* loves: getting smashed *and* reading crime novels. From'65 to '77, I lived mostly on the streets, flopping out in parks, with about fifty arrests for drunk, trespassing, shoplifting, disturbing the peace, and other Mickey Mouse, booze-related misdemeanors. I imagine I didabout a total of six months'countyjail time. It wasn't particularly traumatic, by the way: I was bigand strangeenough sothat no one said "Boo" to me.

During the early '70s, I read Chandler and Ross MacDonald and flipped out over their tragicpower. I must have read everyone of MacDonald's books at least ten times. I consider him, along with Joseph Wambaugh, as my greatest teacher

Wrapping this up, I almost croaked from a series of booze- and dope-related maladies early in '77. Realizing that it was live or die, I opted for life. I've been sober since August of '77. Needless to say, my perspectives have changed. I began the writing of *Brown's Requiem* in January of '79, shortly before my thirty-first birthday. The rest youknow about.

DT: I'msureyoucan anticipatemy nextquestion.

JE: Yes, yes. The cause and effect is patently obvious. If my mother hadn't been murdered, I might have become a writer of Disneyesque kiddies' parables. Who knows? Strange, and perhaps perverse, but I have a very healthy respect for the rather dark events that have formed me. From a standpoint of pure efficacy, they have certainly supplied a marked contribution toward making me thefine writer I am today.

DT: Thatsounds very callous.

JE: I disagree. To me, it's a classic case of mankind profiting from tragedy. You like that? It sounds like a definitionof literature in a nutshell.

DT: Do you think that literature has a social responsibility?

JE: If you mean do I think that literature's ultimate purpose is to create needed socialchange, no. W. H. Auden said, "For poetry makes nothing happen. It survives, a way of happening, a mouth." Since we're dealing specifically with crime fiction, I would say thatin *general* the crime writer's only responsibilityis to entertain.

DT: What about your individual responsibility as a writer?

JE: Entertaining the reader stands as a bottom line. Beyond that, I want to create a verisimilitude that will give my readers the feeling of being uprooted from their daily lives and thrust intothe heart of an obsession. My responsibility is to combine the natural, raw power of the crime novel form with my own narrative gifts to build an obsession so compelling that the reader will willingly move with its flow—regardlessof where ittakeshim

DT: [illegible]

JE: It varies. In *Brown's Requiem, it was to the heart of a lonely man, a decent man too corrupted*

JE: It varies. In *Brown's Requiem,* it was to the heart of a lonely man, a decent man too corrupted and paradoxically innocent to be called tragic. In *Clandestine,* it was to L.A. in the early 1950s. In *Blood on the Moon* and *Because the Night,* it was to the ultimate terror: human beings beyond love or reasonand *their* obsessions.

DT: Do you see any general trends emerging in hardboiledfiction?

JE: Unfortunately, I don't read enough in the field to be able to spottrends. I just don'thave the time to read. Sad. My instincts,however, tell me thatthe cop willreplacethe private eyeas the hardboiled ikon.

DT: Why?

JE: Let's divide crime fiction readers into two categories: those who readto escape reality and those who read to confront it and gain a handle on the pulsebeat of the dark side of life. Put hardboiled readers in the second category, and, while you're at it, consider the fact that crime in America is rapidly escalating, assuming as many bizarre forms as there are lunatic perpetrators to give them form. The reader out to sate his dark curiosity and inform himself on the violence that surrounds him will want a hero, or anti-hero, whomeetsthe requirements of a realistic vision. In one of the "87th Precinct" books,

McBain's hero Steve Carella ruminates that the last time he ran across a private eye investigating a murder was never.

DT: Do you consider yourself a nihilist?

JE: No, although I have absolutely no desire to upgrade the fabric of life in America today or actuate any kind of social change. I think that cultivating a literary vision entails developing an affection for things the way they are. Write it down the way it is, reach into your own soul for whatever it takes to provide illumination, and give it to the reader. Maybe your vision will inspire compassion, maybe it won't. The important thing is to look at things the way they are and not flinch, then look at yourself the way *you* are and not flinch. Only the reader should flinch—but only momentarily. You have to compel him to need to know the way *you* need to know.

DT: You sound obsessive on that subject.

JE: I *am* obsessive on that subject.

DT: Moving on, what are your future writing plans?

JE: I'm going to write three more present-day, L.A. police novels, none of which will feature psychopathic killers. After that, I plan on greatly broadening my scope. How's this for diversity: a long police procedural set in Sioux City, South Dakota in 1946; a long novel of political intrigue and mass murder in Berlin around the time of Hitler's Beer Hall Pustch; the first *complete* novelization of L.A.'s 1947 "Black Dahlia" murder case; and the re-working, re-thinking, and re-writing of my one unpublished manuscript—*The Confessions of Bugsy Siegel,* an epic novel about the Jewish gangsters *circa* 1925–45.

DT: The manuscript is completed?

JE: Halfway. Four hundred pages. It's a mess. Even my nobleagent hates it.

DT: How old will you be by the time all those projects are realized?

JE: About fifty

DT: Will you have mellowed?

JE: No. Being mellow is okay, if you aspire to becoming a piece of cheese. The trouble with being a piece of cheese is that someone is likely to spread you on a cracker and eat you.

DT: Ha! Let's conclude with some nonsequitur-type questions and answers. Do you have non-writing hobbies or pastimes?

JE: I love classical music and boxing, and enjoy going to the movies.

DT: What is the one thing that you do not possess that you would most want to possess?

JE: Need you ask? The love of the unattainable, but hopefully attainable, woman. Maybe she'll read this interview and stalk my heart. Who knows?

DT: Why is that cat staring at us so insistently?

JE: That's Chico, my mascot. He's memorizing your features. If you write anything bad about me, he's going to be my avenger. Very sharp teeth

DT: I'll watch out for him. Any last words? On whatever subject you like.

JE: Yes. A pledge to crime fiction readers everywhere. I pledge to never relent in my determination not to flinch and my determination never to grow stale; never to give you anything less than my best.

Third Annual PWA "SHAMUS" Awards Ceremony

This year's award ceremony will be conducted at BOUCHERCON XV, which will be held October 26-27-28, in Chicago.

The Private Eye Writers of America, founded in January of 1982, has created the SHAMUS award for the best in Private Eye fiction, and has produced an anthology of original Private Eye short stories, THE EYES HAVE IT, which will be published in the Fall of 1984 by The Mysterious Press.

PWA would also like to thank The Armchair Detective for its 17 years of devotion to mystery fiction.

The Private Eye Writers of America have active memberships available for $15.00 a year, and non-active memberships available for $10.00 a year. For information write PWA c/o Randisi, 1811 East 35th Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11234.

For further information on BOUCHERCON XV write Mary Craig, Bouchercon XV, 301 Lake Hinsdale Drive, Number 112, Clarendon Hills, Ill. 60514

Otto Penzler

COLLECTING MYSTERY FICTION

DASHIELL HAMMETT

Since the previous column about collecting mystery fiction was devoted to Raymond Chandler, it is inescapable that this one be devoted to the man whose name is invariably linked with his – Dashiell Hammett.

It is nearly impossible to think of a twentieth-century writer in the mystery genre who had a comparable influence on the authors of his era and on those who followed.

Chandler, for all his skill as a writer, refined a form that had been made significant by Hammett. To be totally fair, Hammett did not invent the sub-genre of mystery fiction that is today identified so closely with him: the "hardboiled" novel.

The credit for that must rest with Carroll John Daly, who wrote the first story about a "hardboiled dick" and who also was the first to use a series character, the notorious Race Williams. There were certainly tough detectives in American literature before Daly, but the private eye story, as we know and identify it today, was essentially his creation.

While Daly was a storyteller who knew only one pace – supersonic – he had virtually no sense of style, characterization, atmosphere, or any of the basic components of literature. It took Hammett to bring art to the hardboiled novel.

During the Golden Age of *The Black Mask* magazine (the 1920s and 1930s), Hammett was a prolific contributor to its pages, though slightly less popular than Daly and Erle Stanley Gardner, according to its own reader surveys. In addition to literally scores of short stories for *The Black Mask*, Hammett wrote stories for other magazines, accounts of true experiences as a Pinkerton, articles and book reviews for a variety of publications, occasionally under pseudonyms: Peter Collinson, Samuel Dashiell, and Mary Jane Hammett are the only ones to have been identified, but the theory persists that he may have produced work under other bylines as well.

As prolific as he was in the 1920s and first few years of the 1930s, his output virtually ended in 1934. Richard Layman's Hammett bibliography identifies 138 original contributions to magazines. Of these, 131 appeared in 1934 or earlier, while the remainder either had been written during those early years but remained unpublished until later, or were letters or articles of a political nature.

This is not to say that Hammett ceased work entirely. He spent much time in Hollywood after his peak period and wrote screen plays, dialogue, and treatments. He created a radio series, edited an Army newspaper, *The Adakian*, during World War II, and provided no small assistance to a beginning writer with whom he conducted a long, if episodic, affair – Lillian Hellman.

For all his importance in the history of American letters – and he is arguably one of the two most influential writers of dialogue in this century, the other being Ernest Hemingway – Hammett wrote only five novels. The extraordinary fame of Sam Spade and Nick and Nora Charles is based on a single book appearance for each (plus three Sam Spade short stories), though, of course, the popularity of their motion picture portrayals (Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon* and William Powell and Myrna Loy as Nick and Nora in the "Thin Man" series) cannot be underestimated as to the degree of recognizability and affection these characters have engendered.

The series character with whom Hammett began and who appeared in more fiction than all his other significant creations combined is the unnamed Continental Op, the tough old detective for San Francisco's Continental Detective Agency. The Op appeared in the first two Hammett novels and in numerous short stories, where some of Hammett's finest work appears. With broad but powerful strokes Hammett could block out a character and populate it with living, sharp-tongued characters within a few pages. Many of these short stories, written sixty years ago, seem as fresh today as they did in their prime – a truly remarkable achievement when one considers the changes in language, attitudes, and patterns of ordinary behavior that have occurred since then.

It is unthinkable to be serious about collecting American literature, and detective fiction in particular, without wanting to collect Hammett. It is almost as difficult to do it successfully. The short-story collections are relatively common (though increasingly scarce in truly fine and fresh condition), but the novels are a genuine challenge to find in first edition "dust jacket."

None of the five novels is particularly difficult to locate in first edition. All were published by Alfred A. Knopf in rather uniform format over a seven-year period. With a little perseverance and a moderately well-endowed bank book, it is even possible to find books in dust jackets. But to find fine, fresh, untorn, clean dust jackets is a different bucket of bassa altogether.

Here, it is not even a question of being able to afford the books, which are, literally, worth their weight in gold. The rarity of the books in pristine condition will require patience as well as perseverance – *and* a very fat bank book indeed. After more than twenty years of extremely active collecting and hunting for books, I have yet to see a perfect dust wrapper on *The Dain Curse*. That isn't to say it doesn't exist; I've just [illegible].

It seems reasonable to state that the only American author of detective fiction whose books are more valuable than Hammett's on an average is Edgar Allan Poe. Perhaps not surprisingly, it seems equally reasonable to state that Hammett is second only to Poe in significance in the history and development of detective fiction in this country.

Since we are concerned here only with mystery fiction, no complete description of Hammett's other work will be provided. It should be noted, however, that he was the author of a large, oblong pamphlet entitled *The Battle of the Aleutians*, published in 1944 by the U.S. Army. Although regarded as a

rarity, numerous copies have been located in recent years, always in fine condition, suggesting the likelihood of a small cache having been unearthed, with a consequent small but steady stream of copies finding their way onto the market. This, however, is pure surmise. Copies tend to have a nearly uniform price of $250. I cannot recall ever having seen a copy in less than fine condition, which would lend credence to the speculation that multiple copies were discovered. Under ordinary circumstances, a rather fragile paper-covered booklet would be expected to turn up in frayed and creased condition, if at all.

A general word of warning pertains to the dust jackets of the five Hammett novels. All of the books were reprinted, some frequently, by Knopf. Since these later printings were identical in size and format to the first printings of the first editions, it is simplicity itself to remove a dust jacket from a later printing and wrap it around a first printing. During the past half-century, it is not unlikely that this has occurred on more than one occasion. The motivations for these transfers may be varied, but the result is the same: *Caveat emptor.* The appeal of dust jackets is undeniable, and early collectors may have added jackets from later printings to early editions merely to enhance their appearance. In subsequent years, as the values of dust wrappered copies of the first printings escalated, book sellers or collectors may have "improved" first printings by taking jackets from later printings, not realizing (or, though it is unkind to suggest it, not caring, or, though it is even unkinder to suggest it, attempting to conceal the fact) that the jackets of the later printings were different from the jackets on the first printings. Reviews are added, a new book blurb is added—whatever the change, a later dust jacket on a first printing adds virtually nothing to the value of the book, except in an aesthetic sense. Be extremely cautious here, as there seem to be more cases of "wrong" dust jackets on Hammett first printings than on any other author's books. See individual book descriptions below for further details.

Although it is beyond the scope of this column to examine magazine appearances, the relationship between *The Black Mask* and Hammett is unique. With the possible exception of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories in the pages of *The Strand Magazine,* no major author and his work has been so closely identified with a single publication. Thus, a break with custom follows below, in the form of a complete list of Dashiell Hammett's fiction in *The Black Mask* magazine, in chronological order. Unless stated otherwise, the contributions appear under the Hammett byline. For a complete list of Hammett's periodical contributions, see the excellent bibliography in the Pittsburgh Series in Bibliography: *Dashiell Hammett: A Descriptive Bibliography* by Richard Layman (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979).

"The Road Home" by Peter Collinson (December 1922)

"The Vicious Circle" by Peter Collinson (June 1923)

"Arson Plus" by Peter Collinson (October 1, 1923)

"Crooked Souls" (October 15, 1923)

"Slippery Fingers" by Peter Collinson (October 15, 1923)

"It" (November 1, 1923)

"The Second Story Angel" (November 15, 1923)

"Bodies Piled Up" (December 1, 1923)

"The Tenth Clew" (January 1, 1924)

"The Man Who Killed Dan Odams" (January 15, 1924)

"Night Shots" (February 1, 1924)

"The New Racket" (February 15, 1924)

"Afraid of a Gun" (March 1, 1924)

"Zigzags of Treachery" (March 1, 1924)

"One Hour" (April 1, 1924)

"The House in Turk Street" (April 15, 1924)

"The Girl with the Silver Eyes" (June 1924)

"Women, Politics and Murder" (September 1924)

"The Golden Horseshoe" (November 1924)

"Mike, Alec or Rufus" (January 1925)

"The Whosis Kid" (March 1925)

"The Scorched Face" (May 1925)

"Corkscrew" (September 1925)

"Dead Yellow Women" (November 1925)

"The Gutting of Couffignal" (December 1925)

"The Nails in Mr. Cayterer" (January 1926)

"The Assistant Murderer" (February 1926)

"Creeping Siamese" (March 1926)

"The Big Knock-over" (February 1927)

"$106,000 Blood Money" (May 1927)

"The Main Death" (June 1927)

"The Cleansing of Poisonville" (November 1927)

"Crime Wanted—Male or Female" (December 1927)

"Dynamite" (January 1928)

"The 19th Murder" (February 1928)

(*Note:* The previous four contributions form a variant version of *Red Harvest.*)

"Black Lives" (November 1928)

"The Hollow Temple" (December 1928)

"Black Honeymoon" (January 1929)

"Black Riddle" (February 1929)

(*Note:* The previous four contributions form a variant version of *The Dain Curse.*)

"Fly Paper" (August 1929)

"The Maltese Falcon" (September 1929, October 1929, November 1929, December 1929, January 1930) (a five-part, slightly variant form of the book version)

"The Farewell Murder" (February 1930)

"The Glass Key" (March 1930)

"The Cyclone Shot" (April 1930)

"Dagger Point" (May 1930)

"The Shattered Key" (June 1930)

(*Note:* The previous four contributions form a slightly variant version of *The Glass Key.*)

With the publication of *The Glass Key,* often cited as his masterpiece, Hammett had reached the zenith of his powers and abruptly concluded his contributions to the pages of *The Black Mask* magazine and, within another three years, stopped writing fiction altogether.

Many theories have been advanced as to why his career came to such a shocking halt. He claimed that he was rewriting himself, and that his death as a novelist occurred when he discovered that he had a style. Others have attributed it to his liaison with Lillian Hellman—that he worked so hard on *her* writing that he had nothing left for himself. Still others attribute it to his alcoholism, to his relative prosperity (he no longer needed to write to put bread on the table), to his involvement with Hollywood and consequent diverting of his writing time from fiction to screenplays, and to his involvement with Communist politics. Whatever the reason, the brevity of his writing career is a tragic loss to American letters.

It is true for most major novelists in the mystery genre that there are several areas beyond book and magazine appearances in which it is possible and interesting to collect. Hammett was particularly fortunate in having several excellent films made from his work and, for those wishing to specialize in collecting Hammett, there is a great deal of material available.

While just about everyone in the English-speaking world is more or less familiar with *The Maltese Falcon* and associates Humphrey Bogart with the role of Sam Spade, that version, written and directed by John Huston for Warner Bros. in 1941, was actually the third version within a decade to emanate from Hollywood. In 1931, Ricardo Cortez played Spade (Bebe Daniels had the Mary Astor role of Brigid O'Shaughnessy) in the first Warner Bros. version. It was remade for the first time in 1936 under the title *Satan Met a Lady,* with Warren William in the Spade role (renamed Ted Shayne) and with Bette Davis. Apart from having written the novel on which the three films were based, Hammett played no part in the making of any of them (though Huston was smart enough to lift much of the novel's dialogue).

Hammett's crisp and funny, though maligned novel, *The Thin Man,* served as the basis for a movie of the same title produced in the same year, 1934, that Knopf published it. Starring William Powell and Myrna Loy, it was hugely successful and spawned a series of sequels. MGM's first sequel was not released until 1936, though other studios rushed into production with other sophisticated husband-and-wife-team detectives. *After the Thin Man* (1936) also starred James Stewart and was made from an original story by Hammett. *Another Thin Man* (1939) was also based on a Hammett story, "The Farewell Murder," which featured the Continental Op when it was published in *The Black Mask.* Apart from the use of Nick and Nora Charles, subsequent movies in the series—*Shadow of the Thin Man* (1941), *The Thin Man Goes Home* (1944), and *Song of the Thin Man* (1947)—did not involve Hammett contributions of any kind.

Other motion pictures related to Hammett's

work are *Roadhouse Nights* (1930), which was based very tangentially on *Red Harvest* (and converted into a comedy in the process); *City Streets* (1931), filmed from an original Hammett story for Max Marcin's screenplay; *Woman in the Dark* (1934), based on Hammett's short story of the same name; *Mister Dynamite* (1935), based on Hammett's original story; *The Glass Key* (1935), the first cinematic version of the novel often regarded as Hammett's masterpiece, starring George Raft in an excellent, gutsy, complex film; *The Glass Key* (1942), another fine version of the novel, this time starring Alan Ladd as Ned Beaumont; *Watch on the Rhine* (1943), the screenplay by Hammett being based on Lillian Hellman's play; and *The Fat Man* (1951), with J. Scott Smart as the titular character, based on the radio series which had a dual inspiration: the success of *The Thin Man* series and the character known as the Continental Op.

Several television movies have been based on Hammett's work, most notably *The Dain Curse*, a three-part, six-hour adaptation of the least of Hammett's novels, and *Nick and Nora*, a cheap 1975 movie, obviously inspired by *The Thin Man*. In addition, the theatrically released film *The Black Bird* saw George Segal portray Sam Spade's son in his continued pursuit of the Maltese Falcon in what purported to be a comedy. *Hammett*, based on Joe Gores's excellent novel of the same title, was better than its mixed reviews of 1983. In it, as in Gores's book, Hammett functions as the detective, loosely based on his experience as a Pinkerton detective.

Hammett's work has also served as the basis for a television series, *The Thin Man*, starring Peter Lawford and Phyllis Kirk, in a moderately successful half-hour program that lasted for three years and 74 episodes. The radio series of the same name had enjoyed much greater success on NBC in the 1940s, with Hammett writing many of the scripts himself. This series, in turn, spawned *The Fat Man*, with J. Scott Smart (who later played in the movie version of the same character), strongly influenced by the corpulence of the Continental Op.

Sam Spade, played on radio by Howard Duff, was a highly successful series until Hammett incurred difficulties with the House Committee on Un-American Activities. The sponsor was a hair dressing which used a familiar jingle: "Get Wild Root Creme Oil, Charlie..." When *Sam Spade* went off the air, a similar detective series immediately replaced it: *Charlie Wild, Private Eye*.

Hammett also created a popular comic strip, *Secret Agent X-9*, drawn by Alex Raymond (even more famous for having created Flash Gordon) and syndicated by King Features. In addition to creating the strip, Hammett wrote the first several adventures, later giving way to other writers. Nearly four hundred daily strips were published.

For further information about Dashiell Hammett's life and works, the following books are suggested:

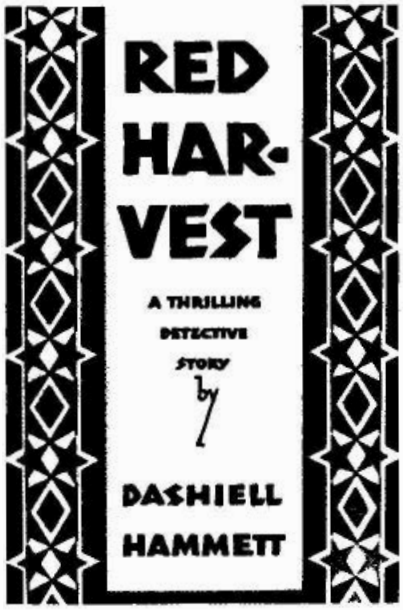
William F. Nolan, *Dashiell Hammett: A Casebook* (Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin, 1969).

Peter Wolfe, *Beams Falling: The Art of Dashiell Hammett* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980).

Richard Layman, *Shadow Man: The Life of Dashiell Hammett* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981).

William F. Nolan, *Hammett: A Life at the Edge* (New York: Congdon & Weed, 1983).

Diane Johnson, *Dashiell Hammett: A Life* (New York: Random House, 1983).



[illegible]

First Edition: New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1929. Red cloth, front cover printed with yellow ornament (of a skull and crossbones) and blue ruled border, spine printed in yellow and black, rear cover printed with black publisher's logo. Issued in an ornamental dust wrapper.

	with d/w	*without d/w*
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	$ 500.00	$ 35.00
[illegible]	2,500.00	250.00
Very fine	[illegible]	400.00

Note: The first edition was published February 1, 1929. *Red Harvest* had previously been published in a somewhat different form in four issues of *The Black Mask* magazine (see above). The second printing is so noted on the copyright page. Although the size of the first print run is unknown, Layman (in his biography of Hammett) estimates that 3,000 copies of the first printing were issued.

Later dust wrappers for *Red Harvest* reveal themselves by printing comments about *The Dain Curse*.

The Dain Curse

First Edition: New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1929. Yellow cloth, front cover printed with red ornament (of a skull and crossbones) and dark brown ruled border, spine printed with red and dark brown, rear cover printed with dark brown publisher's logo. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

[illegible]

retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 500.00	$ 35.00
Fine	2,000.00	250.00
Very fine	3,500.00	350.00

Note: The first edition was published July 19, 1929. *The Dain Curse* had been previously published in a somewhat different form in four issues of *The Black Mask* magazine (see above). The second printing is so noted on the copyright page. Although the size of the first print run is unknown, Layman estimates that 5,000 copies were issued.

A typographical error on page 260, line 19 "dopped in" for "dropped in," is sometimes cited as a point to determine the earliest state of the sheets of the first printing. However, this error continues into later printings of the first edition and so is of no significance whatever.

The dust wrapper for *The Dain Curse* is the rarest of the five novels, especially in fine condition.

[illegible]

First Edition: New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1930. Grey cloth, front cover printed with blue ornament (of a stylized falcon) and black ruled border, spine printed with blue and black, rear cover printed with black publisher's logo. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

[illegible]

	with d/w	*without d/w*
[illegible]	$ 750.00	$ 50.00
[illegible]	2,500.00	300.00
Very fine	4,000.00	500.00

Note: Not the rarest of the five Hammett novels, but certainly the most desired. Extreme care should be exercised if a copy in dust wrapper is offered. The earliest dust wrapper, as far as can be determined after exhaustive research, should be as follows: (a) front flap: after the price, title, and author's name, there should be a single-paragraph blurb about the book, beginning *Sam Spade is...* and concluding *...the water's edge.* This should be followed by a six-line quotation by Joseph Shaw; (b) rear flap: should contain nothing except a biography of Hammett; (c) back panel: below Hammett's name, there are two quotes each about *Red Harvest* and *The Dain Curse*, followed by the publisher's imprint; (d) the front cover panel and spine are identical on all copies of all printings of the original Knopf edition.

Later dust jackets give themselves away by printing numerous reviews of *The Maltese Falcon*.

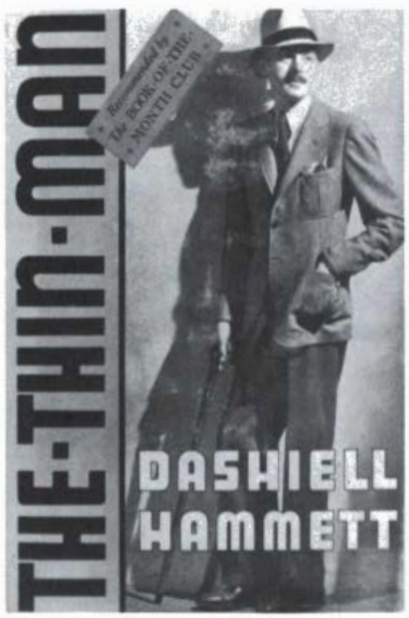
An important edition of *The Maltese Falcon* was published in 1934 by The Modern Library, in which Hammett writes briefly but interestingly of the prototypes for the several notorious leading characters in the most famous American detective novel. The first

ModernLibraryedition waspublished inblue cloth, stamped with the logo in gold on the frontcover,gold lettering on the spine,with therearcoverblank. It wasissued in a green, white, and black dust wrapper. The first printing ofthis edition, and the first printing of the introduction, is so noted on the copyright page; there were numeroussubsequent editions which lackthis notice on the copyright page. A fine first edition in dust wrapper shouldretailfor approximately $100

A comic book version of *The Maltese Falcon* was published in 1946 by King Features

The Maltese Falcon was selected for the Haycraft-QueenCornerstone Librarylist.

A slightly variant version of *The Maltese Falcon* was published in five issues of *The Black Mask* (seeabove).



TheGlassKey

FirstEdition: London, Alfred A. Knopf, 1931. Blue cloth, front cover printed with a white ornament (of a key), spine printed in red and white, rear cover printed with red publisher's logo. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper

First American Edition: New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1931. Palegreencloth, frontcover printed with dark green ornament (of a broken key) and a red ruled border, spine printed in red and dark green, rear cover printed with dark green publisher's logo Issued in a photographicdust wrapper.

Estimated retailvalue:		
FirstEdition		
Good	$1,000.00	
Fine	2,250.00	
Very fine		
First U.S. Edition		
Good	$ 400.00	$ 40.00
Fine	1,500.00	150.00
Veryfine	2,250.00	200.00

Note: Obviously, the first British edition precedes the first American edition. The Britishedition was published on January20, 1931; thefirst U.S. editionwasnot published untilApril 24, 1931.

While it is by no means common, reasonablyattractive collector's copies of *The Glass Key* appear to be less scarce than the other four novels.

Copies of the first British edition sheets have been seen with the imprint of Cassell's on the binding; no Cassell's dust wrappers havebeenreported, though it is possiblethat theyexist

Laterprintingsofthefirst Americanedition areso noted on the copyright page. Copiesof the second printing state: *First and second printings before publication.* (The third printing bears the appropriate information aboutits pre-publicationstatus.)This isof no consequence to the collector, who should view all such copies as precisely what they acknowledge themselves to be: reprints. Do not be misled by statements suggestingthat these volumes have any substantial value; theydonot.

The Glass Key was previously published in a slightly different form in four issues of *The BlackMask* magazine(seeabove)

Oftencitedas Hammett's finestnovel, *The Glass Key* was selected for the Haycraft-QueenCornerstoneLibrarylist.

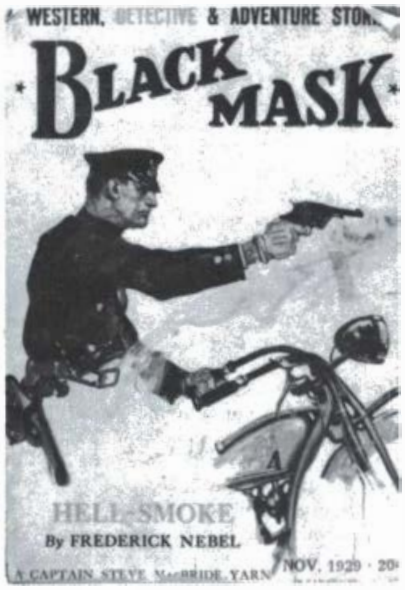
[illegible]

FirstEdition: NewYork,AlfredA. Knopf, 1934. Green cloth, front cover printed with blue ornament (of a mask) and a red ruled border, spineprinted with redand blue, rear cover printed with red publisher's logo Issued ina pictorialdustwrapper.

Estimated retailvalue:	*withd/w*	*withoutd/w*
Good	$ 250.00	$ 20.00
Fine	800.00	75.00
Veryfine	2,000.00	150.00

Note: PublishedJanuary 8, 1934. Thefirst printing issostatedonthe copyrightpage.

The major problem with this book is apparently the dye used to color the cloth. Though it is customary to describe the badly discolored cloth of this book as "faded," it seems that even copies that have been well preserved and carefullyhandled through the yearsalmostinvariably turn up with washed-out spines and unattractive splotches on the rest of the cover. Sun, the usual culprit in the fading of cloth covers, does not appear to havebeen a necessaryingredient in the ruin of most copies. Therefore, even though *The Thin Man* is by far the most common of Hammett's novels in first edition, and the most common in dust jacket, it is virtually unobtainable in a fine, *unfaded* cloth. Even crisp copies in bright dust jackets nearly always have splotchy cloth beneath. This characteristicseemed to be universal until a recent discovery revealed a copy with no discoloration which, while not inexplicable, creates an atmosphere ofdoubt: to wit—can



all examined copies of *The Thin Man,* save one, have been subjected tosufficient sunlight [illegible] discolor[illegible]n, even if the bookhasbeen protected in a bright, unfaded dust wrapper? If that is unlikely (as it surely is), a more reasonable explanation for the common flaw is that the cloth dye had a weakness that caused a process of oxidation or other chemical reaction resulting in discoloration—which suggests the impossibility of any copies escaping from this process unscathed. Sincethisisnotthe case,however, the problem awaitsa definitive explanation.

There is a wide variety of dust wrappers for *The Thin Man* which defies classification as to priority

There are two variant colors of the background next to the photograph of Hammett oneis green, the otherred. Thegreen is more often seen, but no priority has been established. Some copies—*of both colors,* it is significant to note—have a red sticker at a diagonal near the top of the front panel, slightly to the left of the center, announcing

that the Book-of-the-Month Club recommends it. The speculation is that these are later than copies without the sticker, it having beenadded by the publisher either as an afterthought or because the Book-of-the-Month Club had not yet recommended it when the jackets were being printed. An immediate and effective counter-argument is thatcopies of laterprintingsofthe book have been noted on which the sticker does not appear. The appearance of the sticker, then, is of no significance in determining priority. It isals oof littleoverallimportance

The front flap has been seen in two variants, again with no priority established Onestate has two long paragraphs aboutthe book. The first paragraph begins: *This tells the story...* and concludes with. . *of drinking.* The second paragraph begins: *The Thin Manis...* andconcludeswith: *...power of arealist.* A third paragraph, in italictype to match the red or greencolor of the front and spine of the dust jacket, informs potential buyers that thebook will not appear in a cheaper edition before 19.35.This paragraph appearson *all* copies of the first editiondust jacket. The other state (and again, to emphasize the point, there is no priority known) eliminated the second paragraph of text to make room for three quotations about the book from Alexander Woollcott, Sinclair Lewis, aind Jascha Heifetz. Copies of both states haive been seen both in red and in green.

The Thin Man was first published in *Redbook* magazine(December 1933)and was later published in *Six Redbook Novels* (February orMarch 1934).

There was a second printing of *The Thin Man* before publication, but it should be regarded bycollectors as nothingmore than a secondprinting;ithasno substantialvalue.

A typographical error is often cited as an issue point: on page 209, line 17, "seep" appears instead of "sleep." This error persisted through the first five printings of the book (all so noted on their copyright pages) and thus is of no significance whatever in determiningpriorityof copies.

Secret Agent X-9

First Edition: Philadelphia,DavidMcKay, (1934). Flexible pictorial boards, rear cover repeating the illustration on the frontcover, red cloth spine, blank. No dust wrapper issued.

Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 100.00
[illegible]	600 00
Veryfine	1,000.00

Note: Published July 21, 1934. A collection of the newspaper strips written by Hammett and illustrated by Alex Raymond for King Features.

Secret Agent X-9 Book Two

FirstEdition: Philadelphia, David McKay, (1934). Flexible pictorial boards, rear cover repeating the illustration on the frontcover, blue cloth spine, blank. No dust wrapper issued

Estimated retailvalue:

Good	$ 75.00
Fine	500.00
Veryfine	800.00

Note: Published later in 1934 (exact date unknown). A further collection of the Hammett/Raymond comicstripseries.

In 1976, Nostalgia Press published the complete contents of Book One and Book Two, plus additional historical and critical material, as wellasadditionalcomicstrips, in large-format oblong wrappers. A fine copy should fetch $20today.

In 1983, International Polygonics, Ltd. publishedanothercompilationofthematerial from the twooriginal volumes, plus diffierent adventures from the Nostalgia Pressedition, with a new introduction by William F. Nolan. It isin printat$9.95.

$106,000 Blood Money

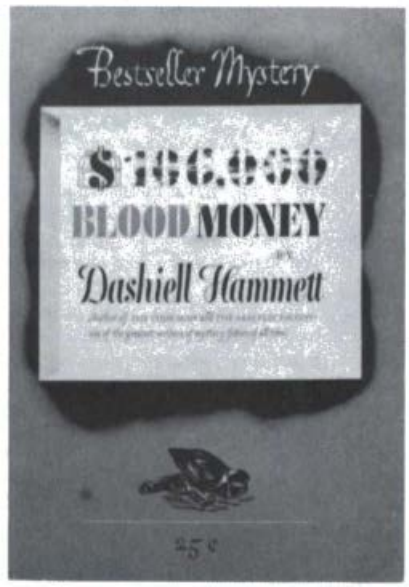
First Edition: (New York), Lawrence E. Spivak, (1943). Orange wrappers, printed in black and white.

retailvalue:

Good	$ 25.00
Fine	85.00
Very fine	125.00

Note: Published June 15, 1943, in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 25¢. The next nine books are short-story collections in [illegible]lar for[illegible]a

Copies of these paper first editions will occasionally turn up in large lots of magazinesorwithother, virtuallyworthless, paperback books. With enough time and energy, access to frequent large groups of paperbacks and magazines, andsome good luck, it is still possible to find these valuable books for a dime or a quarter. It is also possible to win [illegible]lott[illegible]



The Adventuresof SamSpadeand Other Stories

First Edition: (New York), Lawrence E Spivak, (1944). Brown wrappers, printed in black and white.

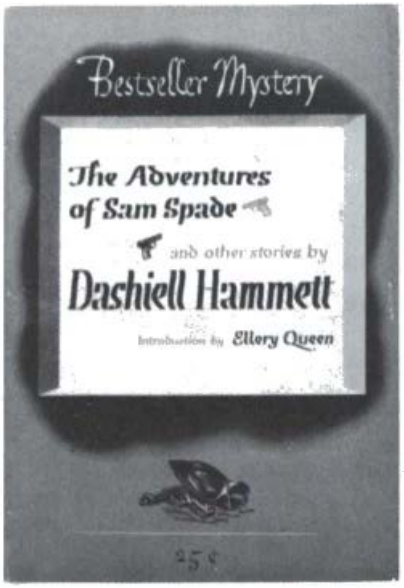
Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 25.00
Fine	85.00
Very fine	[illegible]

Note: Published April 14, 1944, in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 25¢. Ellery Queen introduced the collection.

The Adventures of Sam Spade was selected for the Haycraft-Queen Cornerstone Library list and for *Queen's Quorum,* Ellery Queen's selections for the list of 106 best short-story collections ever published in the mystery genre.

The second printing was retitled *They Can Only Hang You Once* and has little value as a collector's item.



The Continental Op

First Edition: (New York), Lawrence E. Spivak, (1945) Blue wrappers printed in black and white

Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 20.00
Fine	75.00
Very fine	100.00

Note: Published April 13, 1945, in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 25¢. BEWARE! A later printing with identical contents was issued in green wrappers, printed in black, white, red, and blue at 35¢. This has no significant value.

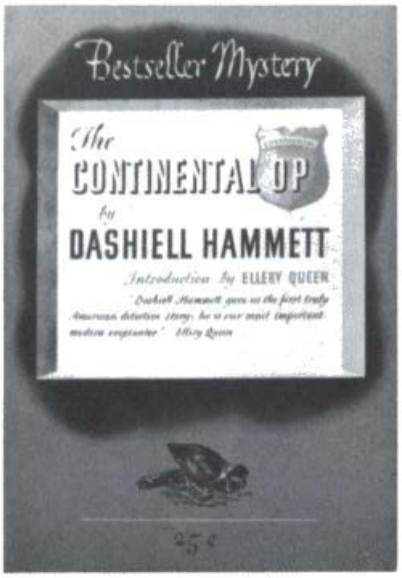
The Return of the Continental Op

First Edition: (New York), Lawrence E Spivak, (1945). Red wrappers, printed in white, black, and blue.

Estimated retail value:

Good	[illegible]
Fine	[illegible]
Very fine	[illegible]

Note: Published July 6, 1945 in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 25¢



Hammett Homicides

First Edition: (New York), Lawrence E. Spivak, (1946). Green wrappers, printed in black and white.

Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 20.00
Fine	75.00
Very fine	100.00

Note: Published December 20, 1946, in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 25¢.

[illegible]

First Edition: (New York), Lawrence E. Spivak, (1947). Green wrappers, printed in white, black, red, blue, and brown

Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 20.00
Fine	75.00
Very fine	[illegible]

Note: Published July 22, 1947, in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 25¢. BEWARE! A later printing, unrecorded by Layman in his bibliography, was published in identical format, but has a 35¢ price on the front cover. Although nothing else has been changed, this issue has little value.

Nightmare Town

First Edition: New York, The American Mercury, (1948). Brown wrappers, printed in white, black, and blue

Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 20.00
Fine	75.00
Very fine	[illegible]

Note: Published February 10, 1948, in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 25¢

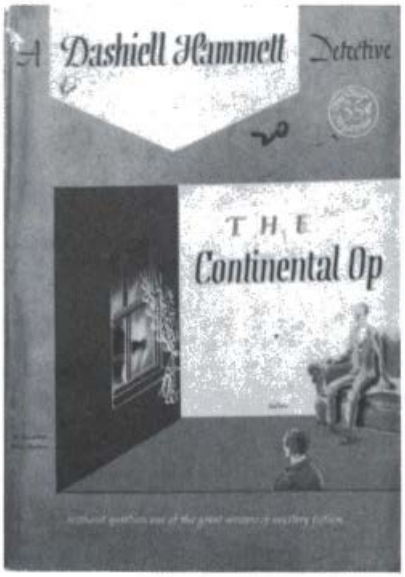
The Creeping Siamese

First Edition: (New York), Lawrence E Spivak, (1950). Red wrappers, printed in white, black, blue, yellow, brown, green, and grey.

Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 20.00
Fine	75.00
Very fine	100.00

Note: Published August 28, 1950, in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 35¢



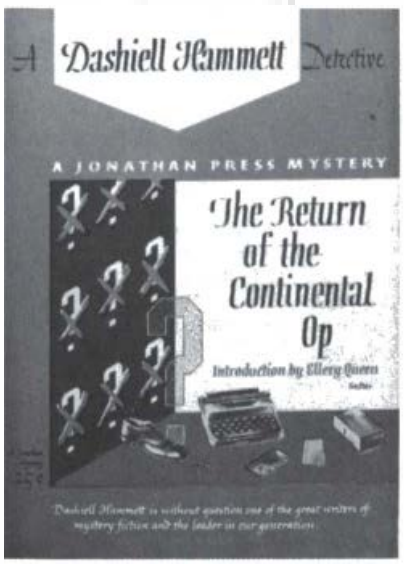
Woman in the Dark

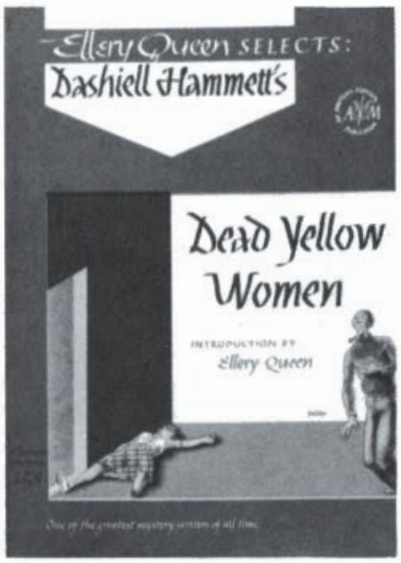
First Edition: (New York), Lawrence E. Spivak, (1951). Blue wrappers, printed in white, black, yellow, and green

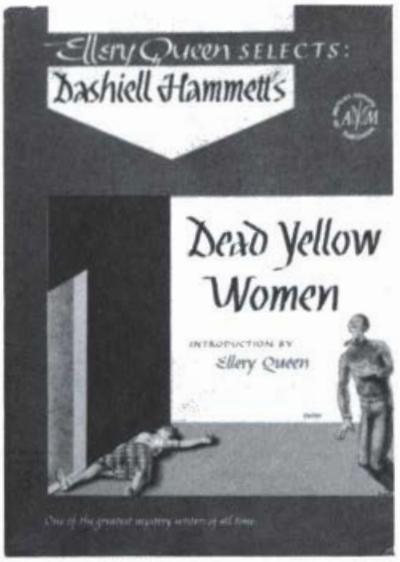
Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 20.00
Fine	75.00
Very fine	100.00

Note: Published June 25, 1951, in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 35¢







A Man Named Thin and Other Stories

First Edition: (New York), Joseph W Ferman, (1962). Blue wrappers, printed in white, black, green, and yellow.

Estimated retail value:	
Good	
Fine	
Very fine	

Note: Published January 19, 1962, in a digest magazine-sized paperback at 50¢

The Big Knockover

First Edition: New York, Random House, (1966). Black cloth, front cover blind-stamped, spine stamped in gilt, rear cover blank. Issued in a green pictorial dust

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$10.00	$ 5.00
Fine		7.50
Very fine		

Note: Published June 1, 1966. These short novels and short stories were selected by Lillian Hellman, who wrote an introduction for this volume. Only "Tulip" has its first book publication in this volume; all other stories had been previously collected.

Book Reviews Which Appeared in The Saturday Review of Literature

First Edition: Portage, Indiana, (Privately printed), 1969. Brown cloth, front and rear covers black, spine lettered in gold.

	$ 75.00
Fine	200.00
Very fine	300.00

Note: Issued without a dust wrapper. A rare book, printed as an exercise without permission. The size of the printing is not known, but is certainly less than 30 copies.

The Diamond Wager

First Edition: Portage, Indiana, (Privately printed), 1977. Unbound sheets

Note: Very rare, printed as an exercise without permission. The size of the printing is not known, but it is certainly less than 10 copies. A story published under the pseudonym Samuel Dashiell for *Detective Fiction Weekly*, October 19, 1929, this is the first subsequent printing

First Edition: Sherman Oaks, California, (Privately printed, 1980). Natural buckram, front and rear covers partially clear plastic, spine lettered in black.

Estimated retail value:	
Very fine	$100.00

Note: A miniature volume reprinting "The Crusader," which had previously appeared in *The Smart Set* magazine for August 1923 under the pseudonym "Mary Jane Hammett," this volume was printed as an exercise by Elmore Mundell (also the printer of the two previous volumes) with woodcuts by the artist. The edition was limited to 85 numbered copies and five artist's proofs, issued in December 1980. All copies are slipcased Since almost all copies found their way into collectors' hands, virtually all are as new and should not be accepted in lesser condition.

Other Books

While the above represent the most important first editions of Dashiell Hammett, many other books are also worthy of consideration if comprehensiveness is desired Significant books are noted below. (ERV = Estimated Retail Value of *fine* copies with dust wrappers where called for.)

1931 *Creeps by Night.* Selected and introduced by Dashiell Hammett. New York, John Day. Contains the first appearances of Hammett's introduction to these horror stories. (ERV: $200)

1932 *The Best American Mystery Stories of the Year.* Selected and introduced by Carolyn Wells. New York, John Day Contains the first book appearance of "The Farewell Murder." (ERV: $125)

1932 *The Best American Mystery Stories of the Year. Volume Two.* Selected and introduced by Carolyn Wells. New York, John Day. Contains the first book appearance of "Death and Company." (ERV: $125)

1934 *The Smart Set Anthology.* Edited by Burton Rascoe and Groff Conklin. New York, Reynal & Hitchcock. Contains the first book appearances of "From the Memoirs of a Private Detective" and "Green Elephant." (ERV: $50)

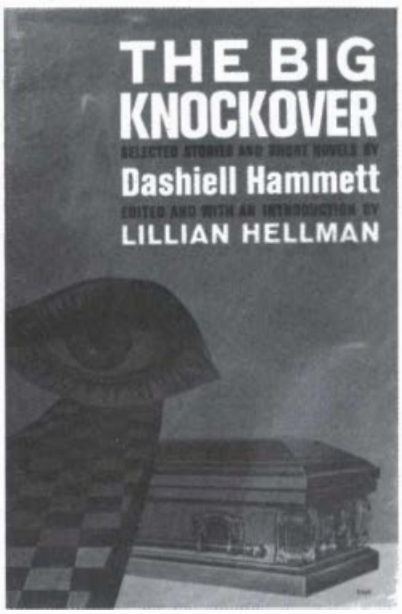
1936 *Good Stories.* Edited by Frank Luther Mott. New York, Macmillan. Contains the first book appearance of "A Man Called Spade." (ERV: $50)

1938 *Writers Take Sides—Letters About the War in Spain from 418 American Authors.* New York, The League of [illegible] by Hammett. (ERV: $35)

1940 *Fighting Words.* Edited by Donald Ogden Stewart. New York, Harcourt Brace. Contains a Hammett speech. No mystery content. (ERV: $35)

1944 *Best Stories from Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.* Selected by Ellery Queen. New York, The Detective Book Club. Contains the first book appearance of "Fly Paper." (ERV: $35)

1945 *Rogue's Gallery—The Great Criminals of Modern Fiction.* Edited by Ellery Queen. Boston, Little, Brown. Contains



the first book appearance of "Ruffian's Wife." (ERV: $75)

1945 *Wind Blown and Dripping—A Book of Aleutian Cartoons.* By Cpl. Bernard Anastasia, Pfc. Oliver Pedigo, and Pfc. Don L. Miller. Alaska, privately printed Contains a three-page introduction by Hammett. Issued in wrappers. No mysterycontent. (ERV: $100)

1945 *Best Film Plays of 1943-1944.* Edited by John Gassner and Dudley Nichols. New York, Crown. Contains the first publication of *Watch on the Rhine.* No mystery content. (ERV: $40)

1945 *The Avon Annual 18 Great Modern Stories.* New York, Avon. Containsthe first book appearance of "To a Sharp Knife" (originally published as "Two Sharp Knives"). Issued in wrappers (ERV: $20)

1946 *The Art of the Mystery Story.* Edited with a commentary by Howard Haycraft. New York, Simon & Schuster. Contains the first book appearance of "The Benson Murder Case," Hammett's review of the S. S. Van Dine novel, originally published in the January 15, 1927, issue of *The Saturday Review of Literature* as "Poor Scotland Yard" (ERV: $50)

1948 *Twentieth Century Detective Stories* Edited by Ellery Queen. Cleveland and New York, World. Contains the first book appearance of "Tom, Dick, or Harry." (ERV: $25)

1950 *The Communist Trial—An American Crossroads* by George Marion. New York, Fairplay. Contains an introduction by Hammett.

Note: The introduction does not appear in the first edition; it was first published in the *second* edition. No mysterycontent. (ERV: $25)

1953 (Proceedings of the Senate Hearing) Washington, D.C., United States Government Printing Office. The proceedings of March 24, 25 and 26 contain Hammett's testimony before the PermanentSubcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations, U.S. Senate, 83rd Congress. No mysterycontent. (ERV: $25)

1961 *The Boys in the Black Mask—An Exhibit in the UCLA Library.* (Los Angeles, California, privately printed for the UCLA Library). Contains a note on the first version of *The Thin Man.* Issued in wrappers. (ERV: $35)

1961 *Ellery Queen's 16th Mystery Annual.* New York, Random House. Contains the first book appearance of "A Man NamedThin." (ERV: $15)

1967 *Writers at Work—The Paris Review Interviews, ThirdSeries.* Introduced by Alfred Kazan. New York, Viking. Contains a pageof Hellman's *TheLittle Foxes* with Hammett's annotations. No mysterycontent. (ERV: $20)

1969 *An Unfinished Woman—A Memoir* by LillianHellman. Boston, Little, Brown. Contains numerous quotations by Hammettthroughout. (ERV: $15)

1972 *LillianHellman, Playwright* by Richard Moody. New York, Pegasus/Bobbs-Merrill. Contains numerous quotations by Hammett throughout. No mystery content. (ERV: $15)

1972 *TheMystery & DetectionAnnual.* Edited by Donald Adams. Beverly Hills, California, (privatelyprintedfortheeditor). Contains numerous quotations from the first version of *The Thin Man.* (ERV: $25)

1973 *Pentimento* byLillian Hellman. Boston, Little, Brown.Containsnumerousquotations by Hammett throughout. (ERV: $15)

1977 *The Hard-Boiled Detective Stories from BlackMask Magazine (1920-1951).* Edited with an introduction by Herbert Ruhm. New York, Vintage/Random House. Issued in wrappers. Contains the first book appearance of "TheRoad Home." (ERV: $5) □

CLASSIC CORNER
Rare Tales From The Archives

The Spell of

By Dick Donovan

Of the many turn-of-the-century authors who might be described as prolific—and it was not a time in which writers felt constrained to stint on verbiage—few were appreciably busier than Joyce Emmerson Preston Muddock (1843-1934), better known as Dick Donovan. In addition to numerous novels (two under his own name, as well as dozens under the more famous pseudonym), Donovan wrote hundreds of short stories, mainly in the mystery genre, but tales of the macabre and supernatural appeared under both names with alarming regularity as well. One of the collections, *The Man-Hunter* (1888), was selected for *Queen's Quorum* as one of the 106 best short-story collections ever published.

"The Spell of the Black Siren" appeared in *The Records of Vincent Trill of the Detective Service*, first published in London by Chatto & Windus in 1899. There is little to distinguish this story from the others in the volume, just as there is little to distinguish Vincent Trill from Michael Danevitch, Tyler Tatlock, Fabian Field, or the many other series characters invented by Donovan. None of them is memborable, nor do they seem to enjoy any remarkable faculties, eccentricities, or physical attributes that might give them an edge on the local constabulary. Mainly, they are reported as "discovering a single vital piece of evidence" which Scotland Yard had overlooked, such as that the victim was a dwarf, or that a room had been painted entirely in a brilliant shade of magenta.

While the stories of Dick Donovan were written as tales of detection, there is less exceptional observation and consequent deduction than might be hoped. Still, most of the adventures of the various Donovan heroes have a pleasant tone and readability that makes them worthy of some attention today.

—Otto Penzler

the Black Siren

It was towards the end of spring, some years ago, when Trill was suddenly called upon to investigate a case which had in it all the elements of a startling romance. The gentleman whose name figured so prominently in the story was very well known in London society, and was regarded as one of the brilliant band of young men whom the late Earl of Beaconsfield — then plain Mr. Disraeli — spoke of as "the coming moulders of England's destiny." This prediction has been somewhat falsified, although one or two of the band have certainly distinguished themselves

At the period that the events I am about to relate occurred, the Hon. Richard Shaw Fenton was a confidential clerk in the War Office, where he was looked upon with very great favour by his superiors. He was the son of Lord Jeffrey Fenton, who so greatly distinguished himself during the Crimean War, and was honoured by being presented with the freedom of his native town and a jewelledsword subscribed for by his fellow townsmen

Young Fenton was a handsome man, endowed apparently with almost all those qualities which are calculated to endear men to men, and beget the love and admiration of women. He was unmarried, and consequently he was in much request by designing mammas; for although he had little to look forward to apart from his own efforts, it was confidently anticipated that he would rise to high position, as he had powerful friends at court. And this advantage, backed up by his own abilities and ambition, could not fail — so people said — to ultimately give him power andwealth

One evening, about nine o'clock, he left the War Office in a hansom, bearing some very important documents, which he was charged to deliver personally to a distinguished General temporarily residing at Hyde Park Gate, where he was confined to his room by a severe attack of gout. It was during a period of excitement caused by strained relations between Great Britain and France. A territorial difficulty had arisen between the two countries, and there had been such a conflict of opinion that matters had reached an acute stage, and in both countries the shameless catchpenny representatives of the press had indulged in threats and recriminations, and had openly talked ofwar. There had been an unusual number of "Meetings of the Cabinet." The air was thick with rumours. The public mind was in that supersensitive condition when definiteness would have been hailed with joy as a relieffrom vagueness and suspense The ignorant oracles of the halfpenny evening rags had produced a morbid tension of the nerves amongst the unthinking classes, and sensational innuendo had lost its effect. A real sensation was needed; a something that would divert attention for the moment from the one burning topic of conversation— the topic which had completely overshadowed that ever-fruitful one of the weather. People talked of war instead of the weather. Even the barber who shaved you forgot his stock theme, and questioned his victim as to what he thought the issue of it all would be

The sensation so much needed came at last. In the early light of the spring morning, a policeman pacing his weary rounds in the neighbourhood of Sloane Square noticed a hansom cab drawn up by the railings of the square. The horse, probably thinking he was on his

accustomed rank, stood limp-legged and with drooped head. The reins were hanging loosely on his back. The driver was on his perch, but the upper half of his body was prone on the roof of the cab. Inside was a fare, a gentleman, well dressed, but with shirt front crumpled, his neckgear disarranged, and his highly polished hat lying at his feet. Like the driver he seemed sunk in profound slumber, and all the efforts of the policeman failed to produce the slightest arousing effect on either of them. Indeed it suddenly dawned upon the policeman, with the suddenness of a shock, that both men were dead. So he summoned aid, and the cab and its burden were taken to the nearest police station. There the two insensible men were hauled out, and for once the police inspector on duty proved that all members of the force do not hastily jump to the conclusion that because a man is speechless and helpless he is necessarily drunk, for he secured the assistance without loss of time of the divisional police surgeon. When that gentleman arrived, he pronounced the cab-driver *in extremis,* and that pronouncement was soon verified, for a ghastly pallorspread itself over his face and his heartceased to beat. The fare still breathed stertorously, and vigorous means were taken to restore animation. Visiting cards which he had on his person proved that he was no other than the Hon. Richard Shaw Fenton of the War Office.

After about an hour's treatment the patient was so far reanimated that his removal with all speed to the hospital was decided on, and an ambulance having been secured, he was conveyed to St. George's Hospital, and a messengerwas despatched to inform his friends.

Now here at once was a first-class mystery, but, as was subsequently proved, it was only the beginning. For the succeeding two or three days Fenton lay in a half-dazed state, and was incapable of answering rationally the questions put to him; but one thing—and a very important thing, too—was brought to light. The documents he was conveying from the War Office to the General had not reached the person to whom they were addressed; they had disappeared, and Mr. Fenton could give no information about them. His mind seemed a perfect blank

The post-mortem examination, which was perforce made, of the remains of the unfortunate cabman, revealed the fact that he had fallen a victim to some powerful drug, which had acted as a heart-depressant, and his heart being constitutionally weak, he had succumbed. In Fenton's case his heart had managed to struggle against the effects of the drug, but it had been left in such a highly nervous and irritable state that it was considered advisable to keep him in a condition of absolute rest

In the meantime Vincent Trill had been set to work. The missing documents were precious—indeed, of such vital importance that his instructions were that he must recover them, if possible, at allcost.

As may be supposed, there was a great deal more beneath the surface than appeared. The prying and inquisitive reporter got hold of the broad facts as given above, but he could get no more, for the friends of the Hon. Richard Shaw Fenton, and the authorities alike were desirous of hushing the matter up, for obvious reasons; so the reporter, with the monumental impudence for which he is famed, invented a highly plausible story one day, to contradict it and invent another the next.

In order to supply the necessary evidence at the adjourned inquest the viscera of the cabman had been subjected to analysis, and the report that was finally brought up was to the effect that the man had died from the administration of a very powerful narcotic, but what it was could not be determined. Mr. Fenton, who had so far recovered as to be able to give evidence at the adjourned inquest, stated that he hired the cab in Pall Mall; that on his way to Hyde Park he called at an hotel, where he met two friends, with whom he remained in conversation for nearly an hour. That previous to leaving the hotel he ordered some whisky and soda to be given to the cabman. He then got into the cab, and was driven off, and remembered nothingmore

This remarkable story was promptly investigated. It was proved to be true. The hotel was a highly respectable house. The two friends mentioned were well-known gentlemen, who swore

that when Fenton left there was nothing whatever the matter with him; while the landlord of the house indignantly disputedthe insinuation that the fatal drug had been administered at his house either wilfully or inadvertently. Trill's most searching investigation failed to disprove thisassertion, soan open verdictwas returned, and themystery was as great a mystery as ever It may be as well to state here at once that Vincent Trill came to the conclusion that for some terrible reason the Hon. Richard Shaw Fenton had lied, and, for reasons of his own, was concealingsomething which might have thrown light on the affair. It was only too evident that the drugging was done after the hotel was left; but as Fenton persisted in his statement, and nothing else could be dragged from him, there was no other course left but to endeavour to solve the mystery by such means as the clever detective was capable of commanding. There werethree things that suggested thernselves to Trill

Firstly, Fenton had called somewhere else after leaving the hotel

Secondly, it was known that he was the bearer of very important papers.

Thirdly, he had been drugged in order that thepapers might be stolen

This reasoning, however, although it seemed logical enough, did not suggest a rational theory as to why the cabman should have been drugged too. At least, at first it did not; but on pondering on the subject, it gradually dawned upon Trill that whoever had administered the drug intended that it should (and hoped that it would) prove fatal in each case, so that the mystery would remain a mystery for ever. It was very obvious that Mr. Fenton had strong reasons for concealing the truth, and that seemed to suggest—to Trill, at any rate, it did—that he had been where he ought not to have been, and the attraction that had drawn him there was, in all probability, a woman. That woman held the key to the problem, and unless she could be found the problem would go unsolved

It has been stated that Fenton was a bachelor, and in much request at houses where there were marriageable daughters, and was very well known to a large number of ladies moving in good society in London. He occupied apartments in St. James's Street, and was regarded as a very reserved and secretive man, by no means given to making confidants. Although all Fenton's friends believed, or professed to believe, that no blame was attachable to him, the authorities took another view; and as the loss of the papers was not only a very serious thing in itselfbut proved that Fenton was not reliable, Trill did not abandon his quest

When Fenton left the hospital he was still unwell, and remained so for some time, during which he kept to his rooms, and received no visitors save his most intimate friends. But three weeks after leaving the hospital he had so far recovered his health and spirits as to accept an invitation to be the guest of a lady of fashion who resided near Haslemere. This lady—a Mrs Gerald Vandelour—was very wealthy. She was, or was supposed to be, the widow of a military officer; but those who partook of her hospitality—which was very lavish—did not allow any vagueness or uncertainty as to her past to stand as a barrier between them and her entertainments. Her house was a magnificent one; she kept quite an army of servants, and lived in a style that suggested thatmoney was no object

When Fenton arrived he found a large number of guests already assembled. On the following day there was to be a garden *fête* on a magnificent scale, and a huge marquee was in process of erection on the extensive lawn. Mrs. Gerald Vandelour was a very showy and seductive-looking woman, with a mass of fluffy hair, and a pink and white complexion—due in a large measure to art—and a figure that inclined to stoutness; but, nevertheless, she was graceful withal and lithe. She was particularly attentive to Fenton: indeed, she seemed to patronise him, took him under her wing, and treated him much as if he had been a great boy

Amongst the guests was a singularly striking woman: a woman so dark that she might have passed for a Spanish gipsy. She had raven-black hair, intensely dark flashing eyes, an imperious bearing, and a commanding, haughty manner. She was a woman of marvellous beauty, and yet there was something—a something that was absolutely indescribable—about her that repelledratherthan attracted. In age she was under thirty-five, but might have passed

for thirty. She was known as "Madame Revel "

Fenton looked ill, haggard, and worn; and whenever Madame was near it seemed as if he tried to avoid her. And yet, when opportunity offered, she courted his society: she smiled on him sweetly, her white teeth gleamed, and her dark flashing eyes peered into his until his drooped and he turned from her

The *fête* was a brilliant affair. Beauty and youth were strongly in evidence. Light, flowers, music, sweet scents, laughter, gaiety made it difficult to imagine that there was a heavy heart amongst that brilliant throng, or sorrow and suffering anywhere. It was a languid night. The air was heavy; the stars shone through a haze; a crescent moon sailed dreamily amongst filmy clouds. At eleven o'clock dancing and music ceased, in order that the guests might partake of supper in the great marquee, where an army of waiters were ready to minister to the wants of the (apparently) light-hearted people. But when the guests took their seats two persons were absent. They were Madame Revel and Fenton. A waiter was also absent—a mooning, clumsy sort of fellow, who had been rated several times during the evening for his stupidity. He was known as John Stokes, and when the supper was in full swing John Stokes was nowhere to be found. Not that it mattered very much, for there were plenty of attendants without him; but still, he ought to have done his duty. Instead of that he was lying at full length in the shadow of some beech trees in a secluded part of the grounds. But he wasn't asleep: oh, dear, no! With senses keenly alert, with eyes and ear strained, he was witnessing a scene as weird, as startling and dramatic as even the most vivid imagination could conceive.

The night was not dark. The crescent moon and the stars shed a dreamy light over the scene. The trees were sharply outlined, and looked ghostly and grim. The light breeze that stirred the foliage somehow sounded like a human moan of pain; and the laughter and conversation of the revellers—subdued by distance—only seemed to accentuate the silence of the night that brooded like a spell of enchantment over the landscape. From his concealment in the shadow of the beeches, Stokes, the waiter, gazed on a lawn, in the centre of which was a very fine statue, by Canova, of Apollo stringing a lyre. Against the pedestal of the statue was a rustic seat, and two persons occupied it. They were the wonderfully handsome Madame Revel—who might have been the spirit of the scene, the goddess of night—and the Hon. Richard Shaw Fenton

At such a time and under such circumstances, it might have been supposed that the man had led the lady to the seclusion, away from the fret of the throng, that he might pour into her ears an impassioned tale such as a man tells when he has fallen a prey to beauty's charms; but so far from this being the case Fenton had given evidence of being ill at ease

The conversation between the twain was carried on in low tones, so that the strained ears of Stokes could catch no portion of it, but his keen vigilant eyes saw signs that even a fool would have found no difficulty in interpreting. At times Fenton would start up as if he intended to break from his companion; but then would she stretch forth a white jewelled hand which touched his and caused him to sink into the seat again. Two or three times he covered his face with his hands and sighed; and once while in this attitude the word "Never, never!" repeated twice floated to the ears of the listener. It was like the soul-wrung exclamation from one who was suffering unbearable torture of mind. Almost immediately after he sprang to his feet as if under the influence of some stern resolution; but once more Madame stretched forth her hand, though this time she did not touch him. She made strange and mystic passes in the air, and as if she had put forth some subtle magic he stood motionless for a few moments, and then sank back like one whose volition had gone. She passed her hand over his head and down his face twice. He shuddered as if convulsed, but otherwise remained motionless and statue-like. The charmer then drew from her pocket a little book, and with a gold pencil began to write down something that he was saying

This strange scene lasted for about ten minutes. Then Madame rose and departed silently, save for the rustle of her silken skirts. For some time the man sat in a heap and

motionless. He might have been frozen into the stony stillness of death; but at last the influence of the spell passed, and with another convulsive shudder and a muffled cry he fell on his face on the sward. Stokes emerged from his hiding-place, and kneeling down examined him, and as he seemed to be in a faint, Stokes hurried away, and procuring brandy returned to find Fenton partly revived and sitting up.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the man; "but I found you lying here, and thinking you were ill I hurried for some brandy. Here it is."

"Thank you, thank you," answered Fenton, and seizing the glass with a nervous clutch he tossed the potent liquid down his throat. His face was of a ghastly pallor; but the moon rays falling on his eyes filled them with a strange, unnatural, unearthly light. He staggered to his feet and, pressing both his hands to his temples, murmured: "God bless my life! How strange! how strange! Yes, I've been ill; I must have fainted. There, thank you, that will do! I am obliged for your attention. Please leave me; I wish to be alone."

The waiter bowed and withdrew, but not far; and, still watching, he beheld Fenton sink into the seat once more and bury his face in his hands, though he did not maintain this attitude long, but, rising suddenly, he rejoined the company, where Madame Revel was the centre of an admiring group of friends. The hostess caught sight of him, and hurrying to him exclaimed:

"O you truant! wherever have you been so?" Then running her eyes hurriedly over her guests, she added: "Now then, sir, confess! what pretty girl have you been flirting with?" But suddenly altering her tone from banter to alarm, she cried: "Why, man, how ill you look! Your face is ashen. What's the matter with you?"

"O nothing," he said, with a ghastly laugh; "nothing, I assure you. Well, that is, not being very strong yet, I think I must have been overcome by the heat of the evening and—and fainted; well, I fancy so, for there is a blank I can't fill in."

"Poor boy! poor boy!" murmured the hostess sympathetically. "Come with me now, and I will give you some champagne cup—it will revive you;" and, taking his arm, she led him into the marquee, as the band was beginning the strains of a strange and dreamy waltz.

The following morning Stokes, the waiter, was summarily discharged as an "incompetent, clumsy, and lazy fellow." Fenton remained under the roof of his hostess for three or four days, for he was ill and she had to nurse him. In the meantime, Madame Revel had taken her departure, and returned to her town house in Sloane Street. The morning after her return a gentleman called at her residence and sent in his card, which bore the name "Adolphe Coppé," and in one corner of the card was this sign—***—that is, three stars. A few minutes later he was ushered into Madame Revel's presence. She received him in her boudoir, and stretched forth her white, delicate hand for him to touch. She was attired in an elegant and costly robe In her raven hair was a tiny red rose. She looked singularly handsome, and her white teeth gleamed as she smiled graciously on her visitor

"Your name is unknown to me," she remarked prettily, "but you are evidently one of us You belong to the Brotherhood of the Three Stars?"

"You will see I have the sign on my card," he answered evasively, though she did not seem to notice his evasion

"You have business of importance?" she asked, with a shade of anxiety shedding itself over her handsome features

"I have, madame. The president of the Brotherhood in Paris is pleased that you have succeeded in obtaining such valuable information from Mr. Fenton."

"Monsieur le Président has received the papers then?" she remarked quickly.

A strange and gratified expression came into her visitor's face as he answered: "It seems so."

"Ah! that is good," exclaimed the lady; "but I have done even better. Fenton and I were guests the other night at the house of a mutual friend at Haslemere, and I placed him under a spell and extracted from him valuable secrets, which I intend to convey to the president myself."

"Yourself?"

"Yes. I leave to-morrow evening by the Paris mail from Victoria "

"You are a wonderfully clever woman," said the guest. "You seem to have made good use of Fenton "

She smiled sarcastically as she answered: "Poor fool—yes. He is my tool, my slave. I have bent him to my will—twisted him round my finger. My power over him is tremendous "

Again the pleasedand gratifiedexpression spreaditselfoverCoppé's features

"Of that there is no doubt," he answered. "My object in calling on you was to say that your presence is earnestly desired in Paris; but you have already anticipated that by your resolve to leave to-morrow."

"O yes. I had determined on that," she answered

"Then I need not troubleyou further, and my mission ends "

In a little while Coppé took his departure, after some hospitality dispensed graciously by Madame.

The following evening the lady duly drove up to Victoria Station and was superintending the registration of her luggage when a hand was laid upon her shoulder, and a stern voice said:

"Madame Revel, I hold a warrant for your arrest."

She turnedquickly, her eyes flashing like an enraged tigress'

"A warrant for my arrest? What for?" she demanded haughtily

"Firstly, on suspicion of causing the death of William Pritchard, a cabman; and, secondly, forhaving stolen Government papers "

She staggered a little, as iffrom a shock, but quickly recovering, said with a sneer

"You are mistaken. This is infamous. You shall pay dearly for this insult "

"If I am mistaken, that is my affair, and I will accept the penalty; but I do not think I am mistaken. My name is Vincent Trill. I am a detective. As John Stokes, the waiter, I witnessed the scene on the lawn at Haslemere, when by your infamous designs and arts you deprived Fenton of his power of independentaction "

Madame looked very uneasy, and cast a momentary, nervous glance round about, as if contemplating some means of escape from the trap in which she had been so cleverly caught. But Trill again touched her, and indicating two men who stood beside him, he said:

"Theseare plain-clothespolicemen. You would like, perhaps, toavoid a scene "

She took the hint, merely remarking:

"I must yield to force; but, I repeat, you are mistaken."

Trill and one of his men accompanied her to a cab, while the other man was left behind to take charge of her luggage. Trill had made a clever capture of one of the most daring and dangerous of a band of notorious conspirators in the pay of the French Secret Service, whose ramifications extended to every capital of Europe. He had come to suspect Madame by having closely shadowed Fenton, and found that he was in the habit of regularly visiting the lady, with whom he had become madly infatuated. On the night that he was ordered to convey the papers to the house of the General at Hyde Park, there is no doubt he called at Madame Revel's house on his way in compliance with a note he had received from her. There he and the cabman were dosed with some subtle drug. The unfortunate cabman was included, presumably because it was deemed advisable that he and his fare might fall into the hands of the police as "drunk and incapable;" and in order to avoid a scandal, Fenton would necessarily have preserved silence as to his movements. In spite of Trill's cleverness, however, Madame Revel managed to checkmate him, but at a fearful cost. When she arrived at Bow Street it was found that she was suffering from illness, and before medical aid could be summoned she had lapsed into insensibility from which nothing could arouse her, and in four hours she had ceased to breathe. A daring and determined woman, she had played for high stakes, and finding herself on the losing side she had managed while in the cab to convey a deadly drug to her lips, and thus paid the penalty of her crimes with her life □

THE BIG SLEEP

BY ANNE PONDER

Until recently, critics have enjoyed *The Big Sleep* for the wrong reasons. Critics of Bogart films and of American studio films of the 1940s have pointed to *The Big Sleep* as a great detective film. Even critics of the American hardboiled detective formula have acknowledged *The Big Sleep* as a supreme example of the genre.[1] But there are two problems with treating *The Big Sleep* as a detective film. (1) *The Big Sleep* violates the essential elements of the form in so many ways as to require that it be evaluated on its own terms rather than by the standards which the detective formula provides. (2) *The Big Sleep* is a romance in everystructural senseexceptits setting.

The hardboiled detective genre is formulaic. It has a set of conventions, of which the structural imperative of suspenseful plot is the most important Other recognizable touchstones of the formula include darkness, cities, witty dialogue, and a detective. The hardboiled detective formula is exemplified in the novels of Raymond Chandler, who, along with Dashiell Hammett and James Cain, "took murder out of the Venetian vase and dropped it in the alley."[2] The archetype beneath the hardboiled detective formula is "the search for hidden secrets."[3] The film *The Big Sleep* is an adaptation of Chandler's hardboiled detective novel in which

> the actual narrative of the mysteryinvolves the isolation of clues, the making of deductions from these clues, and the attempt toplacethe various clues in their rationalplace ina complete scheme of cause and effect.[4]

Because hardboiled detective stories appear to be action tales, with plots which are easily dramatized, the 1946 version of *The Big Sleep* is one of many films of the 1940s adapted from hardboiled detective fiction.

Works which belong in the detective genre conform to the detective formula, which has, as a formal characteristic, a double plot structure. First, the forward-moving plot concerns the activity of detection. The detective is engaged in finding out the identity of the perpetrator and the scope of his crime.

The past is distilled and focused as an incidentwhich culminates in a violent and irrevocablecrime such as murder. The past crime creates an urgency which propels the detective toward a definite resolution The disappearance of Sean Regan is the culmination of the past plot in *The Big Sleep,* and the discovery of his murderer should be the main action of the detective plot.[5]

The encroachment of the present plot in the past plot is the conflict in the detective formula. The intensity and suspense involved in this structural element determines the value of a work of this kind.[6] The strongest detective plot weaves past and present inextricably. The unraveling must not come solely from the detection plot but must evolve out of the past. The criminal must become aware of his own guilt while the detective inexorably connects present with past and assumes the initiative against the criminal

The Big Sleep does not fit such a formula. Very little of Marlowe's action is related to the missing SeanRegan. Instead, Marlowe is busy sorting outthe half-dozen unrelated murders and myriad, unfathomable subplots (pornography, sexual jealousy, blackmail, etc.), and his initiative against the criminal is against Mars—who is responsible for much of the corruption in the present plot but who is not guilty of Regan's murder. The suspense surrounding the detective in *The Big Sleep* is the audience's anxiety for his safety in the contexts of violence (Brody, Canino) and women (Carmen, Vivian). Were this film an example of the detective formula, the underlying plot—Carmen's murder of Sean Regan—would be the over-arching preoccupation of the detective. In addition, this crime plot would be subsumed, overlaid, and blended into the texture of the forward-moving plot so that the solution would be accessible but not immediately apparent to the detective or the film viewer

Part of the difficulty in the double plotstructurein *The Big Sleep* is attributable to Chandler's novel. The linkagebetweenthe crimeplot and the present plotis weak. In *The Big Sleep*, thecrime of the crime plot is not specific. Though the murder of Sean Regan by Carmen Sternwood provides some unity for the novel, the connection between Carmen Sternwood and the Eddie Mars plot is tenuous. Mars and his minions, Geiger and Brody, control gambling, pornography, and other illicit enterprises, but Mars's illegal activity is never clearlylinked to the murder of Sean Regan. Thus, the murder which ought to complete the crime plot is unrelated to it. Mars does convince Vivian, Carmen's sister, that Carmen is responsible, and he blackmails Vivian withthe threat of exposure of her sister; but blackmail does not function as murderdoes in the doubleplot structure. Much of Marlowe's time is spent exposing the minor rackets underMars's auspices ratherthan discovering Carmen's crime of murder. Even at the end, Carmen is more victim than criminal. Chandler, as a novelist, seems toget lost in the complications of the forward moving plot. There are too many characters and too many plots in *The Big Sleep*. Whether this fact results from Chandler's "cannibalizing" severalshort stories (primarily "The Curtain" and "Killer in the Rain," with small parts of "Finger Man" and "Mandarin's Jade") into the novel, or its being Chandler's first book-length work, plot difficulties are apparent Chandler, an overtly self-critical writer,knewthis

> When I started out to write fiction, I had the great disadvantage of having absolutely no talent for it I couldn't getcharacters in and out of rooms. They lost their hatsand so did I. If more than two people were on a scene I couldn't keeponeof themalive. This failing is still with me, of course, to someextent. Give me two people snottingat eachother across a desk and I am happy. A crowded canvas just bewildersme.[7]

Chandler's novel eventually doeshang together with the sardonic tone in the narrative voice of Marlowe and the comic camouflage of syntax, but the film is sabotaged by its plot. In the film, the tension in individual scenesoutranks overall plot, unlike a plot in the detective formula in which the final scene is a revelation and culmination of the past and present plots. Indeed, in the film of *The Big Sleep*, the best scenes contain precisely "twopeople snotting at each other across a desk" or a bed or a table in a [redacted]

Even if Mars were Regan's murderer, the end of *The Big Sleep* would still be logically absurd Marlowe stages a resolution to the plot. A series of revisions of the ending resulted in a scene in which Marsis executed byhis own gang. Judgmentis swift, but how Marlowe decides that Mars deserves his punishment is ignored. The result is unclearly motivated. The fact that Carmen Sternwood is guilty of Regan's murder is referred to in vague dialogue only. Marlowe never finds Sean Regan. The film scene concludes in a reaffirmation of the romantic plot as Bogart and Bacall (as Marlowe and Vivian) await the sirens of the police. Because the detective himself is not the agent of retribution, there are structural problems. The viewer believes in Marlowe's cleverness, and Bogart/ Marlowe and Bacall/Vivian are working together; consequently, the viewer overlooks the obvious flawsin plotting the climax. After Marlowe and Vivian escape from the Realito hideout, Marlowe sets up in a meeting with Eddie Mars at Geiger'shouse while pretending to be some miles distant. Mars agrees to the meeting, arrives quickly (he thinks he is ahead of Marlowe), and instructs thegang to allow Marlowe to enterand then ambush Marlowe when he exits. Mars's gang waits Marlowe, who is waiting for Mars inside,

contrives that Mars exit first. Eddie Mars is shot by his own gang in a trap he has set for Marlowe. The problem in the plotting is that Mars's gang shoots Mars without reason, because theyshouldhavebeen waiting for Marlowe to arrive. There is no reason to shoot Marlowe point blank because he hasn't had time to get there. Even though Mars's bodyguards havebeenused throughout the film for comic relief, their function in the final scene is a radical shift in tone. Mars's exit, which would be of paramount structural concern in a detective narrative, does not concern theaudienceenoughto provoke disbelief.

The one element of the American hardboiled detective's world which also appears in film adaptations of the period is the dark, urban night which pervades them. The devoted detective filmgoer is confused by the plot—who murdered Owen Taylor, the relationship between Geiger and Brody, the relationship between Geiger and Lundgren, etc. There are also sections in the film where visual darkness or limitations of composition prevent the viewer from seeing what is going on, such as when the audience sees only feet leaving the orgy at Geiger's house where Marlowe finds Carmen. In describing films such as *The Big Sleep* and *The Maltese Falcon* (an adaptation of a Dashiell Hammett novel), A.M. Karimi makes clear that *film noir* techniques and the detective formula are mutually exclusive: "According to the 'fair play' dictum of the traditional detective story, *film noir* does not play fair at all."[8] Because filmmakers in the style of *film noir* intentionally confuse plot, the detective structure and the ambiguities of *film noir* are necessarily antagonistic.

The confusions in the plot of *The Big Sleep* provide the viewer with the impression of forward action. What film as a medium does best is dramatic, immediate action. Wherever the main story can be dramatized in the present, there film excels. Wherever explicit meaning can be revealed visually, there film succeeds. The problem posed by the double plot structure of the detectiveformula is burdensome for films because, if the past plot is dramatized in the present, the suspense is ended. For example, in *Farewell, My Lovely,* another Chandler novel adapted into film, the suspense is resolved at the moment the audience realizes thatthe beautiful and wealthy Mrs. Grayle is really Velma Valento, Moose Malloy's girlfriend. The crucial moment intersecting the two plots must be obscured—by substitution, by omission, or by unmotivated and unexplained action—before the two plots collide in a confrontation between the murderer and the detective. That recognition scene is obligatory in the detective form; in *The Big Sleep* it is replaced by a secondary confrontation between Mars and Marlowe and by the Marlowe/Vivian romance. *The Big Sleep* avoids the fundamental requirements of the detective form, and, in doing so, its purpose becomes necessarily different thanthatof thedetectivestory.

Gerald Mast supports this structural divergency with an explanation of Howard Hawks's narrative intentions:

> But before accusing the film's plot, its narrative, of incoherence one must inquire if this confusing sequence of blackmails and murders—its diegesis—is really its narrative, its plot—its discourse—at all. Perhaps this sequence of external events (to which the original novel is completely devoted) is merely a context and pretext for the real narrative of Hawks's film (as in the hanging of Earl Williams in *His Girl Friday*): Marlowe's and Vivian's discovery of one another.[9]

The most coherent parts of *The Big Sleep*—those which are emphasized internally and which we bring forth from our recollection of the film—have less to do with suspenseful plot structure than with the inevitable declaration of love between Bogart/Marlowe and Bacall/Vivian. Although Chandler's novel is a source of some of what is incomprehensible in the film, discerning audiences have enjoyed the film because its plot difficulties are only of peripheral importance. The adaptation violates one of Chandler's own rules for constructing mystery novels:

> Love interest nearly always weakens a mystery because it introduces a type of suspense that is antagonistic to the detective'sstruggle tosolvethe problem. It stacksthe cards, and, innine cases out of ten, it eliminatesatleast two useful suspects. The only effective kind of love interest is that which creates a personal hazard for the detective—but which, at the same time, you instinctively feel to be a mere episode. A reallygood detective never getsmarried.[10]

But the "really good detective" was married. Though Humphrey Bogart played the role of Philip Marlowe only once in film, he is more clearly identified with Marlowe than any other actor. Philip Marlowe became part of the Bogart persona. The filmgoing audience knew that Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall had met on the set of *To Have and To Have Not* and were married to each other. The sexual antagonism and verbalsparring is only so muchplay acting. The verbal repartee (including the scene in which Marlowe and Vivian's discussion of horse-racing functions as double entendre for sexual conquest) and the prevalence of two-shots in scenes between them underscore the obvious attraction. Even the two smouldering cigarettes and two silhouette shadows under the opening credits suggest the inevitableconnection. "Theexchangeand lighting of cigarettes is one of the most consistent Hawks gestures for communicating states of human closeness or distance."[11]

The structure within which *The Big Sleep* operates is that of romance. The detective as knight errant, with a trenchcoat for armor, is sent out by the aging and ineffectual king (Sternwood) to quest for truth (what happened to Sean Regan) and to rid the kingdom of corruption (protect his daughters from blackmail). Philip Marlowe and Harry Jones (Elisha Cook, Jr.) share the code which is most effectively stated in Chandler's frequently quoted description of Philip Marlowe:

> But down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honour, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world.[12]

Marlowe's code of honor, duty, and revenge makes him the best man in his world.[13] Marlowe, as knight, must be tested before he can fulfill his purpose. In *The Big Sleep,* Marlowe is not seduced by Carmen Sternwood, is not tricked or intimidated by Eddie Mars, and is not bought (or "sugared") off the case by Vivian. Marlowe even escapes from the deadly trap set for him by Canino, whose unadulterated meanness may characterize him as the black knight who attempts to dissuade the hero temporarily from his task. The accomplishment of the hero is morally instructive for the audience and for the hero himself. This pattern is, if not classical, at least medieval. Just as medieval romances embodied and gave the holiness of myth to the code of chivalry, so *The Big Sleep* gives the status of myth to the code of the detective. Vivian (as Guinevere) is a daughter (rather than wife) of the old king. As the detective is awarded her attention for his success, the sentimental conclusion overcomes the hardboiled stance of Philip Marlowe.

The Big Sleep is more nearly a romance than it is a detective film. Its plot, an essential element which should hold a detective film together, does not. The incomprehensible plot doesn't ruin the film because the structure of romance is more important. The hardboiled detective of the detective formula becomes a man with a code of behavior who falls in love. Conduct appropriate to a romance would be inexcusable in the detective formula. Thus, *The Big Sleep* is only allegedly a detective film, in that its structure becomes more understandable when *The Big Sleep* is viewed as a romance

Notes

1. Film adaptations of Chandler novels during the period include: *Time To Kill* (based on *The High Window*, 1942, Fox), *The Falcon Takes Over* (based on *Farewell My Lovely*, 1944, RKO), *The Big Sleep* (1946, Warner), *The Lady in the Lake* (1946, MGM), and *The Brasher Doubloon* (based on *The High Window*, 1947, Fox). Subsequent to 1947, there have been film adaptations or remakes of *The Little Sister, The Long Goodbye, The Big Sleep,* and *Farewell My Lovely.*
2. A statement of Chandler's admiration for Hammett quoted in Frank MacShane, *The Life of Raymond Chandler* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976), p. 27. MacShane's biography of Raymond Chandler is thorough, revealing, and readable.
3. John Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1976), p. 6
4. *Ibid*
5. The implication of the double plot structure has been worked through Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler novels and film adaptations in my 1979 doctoral dissertation, *The American Detective Form in Novels and Film.*
6. Marie Rodell, *Mystery Fiction* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1943), p. 62
7. [illegible]
8. A. M. Karimi, *Toward a Definition of the American Film Noir* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), pp. 109–10
9. Gerald Mast, *Howard Hawks, Storyteller* (New York Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 276
10. Raymond Chandler, "Casual Notes on the Mystery Novel," in *Raymond Chandler Speaking*, ed. Dorothy Gardiner and Katherine Sorley Walker (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p. 70.
11. Mast, p. 50
12. Raymond Chandler, *The Simple Art of Murder* (London H. Hamilton, 1950), p. 333
13. Philip Durham, *Down These Mean Streets a Man Must Go: Raymond Chandler's Knight* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966). □

Cornell Woolrich on the Small Screen

By Francis M. Nevins, Jr.

The story of Cornell Woolrich's interaction with television begins in that prehistoric period when the networks were in their infancy and precious few Americans even owned sets. Woolrich's financial records show that he received $60 in 1945 and $75 in 1946 for licensing teleplay adaptations of two of his short stories. Which company paid him, what stories were broadcast and when, who acted in them and how good the shows were, are all lost in the mists of time. But in those experimental days, television's main function was to provide primitive visual accompaniment to live drama of the sort that was heard on radio every night. It's not surprising that the popularity of Woolrich-based scripts on *Suspense* and similar radio series led TV pioneers to try out some of his work in the new medium.

Television took a few years to catch on with the American people, and there was a three-year hiatus before Woolrich was again approached by the entrepreneurs of the small screen. His earnings from TV adaptation rights totaled $1,750 in 1949, $1,800 in 1950, and $1,700 in 1951. Unfortunately, Woolrich's records through 1957 are extremely skimpy, not even indicating how many sales he made. And even the best existing sources on episodic television, such as Larry James Gianakos's three-volume *Television Drama Series Programming: A Comprehensive Chronicle,* customarily list only the titles and principal players in weekly teledrama. Consequently, we can't know, when we come across a reference to a play with a cliché title like "Nightmare," whether it was taken from the Woolrich classic of the same name or if the identity of titles is pure coincidence. In any event, at least ten live TV dramas clearly based on Woolrich's fiction were aired between 1949 and 1951.

The earliest known TV play taken from Woolrich material was "Revenge," broadcast on CBS's *Suspense* series March 1, 1949 and based on the author's 1944 novel *The Black Path of Fear.* An excellent thirty-minute version of the novel had already been heard twice on the *Suspense* radio program, with Brian Donlevy starring in the performance of August 31,

1944 and Cary Grant in that of March 7, 1946. In all probability, the half-hour live television was similar to the radio adaptation. In the leading roles were Eddie Albert and Margo.

The next Woolrich-based teleplay we've discovered was seen on the last day of the same month in 1949. On March 31, a live dramatic series known as *The Actor's Studio,* which had debuted on ABC in the fall of 1948, presented a thirty-minute adaptation of perhaps the most powerful story Woolrich ever wrote, the 1938 chiller "Three O'Clock." As it happened, the same story had been used on radio's *Suspense* earlier in the month, an excellent thirty-minute version starring Van Heflin broadcast on March 10. All we know about the first of the four televersions of the story are the date it was aired and that it starred Steven Hill, Frances Reid, and Philip Bourneuf.

Woolrich's fragmentary unpublished autobiography, *The Blues of a Lifetime,* tells us nothing about when he bought his first TV set, but, if he had one at the end of 1949, he could have watched three live thirty-minute versions of his stories in less than a month's time. On November 21, CBS's *Silver Theater,* a weekly dramatic series hosted by Conrad Nagel, broadcast a teleplay based on his 1945 story "Silent as the Grave," starring Marsha Hunt and TV's later Superman, George Reeves. And ABC's *Mystery Playhouse,* the host of which was Boris Karloff, presented the medium's second adaptation of Woolrich's masterpiece, "Three O'Clock," on December 1, plus a television of his 1936 story "The Night Reveals" on the 15th of the same month. No cast list from either episode seems to have survived.

1950 was another good year for Woolrich in the new medium. On May 21, NBC's Sunday evening *Video Theatre* aired "Change of Murder," based on the author's 1936 biter-bit story in the Damon Runyon vein, and starring a trio of total unknowns named Bernard Nedell, Charles Jordan, and Alfred Hopson. On November 9 of the same year, CBS's *Nash Airflyte Theater,* hosted by William Gaxton, presented "I Won't Take a Minute," with Dane Clark as the man whose girlfriend walks into a building to deliver a package and never comes out. The play was based on Woolrich's 1940 thriller "Finger of Doom," and its TV title came from Anthony Boucher, who had included it under that name in his 1945 anthology *Great American Detective Stories.*

Woolrich's big breakthrough in live TV came in 1951, when two of his finest stories were converted into sixty-minute dramas on one of the most prestigious series in early television, *Robert Montgomery Presents.* Robert Montgomery had already shown his affinity for *film noir* in general and Woolrich in particular. He had both directed and starred in two offbeat movies of this genre, *The Lady in the Lake* (1946) and *Ride the Pink Horse* (1947), and he had played the leads in two sixty-minute radio dramas based on Woolrich novels, "The Chase" (*This Is Hollywood,* Nov. 9, 1946, taken from *The Black Path of Fear*) and "The Black Curtain" (*Suspense,* Jan. 3, 1948, taken from the 1941 novel of the same name). For his weekly television series, Montgomery chose two of Woolrich's strongest and darkest tales. "Three O'Clock," broadcast June 18, 1951, was based of course on the 1938 classic which had earlier been adapted for both *The Actor's Studio* and *Mystery Playhouse.* Vaughn Taylor starred as Stapp, the man who is bound and gagged in his own basement with a time bomb ticking away beside him, and Olive Deering and Montgomery himself played key supporting roles. Another Woolrich immortal from 1938 was the basis of the *Robert Montgomery Presents* production "I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes," broadcast October 22, 1951, with Vaughn Taylor and Katherine Squire as the couple who are doomed to a malignant fate because of a shoe thrown at a yowling cat. In between these sixty-minute dramas came a half-hour adaptation of "Through a Dead Man's Eye," based on Woolrich's 1939 chiller about a twelve-year-old boy trapped in an old house with a decaying one-eyed corpse and a murderer. The episode was broadcast July 21, 1951 on NBC's summer replacement series *Assignment Manhunt.* No cast list for the play has come to light.

"Woolrich's financial records show that he received $60 in 1945 and $75 in 1946 for licensing teleplay adaptations of two of his short stories."

Woolrich made not a cent from television in 1952, but that was the last year of his life in which the medium totally neglected him. His income from the small screen in 1953 added up to precisely $2,000. By then, TV's center of gravity had started to shift from live drama staged in New York to thirty-minute films, shot in Hollywood on two- or three-day schedules and rerunnable *ad infinitum* after their first showings. *Revlon Mirror Theatre* had begun on NBC in the summer of 1953 as a series of thirty-minute live dramas, but in the fall it moved to CBS and switched to film. Its third film presentation was "Lullaby,"

broadcast October 3, 1953 and based on Woolrich's 1937 story "Humming Bird Comes Home," which had been included in the author's then most recent collection, *Bluebeard's Seventh Wife* (1952), published under his famous pseudonym William Irish. Agnes Moorehead, Tom Drake, and Betty Lynn starred as the blind mother, the fugitive son, and the farm girl. And the *Mirror Theatre* film of November 21, 1953, "Summer Dance," also was rooted in Woolrich, being based on his 1947 story "Death Between Dances." Jane Greer and Barbara Bates played the haunted sisters who, years apart, fall in love with the same man. In between these telefilms, on October 9, 1953, ABC's *Pepsi-Cola Playhouse* broadcast a live thirty-minute drama, "Wait for Me Downstairs," with John Hudson and Allene Roberts in yet another version of the Woolrich classic "Finger of Doom."

In 1954, Woolrich made $1,800 from licensing TV plays taken from his fiction, but I've found only two dramas based on his work which were broadcast that year, and apparently neither had much to do with what he had written. The earlier was seen on ABC's *The Mask,* the first hour-long mystery series on television. At the start of the new year, hoping to compete against CBS's and NBC's Sunday evening giants (*Toast of the Town* and *The Colgate Comedy Hour*), ABC launched an ambitious new dramatic program starring Gary Merrill and William Prince as Walter and Peter Guilfoyle, brothers, law partners, and amateur detectives who became entangled in a baffling case every week. Some of the episodes of *The Mask* were original scripts, others were adapted from short stories by well-known mystery writers, with the plots heavily altered and the Guilfoyle brothers shoehorned into the continuity to clear up the puzzlement. In "The Loophole," broadcast February 7, 1954, the Guilfoyles tried to clear an innocent man framed for murder. The brothers' client was played by Brian Keith, supported by Russell Hardy, Audrey Christie, and Betty Garde. The script was nominally based on Woolrich's powerful 1942 story "Three Kills for One," which had been reprinted in the September 1953 *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* under what became its TV title. I didn't watch the program, but my best guess is that the teleplay took up where Woolrich's story left off—with a vindictive and psychotic cop framing a man for one killing because in the cop's view the man got away with an earlier murder. It's safe to assume that nothing remotely like Woolrich's terrifying climax was permitted in the TV version. *The Mask* quickly proved to be a ratings disaster and was canceled after the customary thirteen-week run.

Another live sixty-minute drama vaguely based on Woolrich was offered the night before New Year's Eve on *Lux Video Theatre,* the TV offshoot of the long-running *Lux Radio Theatre*. "The Chase," broadcast on NBC December 30, 1954, was an adaptation of the bizarre 1946 *film noir* of the same name, which had been very freely taken from Woolrich's novel *The Black Path of Fear*. The movie, directed by Arthur Ripley, had starred Robert Cummings as the footloose adventurer Chuck Scott, Michele Morgan as Lorna, and Steve Cochran as her sadistic husband Eddie Roman. The televersion, which was necessarily even less like the novel than the movie had been, featured Pat O'Brien as Eddie, with Ruth Roman as Lorna and a pre-*Gunsmoke* James Arness as Chuck, who falls in love with Lorna and tries to save them both from Eddie's fury. James Mason served as host for the episode.

"It's safe to assume that nothing remotely like Woolrich's terrifying climax was permitted in the TV version."

Woolrich's earnings from television in 1955 totaled a whopping $9,350, enough in itself for a comfortable living at the time. Although he didn't keep detailed figures for that year, it's likely that much of this money came from the sale of rights to stories that were not televised till 1956, for the only known Woolrich-based dramas during 1955 were a trio of thirty-minute films for which he probably received about a thousand dollars apiece.

The earliest of the three was "Debt of Honor," broadcast February 20, 1955 on CBS's Sunday evening anthology series *Stage 7* and adapted from a story first published in 1938, "I.O.U.—One Life." The title of the teleplay, like that of "The Loophole" the year before, we owe to Frederic Dannay (Ellery Queen), who retitled the story "Debt of Honor" when he reprinted it in the October 1954 EQMM. The script apparently stayed close to the Woolrich storyline in which a detective learns that the criminal he must arrest is the man who earlier saved the life of the cop's little daughter. Edmond O'Brien played the cop and none other than Charles Bronson was the fugitive. The cast included Wendy Winkleman, Laura Elliot, and Steve Pendleton.

The other Woolrich-derived telefilms of 1955 were made by Screen Gems, Columbia Pictures' TV

subsidiary, and shown four weeks apart on NBC's *Ford Theatre*. Surprisingly, the stories *Ford* bought were not suspense thrillers but a pair of non-criminous tales that Woolrich himself had failed to sell to magazines (both were included as originals in Woolrich's collection *The Blue Ribbon,* published in 1949 as by William Irish). "Husband," broadcast October 13, 1955, starred Barry Sullivan as Blaine Chandler, whose wife has become movie star Alma Alexander because of a photograph he took. Like the heroines of countless recent feminist stories, Chandler suffocates in the role of Famous Person's Spouse and is about to break away and assert his own identity by opening a photography studio when the Korean War comes along and acts as *deus ex machina* to save the marriage. Mala Powers played Chandler's wife, with Jonathan Hale, Ralph Dumke, and Frank Hanley in character parts. The storyline had almost nothing in common with Woolrich's haunting tale of a marriage at the crack-up point. On the other hand, "The Blue Ribbon," *Ford Theatre's* presentation for November 10, 1955, was a quite faithful rendition of Woolrich's story of the same name, in which a truly dreadful woman makes her son wear a blue ribbon in his hair so that he'll have to fight the other neighborhood boys and grow up, as in fact he does, to become a boxing champ. Ted Post, who later helmed some high-budget Clint Eastwood and Steve McQueen action films, directed from a teleplay by Richard Collins. Scott Brady starred as the boxer, O'Reilly, with Gene Barry as his buddy Carp and Marjorie Rambeau as his mother. The film carefully captures everything that makes the Woolrich story so freakish, including his reverence for the dreadful mother figure and contempt for his own small size, physical weakness, and homosexuality.

Woolrich's hefty 1955 income from TV must have included payment for the rights to three stories which were first shown early the following year. "Once Upon a Nightmare" was broadcast January 3, 1956 on NBC's long-running anthology series *Fireside Theatre*. The basis of the thirty-minute film was Woolrich's tale "Murder at Mother's Knee," which came to *Fireside's* attention when it was reprinted in the December 1954 EQMM as "Something That Happened in Our House." Series hostess Jane Wyman starred as schoolteacher Emily Prince, who assigns her students to write a composition about an actual event and then slowly becomes convinced that the essay handed in by one ten-year-old describes a murder the child unwittingly witnessed. David Kasday, Arthur Space, Vivi Janiss, and Emile Meyer were in the cast.

Fireside was a Tuesday evening program. The following Sunday, January 8, 1956, the now classic suspense series *Alfred Hitchcock Presents,* which was then in its first season, broadcast the first of several Woolrich-based telefilms. Hitchcock of course had directed the classic *Rear Window* (1954), which was adapted from a Woolrich story; but he was not personally involved with any of the thirty-minute telefilms based on Woolrich that were shown on this series. "The Big Switch" was directed by Don Weis from a script by Richard Carr which was very freely derived from Woolrich's Runyonesque 1936 story "Change of Murder." The same tale had been the source of a live drama aired on *Video Theatre* with a cast of total unknowns back in 1950, and, as luck would have it, the cast of the *Hitchcock Presents* version also consisted of obscurities headed by George Mathews, George E. Stone, Joseph Downing, and Beverly Michaels. All that remained of the Woolrich story was the basic idea—a gunman planning to commit a murder buys an alibi from a specialist in such matters—and the ironic ending, which was the kind of twist on which *Hitchcock Presents* thrived. Those who were watching another channel that evening didn't miss much

The film carefully captures everything that makes the Woolrich story so freakish, including reverence for the

Less than a month later, on February 2, 1956, CBS's *Four Star Playhouse* presented "The Listener," from a script by Frank L. Moss based on Woolrich's 1939 gem "The Case of the Talking Eyes" (reprinted as "Eyes That Watch You" in the 1952 Woolrich collection of that title under his William Irish byline). Ida Lupino starred as ruthless Vera Miller, whose plot to murder her husband Verne (Walter Coy) and collect his insurance is overheard by Verne's father (Ralph Moody), a speechless paralytic. The cast included Lupino's son Richard and, in a small part as an announcer, Don Rickles.

In 1956, Woolrich earned $13,650 from television, his best year ever in that medium, and saw his work form the basis of four half-hour films, two hour-long live dramas, and a ninety-minute super special. The more elaborate, and by far the more prestigious, of the pair of sixty-minute teleplays was "Sit Down with Death," broadcast live and in color April 26, 1956 on CBS's extremely popular *Climax!* James P. Cavanagh's

adaptation of Woolrich's well-known "After-Dinner Story" (1938) followed theoriginal quiteclosely. One of the people trapped in a disabled elevator is pulled out of the wreckage and found to have been shot to death. The police decide that he killed himself while trapped at the bottom of the elevator shaft, but the victim'sfather becomesobsessed with the notionthat one of the others imprisoned in the cage murdered him and embarks on a grisly revenge. The father was portrayed by Ralph Bellamy, and the excellent supporting cast included William Talman, John Williams, Vicki Cummings, and Constance Ford.

The fourth and final thirty-minute film based on Woolrich to be seen that year was "Momentum," broadcast June 24, 1956 on *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*. Robert Stevens directed from a script by Francis Cockrell, adapted from Woolrich's downbeat thriller "Murder Always Gathers Momentum" (1940). But the film doesn't even try to capture the bleak Depression ambience and *noir*sensibility that distinguished theWoolrichstory, and in the Stevens-Cockrell version it's not economic desperation but the needling of his money-mad wife that drives Richard Paine to steal from his wealthy employer and slide down the path to doom. In a bright 1950s setting, the story just doesn't work. Skip Homeier and Joanne Woodward starred as the Paines.

dreadful mother figure and contempt for his own small size, physical weakness, and homosexuality.

On October 11, 1956, *Lux Video Theatre* broadcast its second sixty-minute live drama based on a movie which in turn had been based on Woolrich. The nominal origin of the 1947 film *The Guilty,* starring Bonita Granville and Don Castle, had been Woolrich's 1941 novelet "He Looked Like Murder," better known under its later title "Two Fellows in a Furnished Room." The movie had preserved some of the Woolrich story—in which a young man tries to save his roommate, who takes it on the run after the woman he loves but can't have is murdered— but had added two of the most clichéd elements from 1940s *film noir,* The Mentally Disturbed War Veteran and The Twin Sisters One-Good-One-Evil, plus the absurd "surprise" ending from the adaption of the story broadcast on radio's *Suspense.* The result had been an interesting but far from compelling little picture which at least captured the sense of "trapped-ness" shared by so many Woolrich people. The *Lux* televersion seems to have been less ambitious than the movie and even more remote from the Woolrich original. Gordon MacRae was host for the episode, which starred Ralph Meeker and was aired in color on NBC.

Exactly two weeks later came what, from the point of view of money and prestige, was Woolrich's biggest TV night ever. CBS's *Playhouse 90*, the most highly budgeted and most critically hailed dramatic series of its time, brought Woolrich's powerful 1948 novel *Rendezvous in Black* to the small screen in a ninety-minuteadaptation under its original title. The basicpremisecomes straight from the book: Johnny Mark (Johnny Marr in the novel) finds his fiancée dead on a street corner, apparently the victim of a freak accident, and sets out to find the people responsible for that accident, dedicating himself to entering their lives one by one and killing, not the perpetrators, but the person each of them most loves, so that they will live the grief he lives. Among the stars of this ambitious live drama were at least three whose careers had intersected with Woolrichbefore: Franchot Tone, who had played the twisted murderer in the 1944 movie *Phantom Lady;* Boris Karloff, who had hosted the *Mystery Playhouse* series where two early televersions of Woolrichstorieshad been aired; and Tom Drake, the Humming Bird character in *Revlon Mirror Theatre's* 1933 film "Lullaby," who enacted the principal role of Johnny Mark on *Playhouse 90.* The female leads were Laraine Day, Viveca Lindfors, and Elizabeth Patterson, and the entireepisode washosted by Frank Lovejoy.

It's quite possible that yet more Woolrich-based dramas were televised in 1956. The author's financial records indicate that on March 27 of that year The Web Productions contracted with him for a TV adaptation of his 1936 story "Double Feature," but no trace of any live or filmed version of the tale has come to light. And on July 7, 1956, Screen Gems signed an agreement for TV rights to Woolrich's 1939 chiller "Charlie Won't Be Home Tonight" (collected in *Eyes That Watch You,* 1952, as by William Irish), but again no telefilm based on this story has yet been found.

During 1957, Woolrich's income from TV totaled a paltry $1,400. In view of the multitudeof televersions of his work broadcast that year, it takes no Poirot to deduce that most of them were contracted and paid for during the boom year of 1956. The earliest Woolrich-based drama of 1957 was "The Earring," a thirty-minutetelefilm presentedJanuary 13 on CBS's Sunday evening *General Electric Theater.* Woolrich's

source story, first published in 1943 as "The Death Stone," had been retitled "The Earring" by Fred Dannay when he reprinted it in the February 1946 EQMM, and Woolrich kept the Dannay title when he put the tale in his collection *Dead Man Blues* (1948, as by William Irish). The TV adaptation starred Greer Garson as Lydia Shaw, who is being blackmailed by her former sweetheart Phil (Philip Reed) over some pre-marital love letters but is determined to keep her prominent lawyer husband David (Eduard Franz) from finding out about the affair. Also in the cast was Norman Lloyd, and Ronald Reagan served as host.

Three weeks later, on February 2, 1957, Revue Productions' syndicated series *Heinz Studio 57* presented the thirty-minute film "You Take Ballistics," based on Woolrich's 1938 story of the same name which, like "The Earring," had been collected in *Dead Man Blues*. Joseph Wiseman and superstar-to-be Lee Marvin played the cop and the killer in this story of a murder suspect who stymies the police by admitting everything about the crime he committed except the killing itself.

One might almost believe that the medium had decided on a quota of one Woolrich story a month, for, on March 28, 1957, *Lux Video Theatre* broadcast its third and last sixty-minute live version of a movie taken from one of the author's works. The 1946 *Black Angel* had been a superb *film noir* starring June Vincent, Dan Duryea, Broderick Crawford, and Peter Lorre in an adaptation which was at once far removed from the letter and quite faithful to the spirit of Woolrich's grotesquely powerful 1943 novel of the same name. That movie was the basis of the live *Lux* version, which naturally was closer to the film than to the book. A married man is convicted of the murder of his mistress and sentenced to die, and the man's wife joins with the dead woman's love-flayed husband to prove that the wrong person was found guilty, but with the inevitability of tragedy the searchers find themselves falling in love with each other. Marilyn Erskine and John Ireland played the leads, and the episode was hosted by Gordon MacRae.

April followed the pattern by bringing forth its own Woolrich TV night, as had the previous months of the year. The April 14 offering of CBS's *General Electric Theater* was "Cab Driver," adapted by John L. Greene from Woolrich's Runyonesque 1937 tale "Cab, Mister?" which had been reprinted in EQMM for September 1950. This second and last *General Electric* film drama to be taken from Woolrich stressed humor, not terror. Imogene Coca, the comedienne who had shot to small-screen superstardom opposite Sid Caesar on *Your Show of Shows*, played New York hackie Virginia Odell, who discovers a passenger murdered in her cab and becomes involved in a comic romance with the long-suffering sergeant assigned to the case (Keenan Wynn) – not to mention her subsequent run-in with the killer. Although I never got to see this film, apparently it was geared more for Coca's comic talent than anything else. Ronald Reagan once again hosted.

No more adaptations of Woolrich stories came on the air until the closing months of summer. On August 31, 1957, NBC's Saturday evening replacement series *George Sanders Mystery Theatre* presented "The Night I Died," a thirty-minute film based on Woolrich's 1936 story of the same name (collected in *Somebody on the Phone*, 1950, as by William Irish). The televersion begins like the story,

"the night to have been sitting in front of the small screen was September 30, 1957, when the sixty-minute dramatic series Suspicion,

with a man coming home early from work and walking in on his wife and her boyfriend plotting to kill him for his insurance. In the Woolrich version, the husband and the lover have a fight, the lover is killed, and the wife persuades the husband to go into hiding while she passes off the lover's body as the husband's and collects the insurance for the two of them. It's not clear how much of this scheme is used in the telefilm. The undistinguished cast was headed by Howard McNear, Eve McVeagh, and Scotty [illegible].

For those who love the haunted Woolrich world, *the* night to have been sitting in front of the small screen was September 30, 1957, when the sixty-minute dramatic series *Suspicion*, which alternated between live and filmed productions, broadcast the most perfect Woolrich-based film ever made. Its title was "Four O'Clock," and its source was the already thrice-televised 1938 classic "Three O'Clock," which for my money is the most powerful story Woolrich ever wrote. The script was by Francis Cockrell, a veteran of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, and the director of the film was Hitchcock himself. What he brought to the small screen was an absolute masterwork, pure Hitchcock and pure Woolrich at one and the same time and the most unremittingly suspenseful picture of his career. Why he retitled it

"Four O'Clock" no one knows. In 1954, when he'd directed *Rear Window,* Hitchcock had radically expanded the Woolrich source story and altered its tone from *noir* to multichromatic so as to suit his own needs, but Woolrich's "Three O'Clock," with its unbearable account of the lasthours of a man who knows the exact moment when he will die a horrible death, perfectly captured Hitchcock's own existential terrorbeforethe ultimatespecter, andthe changeshe made were minimal. E. G. Marshall was agonizingly magnificent as Stapp, with Nancy Kelly and Richard Long in the principal supporting roles. If ever a TV filmdeserved tobe revived as a theatrical feature, this is it.

Woolrich's mother died in 1957 after a long illness, and I suspectit's because she was no longerwith him thathis financial records from 1958 on are so much moredetailed thanthose ofprior years. His earnings from television during that first year he was totally alone added up to $3,525, a figure which can be subcategorized to the last penny. From Revue Productions he was paid $1,250 for TV film rights to his 1940 story "Post Mortem." Another company gave him $100 for an option it never exercised on his 1936 gem "Johnny on the Spot." For TV film rights to his bizarre 1937 story "Don't Bet on Death," which had been reprinted in the March 1958 EQMM as "Don't Bet on Murder," Woolrich received an even $1,000, although I can find no indication of any telefilm with this tale as its source. As residual royalties from the 1955 TV film "Debt of Honor," he was sent a check for $50. His last and largest chunk of television money that year came from the CBS series *Pursuit,* whichpaid him $1,125 for the right to broadcast a sixty-minute live drama based on the bitter 1942 tale "Three Kills for One," which had earlier beenturned into an installment of *The Mask.* Unfortunately, this ambitious *Climax!*-like series was a ratings failure and left the air before its episode taken from Woolrich could be shown.

Only two Woolrich-based telefilms have been found that were first broadcast in 1958. The first, which must have been contracted for the previous year, was "Bluebeard's Seventh Wife," broadcast on CBS's long-lived Fridayevening *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars* for March 21. In Woolrich's 1936 story, the leadtale in the 1952 paperbackcollection ofthe same name, published as by William Irish, homicide detective Rich Doakes becomes suspicious that the man his kid sister has just married is a pathological wife-killer and shadows the young couple on their Atlantic City honeymoon. The televersion changed Doakes's name to Rich Adams and converted his sister into his girlfriend, who naturally enough believes that the detective's suspicions are rooted in nothing but jealousy. Starring as Adams was Ralph Meeker, who had also played a Woolrich protagonist in the *Lux Video Theatre* version of *The Guilty.* Phyllis Avery played the woman, and her new husband was Hugh Marlowe, best known for his starring role in radio's and later TV's Ellery Queen series. Marlowe's suave personality added a new dimension to the character of the bridegroom, whom Woolrich had portrayed as a brutal lout.

On May 18, 1958, *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* broadcast its thirty-minute film of "Post Mortem." Arthur Hiller, who later became a top-rank moviemaker perhaps best known for *Love Story* (1971), directed from a script by Robert C. Dennis. Like Woolrich's 1940 tale of the same name, the TV version is about a woman, recently married for the secondtime, who suddenlyrealizes that her late first husband was the holder of a winning sweepstakes ticket—which apparently was in the pocket of the suit in which he was buried. The woman was played by Joanna Moore, with Steve Forrest as her second husband and James Gregory, best known to today's telefreaks as Inspector Luger in the sitcom *Barney Miller,* playing the cop who inevitably gets involved in the bizarre happenings.

which alternated between live and filmed productions, broadcast the most perfect Woolrich-based film ever made

Woolrich's 1959 TV earnings were a mere $1,700, of which $1,500 was paid by the British company Towers of London for TV rights to the author's superb 1939 novelet "You'llNever See Me Again." In thestory, a young architect whosewifevanishes after a quarrel is accused of having murdered her and desperately tries to prove she's still alive. In their pioneering book on TV film directors, *The American Vein* (1979), Christopher Wicking and Tise Vahimagi report that the film made by Towers of London was broadcast over British television on the *ABC Armchair Summer Theatre* series and that it was directed by Ted Post, who had earlier helmed "The Blue Ribbon" for *Ford Theater.* Nothing else is known of this 1959 production. The remaining $200 of Woolrich's income that year from television consisted of $50 in further "Debt of Honor" residuals and $75 apiece for Japanese TV rights to "The Earring" and

"Double Feature."

As far as television revenue went, 1960 was virtually a one-shot year for Woolrich. NBC paid him $1,250 for the right to present a sixty-minute dramabased on his 1936 suspensethriller "The Night Reveals," about an insurance investigator who slowly comes to believe that his wife is a compulsive pyromaniac. The TV adaptation by David Davidson, retitled "Fire by Night," was broadcast July 22, 1960 as an episode of NBC's live summer replacement series *Moment of Fear*. Mark Richman and Fay Spain starred as Harry and Marie Jordan, with Phyllis Hill and FrankOverton in backup roles. The only other money Woolrich made from the small screen thatyearwas $93.75 for Japanese TVrights to his 1945 story "Dipped in Blood" (included as "Fountain Pen" in his 1948 collection *Dead Man Blues*).

Hefared muchbetterthe following year, thanksto thesuccess of a weekly sixty-minute film seriescalled *Thriller*, hosted by Boris Karloff, which had debuted on NBC in the fall of 1960. Many *Thriller* episodes were based on novels or short stories by well-known American mystery writers such as Charlotte Armstrong, Fredric Brown, Philip MacDonald, Margaret Millar, and Lionel White. During 1961, the production company making the series paid Woolrich $4,600 for TV film rights to three of his most renowned stories. The *Thriller* trio turned out to be the only Woolrich-based telefilms broadcast in 1961, buttheirqualitymorethan compensated for the lack of quantity. The first of the three to goon the air was "Papa Benjamin," broadcast March 21, 1961 and based on Woolrich's 1935 story (originally entitled "Dark Melody of Madness") about a jazz composer-bandleader who is put under a curse when he learns too much about a voodoo cult. Ted Post directed his third Woolrich-derived telefilm in his characteristic style, efficient and workmanlike but unmemorable, and John Kneubuhl's script moved the setting from New Orleans to the Caribbean but kept reasonably faithful to its source. John Ireland starred as doomed musician Eddie Wilson, with Jeanne Bal as his wife Judy and Jester Hairston as the witch doctor Papa Benjamin

Two weeks later, on April 4, *Thriller* presented "Late Date," directed by TV veteran Herschel Daugherty from an adaptation by Donald S. Sanford of another 1935 story. The source story was first published as "The Corpse and the Kid" but is best known as "Boy with Body," the title under which Woolrich included it in his 1950 collection *Somebody on the Phone,* published as by William Irish. Daugherty's inspired direction, combined with a spine-tingling score by Jerry Goldsmith, turned "Late Date" into one of the finest examples of made-for- TV *film noir*. The storyline followed Woolrich quite closely: a young man finds that his beloved fatherhas murdered his slut stepmother and desperately tries to conceal thecrime by carrying the woman's body out of the seaside townwhere thefamily lives and over to the roadhouse rendezvous where her current lover is waiting for her. The account of the boy's journey with the body wrapped in a rug was the first of Woolrich's classic set-pieces of pure nail-biting suspense, and the telefilm does it full justice. Even with a less than stellar cast (Larry Pennell as the son and Edward C. Platt as the father) and a censorially demanded last-minute reversal of Woolrich's ironic ending, "Late Date" is one of the three best Woolrich-based films ever made for television.

"Daugherty's inspired direction, combined with a spine-tingling score by Jerry Goldsmith,

The third and final *Thriller* taken from Woolrich was even better. As the second presentation of its second and last season, the series chose "Guillotine," based on "Men Must Die" (1939), which had been collected in *Dead Man Blues* in 1948 under what became its TV title. Like "Three O'Clock," the tale is a masterpiece of existential suspense rooted in the situation of knowing that one is about to suffer gruesome death. The setting is France in the late nineteenth century, and Robert Lamont approaches the moment when he is to be guillotined. Meanwhile, outside the prison, his girlfriend desperately tries to poison the headsman on his way to the scaffold, in hope of invoking the old French tradition (which Woolrich apparently invented) that, if the executioner dies just before a beheading, the victim is spared. I was eighteen when this film was shown, and, even though I had read Woolrich's story more thanoncebefore that night andknew exactly whatto expect, the picture left me gasping with terror. Ida Lupino, who enriched *film noir* both as an actress and behindthe cameras, directed from a teleplay by science fiction-fantasy-horror specialist Charles Beaumont. Alejandro Rey starred as Lamont, with Danielle de Metz as Babette and Robert Middleton in an unforgettably grotesque performance as M. de Paris, the head-slicer

The rest of Woolrich's 1961 television income came from abroad. A French company paid $342.31 for the rights to "Eyes That Watch You," which had been the basis of *Four Star Playhouse's* 1956 film "The Listener," and a Japanese organization gave him $240 for the right to adapt four of his tales: "Collared," "Fountain Pen," "Boy with Body," and "After-Dinner Story."

In 1962, one of the leanest years of Woolrich's life as far as TV went, he earned from the medium a grand total of $270, consisting of $150 in further residual royalties on "Debt of Honor" and $120 for Japanese TV rights to "After-Dinner Story" and "Humming Bird Comes Home." The only new Woolrich-based film on American television that year was a sixty-minute version of his 1941 novel *The Black Curtain,* broadcast November 15, 1962 on CBS's *Alfred Hitchcock Hour*. Since Woolrich's financial records show no payment for this film, it seems that Hitchcock's production company obtained its rights by purchasing the remake option of Paramount Pictures' original contract with Woolrich, under which Paramount had filmed *Street of Chance* (1942), the theatrical film with Burgess Meredith and Claire Trevor, which was based on the novel. The 1962 televersion was directed by Sydney Pollack, currently a superstar filmmaker with mega-hits such as *Tootsie* to his credit, and its script was by Joel Murcott. Richard Basehart starred as Townsend, whose nightmare begins when he recovers from a *second* blow on the head and learns that he's been suffering from amnesia and leading another life for the past few years. His adventures in this version had almost nothing in common with *The Black Curtain* nor with the earlier movie and radio adaptations, which had actually improved upon Woolrich's novel. Lola Albright played Ruth, and the key supporting roles of a corrupt private eye, a friendly cabbie, and a juvenile hood (none of the three resembling any character in Woolrich) went respectively to Lee Philips, Harold J. Stone, and James Farentino

That was the last Woolrich-based TV drama broadcast in the U.S. during the author's lifetime. All the money he received from the medium in those sad years when he was dying by inches came from abroad. Japan continued to buy rights to a couple of his stories each year, and in 1963 he was paid $1,348.65 by a company called Televisión Española for the right to broadcast Spanish adaptations of 26 of his tales. Except for this bulk deal, he never made more than a few hundred dollars out of TV from 1963 until his death.

Wheelchair-bound for several months after the amputation of a leg, Woolrich died of a stroke on September 25, 1968, at age 65. The next telefilm based on his material was broadcast—at least in some parts of the country—about a week later. The episode was not listed in *TV Guide* nor mentioned in Gianakos's three-volume chronicle of television drama, but on October 3, at least in Oklahoma where I was living at the time, ABC's short-lived series of sixty-minute British-made suspense and horror films, *Journey to the Unknown,* presented "Jane Brown's Body," nominally based on Woolrich's 1939 novelet. Although overlong and pulpy in spots, Woolrich's story generated fearsome power as his protagonist struggles wildly to save his beloved from a gruesome and inevitable death. It's understandable that some of the grotesque aspects of the story would be toned down for the small screen, but the film I saw that night in Lawton, Oklahoma had nothing to do with Woolrich at all. Indeed, nothing in Woolrich's financial records indicates any payment for rights to the story (although it's quite possible he stopped keeping accounts in those last wheelchair-ridden months of his life). *Journey to the Unknown* was produced by Hitchcock's long-time associate Joan Harrison, and it may well have been her idea to move the setting of "Jane Brown's Body" to mod London in the Swinging Sixties and to turn the story into a weak-tea imitation of Hitchcock's 1964 film *Marnie* Alan Gibson directed from a script by Anthony Skene. At the top of the cast were those fine actresses Julie Harris and Stefanie Powers, supported by Alan MacNaughton, Sarah Lawson, and David Burke. I suppose it's just as well that Woolrich wasn't alive to see this disaster.

It took four and a half years before the next Woolrich-based film made it to prime time. *You'll Never See Me Again,* broadcast on ABC as a ninety-minute TV movie the evening of February 28, 1973, was the result of an American production company's picking up the remake option on that Woolrich novelet from the Towers of London contract negotiated in 1959. Jeannot Szwarc, one of the most reliable of telefilm makers, directed from a script by William Wood and Gerald DiPego. The picture

turned "Late Date" into one of the finest examples of made-for-TV film noir.

updated, but in most essentials stayed close to, Woolrich's tale of a man's desperate search for the missing wife he's accused of having murdered. David Hartman starred as Ned Bliss, with Jess Walton as Vickie, the vanished woman, and Jane Wyatt and Ralph Meeker as her mother and stepfather. It was a solid, professional job, not on the level of the three great Woolrich-based telefilms but eminently watchable.

Most recently, thanks to the sale of *Thriller's* remake option on the story to another company, a new telefilm version of "Guillotine" was broadcast January 8, 1982 as an episode of *Darkroom,* a short-lived ABC series hosted by James Coburn which tried and failed dismally to be a carbon copy of Rod Serling's *Night Gallery* of ten years earlier. Rick Rosenthal directed a teleplay by Peter Allan Fields which stayed reasonably close to Woolrich's magnificent 1939 story except for adding some sexual titillation and making the man sentenced to death more louse than Everyman. Michael Constantine played M. de Paris, the executioner, with Patti d'Arbanville as Babette and France Benard as Pierre, *l'homme condamné.* I happened to be out of town the night this episode was broadcast and have not caught up to it yet, but no one I know who has seen it rates it very highly

It's been more than two years since the last American TV adaptation of a Woolrich novel or story, but more projects are in the pipeline. Ballantine Books' reprinting of all the author's major novels has stimulated considerable media interest, especially in view of cable television's hunger for new material. A remake of *Rear Window* is scheduled for broadcast on HBO, and other Woolrich-based films are likely to follow. If the mid-1980s witness a new Woolrich boom on the small screen, let's hope quantity is matched by quality.

CORNELL WOOLRICH AS ADAPTED FOR U.S. TELEVISION: CHRONOLOGY AND CREDITS

"Revenge." *Suspense,* CBS, March 1, 1949. Based on *The Black Path of Fear* (1944). Live, 30 minutes. With Eddie Albert, Margo.

"Three O'Clock." *The Actor's Studio,* ABC, March 31, 1949. Based on "Three O'Clock" (1938). Live, 30 minutes. With Steven Hill, Frances Reid, Philip Bourneuf.

"Silent as the Grave." *Silver Theater,* CBS, November 21, 1949. Based on "Silent as the Grave" (1945). Live, 30 minutes. With Marsha Hunt, George Reeves. Host: Conrad Nagel.

"Three O'Clock." *Mystery Playhouse,* ABC, December 1, 1949. Based on "Three O'Clock" (1938). Live, 30 minutes. Host: Boris Karloff.

"The Night Reveals." *Mystery Playhouse,* ABC, December 15, 1949. Based on "The Night Reveals" (1936). Live, 30 minutes. Host: Boris Karloff.

"Change of Murder." *Video Theatre,* NBC, May 21, 1950 Based on "Change of Murder" (1936). Live, 30 minutes. With Bernard Nedell, Charles Jordan, Alfred Hopson.

"I Won't Take a Minute." *Nash Airflyte Theater,* CBS, November 9, 1950. Based on "Finger of Doom" (1940). Live, 30 minutes. With Dane Clark. Host: William Gaxton.

"Three O'Clock." *Robert Montgomery Presents,* NBC, June 18, 1951. Based on "Three O'Clock" (1938). Live, 60 minutes. With Vaughn Taylor, Olive Deering, Robert Montgomery. Host: Robert Montgomery.

"Through a Dead Man's Eye." *Assignment Manhunt,* NBC, July 21, 1951. Based on "Through a Dead Man's Eye" (1939). Live, 30 minutes.

"I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes." *Robert Montgomery Presents,* NBC, October 22, 1951. Based on "I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes" (1938). Live, 60 minutes. With Vaughn Taylor, Katherine Squire. Host: Robert Montgomery.

"Lullaby." *Revlon Mirror Theatre,* CBS, October 3, 1953. Based on "Humming Bird Comes Home" (1937). Film, 30 minutes. With Agnes Moorehead, Tom Drake, Betty Lynn

"Wait for Me Downstairs." *Pepsi-Cola Playhouse,* ABC, October 9, 1953. Based on "Finger of Doom" (1940). Film, 30 minutes. With John Hudson, Allene Roberts.

"Summer Dance." *Revlon Mirror Theatre,* CBS, November 21, 1953. Based on "Death Between Dances" (1947). Film, 30 minutes. With Jane Greer, Barbara Bates

"The Loophole." *The Mask,* ABC, February 7, 1954. Based on "Three Kills for One" (1942). Live, 60 minutes Starring Gary Merrill and William Prince as series characters Walter and Peter Guilfoyle. With Brian Keith (Blake), Russell Hardy (Lt. Hardy), Audrey Christie (Rhea), Betty Garde (Mrs. Novak)

"The Chase." *Lux Video Theatre,* NBC, December 30, 1954. Based on the movie *The Chase* (1946), which in turn had been based on *The Black Path of Fear* (1944) Live, 60 minutes. With Pat O'Brien (Eddie), Ruth Roman (Lorna), James Arness (Chuck). Host: James Mason.

"Debt of Honor." *Stage 7,* CBS, February 20, 1955. Based on "I.O.U.—One Life" (1938). Film, 30 minutes. With Edmond O'Brien (Clinton Sturgess), Charles Bronson (Murray Forman), Wendy Winkleman (Barbara Sturgess), Laura Elliot (Martha Sturgess), Steve Pendleton (Hyland).

"Husband." *Ford Theatre,* NBC, October 13, 1955. Based on "Husband" (1949). Film, 30 minutes. With Barry Sullivan (Blaine Chandler), Mala Powers (Alma Alexander), Jonathan Hale (Dr. Stanley), Ralph Dumke (Sam), Frank Hanley (Dr. Bartlett).

"The Blue Ribbon." *Ford Theatre,* NBC, November 10, 1955. Based on "The Blue Ribbon" (1949). Directed by Ted Post from a teleplay by Richard Collins. Film, 30 minutes. With Scott Brady (O'Reilly), Gene Barry (Carp), Marjorie Rambeau (Mrs. O'Reilly), Stanley Adams (Shackley).

"Once Upon a Nightmare." *Fireside Theater,* NBC, January 3, 1956. Based on "Murder at Mother's Knee" (1941). Film, 30 minutes. With Jane Wyman (Emily Prince), David Kasday (Johnnie Gaines), Arthur Space (Paul Kendall), Vivi Janiss (Agnes Mason), Emile Meyer (Ed Mason).

"The Big Switch." *Alfred Hitchcock Presents,* CBS, January 8, 1956. Based on "Change of Murder" (1936) Directed by Don Weis from a teleplay by Richard Carr. Film, 30 minutes. With George Mathews (Sam), George E. Stone (Barney), Joseph Downing (Al), J. Edwards

(Ed), Beverly Michaels (Goldie), Mark Dana (Morgan) Host: Alfred Hitchcock.

"The Listener." *Four Star Playhouse*, CBS, February 2, 1956. Based on "The Case of the Talking Eyes" (1939) Teleplay by Frank L. Moss. Film, 30 minutes. With Ida Lupino (Vera Miller), Ralph Moody (Jarvis Miller), Walter Coy (Verne Miller), Richard Lupino (Jimmy), Nan Boardman(RoseSharon), Don Rickles(Announcer), PaulBryar(Lt. Casement).

"Sit Down with Death." *Climax!* CBS, April 26, 1956 Based on"AfterDinner Story" (1938). Teleplay byJames P. Cavanagh. Live and in color, 60minutes. With Ralph Bellamy (Philip Hardecker Sr.), William Talman (Joe MacKenzie), John Williams (Harold Johnson), Vicki Cummings (Liza Farley), Constance Ford (Ellen MacKenzie). Host: William Lundigan.

"Momentum." *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, CBS, June 24, 1956. Based on "Murder Always Gathers Momentum" (1940). Directed by Robert Stevens frorn a teleplay by Francis Cockrell. Film, 30 minutes. With Skip Homeier (Dick Paine), Joanne Woodward (Beth Paine), Ken Christy (A.T. Burroughs), Henry Hunter (Man from Finance Company), Mike Ragan (Cab Driver), Billy Newell (Charlie), Frank Kreig (Janitor). Host: Alfred Hitchcock

"The Guilty." *Lux Video Theatre*, NBC, October 11, 1956 Based on the movie *TheGuilty* (1947), which in turn had been based on "He Looked Like Murder" (1941). Live and in color, 60 minutes. With Ralph Meeker. Host: Gordon MacRae

"Rendezvous in Black." *Playhouse 90*, CBS, October 25, 1956. Based on *Rendezvous in Black* (1948). Live, 90 minutes. With Franchot Tone (Hugh Strickland), Laraine Day (Florence Strickland), BorisKarloff(Ward Allen), Tom Drake (Johnny Mark), Viveca Lindfors (Martine), Elizabeth Patterson (Mrs. Middleton). Host: Frank Lovejoy.

"The Earring." *General Electric Theater*, CBS, January 13, 1957. Based on "The Death Stone" (1943). Film, 30 minutes. With Greer Garson (Lydia Shaw), Eduard Franz (David Shaw), Philip Reed (Phil), Norman Lloyd (Johnny), Barney Phillips (Lt. Weil), Ruth Lee (Jane), Clark Howat (Milkman), Frank Wolff (Cab Driver), Host: Ronald Reagan.

"You Take Ballistics." *Heinz Studio 57*, syndicated. First New York broadcast February 10, 1957. Based on "You Take Ballistics" (1938). Film, 30 minutes. With Joseph Wiseman, Lee Marvin.

"Black Angel." *Lux Video Theatre*, NBC, March 28, 1957. Based on the movie *Black Angel* (1946), which in turn had been based on *TheBlack Angel* (1943). Live and in color, 60 minutes. With John Ireland, Marilyn Erskine. Host: Gordon MacRae.

"Cab Driver." *General Electric Theater*, CBS April 14, 1957. Based on "Cab, Mister?" (1937). Teleplay by John L. Greene. Film, 30 minutes. With Imogene Coca (Virginia Odell), Keenan Wynn (Sgt. Kelsey), Harry Shearer (Timmy), Joseph Downing (Lieutenant), Harry Bartell (Sheridan), Joyce Jameson (Blonde). Host: Ronald Reagan.

"The Night I Died." *George Sanders Mystery Theatre*, NBC, August 31, 1957. Based on "The Night I Died" (1936). Film, 30 minutes. With Howard McNear (Ben), Eve McVeagh (Thelma), Scotty Beckett (Darrell), Paul Gary (Nick), Benny Rubin (Morris), Ted Jacques (Police Chief). Host:GeorgeSanders

"Four O'Clock." *Suspicion*, NBC, September 30, 1957 Based on "Three O'Clock" (1938). Directed by Alfred Hitchcock from a teleplay by Francis Cockrell. Film, 60 minutes. With Nancy Kelly (Fran Steppe), E. G. Marshall (Paul Steppe), Richard Long (Dave), Tom Pittman (Joe), Dean Stanton (Bill), Charles Seel (Male Customer), Vernon Rich (Doctor), David Armstrong (Policeman), Juney Ellis (Mother), Jesslyn Fax (Wife), BrianCorcoran (Boy).Host: DennisO'Keefe.

"Bluebeard's Seventh Wife." *Schlitz Playhouse of Stars*, CBS, March 21, 1958. Based on "Bluebeard's Seventh Wife" (1936). Film, 30 minutes. With Ralph Meeker (Rich Adams), Phyllis Avery (Betty Mathews), Hugh Marlowe (Frank),Jackie Loughery(Flo)

"Post Mortem." *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, (CBS, May 18, 1958. Based on "Post Mortem" (1940). Directed by Arthur Hiller from a teleplay by Robert C. Dennis. Film, 30 minutes. With Joanna Moore (Judy Archer), Steve Forrest (Stephen Archer), James Gregory (Westcott) Host: Alfred Hitchcock

"Fire by Night." *Moment of Fear*, NBC, July 22, 1960 Based on "TheNight Reveals" (1936). Teleplay by David Davidson. Live and in color, 60 minutes. With Mark Richman (Harry Jordan), Fay Spain (Marie Jordan), Phyllis Hill (Ruth Minton), Frank Overton (Psychiatrist)

"Papa Benjamin." *Thriller*, NBC, March 21, 1961. Based on "Dark Melody of Madness" (1935). Directed by Ted Post from a teleplay by John Kneubuhl. Film, 60 minutes. With John Ireland (EddieWilson), JeanneBal (Judy), Jester Hairston (Papa Benjamin). Host: Boris Karloff.

"Late Date." *Thriller*, NBC, April 4, 1961. Based on "The Corpse and the Kid" (1935). Directed by Herschel Daugherty from a teleplay by Donald S. Sanford. Film, 60minutes. With Larry Pennell(Larry Weeks), Edward C. Platt (Jim Weeks), Jody Fair (Helen), Chris Seitz (Gordon). Host:Boris Karloff.

"Guillotine." *Thriller*, NBC, September 25, 1961. Based on "Men Must Die" (1939). Directed by Ida Lupino from a teleplay by Charles Beaumont. Film, 60 minutes. With Alejandro Rey (Robert Lamont), Danielle de Metz (Babette Lamont), Robert Middleton (M. de Paris). Host: Boris Karloff.

"The Black Curtain." *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, CBS, November 15, 1962. Based on *TheBlack Curtain* (1941) Directed by Sydney Pollack from a teleplay by Joel Murcott. Film, 60 minutes. With Richard Basehart (Phil Townsend), Lola Albright (Ruth), Lee Phillips (Frank Carlin), Harold J. Stone (Taxi Driver), James Farentino (Bernie). Host: Alfred Hitchcock.

"Jane Brown's Body." *Journey to the Unknown*, ABC, October 3, 1968 (at least in some parts of the United States). Based on "Jane Brown's Body" (1939). Directed by Alan Gibson from a teleplay by Anthony Skene. Film, 60 minutes. With Julie Harris, Stefanie Powers, Alan MacNaughton, SarahLawson,DavidBurke

You'll Never See Me Again. ABC, February 28, 1973 Based on "You'll Never See Me Again" (1939). Directed by Jeannot Szwarc from a teleplay by William Wood and Gerald DiPego. Film, 90 minutes, color. With David Hartman (Ned Bliss), Jane Wyatt (Mary Alden), Ralph Meeker (Will Alden), Jess Walton (Vickie Bliss), Joseph Campanella (Lt. John Stillman), Colby Chester (Bob Sellini), Bo Svenson(Sam).

"Guillotine." *Darkroom*, ABC, January 8, 1982. Based on "Men Must Die" (1939). Directed by Rick Rosenthal from a teleplay by Peter Allan Fields. Film, about 45 minutes, color. With Michael Constantine (M. de Paris), Patti d'Arbanville (Babette), France Bernard (Pierre). Host:JamesCoburn □

THE 3RD CONFLICT

The mystery novel, it has been said, is a mainstream novel turned backward. Stripped to bare bones, the mainstream novel has a protagonist in conflict with an antagonist. This conflict builds to a confrontation in which, usually, the conflict is resolved. The protagonist overcomes the antagonist and is, himself, changedthereby.

Regardless of where the author opens his story, the mystery novel really begins with the murder of the antagonist by the protagonist, who, by that act, has resolved his conflict and gained his immediate goal Completingthe pattern, by that act the protagonist is changed; he has becomea murderer.

Simultaneously there is a structural change: the protagonist becomes an antagonist, and a new character, the detective, takes over the role of protagonist

It is the function of the detective to relate the mainstream novel which came before: the story of the first conflict, the conflictwhich led to the murder. Thedetective puts together the scattered pieces of the puzzle,separates the relevant from the irrelevant, the trustworthy from the misleading, the true from the false. He slowly traces backward the path leading to the murder, following the clues of personality, circumstance, and physical evidence. He listens with the ear of a psychiatrist and the talents of a gypsy fortune-teller to the fragments of the story told him by interested parties and by disinterested, but possibly mistaken, witnesses. The detective hears different versions of the story from the suspects, statements which soundplausiblebut areclearlyself-serving and not necessarily complete or accurate.

Analyzing everything he has learned, for a lie may be as revealing as a truth, the new protagonist, the detective, must nowsynthesize themainstream novel, the events leading to the final confrontation, to the resolution of the first conflict. He must go back in

BY HERBERT RESNICOW

time, following twisted, andeven dead-ended, paths, until he comes to the crossroads, the *crux,* wherethe murderer, and the victim, too, chose the way which led inexorably to the murder. He must go back to the moment when, as in the Greek drama, the tragedy becameinevitable, foreordained.

The detectivethen retraces thepath he has found, this time forward, this time accurately and rapidly, putting everything in proper order. Following the thread that leads out of the forest, he reveals the story of the first conflict in the climax of the mystery novel: the dénouement, the final confrontation in which he destroys the murderer. This confrontation, this resolution of the second conflict, the conflict between the detective/protagonist and the murderer/ antagonist, isthemark of themystery.

If you go into any mystery bookshop, you will find whodunits, police procedurals, private eyes, hard-boileds, gothics, amateur detectives, juveniles, romances, historicals, horrors, and on and on and on. In fact, if you accept the premise of a mystery being a mainstream novel told backwards, there are as many mysteries possible as there are mainstream stories, for whichthemysteryfan givesthanks.

Some mystery novels may start at the moment of the murder, some may begin years before or years after the murder. In others, the first-conflict murder may occur near the end of the story, and, in still others, thefirst conflict may be barelyevident or even absent, existingonly implicitly. But in the sub-genre of the whodunit, the puzzle mystery, the pattern describedabove isadheredto rather closely. And it is the classic whodunit, surely the purest of the genre, which is the favorite of most readers, myself included. Certainly the whodunit is the oldest form of the modern mystery story, regardless of whether Poe or Doyle is considered the father of it all. And since the whodunit can be combined with any of the classifications of mysteries, the whodunit can be considered the foundation of the mystery story. If the second conflict, the mark of the mystery, is the search for the first conflict, for who did what and howand why, thenthe puzzle/solution form isat the coreofthe wholegenre.

It is clear that, in addition to the joys a good mystery offers, the whodunit provides yet another source of pleasure. This is the trial of intellect, the struggle between the detective and the murderer. There is, at the same time, the combat between the reader andthe murderer (which isalso a race between the detective and the reader). Ultimately, the whodunit is a contest between the reader and the author, with strict rules and ancient conventions. This contest is the third conflict: the mark of the whodunit.

The third conflict provides an additional dimension of complexity to a mystery. It brings the reader directly into the story and offers him the thrill of a challenge accepted and a battle won. And when the readersolvesthe puzzle, the how andthe why and the who, there is a glow of accomplishment, a sense of rightness, a satisfaction of justicedone, a completion of structure, and, afterward, the relaxation of tensions.

But, most importantly, the third conflict involves the reader; it is*his* conflict, *his*battle, *his* victory. In fact, excluding only hardcore pornography, there is no literary genre which involves the reader more directly, more deeply, and more intimately than the whodunit.

It is this third conflict which makes the whodunit the preferred source of indoor pleasure for the aficionado. To silence scoffers and doubters it is required only to quote this soon-to-be famous verse:

> Breathes there thebuff withsoul so dead
> Who never to his spousehathsaid,
> "Justeightmore pages,darling,
> Andthen I'll cometo bed"? □

'And I could tell it was a very personal film for him even while he was making it."—James Stewart

VERTIGO

AFTER SUCH KNOWLEDGE, WHAT FORGIVENESS?

By Louis Phillips

Vertigo *"is a complicated psychological plot with puzzling twists and turns that are never quite explained. Hitchcock refers to these often illogical moments as 'Icebox Talk Scenes,' meaning that they will be discussed and dissected by the audience while they are scouting the icebox for leftovers after the movie is over."*

—Michael Haley, *The Alfred Hitchcock Album*

Vertigo. Vertigo. From *vertere*, to turn. The film turns andtwists like the windingstaircasethat James Stewart twice climbs. The camera too (form following content) turns and twists, pulling back and zooming at the same time, producing vertigo in the beholder—i.e., that disordered state in which the individual or his surroundings seem to whirldizzily.

Even in love, with James Stewart as the detective and Kim Novak, theblondewith themysteriouspast, locked in long and passionate kiss, the effect is dizzying.

Loveitself produces thebest form of vertigo.

Love is the vertigowedesire.

Knowledge of good and evil is the vertigo we wish to avoid. The detective doesn't even desire to solve the case; the guilty party does not really wish to escape. Desire/avoidance. Avoidance/desire. *Vertigo* is avoidance/desire dramatized to the Nth degree.

We, the audience, also avoid and desire. Don't we want the man and woman to fall in love (*to fall*, yes), but don't we also desire the detective to discover the truthwhichwill effectively destroy his ability to love?

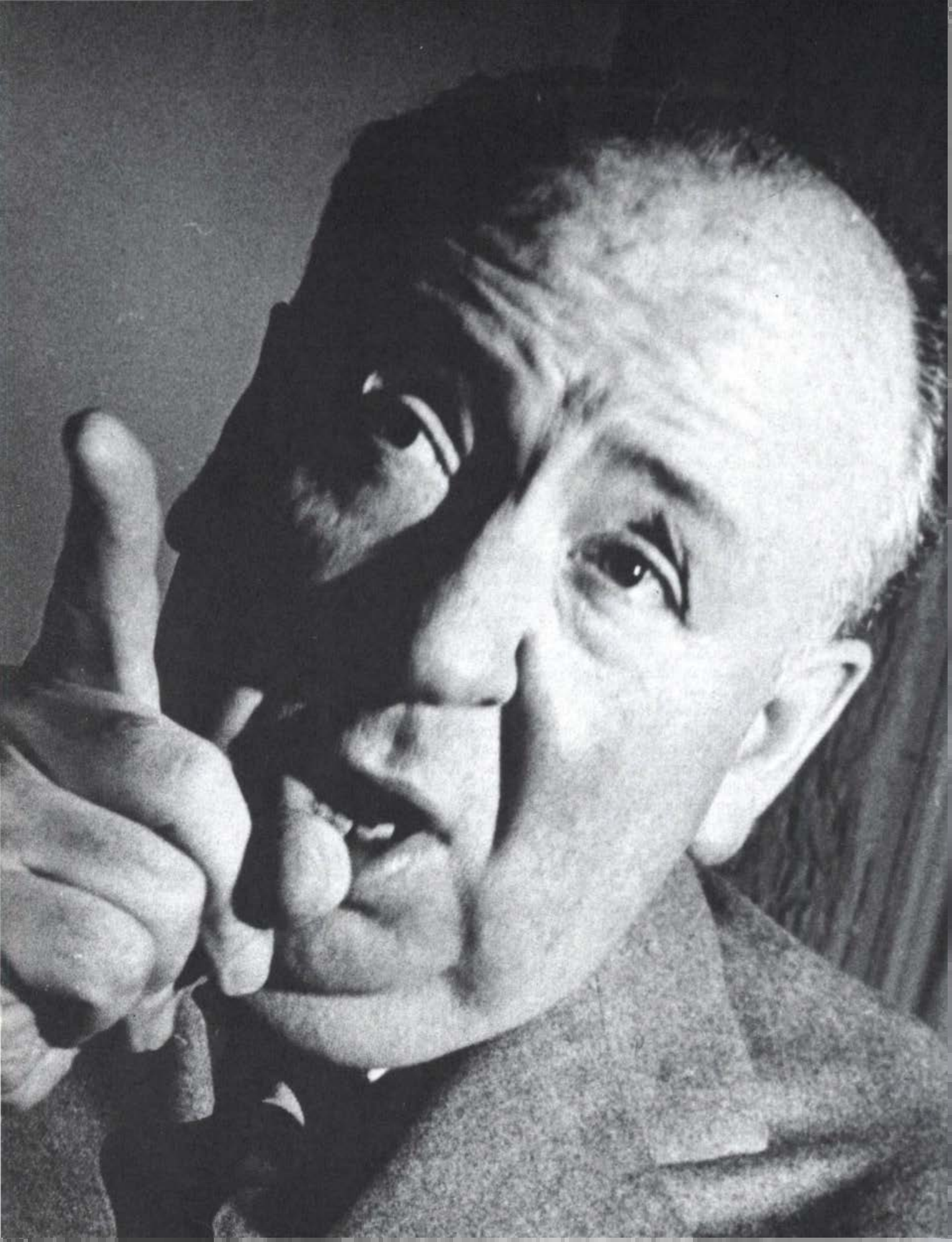
Aftersuch knowledge, what forgiveness?

[redacted] have long noted (as have Hitchcock's own [redacted] and audience) that *Vertigo* dramatizes [redacted] own need to create the mysterious blonde woman. John Russell Taylor wrote that "it is difficult not to notice a strangeand hardlycoincidental similarity between what James Stewart does to Kim Novak and what Hitch has done over and over again to his leading ladies,"[1] and, a few years after *Vertigo* was released, another of Hitchcock's blonde actresses, Tippi Hedren, remarked: "I had always heard that his idea was to take a woman—usually a blonde—and breakher apart, to see her shyness and reserve break down, but I thought this was only in theplots of his films."[2]

But, of course, it wasn't just in his films. It was in the dark night of Hitchcock's soul. To satisfy his need, no matter how complex or perverse that need might be, he would create the Woman. *Films and Filming* (July 1959) quoted Hitchcock on this theme:

> The conventional big-bosomed blonde is not mysterious Andwhat could be moreobvious than the old black-velvet and-pearls type? The perfect blonde, subtle, and Nordic, like Eva Marie Saint. How to achieve this mystery? By what shesays, even if she says it in circumspectways. By theway shedresses. Andmost especially by her actions.[3]

Subtle. And Nordic. But also erotic. In *Vertigo*, Midge—the detective's ex-fiancée and now good friend—is practical, but not erotic. She designs the perfect brassiere. Madeleine (Judy) wears no brassiere—a fact that is subtly emphasized by the shot in thedetective'sapartment in whichwe see Madeleine's clothes hung out to dry. No brassiere. Adolescent, you say, to mention it? Quite right. But notice the delight that Truffaut and Hitchcock take in dis-



cussingthatfact:

TRUFAUT: When you see Judy walking on the street, the tawnyhairand make-upconvey ananimal-likesensuality. That quality is accentuated, I suppose, by the fact that she wearsno brassiere.

HITCHCOCK: That's right, she doesn't wear a brassiere. As a matter of fact, she'sparticularly proud of that![4]

To whom are they referring? The actress? Or the character in the film? But in terms of the structure of *Vertigo,* Hitchcock has had his naughty joke. Why spend time discussing the perfect brassiere at the beginning of the film if the material can't be used somewhatlater? Or, in thiscase, notused.

"Suspense is like a woman. The more left to the imagination, the more the excitement. Audiences are more enjoyably scared when they think *about rather thanseemayhem."*

—Alfred Hitchcock

At the beginning of *Vertigo,* James Stewart is left hanging from the roof of a building; in the next scene, we see that Stewart has been saved, but we don't know how. In other words, we are now left hanging. We are left hanging throughout most of the film's improbabilities, but there is one point at which we are not left hanging: Hitchcock lets us know that Madeleine and Judyare indeed thesame person, and that Madeleine was part of a murder plot. It was not Madeleine who plummeted from the bell tower. Oh, no. It was the wife of the man who had hired the detective. More than once, Hitchcock has been criticized for giving away the surprise too soon. Penelope Houston, for example, when she reviewed thefilm, labeledthe flashback"curiouslytimed":

Thequestionof identity, central tothe novel, isdisposedof by Hitchcock in a brisk and curiously timed flashback, leaving only the secondary problem of how the hero, a detective whofirst tracks thegirl,then becomes obsessed by the memories of her, will react to the discovery of the truth.[5]

Secondary problem? It is *the* problem. It is the curiously timed flashback that gives the movie its strength, its character. It is the bravest aspect of the script. Hitchcock is not interested in surprise endings. Like many a master storyteller before him, Hitchcock is concerned with involving us not just with plot but with characteras well. He knew that the best suspense (from *suspendre*, to hang up) is produced by dramatic or tragic irony in which we, the audience, possess knowledge that the main character does not. Who would study *Oedipus Rex* closely if we discovered the truth when Oedipus does? Surprise endings have rarely been the ingredients of great literature. *Vertigo* may not be in the same league as *Oedipus Rex,* but at least it can withstand repeated viewings. *Vertigo* can withstand repeated viewings because it depends not upon logic (*Oedipus* also stands in spite of illogic) but upon the infinite capacity of the human heart to fool and to betrayitself, and yet to yearn forthatwhichis true.

Was it mere coincidence that the bestselling nonfiction book of 1956—The Search for Bridey Murphy, *telling of a hypnotist taking his patient back into memories of a previous existence—appeared just a year before* Vertigo? *I think not. Moviegoers in 1957 who were watching the first half of* Vertigo, *in which we are led to believe that a living person (Madeleine) could identify strongly with a woman from a previous existence, must have been reminded of the publicity surrounding* The Search for Bridey Murphy.

Vertigo and *Rear Window* are often compared because both films deal with obsession. (Who is the most dangerous person in society? The obsessed person. Society was not created for Dionysus.) In *Rear Window,* the photographer-turned-detective becomes obsessed with an evil that lurks not far from his own isolated world; in *Vertigo,* the detective becomes obsessed with love, with sexual desire, the yearning to know the woman. *Rear Window* is the eye looking out; *Vertigo* is the eye turned inward. In his excellent discussion of the film, critic Robin Wood has written:

One aspect of the theme of *Vertigo* is given us by Saul Bass's credit designs. We see a woman's face; the camera moves in first to lips, then to eyes. The faceis blank, masklike, representing the inscrutability of appearance: the impossibility of knowing what goes on behind the mask But the eyes dart nervously from side to side: beneath the maskare imprisoned unknownemotions, fears, desperation. The vertiginous spiralling movement begins in the depths of the eye, moving outwards as if to involve the spectator: before the film has begun, wearemade aware that *Vertigo* of the title is to be more than a literalfearofheights.[7]

The restless movement of the camera moves us closer and closer to the eye, until we enter the eye, and the eyetakes usdown and down and down, spiraling like the winding staircase at the Spanish mission. We experience a vertigo of our own before we are introduced to the vertigo of the main character.

"The theme of the 'double' has been very thoroughly treated by Otto Rank. He has gone into the connections the 'double' has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death; but he also lets in a flood of light on the astonishing evolution of this idea. For the 'double' was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, an 'energetic denial of the power of death,' as Rank says; and probably the 'immortal' soul was the first 'double' of the body."

— Sigmund Freud

For many viewers, *Rear Window* and *Vertigo* rank at the top of Hitchcock's work. If *Vertigo* is Hitchcock's finest film (and there are days when I think it is), it is because it is within these vertiginous images that Hitchcock meets Freud. The first half of *Vertigo* confronts the feeling of the "uncanny" head-on (Bridey Murphy on the streets of San Francisco), while the second half shows us a true mastery of the concept of suspense. In *Vertigo* (putting both halves together), Hitchcock has found a way to confront imaginatively and creatively the three themes that most obsessed him:

1. The Inherent Evil lurking in the world. A man or a woman, taking a wrong step, opening the wrong door, turning the wrong corner (or the right one at the wrong time) finds himself/herself in a world out of control. As a species, as fallen souls, we are inherently evil, not good. And the bad are not always punished. (After *Vertigo* has left the screen, many a spectator must be reminded that the murderer has gone free. And is not the detective responsible for the death of Madeleine/Judy? The detective has cured himself of vertigo — ah, but at what a price!)

2. The sexual theme. The world of eroticism (that braless world) which takes us out of ourselves and into ourselves. The desire to unite with another at any price. Moral codes break down. The detective loves Madeleine and desires Madeleine, even though Madeleine is married. Here is avoidance/desire, leading to repetition/compulsion. As Freud says, *repetition-compulsion* is "a principle powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of mind their daemonic character. . . [t]his inner *repetition-compulsion* is perceived as uncanny."[9] The detective in *Vertigo* will recreate his life with Madeleine at any cost. He will recreate his Madeleine just as Madeleine pretended to recreate Carlotta Valdes. What irony! It is the "Carlotta" necklace which unravels the secret of Judy's identity for Scottie. At the fashionable dress salon, the detective makes Judy dress like Madeleine:

SCOTTIE: It can't make that much difference to you this for me. *(To the saleswoman)* Now we would like to look at a dinner dress—short, black, with long sleeves and a square neck.

SALESWOMAN: My, you certainly do know what you want!

He certainly does know what he wants. He wants the past at the expense of the present. He wants Madeleine at the expense of Judy. He wants the dead over the living. He wants the dead to become alive again.

3. The fear of death. Perhaps it is Everyman's theme, though some persons might experience less fear of death than others. The theme is explicitly stated in *Vertigo*, when Madeleine and the detective visit the redwood forest:

ACOTTIE: Whatareyouthinkingabout?
MADELEINE: All the people who were born and died while thetreewentonliving.
SCOTTIE: Itsrealnameis Sequoiasemperviva.
MADELEINE: I don't like it . . . knowing I have to die.

If we didn't wish to live so much, there would be no suspense. Characters could easily give in to death. The cure for vertigo is simple—give into it and die. But the detective in *Vertigo* has a great need to live. He watches three persons fall to their deaths, but still he lives. He watches Madeleine jump into San Francisco Bay, and he fishes her out. He is the rescued, the rescuer, and then an executioner of sorts.

Perhaps an artist creates best out of his or her own obsessions. In *Vertigo,* the characters reflect Hitchcock's own concerns, his own fears, his own beliefs, so that the film transcends mere entertainment. In place of a surpriseending, it offers us true mystery. The key to Hitchcock's life and art surely lurks in *Vertigo,* though we as mere mortals may never open the lock. Like an uncanny experience, it provides us with a kind of knowledge. Alas, it offers no forgiveness.

Notes

1. John Russell Taylor, *Hitch: The Life and Work of Alfred Hitchcock* (1978), p. 243
2. Quoted by Donald Spoto in *The Dark Side of Genius* (1983), p. 457. Spoto also shares the same insight: *Vertigo* "was his ultimate disclosure of his romantic impulses and of the attraction-repulsion he felt about the object of those impulses, the idealized blond he thought he desired but really believed to be a fraud" (p. 395).
3. "Alfred Hitchcock Talking," in *Films and Filming* (July 1959), p. 7.
4. François Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (1967), p. 188
5. Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films* (1977), p. 78
6. Penelope Houston, "Review of *Vertigo,*" in *Sight and Sound* (Autumn 1958). p. 319.
7. Wood, p. 78
8. Sigmund Freud, *On Creativity and the Unconscious* (1958), p. 141
9. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

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THE UNIQUE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

PART IX

HUGO GERNSBACK'S SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY

By Robert A. W. Lowndes

John Ruger's cover for the September issue shows a pigtailed, scraggly-mustached Chinese, somewhat suggesting Fu-Manchu, wearing a green mandarin hat. There is a grimace on his face; his teeth are showing and he clutches his throat with one hand. A telephone is dropping from his other. On a small table beside him, we see two ornate backscratchers, one of them with a gleaming jewel inset; over the table is an automatic in another person's hand, pointed at the Chinese. The red background shows the outlines of a Chinese dragon, apparently a tapestry.

That cover illustrates Dr. David H. Keller's story, "Menacing Claws," which is another adventure of Taine of San Francisco. When I first looked at it, then at the interior illustration, I thought that this was the story about Taine and the hidden monster that was alluded to at the beginning of "Burning Water" in the June issue. Why, then, had the apparently later story been published first? Why, because the May cover had also depicted a Chinese and even at the time I realized that you wouldn't want to have two successive covers on a magazine so similar—unless the magazine was devoted to oriental stories; having three other-type covers in a row between May and September made better sense. Anyway, nothing had been lost, as the reference told us nothing about the "hidden monster" tale except that Taine had disguised himself as a Chinese, and came through at the end—hardly a giveaway.

The editorial this time, "Crime Prevention," urges that children be instructed from an early age in the abhorrence of crime and the fear of becoming criminals by showing them graphically what happens to criminals who are caught and convicted.

> If teachers would read to their classes from newspapers every day about convictions and sentences of criminals and impress upon the young mind that crime never pays under any form or circumstances, the minds of a new generation could be fixed in such a way that within a few generations crime would no longer be the major problem that it is today.
>
> It seems the United States Government could easily get up weekly bulletins of a nature to be understood by every young child, that would prove highly effective.
>
> Children are particularly impressed by pictures and charts. Such charts could easily be made up and presented in colors in that weekly bulletin. Then, of course, we have the motion picture, where excellent instruction could be had by throwing on the screen actual punishment of criminals, particularly such cases as actual electrocutions, hangings, etc. This may not be a pretty subject to show children, but we should not be too squeamish about it, as the powerful impression made on the youthful mind will last for many years and prove a powerful deterrent in those who later on may have criminalistic tendencies. Visits to prison by the entire school classes would also be a powerful object lesson, not likely to be forgotten very soon.

The artwork in this issue was back to the type of illustration that we'd been seeing in earlier issues; I can still remember my relief upon seeing it. Now it was only the front cover that appeared garish and cheap.

Professor Nathaniel Caldwell, who solved the riddle of "The Mind Machine" in the July issue, is with us again in the lead-off story, "The Temple of Dust." The culprit is a scientist, as in the earlier case, Caldwell suspects. It seems that the mayor has received a warning that he will die at eight o'clock this present evening; Sergeant O'Leary and the police are at their posts guarding him. Shortly after eight, Caldwell receives a phone call: the mayor has been blown up. It proves to have been a really terrific explosion and no bomb was found in the house beforehand.

O'Leary says that he and his men were outside the room when it happened. They had heard some shots in other parts of the house, and were investigating. Policeman O'Brien, who was guarding outside the window, testifies, when asked what he saw:

> "Nothin' much. I glanced in just in time to see the mayor look out the window, cough, start to get out of his chair, and light his cigar lighter while he did it. When it lit, every-

thing went black and went everywhere. The windows blew out and I ducked around the house."

The mayor, of course, was about to light the cigar that O'Brien saw in his mouth. All the windows were tightly closed. Caldwell asks O'Brien if he noticed any expression on the mayor's face as he began to get out of his chair. O'Brien testifies that he looked as if something were hurting him. "His eyes were part closed and he seemed to have trouble breathing." O'Leary had already stated, when asked if he smelled anything; "Yes. Not exactly a smell, but it sort o' choked me up an' cut my lungs like a knife. I liked to have passed out when I got here."

Caldwell is not baffled for a moment as to the means of the murder. He notes that the investigation will be more of a job for detectives than for science "although science was used to commit the murder. The only thing that science can really do is to explain how Mayor Whitmoore died."

"The odor which you describe, Sergeant O'Leary, is evidently that of chlorine gas. The city uses that same chlorine to purify the water in a mixture or compound called sodium hypochlorite. The gas itself is not in itself explosive, but when in combination with oxygen, it is dangerous."

When the police went looking for the "shots" heard just before the big bang, they found exploded tin cans. Caldwell's explanation covers that as he continues:

"Many chlorine compounds are highly explosive when heated, subjected to concussions such as dropping, and subjected to fire. The chlorine dioxide is more explosive than chlorine monoxide and chlorine heptoxide than either of them. I believe, however, the chlorine dioxide was used to kill the mayor and to explode all of those tin cans. It is the more explosive gas, and we know a gas was used. If the oil had been used the flame would have to be applied to the liquid, which is confined. A gas permeates everything it can reach

"You will remember that every door and window in that room was closed. The chlorine dioxide was pumped into the room until the odor of chlorine became too strong for the mayor. O'Brien says he got out of his chair and started toward the window. As he rose, he lit his cigar lighter, which exploded the gas "

We'll skip the brief paragraph that explains why chlorine dioxide is so explosive, and that concludes the scientific part of the story. We find that the mayor's wife was away at the time of the murder; tearing down walls uncovers pipes whereby the gas was pumped into the room, and we learn that extensive decorations had been added to the house that last summer. One of the workmen involved actually saw the pipe before it was walled up and wondered about it, but assumed that the plumbers or whoever knew what they were doing. Since the mayor was a very rich man, we see that the best suspect is a possible heir and it's also apparent that someone the mayor knew, and who had the run of the house, had to plant the little bombs which would be used to distract the police from the room before it was filled with gas

The mayor's wife is apparently in Los Angeles—they find a letter signed by her, but a handwriting expert declares that the handwriting, while similar to genuine letters from the woman, is not the same. It's clear that we have a rather involved plot here, and that the culprit went to considerable expense to carry out the murder.

A little later, Caldwell gets a telephone call from an unknown who says that the solution to the mystery can be found in the Temple of Dust—an abandoned roadhouse that had a long and unsavory history. Since the story rapidly runs down hill once the explanation of the murder method is finished, there's no point in not getting directly to the solution. At the Temple of Dust our detectives meet three men who explain that they are members of the German Secret Service, on the trail of a terrorist gang which committed similar atrocities in Germany some years before. It turns out that the mayor's wife is a member of the gang, and so are O'Leary and O'Brien. The gas was pumped in from a nearby house, where the mayor's wife actually has been staying. (It was her sister who wrote the letter from Los Angeles.) There remains only one small question: if the mayor had not lit his cigar at eight o'clock, how would the explosion have been brought off on time?

Elementary! Remember that we have only one person's testimony to the effect that the mayor started to light a cigar: Patrolman O'Brien, watching from outside the window. What actually happened was that O'Brien was smoking a cigar, waiting for the mayor to show signs of distress that would indicate the room was saturated sufficiently. O'Brien raised the window slightly, tossed in his glowing cigar butt, and hit the ground. There was hardly enough left of the window to show whether it had really been shut tight at the moment of the explosion, nor was it open long enough to allow significant dissipation of the gas.

The only remaining mystery is why the story is placed in the future when everything that happens could so easily have taken place in the present. That's simple, too; the first Caldwell case does involve super-science beyond the level of the present (not only 1930, but even 1984), so another story about the same detective team has to take place circa 2000 A.D

But why didn't the author use different characters, appropriate to the present? Aaaargh! I have answered three questions, and that is enough

"The Black Cabinet," by Henry Leverage is a light-hearted tale. One Frontenac, not too long out of prison but well arrned with fake credentials, answers an advertisement for an experienced and honest

butler for an eccentric recluse who has a secluded estate at Lake George. "You doubtless are aware," his new employer, Hamilton, says, after examining the references, "that I am the inventor of several dangerous devices. My former butler was shocked withsevenhundred and fifty volts—whenhe placed a finger in one invention. For all I know, he's running yet. Helefthis clothes, which youmaywear."

It seems that Hamilton's latest device is a time machine. Frontenac says, "If these references are satisfactory, I would like to be placed in the furthermost part of the house from the machinery. They don'tinterest me a bit, I wouldn't knowwhich end of a pair of pliers to use, sir. I'm very unmechanical." The author adds: "Frontenac was rated in several rogue's galleries as the electrical sharp. He could phantom-circuit a bucket-shop wire or arc a hole through three inches of chrome steel on the door of a strong-box."

The under-butler and the rest of the servants are in a nervousstate, to saythe least.

"It's the Time Machine in the basement that's got me shaky. First the master had a howler operating down there that frightened all the servants away except the cook, a waitress, the butler, and me. Now he's got blue sparks shooting out one window and coming in another. That's why Jones quit. He stopped a spark. . . ."

". . . . He entertains queer looking engineers that come up from New York—and sometimes greasy mechanics. He's trying to sell rights to the Time Machine. A Mr. Elliott, a broker, comes up Wednesday."

Frontenac bent over his bag. Details of the invention, with the exception of a secret cabinet, had been published in the electrical journals. The inventor claimed to see into the immediate future. The papers admitted that he had discovered something new.

When he sees the chauffeur, however, he recognizes an old acquaintance: BigEd Hawleyof Sing Sing. It's obvious that Big Ed is here to steal the invention for someone. Then the under-butler comes in with the news that Mr. Hamilton is missing. "He's gone. His glasses were on the basement stairs headingoutward. There was a bit of his working scarf on a rosebush. And—he'sbeentothe shorenearthe boat-house."

Frontenac decides that he'd better become a detective right away. Big Ed is notorious for messing things up. Further inquiry shows that Hamilton may have left voluntarily to go on one of his experimental trips; a motorboat is missing and they hear a *put-put* sound down the lake.

Frontenac has an extra lock put on the door to the basement, but an infernal racket in the night shows that Big Ed has managed to get in. The [illegible] is sending out noises that shatter glass and is emitting flashes. Frontenac finds Big Ed in the basement and correctly deduces that he has turned The Howler on to scare the servants away. Big Ed tells Frontenac that Hamilton is safe—on an island up the Narrows. "He can't get away from there until I fetch him. I told him, for a stall, that some people were putting up wireless there. He thought they were trying to tap in on his machine. That ain't kidnappin'!"

So the two genial crooks are there alone. Frontenac talks Big Ed out of trying to force the black cabinet, which is the core of the Time Machine. He tells him that his (Big Ed's) employers will only give him a few thousand for the machine, while if they work it themselves they can make a pile.

"There's a broker coming here to lease rights to it. Perhaps he wants to beat the stock market. We'll rent it to him for forty thousand dollars. I'll wear Hamilton's clothes—and be Hamilton. He's just my size. You be the butler. The old butler was almost your size. His clothes will fit you. Then—by the time the broker arrives—I'll have the Time Machine working for a demonstration."

The broker arrives, and by now Frontenac has the Time Machine apparently all set for a demonstration. As the test, Frontenac tells Elliott that he'll hear the closing quotations of the New York Stock Exchange one hour before the close. "There's a low speaker in the cabinet. At two o'clock you'll get the three o'clock quotations. You can also see the brokers in the Exchange. That is, if you're optically receptive." Elliott replies that he'll believe his ears more than his eyes.

Frontenac has drawn up an agreement whereby Elliott will lease the machine for a specified time, at $40,000, [illegible] demonstration [illegible] him He signs the agreement (he has brought the money with him) and they have a little drink overthe agreement. Frontenac tells Big Ed to stand by the door and not let anyone else come into the library where the Time Machine is.

There has been a previous arrival, a 19-year-old girlwhosayssheis Hamilton's niece. She's neverseen her uncle before, but many years ago her father loaned Hamilton $30,000. Now she and her widowed mother are in need andshe hopes to get someof the money back. Big Ed regards her as dangerous, knowing that Frontenac is the kind of man that a woman could reform—if he met the right one.

Thedemonstrationstarts:

". . . Now Mr. Elliot, come to the machine. Take this chair. Relax! What do you see? What do you hear?" Frontenac twisted the dials.

"I don't see anything—except sparks on the plate. I hear quotations in the air from Dow's place broadcasting. C.B.Q. off an eighth. Little Steel up a point. Pressed Car Foundries nineteen and a quarter—"

"Look at your watch," ordered Frontenac.

"Two-seven quotations." Elliott's forehead touched the ground glass. "I'm beginning to see things. What are they? It's what I see every day—stock market—traders."

"You're gaining on time. Do you hear the two-thirty quotations?" Frontenac's voice was impressively low. "It's

two-forty now. It's two-fifty. Listen." Clammy sweat beaded Elliott's brow. He swayed in the chair. Frontenac gripped his arm. "Steady! Concentrate! What quotations do you hear now? You've beaten time!" Frontenac pulled out the broker's watch. "Can't you see you've conquered the market? It's only two-twelve—actual time. The reports coming in are closing ones. Hear them—forty-eight minutes before they are actually sent in the air."

"Pencil—paper," Elliott gasped. "My head is going round. I want to nail those quotations."

A click sounded in the Black Cabinet. The light upon the ground-glass plate faded. The low-speaker was silent. Elliott swayed outwardly. He grasped Frontenac's shoulder. "What time have you?" he mumbled. "My time shows two-fifteen. I heard the Market's close. I heard it at two-twelve, thirteen, fourteen. Wait. I've got the figures. They must be wrong."

Frontenac became indignant. "Do you question my invention—or do you believe in it?"

Elliott spied a lounge and staggered for it—too dizzy to stand erect. His fingers coiled the notations he had made on the paper. He tried to read them, his watch dangled from his vest pocket. Again he consulted it and swayed from side to side. Back went his head. Frontenac replaced the watch.

"Brandy!" Frontenac called to Big Ed Hawley. "Fetch brandy, quickly! The shock has stunned Mr. Elliott."

"See here," Elliott muttered. He had swallowed Frontenac's offering, neat. "See here, Hamilton! My time showed the Market's closed now. I can prove if that machine worked or not. I've got you—or you've got my forty thousand dollars! Have you a phone? I want to check up on those quotations!"

"There's a phone on the desk."

Elliott sputtered into the mouthpiece. "Give me Hanover 0927. New York! Yes! Hanover 0927. Yes. This you, Gertrude? Get Haskell on wire. This is Elliott. Quick! Hello Haskell. What did General Motors close at? What's closing on Westinghouse? What— What— Repeat! Are you sure?"

The paper crumpled in Elliott's hand. He hung up. "I'll take the Time Machine," he said to Frontenac. "Our agreement stands. You'll have to go through with it. Here's the money. Count them! Call my chauffeur. The machine goes in my car. Who'll connect it up—in New York?"

"Any radio engineer." Frontenac pocketed the bills. Big Ed cautiously blocked the door. "Call the chauffeur," commanded Frontenac. "Help him out with the machine. There's full writing instructions inside it."

Exit Mr. Elliott. Frontenactells Big Ed to bringBetty Booth downstairs. He wants to give her something andsee her safely out. So they seeMiss Betty off and Big Ed says,now howaboutthis split?

"You get just what I get—our commission for this job. That's two thousand each—ten percent. The law allows us that for dealing with Elliott. Here's your two thousand. I gave the rest to Betty Booth. I signed her father's contract with Hamilton—marking it paid in full. I took her receipt. She went away with thirty-six thousand dollars. It belongs to her mother."

Frontenac has carefully unloaded Big Ed's gun, and finally convinces him that it hasn't been a bad deal. There remains the question of whether the time machine really works, and what Frontenac actually didduringhe "demonstration."

"I found veronal in that rosewood case—along with other drugs Hamilton uses. I put some in Elliott's glass. He was groggy when he sat in the Time Machine. He saw things on the ground glass. That was suggestion—optical retentions from his brain. The quotations were legitimate ones—received from Dow's broadcast. I set his watch back—then I set it forward again. He didn't notice that."

So the caper comes to a happy conclusion for all except the inventor, but we do have another reader-cheater here. Was the Time Machine a fake? Would Hamilton have used similar means to con Elliott, or...?

In "The Duel in the Dark," by Edwin Balmer and William McHarg, we are spared the usual introduction of some electronic device that gives the culprit away. This is straight deduction based upon the evidence and a specialized knowledge of guns, cartridges, and weights. At first it looks as if Neal Sheppard has murdered his brother, but Trant uncovers evidence that it was actually a duel in a dark room. The only question remaining to be solved is whether it was a fair one. Trant proves that it was not so intended; the man who was killed had rigged up dud and dummy bullets for his opponent's rifle, but the intended victim outsmarted him. An interesting scientific detective puzzle, but dragged out far too much—although, if memory doesn't betray me, perhaps not more than some of the cases of Dr. Thorndike.

"Menacing Claws" has all the tongue-in-cheek charm of Dr. Keller's other "Taine of San Francisco" stories, with just anough suspense to carry the reader through the absurdities. Two of the Chief's best men, assigned to solve the riddle of opium smuggling in San Francisco's Chinatown, die very unpleasantly of tetanus. The man they were investigating is Ming Kow, but the police have nothing to go on except suspicion. Now Washington is interested; one of their agents has died of tetanus, too.

Taine takes [illegible] assignment, despite the Chief's pointed doubts of his ability, and first goes to his old college library andreads everything he can find about tetanus. That night he remembers something he had read about it in the past: Angora kittens had been sent to a lady as a gift, but their claws had been coated with a boullion containing tetanus germs. The kittens had scratched the lady playfully and the lady had died.

Taine decides against trying any disguise whatsoever. He starts out with ten thousand dollars in his pocket. (Taine has ample funds—he doesn't have to take new cases unless they interest him. This one does.)

It did not take him long to find the shop presided over by the suspected Chinaman.[2] The window was like a dozen

others on the same street. There were ivory elephants, some packages of tea, a few pieces of china, and a vase, which held a number of long sticks, each of which ended in a small ivory hand, the fingers outstretched but flexed at the terminal portion

"Back scratchers!" Taine said to himself.

Taine goes to other places, as well as to a jewelry store, and spends five thousand dollars. We read only that his next three days were busy ones. Then he goes back to Ming Kow's store, enters the store, and introduces himself.

"My name is Taine. Are you Ming Kow?"

"I am Ming Kow."

"You speak very good English."

"I was educated in Oxford."

"I am not surprised. Did you learn to play poker there?"

"I did. Have you come to play with me?"

"Yes. Can I see you privately?"

"Yes. Will you honor me by entering my humble abode?"

The room they entered was simply but richly furnished The Oriental placed a table in the middle of the room, a chair on either side and an unopened deck of cards on the table.

"Be seated," he urged

Taine slowly picked up the cards and placed them on the floor. From his pocket he carefully drew a long object, wrapped in tissue paper. Then he started to talk.

"As a personality you are interesting to me; so I wanted to meet you. You have made it easy to do so. In preparation for this visit I have selected a present which inadequately expresses my admiration for your unique personality. As you see, when I remove the paper, it is a back scratcher, but a trifle different from the ones you have on display in your window. I trust you will honor me by accepting this trifle."

Ming Kow picked up the stick and slowly scrutinized it.

"It is very lovely," he said at last. "If the diamond is genuine, it must have cost a great dea "

"The diamond is genuine."

"I can accept it only under one condition. That you allow me to give you one in exchange." He excused himself and left the room. He returned in a few minutes with a [illegible]

"I hoped you would think of that. It shows me that you are a perfect gentleman," exclaimed Taine

"Due, I trust, to my ancestry as well as to my Oxford training, I carry with my other valuables a back scratcher of great antiquity. The hand was carved by a famous artisan three thousand years before the advent of your Christ Many an Emperor has allayed his cutaneous irritation by the use of its cunningly curved fingers. Tradition states that it was sent as a present to Nero and that he used it when he attended the sanguinary Circus. May I present this trifle to you as a slight token of my appreciation of your valuable present?"

And now the two ivory back scratchers lay on the table, side by side. They were both beautiful in their individual way, but there was something esthetically lovely in the old implement that was lacking in the newer one. The two men looked at each other, and then at the back scratchers. Ming Kow sighed.

"You appreciate beauty. I am sorry that you have to die. I know a great deal of you. If you wish, I will adopt you as my son and you can live in luxury the rest of your life, finally honoring me by daily placing flowers on my tomb."

"You know a great deal about me?"

"Yes. You are Taine of San Francisco. I thought that you were a young fool, but the way you come here and play poker with me shows that you are a brave man and very wise."

"Are we playing poker?"

"We are."

Taine reached into his hip pocket and drew out some paper money. He patiently smoothed out and placed in a row five $1,000 bills

"I bet five thousand."

The Chinaman reached in the folds of his gown, took out some money, and threw it in a crumpled ball on the table.

"I will cover that and raise you five."

"Done!" he exclaimed. "Now, how about the bet?"

"Well, what shall we bet on?" asked Ming Kow, almost jovially.

Taine explains that he is a fatalist. Dr. Keller has made it clear in earlier stories that Taine is a convinced Presbyterian, who apparently has made a thorough study of Calvinism, with its predestinary teachings, so that statement isn't just something that Taine is saying on the spur of the moment to impress Ming Kow. He says that he had tried to stay away, but it was no use.

"...I am confident that one of us will be dead within the next two weeks. Perhaps I will be dead in the next hour! But I am betting you ten thousand that you will be the corpse and that I will live for many more years. I like you, in a way, but if one of us has to die, I trust that it will be you. Still, that is all decided. I suggest that we isolate ourselves in a room. You give orders that we are not to be disturbed. We will eat and sleep there and talk to each other about the culture that was once Greece, the glory that was once Rome, and the honor that can never depart from China. When one of us dies, the other walks out. Do you play poker?"

"I do! The game you suggest is most interesting. Place the twenty thousand in your pocket. If you win, it will be there; if I win, I can remove it." He called a servant in and gave several rapid orders. Then he turned to Taine.

"We will go to my bedroom. There are two beds there and we will be undisturbed. Meals will be placed at the door regularly. If I die, you will be permitted to walk out Come with me."

"Do not forget the back scratchers."

"I never intended to," answered the Oriental as he picked them up and led the way into the bedroom

One can imagine the scene and the ensuing duel as played by Boris Karloff, though it's harder to think of an old-time actor who would have made a good Taine. (Richard Barthelmess, perhaps?) We need a more-or-less nondescript person with something of a baby face and of short stature. It's a pity that no tapes were made of the conversations; one gathers that they would be on a par with the dialogues of Plato.

Once there, at Ming Kow's suggestion, they strip to the waist, and settle themselves comfortably in piles of cushions on the floor. Ming Kow explains that he had decided to withdraw from society for a while, as he has many enemies. This visit will enable him to do

soenjoyablyand win ten thousand dolla rs. "But first letus beginthis strange friendshipin a truly Oriental way. You scratch my back and I will scratch yours." The re is an art in scratching, he says, to produce delicate red lines without drawing a drop of blood. So Taine scratches Ming Kow's back with the scratcher he has brought and receives the manda rin's compliments for an excellent operation; then Ming Kow gives Taine a treat with the scratcher he has presented to his guest.

At the end of fifteen minutes the backs of both men were distinctly reddened by the ivoryclaws

"Now we will allow the cool air to pay homage to our scratches," exclaimed the Chinaman. "We will sit here and talk aboutthe philosophyof fatalism."

After that came four very wonderful days

The food, drink, and other accommodations are superb. On the fifth day, Taine starts to grin and complains that his jaws feel stiffand that it is hard for him to move his neck. He starts to move around the room restlessly. Ming Kow urges him to lie down.

"My dear friend, I am sorry to inform you that you are showing the early symptoms of a disease known as tetanus or lockjaw. I suspected as much when you so often smiled yesterday. I fear that in some way you have suffered an abrasion of theskin andhavebecome infected."

Tainestarted to laughand before he could utter a sound hisbody becamerigid.

"I guess youwinthe ten thousand," hesaid.

"I am afraid so. I fear that you are going on the same longjourney that Stokerand McClaudy and the gentleman fromWashington traveled. Can I do anything tomake your lasthours morecomfortable?"

"Yes.Since I have to die, at least relieve my curiosity by telling me how you smuggle the opium. Then I can die satisfied"

Ming Kow tells him and it takes most of the night, during which, at times, Taine appears to be unconscious. Ming Kow picks him up gently and places him on one of the beds. But Ming Kow himself isn't feeling too well. He cannot sleep.

. . . At four A.M. the yellow man poured himself a glass of wine but the first swallow was shot out of his mouth as thoughfrom a gun. He triedagainand again, and againthe muscles of deglutition went into a spasm. He sat down on his bedand tried to think. More and more he found that it was hardto breathe.

"I'm sick," he thought. "But it is not tetanus. Taine is dyingof tetanus, but I am sick in a differentway."

When he turns on the light, themuscles of his throat and chest go into spasms, relieved only when the room is in darkness again. At daylight, he walks slowly to the telephone, determined tocall a doctor.

. . Trembling, he picked up the receiver—and heard a voicebehindhim.

"The agreement was to stayhere tillone died. I do not recall anythingabout the use of telephones."

It was a cold, hard voice. Ming Kow turned. There was Taine and Taine's eyes were cold and hard and the little man had a revolver in his hand.

The Chinaman put down the phone.

"That was the agreement," he admitted. "But I thought youweredead."

"I am not; and I am staying here till the poker game is finished. Have a drink?"

"Yes. NO!! Damn you!! What did you do to me?"

The telephone scene, of course, is what we saw on the cover, although the artist gives Taine an automatic rather than a revolver and the copy editor didn't change the story to fit. Taine watches until six o'clock that night when Ming Kow dies, and walks out with the money and the two backscratchers. He loses no time in getting to the chief with the news of Ming Kow's demise and the ingenious way in which the opium was smuggled.

How did Taine do it? What did he do to Ming Kow?

Taine assumed that Ming Kow made good and consistent use of tetanus antitoxin and took care to protect himself in advance. He had studied the symptoms of tetanus carefully and, at the proper time, acted them out convincingly enough. (We learned in earlier stories that Taine was a very good amateur actor in college and had often deceived experts in variouspranksand disguises.)

"I knew that I was fighting against time and that he was going to be suspicious if my symptoms didn't develop on time. I started to imitatea case of tetanus. That was one of my worst trials. I had never seen an actual case; so I had to read every description I could find and then duplicate the descriptions. I worked at that for three days in my hotel before I felt that I could put it across. Well, at any rate, I did it well enough to satisfy him that I was dying from tetanus and that threw him off his guard. Then when he thought I was dying he became sick and actually died"

"But I thought you said he had protected himself by takingantitoxin?"

"He had; but he died of hydrophobia. He was not protected against rabies. . . . Ming Kow was rather wise in regard to tetanus, but he had overlooked the fact thatother germs could be used in the same way."

One hopes that Taine lost no time in disinfecting both of the back scratchers that he kept as souvenirs of the case. But we can be sure he did, because this was one of his early cases, before theChiefwas really convinced that Taine was a detective, and later ones show him happily married andwith daughters.

In "The Body That Wouldn't Burn," by Arthur B. Reeve, it appears at first that Craig Kennedy is up against a case of that fascinating phenomenon known as spontaneous human combustion, and we get interesting details aboutsuch reported cases; but in the end, the scientificangle isthat of scientifictests

that can prove whether a blood spot—even one which has apparently been wiped away—is human or non-human blood. I'd say that this tale is exactly right for theintentions of the magazine.

"The Carewe Murder Case" is by Ed Earl Repp, who was another author whose science fiction career began with a Gernsback Publication (*Science Wonder Stories),* but Repp had sold other types of fiction before—he was mainly a Western story writer. At any rate, this two-part serial, blurbed as "Did death come through the Nth dimension to strike down the eminent Dr. Carewe?" is not only a reader-cheater, but is one of the most laughable examples of free-wheeling melodrama that I've read in either science fiction or detective magazines. However, I will not inflict my possibly perverted sense of humor on you now; Repp meant it seriously, I'm sure.

"Undertones of Death" is a reasonably clever scientificdetective mysterywherein thelow tones of a piano cause a secret panel to open and a pistol concealed there to project itself and fire. The victim always sits on that particular chair, in theexactsame spot, night after night, when his niece plays the piano for him, and she always includes a certain minuet which contains the fatal tone that sets off the mechanical device. For its time, it's quite ingenious; thereader has tobelievethatthe amateurinvestigator isequallyas erudite and ingenious as theculprit—but that is one of the things we have to accept in short stories of this nature; otherwise, we can't have a game.

In "The Reader's Verdict," one correspondent wants to know how a scientific detective can find clues in a bullet; the editorgives somespecific details inanswer. Anotherindicates that at least some of the readers were aware that the Craig Kennedy, as well as the Luther Trant, stories were reprints, having read them before and suggested that further reprints be held off for a few issues.

The editor is very pleased that a young reader lists "psychological" in third place in the list of types of story he likes best. That youngreader would become rather well known in years to follow—Forrest J. Ackerman. Another reader objects vehemently to white backgrounds on the cover, but the best criticism this time is something that (alas) didn't occur to me even when I re-read the story in question before starting this survey. Thirteen-year-old Neal Oakley notes, about "Horror House" in the July issue, that a python would devour its victim after killing it. How absurdly simple![3]

Under "Book Reviews," we have *The Mark of the Rat* by Arnolds Frederick, *Inspector Kennedy,* a play by Milton Herbert Gropper and Edna Sherry, as presented at the Bijou Theatre (one assumes somewhere in New York City, though that is not specified), and *The Scarab Murder Case* by S. S. Van Dine. The unidentified reviewer feels that this latest Philo Vance novel, though good, is not up to the level of the first four, and, while still remaining fond of it, I have to agree. Two scientific crime notes round out the text of this issue.

1. A decade or so ago, a group of young juvenile delinquents was taken on a tour of a prison for lifers, in Rahway, New Jersey, and got a very good and very unsettling picture from some of the convicts of what it was like. They were visibly impressed, and an account of the episode that appeared in *Readers'Drgest* wastitled "ScaredStraight."

   About ten years later, someone thought of examining the records to see if the members of that group of delin quents had a lower recidivism rate than average. What the records showed was that that group had a significantly *higher* recidivism rate. Of course—they had to prove to themselves and to their peers that they *weren't* scared! Scratch another p[illegible]

2. In theearly 30s it wasnot generallyconsidered a slur to call a Chinese a "Chinaman." The slur terms then were "Chink" or "slant-eye."

3. When I was living in Suffern, my stepson was friendswith a kid his age, across the street. They had a lot of variouskinds of animals, and one day he came over with a "baby" boa constrictor—not much larger than a garter snake. They didn't keep it very long becausethey foundthat it wouldonly eat what it had killed itself and putting live mice in its cage got tobe rather harrowing. So it does seem as if thepython in "Horror House" would at least have tried to *swallow* its victims—unless, perhaps,they weretoofully clothed, and the reptile's motherhad nevertaught it to eat its roughage. □

AKA PHILLIP MARLOWE

By John L. Apostolou

Watching and enjoying the recent Home Box Office series of Philip Marlowe stories prompted me to reread the short fiction of Raymond Chandler. I soon discovered that only one of the five stories shown on HBO was originally a Marlowe story. The other four, although quite faithful to the original versions, required adaptation to accommodate the Marlowecharacter.

Further research revealed that Chandler had written 22short stories in the mystery genre, andthat most of them appeared in pulp magazines before the debut of Marlowe in *The Big Sleep* (1939). In fact, the only genuine Marlowe short story is "Marlowe Takes On the Syndicate," published in 1959 shortly afterChandler'sdeath.

Four other short stories featuring Marlowe do exist. They were created by simply changing the names of the protagonists to Marlowe or, as in the case of "Finger Man," by giving an anonymous private investigator the name of Marlowe. These changes were made for the first hardcover collection of Chandler stories, *The Simple Art of Murder* (1950), to capitalize on the popularity of Philip Marlowe, who, by 1950, had appeared in five novels and four films. For some reason, the names of the leading characters in two stories in that collection were changed to John Dalmas and Ted Carmady rather than to Marlowe. The six revised stories were laterreprinted, in revised form, in severalsubsequent collections and anthologies. But, complicating the matter, whentheseSix stories appeared in the British anthology *The Smell of Fear* (1965), the original character nameswere used in four of them.

The history of name changes which I have just outlinedhasresulted in a certain amountof confusion. Since copies of the old pulps are not readily available, authors writing about Chandler have often madeerrorswhen referring to the protagonists of his short stories.

Theaccompanyingchart, to which I have given the snappy title "Names of Protagonists in Raymond Chandler Short Stories," should answer most questions relating to this limited subject. The first column is a list of allthe Chandlershortstoriesthat fall in the mystery genre. The stories are listed in chronological order, the first having appeared in 1933 and the last in 1959. Except for "I'll Be Waiting" and "Marlowe Takes On the Syndicate," they were all initially published in pulp magazines – *Black Mask*, *Dime Detective*, andothers.

The second column is a list of the original names, given in full, of the protagonists. As you might expect, the leading character in most of the stories is a private eye. Grayce and Reseck, however, are hotel dicks. De Ruse is a gambler; Delaguerra, a police detective; Malvern, a hotel owner who once was a private eye; Anglich, an undercover narcoticsagent; andGage, a wealthy man of leisure.

Thenext three columnsshow thenames used in the major collections of Chandler stories: *The Simple Art of Murder* (1950), *Killer in the Rain* (1964), and *The Smell of Fear* (1965). And the final column indicates which stories were dramatized on the television series *Philip Marlowe, Private Eye*, produced in England and shown on HBO in 1983.

Besides being of some value to scholars, this handy, dandychartshouldprovidegood material for trivia contests. The information it contains could also be used to impress your friends at the next Bouchercon and at other gatherings of mystery aficionados.

NAMES OF PROTAGONISTS IN RAYMOND CHANDLER SHORT STORIES

	OriginalName	*SAOM*		*SOF*	
"Blackmailers Don'tShoot"	Mallory			Mallory	
[illegible]	Mallory	[illegible]		Dalmas	[illegible]

"Finger Man"	nameless	Marlowe			
"Killer in the Rain"					
"NevadaGas"	Johnny De Ruse	De Ruse		DeRuse	Marlowe
"Spanish Blood"	SamDelaguerra	Delaguerra		Delaguerra	
"Guns at Cyrano's"	Ted Malvern	Ted Carmady			
"The Man Who Liked Dogs"	Carmady		Carmady		
"NoonStreet Nemesis"	PeteAnglich	Anglich[1]		Anglich[1]	
	Carmady			Carmady	
"TheCurtain"	Carmady				
"Try the Girl"	Carmady				
	John Dalmas	Marlowe		Dalmas	
"The King in Yellow"	Steve Grayce	Grayce		Grayce	
"BayCityBlues"	John Dalmas		Dalmas		
"The Lady in the Lake"	John Dalmas		Dalmas		
"Pearls Are a Nuisance"	Walter Gage	Gage		Gage	
"Trouble Is My Business"	John Dalmas	Marlowe		Dalmas	
"I'll Be Waiting"	Tony Reseck	Reseck		Reseck	
"No Crime in the Mountains"	John Evans		Evans		
	PhilipMarlowe				

[1] Title changed to "Pick-up on Noon Street"
[2] Title changed to "The Pencil"

THE PAPERBACK REVOLUTION

Charles Shibuk

ANTHONY BERKELEY

The insecure but astute Mr. Ambrose Chitterwick, fresh from his triumph in *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*, is having tea in a luxurious British hotel when he sees an elderly lady poisoned by a red-haired man who turns out to be her nephew in **The Piccadilly Murder** (1929) (Dover), but appearances are often deceptive.

Although this author is one of the all-time great mystery writers, *The Piccadilly Murder* does not stand among his major works, but it is a sparkling and clever detective story which was praised for being original and droll when it first appeared.

Sick To Death (1971) (Perennial) is an excellent example of the British police procedural and represents the fourth investigation in the early careers of (then) Detective Chief Inspector Masters and Detective Inspector Green. This short tale is about the suspicious death of a lovely young woman from diabetic coma after an injection of insulin which turns out to be ineffective. It's a well written with an economy of means and great precision.

An anonymous and cryptic note, plus a strangely marked railroad timetable, are the ingredients which will lead to murder in a dignified old New York family, and a problem for bibliographic sleuth Henry Gamadge in **Arrow Pointing Nowhere** (1944) (Dell). This is one of Miss Daly's best novels and is cited in James Sandoe's "Readers' Guide to Crime." Terms such as "quietly brilliant," "reserved," and "ingenious" have been applied to it.

RICHARD HULL

This author's second effort takes place in the exclusive Whitehall Club and starts when a member is found dead in his chair—the victim of what might be an accidental poisoning. The club's vacillating secretary makes strenuous efforts to **Keep It Quiet** (1935) (Dover) but leaves himself open to a blackmailer's fell designs—and then the complications ensue in this excellent and really offbeat crime novel from a master of the form.

PATRICK McGINLEY

Goosefoot (1982) (Penguin) is basically the character study, adventures, and relationships of a young Irish farmgirl with a newly won Bachelor of Agricultural Science degree, who decides to take a year off and winds up teaching science in a fourth-rate Dublin secondary school. Although there is a murder, crime fiction elements are exceedingly scarce in this unconventional but impressively written novel—until the climax.

Boston private eye Spenser is in Hollywood acting as bodyguard for a pretty TV investigative reporter tracking down a story that will link film industry figures to organized crime in **A Savage Place** (1981) (Dell). Strictures that this author's plots are anemic need not apply to this narrative, which is simple, straightforward, serviceable, and unpretentious. Parker is a witty and talented writer, and one of the best entertainers in the business.

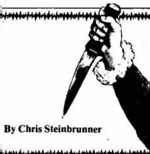
ROBERT J. RANDISI

The Steinway Collection (Avon, 1983) is composed of 10,000 valuable pulp magazines that are missing. Their owner hires Miles Jacoby to find them but is quickly shot by a .45. Jacoby acquires a new client for the same task — and three more murders follow. This is Randisi's third and best medium-boiled private eye novel—an entertaining and well paced affair.

JOHN WELCOME

If you're interested in good characterizations, brief but evocative descriptions, straightforward plotting, action, excitement, suspense, chases, minimal violence, and a little romance, you might try **Run for Cover** (1958), **Stop at Nothing** (1959), and **Go for Broke** (1972). All have been reprinted by Perennial and are fast moving, engrossing, and very readable narratives. □

The Radio Murder Hour



By Chris Steinbrunner

It was tons of fun recently when the Black Orchid Dinner of the Wolfe Pack—the Nero Wolfe Society of New York—paid affectionate tribute at an afternoon symposium preceeding the dinner event, to the fat detectives of radio drama. Wolfe himself was pre-[illegible]nin[illegible]t in th's category, but there *were* others.

The symposium, which this columnist ch[illegible]ed, fi[illegible]red [illegible]rie[illegible] of [illegible] radio mystery's First Fat Man. Debuting in 1943, *The Adventures of Nero Wolfe* featured [illegible] mass[illegible] masterdetective, amongthem Santos Ortega (of whom we will speak more later) and silent screen matinee idol Francis X Bushman. From the very first—as in the stories—the relationship between Wolfe and his live-in assistant Archie Goodwin was far more interesting than the mysteries they tackled; Wolfe solving and Goodwin doing the legwork, an arrangement which translated well to the radio medium. More often than not, the "gargantuan gourmet" was content to be indolent, and Archie, guardian of the finances, had to pushhim into acceptingcases when the bank book slipped low. The final Wolfe on radio (in 1950) was SydneyGreenstreet, who seemedat first an idealchoice, but who frequently sounded ill and tired. The Archies who played opposite him changed often, some of the actors—Gerald Mohr and Lawrence Dobkin in particular—going off to star as radio detectives (but *thin*detectives) [illegible] heir [illegible]

Radio's most memorable fatmandetective, though, was *The Fat Man*, Brad Runyon, who at the start of each program tipped the drugstore scales at 239 pounds and whose fortunewas "Danger!" Interestingly enough, the show was appropriately sponsored by stomach-soothing Pepto-Bismol ("...feel *good*again"), andthe actor who playedBrad, J. Scott Smart, himself weighed in at 270 pounds, undoubtedly thought of as a little *too* oversized. Unlike Wolfe, Runyon never let his girth get in the way of getting around Far from a recluse, he had a girlfriend and frequently kept in touch with his mother, the onlyradioprivateeye to do so on theair!

The Fat Man was created by Dashiell Hammett, partially as a mix of his villainous Gutman and overweight Continental Op, partially in response to the success of his *The ThinMan*, also a popularradio show. Diane Johnson in her biography of Hammett tells us that the author only developed the character, leaving the rest to packager-producer E. J. Rosenberg. Hammett was quoted as saying that his sole duty in regard to the program was to look in the mail for the weeklycheck. He never even listened to the series, for then he would be tempted into tampering with it. "I don't wantanything to do with radio—it's a silly world. It makes movies seem highly intellectual." Similarly, Rex Stout had little to do with the *Nero Wolfe* radio show

Despite this abandonment, *The Fat Man* had some of the best dialogue of its time, sharpand crackling, with a toughnesswhich rivaled Sam Spade. Themysteries were good too. Sadly, the show (as well as *Sam Spade* and *The Thin Man*) disappeared whenHammett fell under Congressional investigation When Universal brought *TheFatMan* to the screenshortly thereafter—with RockHudson as the murder victim—it left Hammett's name ff th[illegible]ed [illegible] f th cha[illegible]

Finally, the legendary radio producer Himan Brown contributed a Wolfe look-alike in *TheAffairsofPeter Salem* (1949). Salem was a sharp small-town detective who outfoxed urban criminals; he also had a weight problem. He wasplayed(as was Nero for a time) by Santos Ortega, a skilled master of voices who was himself of average size but could perfectly suggest the full-bodied, rumbling, gurgling, wheezing sounds of a man of superiorsubstance

Comment must be made on those fat detectives who at the demise of radio managed to relocate on television. In the TV series *Checkmate*, sedate criminologist Sebastian Cabot had *two* Archie types to do his footwork for him. William Conrad's *Cannon*, however, hardlyslowed down; even as a fat man he fought, practically ran a country mile, tackledsuspects, even bedded down women. Nero would scarcely approve, especiallyasConradlaterstarred as Wolfe in a television series, somewhat lesshyperactive but farfrom lethargic.

Himan Brown himself was the featured guest at the BlackOrchid Dinner, asshowman whose accomplishments in radio mystery go backpractically to the dawn of the medium He was a friend of Rex Stout, whom he met in 1943 as a fellow member of the Writers' War Board. Seeking a summer replacement series, he inveigled Stout for $250 to allow him to use Nero Wolfe.

How does onecreate an identifiablesignature for a radio program? For *GrandCentral Station*, Brown had used the sound of a locomotive steaming through a tunnel—memorable, even though a hundred people a week wrote in that the New York Central actually useddiesels. For *BulldogDrummond*, there was a foghorn, for *Inner Sanctum* a creakingdoor. "You can only do that in radio—but how do you say *fat?*" Brown settled on a guttural laugh: "You felt the flesh." It worked.

Brownwas successful withWolfe on radio When Stout died, the producer tried to get the rights to the character for television but failed; he felt he could have done a far better job, for he loved the detective. "Nero had a *character*—and I don't just meanhis orchids and such—he had a bite, and a wit, and compassion."

Brownalso was happywith *The ThinMan*, a radio series he also produced. The mystery was always wrapped up at the end with Nick and Nora in bed. After the explanations, we hear Noracroonsweetly, "Goodnight, Nicky darling," and the sound of the light chain beingpulled. "You could imagine what you wanted," Brown beamed, proud at having created [illegible] radio in [illegible]ars a situation which was both adult and very warm and human

Brownansweredmanyquestions about the parade of mystery series—including *Dick Tracy* and *Terry and the Pirates*—which he had brought to radio during its GoldenAge, doing as many as three or four showsback to-backdaily. He hopessoom todramatize in completeformthegreatplays of ourAmerican theatricalheritage on public radio. He is still vigorous, enthusiastic, and determined to keepalive the sound of dramaoverthe radio airwaves. Long may*he* wave □

By Thomas Godfrey

TAD at the MOVIES

One reader has asked me if I've given up writing about new films, and I'm tempted to say yes because the films I write about are invariably old by the time my column appears.

But that's begging the question. There has been a scarcity of good mystery-suspense films this year, and I find myself automatically gravitating to the older movies that are turning up on cable and in revival houses. They may not be much better than the current stuff, but they are somehow more interesting, even as failures.

For that disappointed reader, I'd like to say that I will be dealing in my next column with the two Bond films that came out this year, as well as the film treatment of *Gorky Park*. There are a few films which I missed first time around that I hope to catch on second bounce, most especially the Iranian film *The Mission*, which appeared on a number of Ten Best lists for 1983.

Before delving into this quarter's films I'd like to say a few kind words about cable TV which may be the last best hope of mystery moviegoers outside large urban centers. The P. D. James film reviewed below would not have been available for viewing in this country if it weren't for cable. While I had my reservations about it, I have no reservation about its deserving exposure to an audience.

Within the week, cable has also provided a thoughtful version of Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four*, listing one Otto Penzler as technical adviser. While I still believe there is relevance in applying the mystery genre to contemporary lifestyles, there seems to be little recent work in this area which is either imaginative or genuinely new. In the absense of that, I'll take a well-intentioned film version of Conan Doyle any day.

Something should also be said on behalf of HBO's in-house series of Raymond Chandler stories. They were not to everyone's liking. I found Powers Booth a surprising choice for Philip Marlowe (a more plausible choice for the Continental Op), but he did grow on me through the series. I just wish the producers had spent a bit more on extras. There was an aura of deserted stillness about their conception of Southern California that was mildly unnerving.

I hope Richard Meyers will forgive me for venturing into what might well be his territory, but cable TV does blur what were once well-defined boundaries. At any rate, I will undoubtedly venture back into this cultural no-man's land in the future if the material proves worth the trip.

★★½ **An Unsuitable Job for a Woman** (1981) Billie Whitelaw, Paul Freeman, Pippa Guard (D: Christopher Petit)

A first attempt to film the work of P. D. James which serves as a caveat to all who follow. This methodical account of a young woman's attempt to unravel the mystery of an adolescent heir's apparent suicide faithfully captures the psychological shadings of James's analytic style. Yet it does not make for entertaining cinema. Though the central mystery may hold you, it does so against sparkless direction, wan performances, and an archivist's touch that reduces even major developments to small turns and fine gradations.

As befits this author's sensibility, there is no glamor or sweep to the storytelling, but there is also too much reliance on fortuitous discoveries timely made for it to be wholly satisfying as a cerebral exercise.

A minimalist score, artful if not fluid camerawork, and intelligent but vague dialogue compound the impression of an interesting recollection told by a sharp-witted but depressed observer. Admittedly a matter of taste, but one better suited to the printed page.

★★ **Chandler** (1971) Warren Oates, Leslie Caron, Gloria Grahame (D: Paul Magwood)

The late Warren Oates was highly regarded as a supporting actor. In films such as *The Wild Bunch*, *The Hired Hand*, and even *Stripes*, he gave strong portrayals of solid, rumpled men whose unpretentious masculinity provided a welcome calm in the midst of more dramatic (or comedic) churnings.

On a blander scale, he had some of the attributes of the early Bogart, so it was only a matter of time until someone promoted him to a leading part. Certainly Gene Hackman had come up that way. So had Bogart. But Oates was never able to make the jump, and *Chandler* gives some evidence why.

Certainly it does not look like a promising script. Although the writers have made him an alcoholic ex-private eye taking jobs as a security guard to make ends meet, they have not spent nearly enough time polishing the character into anything an actor could sink his teeth into.

When he's called in to guard a key witness in a government case, you already know he's being set up as a fall guy. The real conflict between two underworld chieftains doesn't much compensate for the dramatic bog they've stuck poor Oates into. At no point does he appear to be anywhere close to getting the upper hand, and, since the various mob elements keep hitting us with steamroller dialogue and pretentious phony "meaningfulness," we have nowhere to turn for some relief.

Caron looks more tired and bored than the key witness has any right to be, and Alex Dreier, the one-time television commentator, keeps forcing too hard for some sort of Orson Welles-Sidney Greenstreet presence. You keep hoping the camera will avoid him. Mitchell Ryan, the designing mobster, acts like the postwar Richard Gere brought back to life.

The worst miscalculation of *Chandler* is throwing Gloria Grahame away in a thirty-second bit as an ex-pug's widow. She's gone before you realize who it was. The film needs the kind of oomph she gave *The Big Heat*, *Crossfire*, *Sudden Fear*, and God knows how many films back in the days when Hollywood moviemakers knew how to turn out films like this in their sleep.

At one point, Caron observes, "Tough guys can get so monotonous." And she's right, especially when trapped in hack screenplays such as this one.

With Charles McGraw, Richard Loo, and Scatman Crothers as a play-it-Sam-for-old-times-sake pianist.

★★½ **Beyond a Reasonable Doubt** (1956)

Dana Andrews, Joan Fontaine, Sidney Blackmer (D: Fritz Lang)

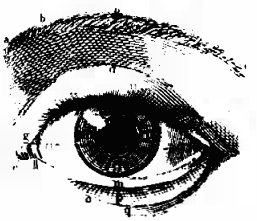
Lang's last American film, and far from his best. The premise is interesting, but only the absence of any gross touches in the execution indicates that an experienced hand might be behind the camera.

Andrews is cast as a former journalist turned novelist whose one-time employer (Blackmer), an ardent opponent of capital punishment, persuades him to frame himself for the murder of a burlesque dancer in order to make a moral statement. Even Andrews's fiancé and Blackmer's daughter (Fontaine) is not to know of their scheme. At the proper time, Blackmer is to come forth with the evidence of Andrews's innocence, thus discrediting capital punishment, humiliating an overly ambitious district attorney, and giving Andrews material for his next book.

Naturally, there are some complications along the way. The fact that the film commands attention at all is solely due to its serpentine plot. Andrews's acting is competent but lifeless. Blackmer, an effective stage performer, similarly gives his part little more than a brisk run-through. Fontaine looks too middle-aged for what must have been intended as an ingenue role, and her romantic, mannered acting looks dead wrong on these Spartan, stylelesssets

Perhaps Lang was hampered by the cheapness of Bert Friedlob's production. Half the budget looks as if it went into Fontaine's wardrobe. Or maybe the veteran director (*M, Fury, The Big Heat*) was just too old and disinterested by the time filming commenced. Whatever the reason, opportunities to enrich the storytelling cinematically pass by unclaimed □

THE PERSONAL I



By Thomas Chastain

The doomsayers are loose amongst us once again. This time they bring us dire tidings of the death of the private eye novel. My answer is: I doubt it.

Not that there is not some truth behind the reasoning which has led them to their prophecy. The most persuasive of these truths being that in today's technologically advanced society the idea of a lone private eye doing a better job than the police themselves—with all their equipment—is no longer quite credible. And so, goes the reasoning, the figure of the policeman will replace the private eye as protagonist. Or that some other representative of our modern-day society will become the hero of the crime story. This of course has already happened, to a degree, in the police procedural.

Another reason given for the predicated demise of the fictional private detective is that he, along with his sentimentalized *angst*, is just plain old-fashioned and out of date Again, there is a certain amount of truth behind this reasoning. (The doomsayers amongst us, whether correct in their prophecies or not, do serve a purpose: they answer before we ask the question, Watchman, what of the night?)

Yet, even acknowledging the possible truth of both of these reasonings—along with others, such as that the private eye story has simply been done to death already anyway and/or that the same story has been written over and over again too many times (again, in both instances, true, true)—I believe they all miss the point.

The point is that the sensibility of a private eye is an ideal device through which to filter a fictional story of crime. Much more than has ever been realized, the character of the private eye is an inspired literary creation He became the mythic loner righting wrongs, comparable to two other mythic loners in fiction, the knight and the cowboy.

Yet, curiously, it has seldom been remarked—and perhaps never fully understood—that, of these three mythic figures, it is the character of the private eye who is the most literary In real life, the knight and the cowboy were central to their times and societies, so it took very little imagination to adapt them for the purpose of fiction. The private eye, in real life, was always peripheral to his time and society. Thus, it would seem exceedingly strange that writers would abandon such a powerful symbolic literary character. Nor do I think they ever will.

Rather, I believe that the true challenge is how to develop the character beyond the by now almost stereotypical figure written of by Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald—and not much changed by any author of any private eye novel since

I suspect the truth is that the time has come when there needs to be a break between the concept of the character as drawn by Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald—a concept more similar than dissimilar in all three cases—and future portrayals.

I suspect further that one of the most overlooked aspects of the private eye character is that he serves most powerfully as a metaphor for the alienated modern man. And that it is this area of his personality which has been least explored by the writers who have come along since Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald

I would suggest, therefore, the times now being what they are, that the defining of the character as alienated modern man is the direction writers might pursue to make, to keep, the private eye relevant in fiction

Meanwhile, I doubt that—as has been, respectively, predicted—either God, the novel, or private eye fiction is dead. □

PAPER CRIMES

By David [redacted]

52 Pick-Up by Elmore Leonard (Avon, 1983), $2.95. **Groomed for Murder** by Vivian Rhodes (Ballantine, 1983), $2.50. **Shattered Mask** by D. G. Devon (Ballantine, 1983), $2.75.

52 Pick-Up by Elmore Leonard is not really a new book, nor really a paperback original. It has been newly brought back into print, however, in paperback by Avon, and any excuse to review it is welcome—it's a terrific book.

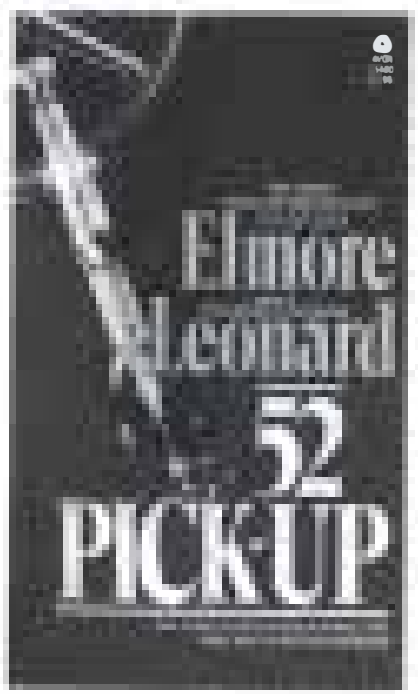
Harry Mitchell is the owner of a plant in Detroit that makes automobile parts; before owning the company, he was an assembly line worker. Although married for 22 years, he has taken a mistress. Upon arriving one day at the apartment he has provided her, he finds not the mistress but three men intent on blackmailing him with his infidelity. He owns the patent on an essential automobile part, and they want a year's profits from that patent—more than $100,000. He decides not to pay them, but to fight back.

Mitchell's is a guarded, rather than an outgoing, personality. His wife Barbara says that he is "quiet and calculating. Always mild-mannered, the nice guy—until someone steps over the line and challenges him." At another point, she says, "He can also be—I was going to say cold-blooded and I can't think of any other word for it," even if he is "not vicious or mean." Moreover, the reader's first impression of him is negative—he has betrayed, and wounded, his wife.

Even so, Leonard is able to create considerable sympathy for him. In part, of course, that's because he is opposed by three unconscionable people and he looks well by comparison. But more than this, Leonard seduces the reader into thinking like Mitchell. The book's opening is, by design, mildly confusing. "The girl" is mentioned but not identified, and a paragraph later there is a name—Cini—which may be the girl's and may not; who can say for certain whether it is even a female name? In the midst of this, the reader learns that Mitchell—identified at this point only as "he"—is also disoriented. He is meeting his mistress and is uncomfortable in his adultery, and things at her apartment are not as they usually are. This is because his blackmailers have laid a trap for him, but, by the time they spring it, he is unconsciously on guard, and so is the reader. Thus, Mitchell reacts to the threat calmly, in character; thus also, the reader is already unconsciously thinking in tune with Mitchell, accepting his character.

The book is this good, this imaginatively and skillfully written, throughout. Here are some particularly pleasing points. Mitchell's first view of his adversaries is minimal, and he can determine only that they are not quite alike. Certainly, physical individuality is a commonplace enough observation; nevertheless, it proves to be the key to his attack against them. To offer more detail is to give too much away. But not only is Leonard able to make Mitchell seem a very resourceful person but he also shows a great skill for letting small, apparently unremarkable detail grow to great significance.

Although he is embroiled in a crisis, Mitchell is required at the same time to live his ordinary life. Among the scores of fictional detectives who are professional or who are able somehow to drop everything for their cases, this is a nearly unique, if perfectly reasonable, feature. Moreover, his professional life has an important bearing on the way he handles the crisis: the strength, the bargaining skills, the intelligence that he marshals against his blackmailers are all necessary attributes in his work. Also, if his professional experience provides his tactics, his rekindled love for his wife provides a kind of moral counterpoint to the enemy he is fighting. No aspect of the story seems to stick out. Everything blends; everything is integral.



Elmore Leonard has, by now, been "discovered" by more reviewers than you can shake a stick at. So this opinion may not be new, but it at least adds to a consensus: Leonard is top rank.

Like many books, *Groomed for Murder* contains a brief biographical sketch of its author. Vivian Rhodes is described as a "successful young writer" and a "talented novelist." So little evidence of that talent is to be found within the novel that its most challenging mystery may be to determine upon what the anonymous biographer based his assessment.

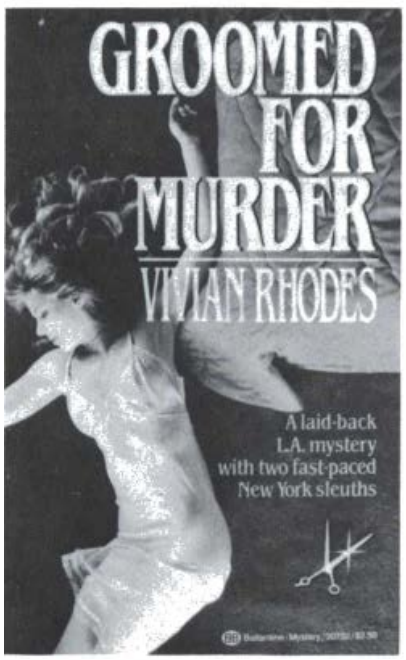
The story concerns Susan Finkelstein, a children's book writer as well as a born-and-bred New Yorker who lives in Los Angeles. Her hairdresser dies, violently but apparently accidentally; a few days later, his former wife, a movie actress, also dies, an apparent suicide. Finkelstein, having overheard a conversation which leads her to suspect murder, chooses to investigate. Needing help, she finds herself teamed with Nick Comici, the friend of a friend, an investigative reporter who is also from New York. Although she lives with another man, Comici attempts not only to assist her but also to seduce her. The investigation takes the form of a series of interviews of suspects, each of whom is discovered to have a motive for murder, and, as the book wears on, several attempts are made on the detectives' lives.

These bare bones are fleshed out, as if on a diet of carrot sticks, with action that is either banal—seeking to interview her suspects, for instance, Finkelstein invites them to host Tupperware parties—or implausible—they accept. Or how about this: Finkelstein and Comici are in a car, the brakes and clutch of which have been tampered with. Out of control, they hurtle down a hill, toward a cliff, at 95 miles per hour. That Rhodes would employ such a hackneyed device is bad enough. But what's worse, "in one sharp turn he steered the car up onto an embankment of pussy willows and dandelions. Everything stopped," instantly and harmlessly, it would seem. Those may be the strongest dandelions and pussy willows known to man.

Rhodes resorts to stereotype in the creation of some of her characters. There are a woman who married money and, to preserve her marriage, is eager to hide her shady past, as well as a Jewish matriarch whose accent one

is more likely to encounter in bad fiction than in life. There is also a sleazy Hollywood agent whose sexual preference is not so much revealing of his character as it is an unpleasant variation on the usual vice, seemingly thrown in to make an otherwise dull character seem shocking.

Other characters are defined in terms of famous people. The hairdresser victim, for instance, is reminiscent of "the role Beatty played in *Shampoo*," except that his face recalls "a young Tyrone Power." One of his customers looks "very much like Cheryl Tiegs." For whatever reason this technique is employed—presumably to add a touch of glamour—it also supplies Rhodes with ready made characters. That's cheating, even if she is free to embellish such characters somewhat. To say in her defense that she is not the only writer to take advantage of this sort of novelistic shorthand is only another way of



saying that she lacks originality

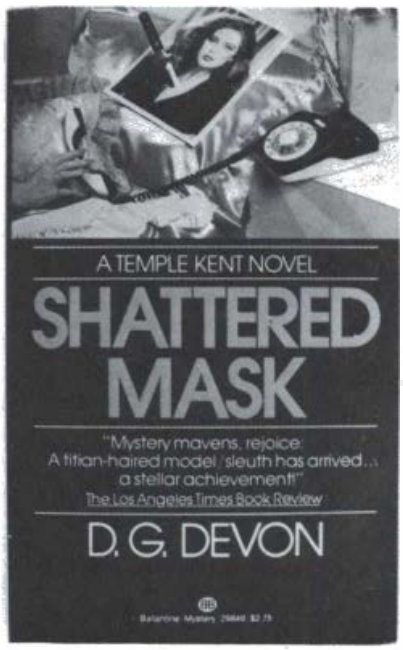
Nor are the main characters—Finkelstein, Comici, and Marc Beaumont, the man with with whom Finkelstein lives—particularly satisfying. Because all three are New Yorkers in Los Angeles, they tend to make the supercilious jokes New Yorkers like to make about California. But toward the end of the book, Finkelstein realizes suddenly that she likes L.A. after all and has no wish to return to New York. This ability to have things both ways is really the basis of her character. She is torn between obligation to Beaumont and a growing affection for Comici. In the resulting triangle, which seems not so much to complement the mystery as to interfere with it, she is meant to have things both ways once again. Behavior which is supposed to seem insensitive or wounding in Beaumont is supposed at the same time to seem understandable and forgivable in Finkelstein; unfortunately, she's nowhere near charming enough to carry it off. Beaumont is portrayed in an unflattering light and is totally uninteresting. Comici appears favorably by comparison; he should be grateful for the help.

Without plausible action or ingratiating characters, the book might nevertheless have been somewhat redeemed by a challenging mystery. Too bad, then, that the killer can be fairly easily identified well before he/she is formally revealed. *Groomed for Murder* has very little to recommend it.

Shattered Mask is D. G. Devon's second novel about Temple Kent, a top New York City-based fashion model. (The first novel was, appropriately enough, *Temple Kent;* D. G. Devon is a pseudonym for two writers but will be treated in the singular here.) Kent is recruited as the figurehead of a movement to preserve several architecturally significant buildings from a corporation that seeks to raze and redevelop an entire neighborhood. She is, as she was in the first novel, in love with Frank Coughlin, a judge who is a favorite of New York's mayor as well as the scion of an Irish family once powerful enough to have had important links with Tammany Hall. Coughlin's brother owns one of the contested buildings; the brother is killed, apparently accidentally, but enough ill will has been generated by the preservation effort to make Kent and Coughlin suspect murder.

Obviously, these are not everyday people. Devon, in fact, goes to considerable lengths to avoid giving the impression that the book condescends to its readers, that they are ordinary people being treated to a view of glamorous life in the big city. For example, he has Kent submit to an interview in which she describes her modest background, ridicules the notion that her family is patrician, and explains her dislike of celebrity and chic pretension. Jus' folks, is she. When the interview is published, her statements have been turned around to seem elitist and uncaring. Clearly, the journalist has been dishonest, and so would the reader be to side with the journalist against the model.

Although it's a clever strategy, it's too transparent an attempt at manipulation and seems grating, to say the least. To say more, it seems false as well. The book's best moments are those which set it apart from everyday life. No matter how hard Devon



tries to make Kent seem down to earth, she is notable because she is a chic celebrity. She, and the reader along with her, are invited into a clan whose roughcamaraderie and colorful past are perhaps more than commonly vivid or even precisely accurate (how many historians ascribe any charitable motives to Tammany Hall politicians?). To the extent that the book works, it works best if it's not taken seriously; it's a literary comic strip, *Brenda Starr, Reporter* reworked for subscribers to *Vogue* magazine. It's at its weakest when it tries to touch base with real life.

So: Don't look for anything profound, or even for an especially challenging mystery (the least likely suspect rule obtains here). What's left is a reasonably well-told story. Characters are sufficiently individual, even if the Irish accents seem a little thick, and Kent in particular is convincingly portrayed as intelligent as well as beautiful. The plot moves along briskly and with some humor, even if there is nothing particularly daring about it; it's a boy has girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl story with a mystery woven into it. What's more, *Shattered Mask* is better than *Temple Kent* and so leaves one hoping for better still to come. □

CURRENT REVIEWS

Show Business Is Murder edited by C. R Waugh, M. H. Greenberg and Isaac Asimov. Avon, 1983

Murder takes center stage in a delightful collection of short stories which combines mayhem with show business. The dastardly deeds take place on stage, behind the scenes, in front of the cameras, at the back of the auditorium. It seems that the performing arts are populated with villains of all kinds, and that artistic temperaments often get out of hand and beyond the law.

Perhaps because of its inherent glamour and charged emotions, the background of show business has attracted many mystery writers. Ellery Queen, under the pseudonym of Barnaby Ross, has written a series of four excellent novels featuring a deaf Shakespearean actor as the solver of baffling crime riddles. Patrick Quentin's amateur detective was a Broadway producer whose acute observations of reality and fantasy were nurtured in the theatre. Ngaio Marsh, Agatha Christie, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Edmund Crispin, and Stuart Kaminsky are among the authors who have discovered tinsel and pretense beneath the glittering façades of the performing arts

The present anthology contains yarns by the best modern practitioners in suspense fiction. They cast in starring roles the has-been who makes his final exit with a bang, the untalented actor-murderer who is trapped because he cannot fake reactions convincingly, the elec[illegible] cha[illegible] who[illegible] deadly change in the script, and the opera spectator who is poisoned during a performance of Wagner's *Die Walküre*. The gallery of characters involved in various shady plots includes acrobats, directors, camera operators, ghostwriters, and saloon piano players, and there is even an agent willing to cover up a murder in order to protect his ten percent [illegible].

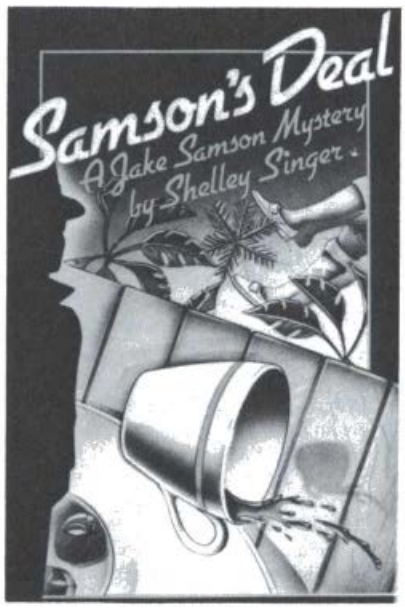
One story depicts the fate of a whole company of amateur thespians kidnapped by a maniacal director, while another gem focuses on a real poisoning during the last deadly scene of *Hamlet*. Knives, pistols, and poison capsules take their toll in rehearsal halls, recording studios, soundstages, and vaudeville circuits. Motives range through the broad spectrum of pride, jealousy, greed, and lust. The anthology proves that there is no business like show business for mystery aficionados

[illegible]

A Study in Scarlet edited by Simon Goodenough. Based on the story by Arthur Conan Doyle. Quill/Morrow, 1983

The first exploit of Sherlock Holmes, the world's foremost consulting detective, appeared in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* for 1887 under the title *A Study in Scarlet*. It was subsequently published in book form in 1888 and launched the amazing career of possibly the most famous literary creation of all time The tall, hawk-nosed detective captured the imaginations of readers the world over. His deerstalker hat, shag tobacco, and magnifying glass became international symbols.

A Study in Scarlet depicts the first meeting between Holmes and Dr. John H. Watson After airing their respective shortcomings, the two gentlemen agreed to share rooms together at 221B Baker Street. Dr. Watson became the chronicler of the various baffling cases that Holmes had solved with extraordi-



narily cold logic. Altogether, Watson penned sixty Holmes adventures—four in the form of full-length novels (of which the most popular is *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, 1902), the rest collected in five volumes of short stories.

Sherlock Holmes, however, has transcended the output of his creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Since the turn of the century, many authors have undertaken to continue the saga of the great detective, mostly in the form of pastiches. In their zeal, the parodists have lampooned Holmes's methods of deduction and satirized his personal traits—scratching away on the violin and shooting cocaine. Some authors sensationalized Holmes's relationship with the one woman in his life, Irene Adler. Others have claimed that his older brother Mycroft was more capable, the real brains of the family. Still others attempt to prove that Holmes and Watson had a clandestine homosexual liaison. Is there nothing sacred?

Among the better-known authors who have poked fun at the consulting detective are Vincent Starrett, August Derleth, John Kendrick Bangs, Maurice Leblanc, O. Henry, James M. Barrie, Stephen Leacock, and Mark Twain. Often they tried to guise Holmes behind other names—Solar Pons, Herlock Sholmes, Holmlock Shears, Picklock Holes, Shylock Homes, Shamrock Jolnes, Hemlock Jones, Schlock Homes, Sherlaw Kombs, and even Shirley Holmes.

A few years ago, the literary world was shaken by the discovery of a previously unpublished episode in the career of Sherlock Holmes, entitled *The Seven-Per-Cent Solution*. Its immense popularity opened the floodgates, and, happily, more unknown chapters in the annals of Holmes have since been unearthed (including his heretofore unknown encounters with Dracula, Mr Hyde, and Jack the Ripper)

Recently, Simon Goodenough managed to track down the whereabouts of a rusty tin box containing the true story of *A Study in Scarlet*. An American visitor is found mysteriously murdered in a London house. A woman's wedding ring, the monogram on a handkerchief, cigar ash, and a message written in blood are among the clues. A second blood-spattered body is discovered in a hotel bedroom. A box of poisoned pills enables Holmes to finger the murderer and reveal a desperate plot of love and revenge.

No less interesting than the tale itself is the fact that this variation of *A Study in Scarlet* is presented in the form of a portfolio. Included are handwritten notations by Dr. Watson, photographs of the culprit and of the victims, police statements, telegrams, newspaper clippings of the 1880s, and actual physical clues—a wedding ring, a silk hat label, and pills from the murderer's box. It is a publisher's ingenious method of putting the reader's deductive powers to the test in a perplexing case which takes us back to the era of gaslight, horse cabbies, and noble sleuthing.

[illegible]

The Murder of an Old-Time Movie Star by Terence Kingsley-Smith. Pinnacle, 1983

Right from the start, I want to say that, in spite of its faults, I ended up liking this book I don't want anyone to read this and come away with the question, "Well, did he like it, or didn't he?" I did

Still, faults are faults

This book appears to be a cross between Stuart Kaminsky's Toby Peters books and L. A. Morse's Edgar-winning *The Old Dick* Peter McCoy is obviously a private eye who is over seventy, and the story flashes back and forth between 1983 and 1935. The dialogue and first-person narrative seem rather stilted in the first portion of the book, and it strikes me that the transition between 1935 and 1983 could have been handled better than by simply saying, "Back in 1935..." over and over again. It gets redundant

The story deals with the murder of—you guessed it—an old-time movie star with whom Pete McCoy had some dealings *back in* 1935, after which he came away with a secret

that he'sbeensitting on all theseyears.Could this secret have something to do with the murder, and subsequent murders? Well, the book gets better asyou go along, the writing seems to smooth out some, and you actually get interested in the plot. So I liked the book and the character, and there's a postscript at the end which seems to indicate that there will beanother. I kind ofhopetherewill

– Jack Miles

Samson's Deal by Shelley Singer. St. Martin's Press. $11.95

During the 1968 Democratic NationalConvention, ChicagoMayorRichardDaleymade a hilarious (and quite revealing) slip of the tongue in attempting to defend his free-swinging peace officers from charges of brutality."The police," HisHonor explained, "are not hereto createdisorder, they'rehere topreservedisorder."

Jake Samson is a former Windy City warrior who grew weary of clubbing long-hairedprotestors and of preserving disorder for Mayor Daley. He did the only sensible thing a cop with a conscience could do. Turning in his badge, he drifted west to California in searchof peace,sunshine, and a taste of the good life. If you can't beat the enemy,jointhem.

When we catch up with Jake, in Oakland writerShelleySinger's firstnovel, he'sbecome an"urbangentlemanfarmer,"smallproperty owner, andodd-jobsjourneymaninBerkeley. This lawand order dropout isliving in a quiet way with hiscats, cold beers,friendlypoker games, and endless procession of affectionate females. What more could a man want?

But wait. Here'sa University of California professor, under suspicion in the mysterious death of his artist wife.The profwantsJake to investigate, find the murderer, and clear his name. Amd he's offering $10,000 for this amateur sleuth's services. Jalke can use the money. The question is whether the city of Berkeleycan use a private eye to createand [illegible] disorder in the nameofentertaining detective fiction.

To tell you the truth, I worried about whether Jakewas up to the assignment. Sure, he may have been a hardboiled heavyweight back in HogCity,but too manyyearsofBay Arealivingcanmake a guy too laid-backand mellow for the risky business of peeping at keyholes, poking in secret places, and cross-examining nervous or querulous suspects. Jake is no Sam Spade,after all, and this is a complex caper. There's an enigmatic victim who seems to have had several personalities; therapy and meditation groupies; radical rightists and leftists; devious academicians and other exotic specimens of the Berkeley [illegible]

Ah, but Jake has a secret weapon in his fight against crime. Her name is Rosie—Rosie Vicente. She's his tenant and best friend. Attractive, ingenious, and fearless, she's much more than just a good pal who sharesbeer,poker hands, and felinelore.

When mighty Samson needs help thinking, Rosiie is his brainss. When he needs to be rescued from a kidnapper, she conks the villain and knocks him cold. And when Jake needs information aboutsome political extremists, Rosie infiltrates the group as his resident spy and tells him everything he needs to know.

If youare thinking that this Rosie stealsthe book, which she does, you may also be wonderingwhy on earth Singer didn't make her the protagonist of the piece and drop Jake down to the role of supportive male The majority of women detectives, after all, have just this kind of man around to help them out of tight spots or legal hassles. He's typicallyacop, attorney, or reporter, oftena big brother and sometimes a lover

The fact that Rosie—a lesbian and self-

employed carpenter who affects lumberjack shoes and drives a battered truck—fills the rolemakes foran amusinggender switch and creates a detective storynovelty. Her sexual preference, moreover, doesn't seem to threaten or intimidate the mostly macho Samson, whoseems genuinelyfond of her. Forme, the most endearing moments of the noveloccur when the two trade notes on girlfriends (his and hers) and do some in-house patter based on their favorite old movies. Like Jake, Singer'sreader becomes a staunch Rosiefan

Although he is far fromChicago—aboutas far, let us say, as Oz's Dorothy is from Kansas—Singer'sshamusadapts readily and credibly to his Berkeleymysterymilieu. There are some lapses in the character, as when he interviews a woman and notices that her hair "had just the slightest wave to it, so you couldn't tell how much was her and how much wasthe hairdresser's art"—not the sort of thing a man wouldbe likely to notice, let alone comment upon. And, yes, there are moments when Jake seems something less than the conventional man of steel ("The publicity made me so nervous," he confesses during one crucial moment of the case, "I decided togo homeandtake a nap").

For the mostpart, however, Jake is sturdy and persistent (even tenacious!) enough to inspire confidence that he is what he claims to be. He takes a bad beating and heals quickly enough to pay his sadistic assailant back in kind. And he fields the enmity and suspicion of a tough Berkeleycopwith all thegraceand evasive skill of a wily diplomat. There are times when he can look after himself without the tender loving care of Rosie Vicente

Jake and Rosie are an offbeat duo who work at least as wellas any conventional Mr and Mrs. North tandem, if not better Readers of *Samson's Deal* may find them—as I did—of even greater interest than the mystery. For theseare memorablecharacters, in [illegible] who cha [illegible] th their affection and concern for one another

With *Samson's Deal*, Shelley Singer has joined the elite sorority of Bay Area women writers who have chosen to make their fictional debuts in novelswhichboth homage and subtly parody the mystery tradition. It will be interesting to see whether Singer can sustain the delicate balance between Jake and Rosie in a long-running series. I, for one, look forward to more novels by this funny, shrewdstoryteller

The Papers of Tony Veitch by William McIlvanney. New York: Pantheon, 1983. $12.95

The Papers of Tony Veitch continues McIlvanney's ambitious Jack Laidlawseries set in the grime and grit which constitute Glasgow's underworld, cast againstthe backdrop of Laidlaw's foundering marriage, and informed by the detective protagonist's obsessive desire to make sense of a seemingly senseless world

Laidlaw's involvement in thcTony Veitch casebegins when he is called to the deathbed ofan alcoholicvagrantnamedEck Adamson. Adamson tries vainly to communicate a matter of great importance to him, yet his finalravingsare unintelligible, which Laidlaw attributes first to a ravaged liver but subsequently to the effects of wine laced with a lethal dose of paraquat. An envelopefound in Eck'spocketprovides the namesof Lynsey Farren,PaddyCollins,and a pub called"The Crib," as well as a phone number and a paragraph of idealistically intense sentiments As Laidlaw runs down his leads in Adamson's murder, the list of implicated people grows and includes Mickey Balater (a Birmingham hit-man), Dave McMaster, Cam Colvin, and JohnRhodes(Glaswegianunderworldfigures), and Tony Veitch himself (a rich university student who disappears before finalexams). Tony, in fact, is theinterfacebetweenthe rich and the poor in this novel, the blackmailed and the blackmailers, and the idealistic and the cynical. Tony has gotten in with a bad crowd, as has LadyLynsey Farren, and those boys play rough. They are "the kind who could kill a man on the way to the cinema. Andstill enjoy the show."WhenTony drops out of sight beforethe end of the term, he is soughtafter not only by his blackmailers but also by the police, who first associate Tony

with Adamson's murder but later "disimplicate" him when Tony himself is found, an apparentsuicide

Just as Tony, like Laidlaw, "walking the edge of himself like a ledge," teetersbetween the world of the rich and formally educated and that of the indligent and street-smart, so too does his status waver for much of the book: known to be missing, is he alive or dead? And McIlvanney uses this question about Tony to epitomize the novel's central concern with life and death. For Laidlaw firmly and loudly believes that "no death is irrelevent" and in the face of mortality, death andlife are wonderful, horrible things, each only comprehensible with reference to theother, and the boundary between them is constantly shifting and yet irrevocable. Laidlaw walks that border, and it is significant in this respect that he is routinely characterized as a man on the edge of two territories: his speech is alternately standard King'sEnglish andvirtually incomprehensible dialect, depending upon the status of his hearer, he is in the process of leaving one woman, Ena, for another, Jan, and he moves with equal unease in the worlds of the hoodlum and Tony's university associates, who, in their discussions of writersand ideas, "summon up the dead in order to rekill them."

In the final analysis, McIlvanney creates in *ThePapersof Tony Veitch* a darkly satisfying novel of detection in the same way that Sjöwall and Wahlöö plumb moral issues in their Martin Beck novels It offers a "good read" as well as that sense of moral dilemma in both hunter and hunted which gooddetective fiction requires, with challenging literary allusions and black humor to boot.

—Susan L. Clark

The Red Citroen by Timothy Williams. St. Martin's Press, 1982. 250pp. $11.95

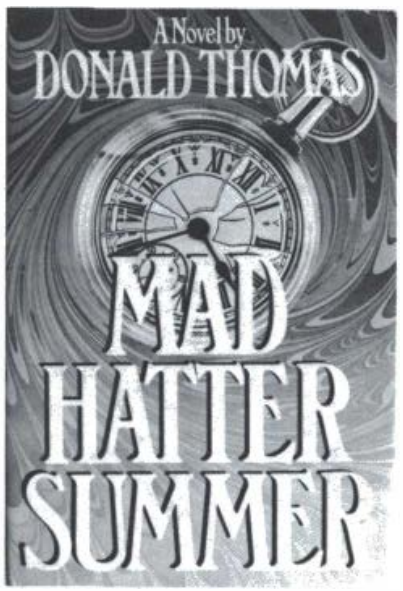
Williams's first novel, originally published in Great Britain in 1982, is quite good. It introduces Commissioner Trotti, of the PubblicaSicurezza,andtakesplace in a small provincial city in the Emilia Romagna province of Northern Italy

The time is 1978 Aldo Moro has been kidnapped, and all Italy is undergoing a spiritualcrisis. TheRed Brigadeshaveterrorized an entire nation and petty blackmail has become the Italian disease. There is no concept of a common state. There is only a loose, ill-definedassociation, allegedly for the common good. Italy, a country with such a glorious history,has littlepractical experience at being a nation, only having been united in 1870.

Trotti is involvedwith the disappearanceof his nine-year-old goddaughter, as well as with the gruesome murder and dismemberment of situ. Can there be tie between these crimes? His world is in a bourgeois city governed by a Communist mayor. Theseeming incongruity is not rare in Italy. Voting Communist while pursuing capitalisticgoals is not a matter of idealism or political manifesto but rather a seeming inconsistency born of what Italians fondly refer to as *misonoarrangio*—anything can be arranged.

It is this very arrangement which threatens our melancholy hero. He is beset by marital problemsbut is driven by an atypical professional integrity. While others may bend, he refuses to compromise. His is an individual's pain which cannot be shared with any other person

As the solution to thesecrimes threatenthe established hierarchy, pressure begins to build for Trotti to discontinue his investigation. His is a terrible decision worthy of a hardboiled detective—to compromise or face destruction. Williams understands the Italian mentality and manages to capturethe rhythm



of Italian life. The book is well written and highly recommended

Mad Hatter Summer by Donald Thomas New York: Viking, 1983. $16.95

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known to children and the literary public as Lewis Carroll (*Alice in Wonderland, The Hunting of the Snark*), is a perfect prospect for blackmail, since one of his hobbies (others might label it a consuming passion or an obsession) is capturing the likenesses of his "child-friends" not only in print but also on photographic film. Dodgson, or "The Story-Book Man" as his detractors at Christ Church CollegeatOxfordcall him, has a predilection for snapping pubescent girls in the buff, believing fervently that "truth is more beautiful when naked," and a problem arises when his "art" snapshots ("nice little nudities for the Royal Academy") are appropriated to feed Victorian England'sgrowing market for pornography—and child pornography at that—and to threaten the very existence of Jane Ashmole, the half-girl/half-woman who sits for Dodgson, dotes on him, and trades with him the linguistic riddles thathave delighted generationsof *Alice* readers("SleepingBeauty, you may know, also went by the name of Miss Ann S. Thesia")

The perpetrators of Dodgson's blackmail provetobe wealthyCharlesAugustus Howell and hiscoarser-grainedaccomplice, oneDicky Tiptoe. When Tiptoe is found drowned in the weir in the Isis River, close by where Jane Ashmole, her widowed mother, and two playmates have been recently bathing, and near where Dodgson has been witnessed strolling, suspicion falls on the gentle Oxford don. Enter Inspector Alfred Swain from London, who tracks the murderer with forensic evidenceand determination, coming to the same conclusion that Dodgson does, although the latter's intuitive methods are at considerable variance with Swain's police-procedural style. The list of possible suspects grows to include Howell, Thomas Godwin (another Oxford don who lodges with Mrs Ashmole), amd even the Ashmoles themselves. The solutiom to the murder in *Mad Hatter Summer* comes about as a result of Swain's and Dodgson's collaboration, and author Thomas adds wonderful period detail that bears on the *modus operandi* of the crime· for example, the techniques of criminal pathologyand the art of photography in their infancies, the intricate workings of Elgin railway watches, and the equally tortuous thought-processes of the Victorianmind.

MadHatterSummer. moreover,echoesthe Victorian era in language and atmosphere and succeeds at this in a way John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* does, although Thomastakesan appropriatelylighter tone. The language occasionallygrateswith what our age would call a trite silliness ("Damn your canting impudence, you sickly little prig!") but by and large communicates the tensions of an age where man is macho or "a soft-voiced lily-poem Mary Ann" (read gay) and woman an angel or whore, where a true innocence such as Dodgson possesses, with his "camera'seye" serving as "an eye of love," is continually misunderstood by the repressed society around him, and where what one *does* and what one *says* need not necessarily congrue. All in all, *Mad Hatter Summer* functions as a charming period mystery which combines the features that a contemporary detective fiction novel demands and those elements characteristic of the literary figures with whom Dodgson had contact in real life—Swinburne, Rossetti, and Tennyson

Murder in the English Department by Valerie Miner. NewYork: St. Martin's Press, 1983 $9 95

Mysteries in academic settings invariably operate on the principle that ivory tower inhabitantsshouldpossesshigher motivations and purer logic than the common riffraff—and, in fact, do not. *Murder in the English Department's* heroine, Dr. Nan Weaver, Ph.D., forms a prime example of this assumption, for the clear-headedness that standsher in such goodstead in herscholarly

work is conspicuously absent when she discovers the violent death of a fellow member of Berkeley's English Department Implicated in Professor Angus Murchie's death, and imprisoned for it while her trial drags on, Nan quite literally sees the truth—and it doesn't set her free

Miner's strength as a mystery writer, as she sets out Nan's painful circumstances, does not lie in plot but rather in characterization, and her description of the workings of academe is disconcertingly accurate, from the paranoia which inevitably complicates tenure decisions (Nan's tenure case is further clouded by her vocal involvement in the campus campaign against sexual harrassment) to the petty backbiting that goes on at departmental parties. Tension, as well as welcome support, comes from Nan's family, particularly from her sister Shirley and her niece Lisa, whose working-class relatives fear that, like Nan, she will catch the dreaded "Feminist Disease." Nan's literary forebears are Dorothy L. Sayers's Harriet Vane and Amanda Cross's Kate Fansler, and, while she may lack the polished wit of the former and the graceful urbanity of the latter, she proves to be thoroughly likeable and, unlike both Vane and Fansler, does not require a male to extricate her from her difficulties. Miner has created a feisty heroine who bears further acquaintance

The Confucius Enigma: A Novel About Modern China's Greatest Mystery by Margaret Jones. New York: St. Martin's Press. $10.95

Margaret Jones, who lives in London as the *Sydney Morning Herald's* foreign editor, turns her two-year stint as a journalist in the People's Republic of China to good use in this Peking thriller, and mystery fans who raved about *Gorky Park* will probably have praise for *The Confucius Enigma* as well

The hypothesis which occupies physician Joanna Robinson and newspaperman Alan Brock is the unexplained disappearance of Lin Piao, who, until his dropping from sight in 1971, was considered in line for power under Chairman Mao. Jones is quick to point out in her author's note that "international politics provide more melodrama than a fiction writer could possibly devise," and she intersperses her fictional account with impressive-looking documents, news releases, and terminology lists. When *The Confucius Enigma* succeeds, it does so impressively, as in a tense train ride sequence and a glimpse into a mental hospital, but when it doesn't, the effect, as in so many thrillers of the *Gorky Park* variety, is merely dreary. In short, the pace is uneven, and, moreover, while it would be ridiculous to expect in the protagonists a sinologist's version of Lord Peter Wimsey, one could at least hope for somewhat more sympathetic characters than Robinson and Brock. If they're at sea in mysterious, hot, unfriendly Peking, the reader is tempted to feel that it must somehow be their fault that they're left reeling and paranoid. One doesn't warm to them, and Jones does not seem to expect the reader to try to like them. Her concern throughout is with the overall structure of plot, and, if characterization falters, as it so often does in this sub-genre of the thriller, then the intricacy of events is expected

Goodbye Goliath by Elliott Chaze. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983. 180 pp. $11.95

The entire staff of *The Catherine Call* hates the general manager, John Robinson, and wish horrible things would happen to him When the city editor, Kiel St. James, finds Robinson with a letter spike shoved through the back of his neck, those wishes are fulfilled.

The investigation into Robinson's death is handled by Orson Boles, who favors a "lizard-green polyester suit" and cracker dialect for conducting investigations. St James can draw out the more literate Boles, the two men having been friends for years in the small Alabama town in which they live.

Boles soon narrows the suspect field down to five. The major clue comes from finding Robinson's much-loved hat crumpled on the floor; closer inspection shows that it has a small hole which corresponds to the size of the letter spike and that it is traced with blood. The blood type is not the same as Robinson's, and Boles's investigation finds only five people on *The Catherine Call* who have the matching blood type. Kiel St. John is one of those, and he is suffering from blackouts pells

A subplot surrounds St. James and the state of his love life. His girlfriend, Gretchen, is called out of town on business which soon turns into a permanent move out of state. St James keeps bumping into cub photographer Crystal Bunt, "the newspaper's all-weather, free-style sex symbol." He tries to hold out against Crystal's efforts to get beyond his resolve but doesn't succeed. The love story which evolves is a pleasant addition to the standard investigation that follows

Chaze provides substance to his mystery by allowing his characters to develop to a point at which the reader can care about them There is a small-town charm to *Goodbye Goliath* which is enhanced by the authentic newspaper atmosphere the author presents

Chaze has worked for the Associated Press and as city editor of the *Hattiesburg American* and presently lives in that Mississippi town *Goodbye Goliath* is his seventh novel, and an ideal one with which to curl up in a comfortable chair.

Fiction 1876-1983: A Bibliography of United States Editions. R. R. Bowker Company, 1983 $99.50.

This work was announced for August 1983 publication in an advertisement (in *Publishers Weekly*) which read in part: "Since 1876 more than 175,000 novels, novellas, and short story collections in English-language editions have been published or distributed in the United States. This unprecedented work captures all of them, indexes them by author, title, and subject—and provides all the data you need on each to identify, catalog, and acquire." "Scholars and students will be able to locate all published works of fiction." "Researchers can trace the rise and development of such genres as science fiction, fantasy, novels of [illegible] and de[illegible]"

Well, now! That would indeed be useful, and—while wishing I'd had the work while doing the new edition of my *Bibliography of Crime Fiction*—I rushed off my prepaid order (in August) with the expectation that this bibliography would be very helpful to me in future editions of or supplements to my bibliography

The book arrived in late December, and the publisher had the gall to bill me for postage and handling after enjoying my money for four months.

The introduction to *Fiction 1876-1983* makes further claims: that it can be used to identify first editions, first U.S. translations, death dates of authors, types of genre fiction appearing in specific time periods, and complete works of authors of interest

What does the work actually deliver? As the following comparison with my *Bibliography of Crime Fiction* shows, *Fiction 1876-1983* does not even remotely achieve the advertised stature and is an offense to any reasonable bibliographic standard. And of course comparison with the full fiction coverage that the work claims would illustrate these deficiencies far more spectacularly

Restricting ourselves only to the A section of the alphabetical listing, here's what we find:

Ashbrook, Harriette. All titles are listed here, even though six appeared as by Susannah Shane (no identification of that pseudonym in this entry), and two are found in a Shane entry without cross-reference to Ashbrook.

Arvonen, Helen. Only 7 of 15 published titles are listed.

Amos, Alan. Only one of four titles is listed here, with the other three found under the author's real name (not cross-ref[illegible]d in the Amos entry) and with incomplete bylineidentification.

Ashby, Kay. Only two of five titles are listed

Ashcroft, Gene. The publishing date of the listed work is not given. This is a frequent fault

Ashe, Douglas. Only the bare original title is listed, not its publisher and date; such information is given about a reprint edition under a different title.

Ashford, Jeffrey. Only 8 of 19 titles published through 1980 are listed, although two more can be found under "Jeremy Ashford." Dates and publishers given are not necessarily those of the first editions.

Austin, Alex. A crime fiction title is not listed

Austin, Hugh. All three titles published by Sc[illegible]'[illegible]d

Avallone, Michael. Only nine of the 48 titles published through 1980 are listed.

Axelrod, George. A crime fiction title is

Axton, David. No entry, but the title is listed, without reference to pseudonym, under the author's real name.

Ayer, Frederick. No date is given for *The Man in the Mirror*.

Ayres, Paul. No entry, but the title is listed—and the pseudonym identified—in the Edward S. Aarons entry.

Aarons, Edward S. An unfathomable alphabetization scheme is used. Ronns (pseudonym) titles are distributed, in duplicate, between this entry (mostly) and the Ronns entry, which is cross-referenced. Sixteen out of the 41 Sam Durell titles are omitted, and for 17 of those listed the date given is not that of the first edition

Abbey, Ruth. One of three titles is omitted

Abbot, Anthony. No entry. All titles are listed under the author's real name, without reference to the pseudonym under which they actually appeared

Abbott, Sandra. Only one of four titles is listed

Acre, Stephen. No entry, and the title is also missing from the Frank Gruber (real name) entry

Adams, Clifton. Only one of three crime fiction titles is listed

Adams, Frank Upham. Only one of two crime fiction titles is listed

Adkins, Bill. Only one of three titles is listed.

Aeby, Jacquelin. Only four of eight crime fiction titles are listed.

Albrand, Martha. No cross-reference is given to the author's real name, but the entry there lists about half of her books, with many books listed in both entries

Alexander, Jan. Only nine of 19 crime fiction titles are listed

Allain, Marcel. Two titles are listed as if the translator is the joint author.

Allan, Dennis. Only two of five titles are listed

Allen, Robert. No entry, but the title is listed, with pseudonym identification, under the author's real name.

Ames, Leslie. Only seven of ten titles are listed.

Anderson, Frederick Irving. One title is omitted

Anderson, J. R. L. His titles are spread over four variant representations of his name, without cross-reference

Asimov, Isaac. *The Death Dealers* is omitted.

Anderson, Jessica. One title is missing

Anker, Jens. No entry, but the title is listed under the author's real name

Anonymous. One title is listed, but some 100 have been published

Appel, Benjamin. Three crime fiction titles are missing.

Arkham, Candice. Two titles are missing

Arliss, Joen. Four titles are missing.

Armstrong, Anthony. Only two titles are listed (actually two different titles for the same work, but this is not stated); other Armstrong titles are found under the author's incompletely rendered real name, mostly without correct byline identification

Arnold, John. One title is missing.

Arre, Helen. No entry, but three of the five titles are listed under the author's real name.

Ashe, Gordon. This is not identified as a John Creasy pseudonym. Eleven of the 25 titles are listed, and in two places (G. Ashe and Gordon Ashe); others are found without correct byline identification in the Creasy entry.

Atlee, Philip. Only 11 of 22 Joe Gall titles are listed.

August, John. No entry, but three of the four titles are listed under the author's real name, without identification of the pseudonym

In addition, no entry is found for the following authors, with the number of titles

thus overlooked shown in parentheses: B. D Ashe (1), Saxon Ashe (2), Clara Augusta (5), Willis J. Abbott (1), Rufus O. Abio (1), Marye Adams (1), Albert W. Aiken (4), George L. Aiken (1), Ralph Aiken (1), Ruth Alexander (2), Dina Allan (1), Henry Allan (1), Joan Allan (3), Erika Vaughan Allen (1), Gertrude M. Allen (1), Clyde Allison (1), James Z. Alner (1), John Ambler (1), Norma Ames (2), Robert Ames (3), George Anderson (1), Jan Anderson (1), Marianne Andrau (3), Alix Andre (8), Dorothy C. Andrews (1), Philip Andrews (1), Anne-Mariel (4), Elizabeth Anthony (2), A. E. Apple (2), Ric Arana (2), E. L. Arch (2), A. A. Archer (2), Lane Archer (1), John W. Arctander (1), Mary Armat (1), and Joel Audrenn (1)

The work does not directly allow genre fiction to be identified, whether published in a specified time frame or not. It contains a Classified Author Index, which identifies time periods (by century) and country of origin for authors, but the index is so incomplete as to be of doubtful usefulness. Many death dates are not shown.

This graphically demonstrates the absolute folly of having vastly ill-informed computers compile bibliographies, and to do so without apparent human intervention to correct errors and regularize data presentation. *Fiction 1876–1983* should be withdrawn by the publisher

The Tenth Virgin by Gary Stewart. A Joan Kahn Book. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983. 243 pp. $14.95

A recent *Wall Street Journal* article on the spiritual and entrepreneurial underpinnings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints explained the church's theological orientation in the following way: "Mormonism remains the odd man out among large U.S. denominations. It blends the moral strictures of the Puritans and the fervor of the modern-day evangelicals with secret Masonic-like temple rituals and a view of immortality that sounds more Buddhist than Baptist. On top of that, the church stakes a claim that it is 'God's only true church'."

The plot of *The Tenth Virgin* revolves around violently conflicting claims among Mormon sects to be the only true church. But internecine accusations are not new among the Saints. For the first fifty years of their existence, their prophets, seers, and revelators maintained that God not only endorsed but encouraged the practice of plural marriage. Consequently, the Utah desert bloomed with wives and children.

In 1890, however, when the territory was on the brink of statehood and it looked as if the federal government were about to meddle in the church's marital affairs, a revelation directed the faithful to abandon polygamy. Compliance was not universal. Fundamentalist patriarchs continued to husband several wives and castigated the monogamous Saints faithless

Author Gary Stewart claims that he grew up assuming that everyone in Salt Lake City had at least one relative living in a polygamous commune. Like Stewart, narrator Gabriel Utley is a lapsed Saint who left the buzzing Beehive State to missionary workers and political drones. Utley is also a failed husband and a successful New York private investigator. He believes that the latter accounts for the former, but a man has to do what he has to do

Utley has been summoned to Utah by his high school sweetheart, Linda Peterson, who is married to a middle-aged Mormon official with celestial ambitions. Utley's assignment is to find Linda's missing teenaged daughter Jennifer before Jennifer's daddy and the holy hierarchy notice that she is missing

Of course, there is more to Jennifer's disappearance than initially meets the private eye, and, in the course of discovering Jennifer's whereabouts, the private eye meets prophets and profiteers, the possessed and the possessors. The happy hive is occupied by killer bees.

The cast of characters is vivid and varied, the scenery is striking, and there is enough action (i.e., violence) for a made-for-TV movie. In fact, all the dopey hippies, car

bombs, pinstriped goons, and transvestite shootouts in *The Tenth Virgin* appear to be designed to keep an audience awake in between catfood commercials.

But a book should be more than just printed television. Instead of probing the peculiarly American paradox that is Mormon culture, Stewart has fabricated a sensational exposé of dirty old men and dimwitted women. This is an old and tiresome story *The Tenth Virgin* will try the patience of a Saint

Tabernacle by Thomas H. Cook. Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1983. $13.95

All is not well in the city of the Saints. Salt Lake City, spiritual home of the Mormon faith, plays witness to a spate of savage and inexplicable murders. At first, the victims appear to have been randomly targeted Surely no connection could exist among church officials, an investigative reporter, and a black prostitute. But as the evidence mounts, Detective Tom Jackson becomes convinced that the corpses are linked in a grisly chain.

Sour and disillusioned from his ten years of fighting scum and corruption in the streets of New York City, Jackson purposefully sets [illegible] abound. For Jackson soon realizes that he's no longer operating on familiar turf. This is Salt Lake City, the land where Brigham Young's fervent followers carved a society in which "everything [could be] explained by that one ancient fall from grace in the garden." Jackson's mere intimation of an adulterous relationship between two slain church members evokes a sharp rebuke from his superior. Stop asking the tough questions "We do things differently in Salt Lake." But Jackson's stubborn persistence allows the author to draw one of the book's interesting parallels

By shifting the story's narrative focus between detective and killer, we witness the personal resolve each possesses in completing his respective "mission." Both allow sought ends to justify questionable means. Jackson repeatedly sidesteps and ignores harsh criticism of his methods while the killer continually quotes Scriptures as justification for his city-wide spree of bloodletting

Cook's characters and setting are expertly drawn as he succeeds in portraying the frustration of an "outsider" operating in a city replete with knowledgeable insiders. And although the inevitable last dance between good and evil is somewhat orchestrated, it in no way diminishes the suspense of the final few pages

The only negative note is *Tabernacle's* cover art. Inspired by the novel's final paragraph, it portrays a toga-clad man blowing a horn while perched on top of the world. Hardly the wrapping this well-executed package deserves.

Minor Offenses

By Edward D. Hoch

Whenever we're tempted to regret the scarcity of American mystery magazines, as compared to twenty or thirty years ago, it's well to remember the plight of the British mystery reader, who has none at all. The classic detective novel may still flourish in England, but they haven't had a mystery magazine of their own since *Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine* ceased publication with its June 1967 issue. (*The London Mystery Magazine* lasted until a few years ago, but it relied heavily on the supernatural.)

It was mainly to fill this void that Lord George Hardinge of the British publisher Macmillan brought out the first of his *Winter's Crimes* anthologies in November of 1969, as a companion to that firm's popular *Winter's Tales* series. Through fifteen years and fifteen volumes, *Winter's Crimes* has solicited new stories from the very best British mystery writers (and occasional Americans who were living in England at the time). Lord Hardinge has edited ten of the volumes personally, though in recent years he's turned over the editorial chores of the even-numbered volumes to Hilary Watson St. Martin's Press now publishes the books in America, a month or two following their British appearance.

I would say that nearly every important British mystery writer has appeared in *Winter's Crimes* at least once, including Agatha Christie just a few years before her death. Even some such as Desmond Bagley and Eric Ambler, virtual strangers to the short [illegible] were coaxed into contributing new stories. Many writers have appeared several times, and Elizabeth Ferrars holds the record with six stories in fifteen years

Winter's Crimes 15, published here in January, is a typical volume. The stories by Celia Dale, P. D. James, and Peter Lovesey are especially good, though the Lovesey has already appeared in the March 1983 issue of EQMM under another title. There are twelve stories in all, offering a sampling of the British mystery today. *Winter's Crimes* is doing its part to keep the short mystery alive in England, and we can all be thankful for that.

Until now, there has been no annual anthology of new mysteries originating in America, but EQMM editor Eleanor Sullivan hopes to remedy that with *Ellery Queen's Prime Crimes*, a year-end volume published in soft covers by Davis Publications and in hardback by Dial Press. The first volume has sixteen stories, twelve of them completely new and the other four published for the first time in this country. We assume these are stories which, because of length, subject [illegible], the [illegible]s were [illegible] ble for publication in EQMM

The lineup of authors in the first *Prime Crimes* is impressive - Patricia Moyes, Christianna Brand, Joan Aiken, William Bankier, and Ron Goulart among others. The book opens with a long Sherlock Holmes pastiche by John H. Dirckx and ends with an eighty-page Christmas mystery by Patricia Moyes. There is a wild private eye parody by Robert Twohy and a fine mood piece by Joan Aiken. It's too soon to tell if *Ellery Queen's Prime Crimes* will achieve the longevity of *Winter's Crimes*, but a second and third volume are already being planned and we wish it well.

Past volumes of *Winter's Crimes* have often been a source of stories for EQMM, and the February 1984 issue contains the first American publication of a P. D. James story from *Winter's Crimes 5*. The same issue marks the return of the Dan Kearny "File" series by Joe Gores, after an eight-year absence. There is also a nice labyrinth story by James Powell and one of the last stories by the late Jack Ritchie.

The 1984 MWA anthology, *The Crime of My Life*, published by Walker, should be in the stores by the time you read this. Edited by MWA president Brian Garfield, the book contains stories by Garfield and twelve past MWA presidents, each chosen as their best Included are Robert Bloch, Dorothy Salisbury Davis, Lillian de la Torre, Stanley Ellin, Garfield, Hoch, Harold Q. Masur, Helen McCloy, John D. MacDonald, Georges Simenon, Richard Martin Stern, Lawrence Treat, and Hillary Waugh. It should be a memorable volume, with special introductions by each of the contributors.

At this writing, the first issue of the revived *Saint Magazine* has been twice postponed and has still not appeared. We hope to have a report on it next time □

Real Life Cases

CRIME HUNT

By T. M. McDade

HARVARD AND HOMICIDE

When Professor John White Webster was hanged in 1850 for the murder of Dr. Parkman, he was assured of immortality among his Harvard peers, and his fame, though ignoble, is more memorable than many of his more scholarly colleagues'. So great indeed has been his personal fame that even succeeding Harvard homicidal dons have long been forgotten while the memory of Professor Webster stays ever green. It is therefore proper that we pay credit to another of those talented Cambridge murderers. First, we must pass over Charles R. Eastman, the Harvard instructor tried in 1900 for shooting to death Richard H. Grogan, for his acquittal renders him ineligible in the Harvard homicidal sweepstakes. I refer instead to Erich Muenter, a German instructor who, before passing from public view, had his name, photograph, and academic attainments on the front pages of all the principal newspapers of America.

In 1906, Muenter, his wife, and three-year-old child lived within a ten-minute walk of the campus, though he more frequently made the journey there by bicycle. Even in the scholastic world, he was a mild eccentric, though his peculiarities were not readily describable. Born in Hanover, Germany, 35 years before, he had but a bachelor's degree obtained from the University of Chicago at the advanced age of 28. Minor teaching posts at smaller schools had culminated in a year at the University of Kansas, and in 1904 he had come to Harvard as an instructor in German.

Of medium height, spare, dark-haired, first moustached and then letting his beard flower into a Vandyke, he had nothing noticeably unusual about him. But he was, in modern terminology, a loner. If he had few friends, he made no enemies. On April 6, Mrs. Muenter gave birth to a child, another girl. She was attended in her labor and in the days to follow by a Christian Scientist midwife. Despite her ministrations, both immediate and at times absent treatment, Mrs. Muenter grew visibly weaker. Muenter telephoned a Dr. McIntire, who came but refused to handle the case when he learned of the Christian Scientist. On the fourteenth, Muenter tried a Dr. Fred Taylor, but he likewise refused to take the case. On the following night, Muenter told the nurse to rest, that he would watch his wife. At six o'clock the next morning, he called the nurse and said that his wife had died in the night.

When Muenter summoned a local undertaker, A. E. Long, he was told that nothing could be done with the body until a death certificate had been obtained from a doctor. The instructor's call to Dr. McIntire was unavailing; he was told to call the medical examiner. In the end, a conclave of doctors, including Taylor, McIntire, Swan, the medical examiner, and a Dr. Durrell, came to the apartment which the Muenters occupied, and, after removing the stomach and intestines which were sent to Harvard Medical College for analysis, a certificate of death was prepared indicating the cause of death as "gastro-duodenitis." Now able to proceed with the burial, Muenter, who had spoken previously of burying his wife in nearby St. Auburn Cemetery, made plans to take the body to Chicago, where his wife's parents resided, and he left the next day, hiring a Mrs. Derrick to accompany him to care for the two children on the trip. On arrival in Chicago, the body was cremated, and the German instructor turned the children over to their grandparents.

In Cambridge, the police received a report from Professor Whitney of Harvard describing his findings of substantial quantities of arsenic in the stomach and intestines, and the police quietly began to inquire when Muenter was expected back. The University had been notified that he did not plan to return; he had asked to be relieved of his duties. A lodger in his apartment house had received two letters, one incoherent, the other explaining that his sister would care for his effects.

On April 28, the collegiate calm was shattered by the appearance of a police circular charging Muenter with poisoning his wife and giving his description. Tired of waiting, the police were now convinced he was not planning to return.

The academic world of Cambridge was aghast. His few friends thought some terrible mistake had been made and that he would return and clear himself. His sister attributed his disappearance to his disturbance over the death of his wife and even placed an advertisement in the papers urging him to return to face the charges. The newspapers described him as an instructor teaching German while working toward his doctorate in philosophy. The subject of his doctoral thesis raised a few eyebrows—"Insanity as described in German romantic literature." He was also said to have been trying to construct a universal language—a combination of German and Scotch.

The police offered as a possible motive a $1,000 life insurance policy on Mrs. Muenter's life. It seemed hardly sufficient incentive, but, strangely enough, Muenter, before he disappeared, had tried to collect on the policy at the Chicago office of the New York Life Insurance Company, where he was told they would have to refer it to their Eastern office.

The deceased woman's family, now anti-Muenter, added items on his background. Walter Krembs, her brother, claimed that the German government had sought Muenter in connection with his marriage to a Miss Rosalie Kratz of Biberich. Others claimed he had been charged with bigamy in Maine. In addition, John M. Crowe, who had lived in the same house with the Muenters in Chicago, reported that on no fewer than three occasions the gas in the Muenter apartment reportedly had blown out, and that once Mrs. Muenter had been overcome by the fumes.

On April 30, Miss Bertha Muenter, the fugitive's sister, arrived in Cambridge, sold off much of the contents of the apartment, and returned to Chicago with no visible contact with her brother.

In fact, for all intents and purposes, it was the last anyone ever saw of Muenter—as Muenter—again, though one last curious missive from him appeared at Harvard. Early in June, a number of his former associates received in the mail, apparently posted from New Orleans, a printed pamphlet of 36 pages which bore on the first page the single word, "PROTEST." On the reverse and for the next thirteen pages, there was reported a wild tale, a macabre caricature which began as follows:

"Sensation! Scandal! Autopsy! Cremation! Assfixiation! [*sic*]

"Brutal murder of four prominent citizens by Oxford Profesor [*sic*] Nurse and baby killed by gas.

"Assassin escaped. Killed eighteen wives before. Oxford, April 25, 1906.

"Ten days ago, Mrs. Smith, wife of head Professor Smith had given birth to a baby in the top flat No. 9 Rue Morgue. Dr. Macinwitch (with the Scotch bilabial pronunciation of the w) though not present, asserted an easy birth. Because Mrs. Smith was a Christian Scientist, having employed beside the doctor a Christian Science healer and nurse, Dr. Vulture, the medical examiner insisted on an autopsy when Mrs. Smith died."

In theensuingpages, Smith shootsthe four doctorswhile they areperformingthe autopsy on hiswife and generallygoes berserk

At this point, a new section of the pamphlet starts, and we apparently have Muenteraddressing us directly. "Having read so far, compare this story with the silly lies in half a dozen Chicago and Boston newspapers . . ." and proceeds to revile the press for its distortion of the facts. In a long, rambling article on religion, sociology, and crime, Muenter wanders about, threatening his brothers-in-lawand finally statingthat an ad in the newspapers of July 22, 1906 will reach himwith a message.

The police, after sending out their wanted notice on Muenter, had numerous secret inquests but issued no further bulletins. A letter to a Kansas friend from one of Muenter'sHarvardassociates gave a strange view of the household just before the child had been born. "The friends of Muenter here," he wrote, "are praying that the baby may bea boy, as they are afraid Muenterwill be in a moodto do something rash if there is anothergirl inhis home"

The usual arrest on mistaken identity occurred, this time in Appleton, Wisconsin, but Muenter had disappeared forgood

From our vantage point in time, we can now trace his movements. Proceeding to MexicoCity, Muenter, under an alias,easily procured a jobas secretary in the office of the Krupp Munitions Company in that city. How longhestayedthere we do not know; we can only say that he next appearedinFortWorth, Texas, where he registered as a student at Polytechnic College in February 1908 under the name of Frank Holt. At about the same time, the Cambridge police, after a lapse of two years, were preparing a new wanted notice on Muenter to be printed in eight languages and distributed around the world What academic history he claimed at Fort Worth is unknown, but his capacity and learning were sufficiently demonstrated for that school to give him a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1909. That same year, he married Lena Sensabaugh, who had been in his class at Polytechnic. From Fort Worth, he moved on to Norman, Oklahoma, where, for the school year 1909–10, hetaught German at the University of Oklahoma. Here his contract was not renewed as he had differences with his superiors;nor did he remain long at any institution. A year teaching French and German at Vanderbilt University was followed by two years at Emory and Henry Colleges. In 1913, he moved to Cornell, where he spenttwo years, and in that time he completed the work toward his doctor of philosophy degree, which he received in June 1915.

Nine years had elapsed since Muenter had disappeared. The clean-shavenHolt, with his new scholastic background, a wife, and two children, seemed safefrom detection.

With the end of the 1915 academic year at Cornell, there alsoended Holt'scareer at that institution. His father-in-law, a Methodist minister and educator, had been selected as the president of the new Southern Methodist University, to open in Dallas in the fall. Holt had an appointment there as head of the department of romance languages. As a full professor, he would now attain the rank which he long felt his due. In anticipation of his removalthere, his wife and children went ahead to Dallas;Holt remained a fewdays in Ithacaand on June 2 wentto New YorkCity, where he registered at the Mills Hotel on Seventh Avenue at 36th Street. The charge for a night was thirty cents; it was a dormitory-type hostel for the poor and homeless. On the same day, he wrote a letter to President Wilson.

The war in Europe had been on formore thanninemonths. While among hiscolleagues Holt hadassumed a neutral position, he had written at least one letter to an Ithaca paper protesting the American policywhichpermitted shipments of munitions toflow fromour ports to England and France becauseGreat Britain controlled the seas to Europe. His letter to the President protested that such a policy was hardly neutrality and urged the banning of shipments to all belligerents. On the fifth, he wrote to the Kaiser, but the contents of thatletter have notsurvived

On the eleventh, he returned briefly to Ithaca to pack and ship some articles to his wife in Dallas; but by the fourteenth he was again registered at the Mills Hotel. At this [illegible] his [illegible] bizarre character. On the seventeenth, in Jersey City, he boughttwo revolvers—a .38 caliber in one shop, a .32 in another. On the nineteenth, he appeared at Central Park Station, near Syosset, Long Island, and, under the name of Patton, rented a small, two-room bungalow. For some days, he made the neighbors uneasy with his target practice in back of the house. Had they known of his activities inside, their simple annoyance would have turned to panic. On the twenty-first, he ordered two hundred sticks of dynamitefrom the AetnaExplosives Company, as well as fuses and dynamite caps, to be shipped to C. Hendricks at Syosset.

The fuses and capsarrived on the twenty third, but, as railroad regulations limited the shipmentof dynamite to Mondays, it did not arrive in Syosset until the twenty-eighth Holt, alias Patton, picked up the twocases weighing 120 pounds with a buggyand drove toSyosset

For the next few days, he was busily occupied in the cottage, eating out of cans. Henext appeared on Friday, July 2, to catch the 7:09 A.M. trainfrom Syosset to Pennsylvania Station in New York City. A heavy trunk, which he routed through to that station, was taken to a storage warehouse to bestored for F. H. Henderson. By noon, he had departed forWashington, D.C., carrying a small handbag, and later that afternoon he [illegible] D St[illegible] th U[illegible] Station. What remained of the afternoon he spent visiting somepublic buildings, including the Capitol and particularly the Senate chambers. Unobserved, he left a parcel in a phone booth in a reception room of the Senate Hall of theCapitol.

The composition of this package he later explained: "I took three sticks of dynamite and bound them together. Then I took my knife and hollowed out a place in one of the sticks. I put some match heads into the hole —three or four. I then took a little bottle of sulphuric acid and put a regularcork in the neck. I turned the bottleupside down and fastened the cork to the hole just about the match heads. I had timed thesulphuricacid in my testsand I knew just how long it would take to eat through the cork and get to the match heads."

Holt then returned to his room, picked up his bag, and left. In the long twilight, he walked about the city, seeing the sights and no doubt consulting his watch at frequent intervals.

He also posted a letter toeach of the four principal Washingtonnewspapers in which he made plain the reason for hisactions

"U[illegible] [illegible] call f[illegible] unu[illegible] means

"In connection with the SENATE affair, would it not be well to stopand considerwhat [illegible] doing.

"We stand for PEACE and GOODWILL to all men, and yet, while our European brethren are madly setting out to kill one another, weedge them on and furnish them more effe[illegible]ve means of murder. Is it right?"

After disclaiming that his act was prompted by theGermans, he wenton·

"Sorry, I too had to use explosives. (For the last time, I trust.) It isthe export kind and ought to make enough noise to be heard above the voices that clamor for war and blood money. This explosion is the exclamation point to my appeal forpeace."

The lettersweresigned R. Pearceanddated June 1, showing how long this had been in conception. The word "Senate" in the first paragraph was handwritten and had been inserted after the bomb was placed, as Holt had a number of places under consideration to leave his bomb and did not make up his mind until he had visited theCapitol

By ten o'clock, he had retired toa berth on the midnight train leaving for New York, and, shortly before the train pulled out, he was assured of the success of his venture by the distant thump of theexplosion

While the physical damage done by the bombwassmall, Holt had correctly estimated its reverberation as a news[illegible]ent. Screaming headlines the next morningproclaimed that a "tremendous explosion" had wrecked theeast reception room, bringing down part of the ceiling and side walls and shattering a crystal chandelier. A door to the office of the Vice-President, Thomas Marshall, which had not been unlocked for forty years, was blown open and the mirrors and windows blown from their frames

Holt's letters did not reach the newspapers until after themorningeditions[illegible]e out, and the press couldonly conjecture onthe reason, ascribing the work to a crank, although there were some who were muttering of sponta-

neous combustion. When the letters were received, the police made a Sherlockian observation of entirely no consequence by noting that, as there were two originals and two carbon copies, the writer probably had to make two typings as he had had but one piece of carbon paper.

Arriving at Pennsylvania Station in New York at 6:00 A.M., refreshed by his Capitol success, Holt was in plenty of time to catch the 7:30 A.M. for Glen Cove, Long Island, where he had plans for another busy day. He entered the taxi of a Myron Ford and asked to be driven to the home of J. P. Morgan, the financier. The estate was located on East Island, reached by a causeway bridge several hundred feet long. Ford stopped before the house and then for the first time became suspicious of his passenger when Holt, after telling him to wait, returned, saying, "I forgot to get my card." He opened a suitcase and took what appeared to be a revolver and, slipping this into his pocket, approached the front door.

Holt was greeted by the Morgan butler, a man with the marvelous name of Henry Physick.

"I want to see Mr. Morgan," said Holt, handing a card to Physick. The card read, "Summer Society Directory, Thomas C. Lester, representing."

"What is your business with Mr. Morgan?" asked Physick, and, when Holt declined to tell him, the butler insisted that he must know. Holt's patience being exhausted, he drew a revolver with each hand from his two coat pockets and, pressing them against the servant, exclaimed, "Don't try to stop me!"

Physick displayed the presence of mind one would expect in Mr. Morgan's butler. "You will find Mr. Morgan in the library," he said, turning and walking in that direction. Actually, the banker, with his wife and the British Ambassador, Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, was breakfasting in the opposite direction on the same floor. As Holt entered the library, Physick ran down the hall, shouting to his employer, "Upstairs, Mr. Morgan, upstairs!" His intention, as he later explained, was to get the Morgans to the second floor, and, fearing to reveal Morgan's whereabouts, he did not go to the breakfast room. As a result, there was a confused rushing about of people. The Morgans ran up a backstair, the great J.P. seeking a burglar he believed to be there. Of one of the nurses he met up there, he asked in a loud voice what had gone wrong. "Nothing at all," he was told, so he continued moving from room to room. Suddenly, the nurse at the head of the front stairs spied Holt coming up, attracted by the loud voices, and she shouted to Mr. Morgan that a man was coming up.

Holt, a revolver in either hand, reached the top of the stairs just in time to come face to face with the banker and greeted him with the words: "Now, Mr. Morgan, I have got you." Mrs. Morgan attempted to throw herself between the two men, but Morgan, whose steely gaze had made many a stronger man turn away, closed with his attacker. As tall as Holt and perhaps half again as heavy, the banker bore down on his quarry when two shots sounded. Holt was borne to the ground, where Morgan flattened him by lying on top of him and wrung the pistol from his right hand. Holt's right hand was pinned under Morgan, and, when he was finally able to work it free, Morgan and the nurse promptly seized it and disarmed Holt. At this point, Physick, the perfect butler, arrived, armed with a large lump of coal picked up from a fireplace, and, crashing it down on Holt's head, rendered the German teacher *hors de combat*. More servants arrived, and Holt was trussed with rope and held for the police.

Morgan, satisfied of the security of the prisoner, then went to the telephone and called a Dr. Zabriskie, who lived nearby. He now revealed two bullet wounds, one in his thigh and the other in his abdomen. Calm as one would expect of him, he next called his mother in Utica to tell her that she might hear he had been injured but that it was not serious. Then Glen Cove police soon arrived and carried off a battered Holt, grimy and bloodstained, his two pistols, and three sticks of dynamite which he had had with him.

At police headquarters, Holt disclaimed any intention of injuring Morgan. All he wanted to do, he said, was to talk to the financier in an effort to persuade him to help in discontinuing arms sales to Europe.

"He came running toward me angrily as soon as he saw me and I shot to frighten him," was Holt's explanation. "I wanted to go to every manufacturer personally and persuade him to stop this traffic. It was physically impossible for me to do this, but Mr. Morgan, with his great influence, could do what was impossible for me, and I decided to apply to him."

The reporters, who by this time were swarming about the Glen Cove police station, found his manner quiet and didactic. When he told them that he had a Ph.D. degree, one of them asked the subject of his thesis and got a prompt rebuff. "Oh, that is wandering very far from the subject." When asked what other things he had done to further his views, he replied, "I have done what I can. I have argued with people to keep them neutral. I have written to the press. I wrote several letters which were printed in the Ithaca [illegible]."

Of Mr. Morgan, Holt had this to say: "I admire Mr. Morgan's courage. If he would display a quality of moral courage equalling the physical courage which he showed toward me, he would go down in history as a very great man."

Concerned as to what his wife might be feeling in Dallas, Holt wrote the following telegram, which the authorities allowed him to send.

"Man proposes, God disposes. Don't come here till you get letters. Be strong. Frank."

Holt's connection with the Washington bombing was not long in coming out. The letters which he had posted to the Washington papers contained the sentence, "We would, of course, not sell to the Germans if they could buy here and since so far, we have sold only to the allies, neither side should object if stopped." In his confession to the police at Glen Cove, Holt had written, "If Germany should be able to buy munitions here, we would, of course, positively refuse to sell her." Taxed with the similarity, Holt admitted he had set the bomb in the Capitol. His letters, he claimed, explained all.

Almost immediately after the news of Holt's activities reached Cambridge, the police in that city announced the suspicion that the man seized in Glen Cove might be the missing Harvard professor, Erich Muenter. A college professor of German, given to violence, whose description was sufficiently similar to their fugitive's, seemed a likely subject of investigation, and Holt's pictures were exhibited around Cambridge to those who had known Muenter. The first photos of Holt, however, showed him clean-shaven, blood- and coal-streaked from Physick's blows, and not too easily recognized as the bearded Muenter. Holt refused to admit the charge, and there was a great scramble for persons who could surely identify Muenter.

In the meantime, Morgan had been examined by a squad of doctors who pronounced his wounds painful but not too serious. The bullets had not pierced his abdomen but had made flesh wounds in his thigh. But even the momentary doubt about the nature of the wounds had caused a seismic shudder to run through the financial world, as well as through other circles. Prayers for his speedy recovery were held in churches of all denominations. His neighbors and business associates paid their respects at his home, which had suddenly become an armed camp, patrolled by thirty guards with rifles and shotguns where before there had been none.

While recovering from his physical injuries, Holt was declining in spirit and energy. He appeared withdrawn and depressed. On Monday, June 5, he made a small cut in his wrist with the metal eraser holder on a pencil, and it was decided to place a guard in his cell to prevent him from taking his own life. The prisoner, however, was too alert for his guards. On Wednesday night, when the guard left Holt's cell to investigate a noise from some of the other prisoners, the scholar quickly slipped from the cell, the door of which had been left unlocked, climbed the bars of the cell door, and threw himself head first to the concrete floor twenty feet below. The noise of his skull cracking on the pavement sounded like a pistol shot, first leading to the report that he had destroyed himself by biting a dynamite cap. Death was instantaneous, and the authorities were left with the tangled ends of his trail and with recriminations and charges of carelessness.

His death, instead of ending the case, only quickened the investigation, for it had been found that in life Holt had started a train of action still to be heard from. Just before his death, the police had located the trunk which Holt had sent to be stored in a livery stable on 38th Street. It contained 134 sticks of dynamite, along with fuses, wires, and many

other bomb-making devices, including two can bombs. The policeestimated that about fifty sticks of dynamite were still unaccounted for, and Holt had refused to discuss them Tlhe harried detectives were further beset by the fact that the two hundred sticks of dynamitesent byAetna Explosives to Syosset had been 40% dynamite while the 134 found in New York were 60%. Were there two shipments, or was there a mistake in the strengthdelivered?

Forseveraldaysbeforehisdeath, Holt had made cryptic statements which worried the police. ToCommissionerWoods, on Sunday, he had talked of everything except the dynamite and when pressed had replied, "I will tell youall aboutthaton Wednesday, but on Wednesday the wholeworld willknow."

On the sixth, Mrs. Holt, in Fort Worth, received a letterwhich the mad instructor had sent offafter he had returnedfrom Washington andbeforehisforay in Glen Cove. In this letter hetold of his plan to hold the wife and children of Morgan as hostages until the banker himselfhad gone to Europe to stop the arms shipments. Included in that letter, the already distracted wife read, was the following

"A steamer leaving New York for Liverpoolshould sink, God willing, on the 7th. It is the Philadelphia or the Saxony (Saxonia) but I am not sure, as these left on the 2d or 3rd." In the margin of the letter was the admonition: "Tear this off until after this happens."

Mrs. Holt immediately communicated this information to a family friend, who advised theauthorities. TheNavy Department immediately sent out wireless messages to these ships,suggesting a search forbombs. Replies from the vessels indicated that nothing suspicious could be found.

Holt, however, had been correct in his timing.Only in the name of thevessel was he in error. At 4:15 P.M. on the seventh, an explosion occurred on the *Minnehaha*, an ammunition ship which had sailedfromNew York on July 3. It was 580milessoutheastof Halifax when suddenly rocked by a stunning blast which shook the vessel and dazed some of the crew. The *Minnehaha* immediately turned to make for port. In her hold were 1,400 cases of TNT, 1,000 cases of cordite, 2,800casesof shrapnel shells, andotherarms and explosives. The fire, in Hold #3, was reported to be controlled bylive steam, which helped to suffocate it. Hold #3 contained small shipped parcels, and it was surmised that Holt had merely addressed a package containing his bomb to a fictitious person in England and therefore could not be sure of the vessel it would be on.

During the two-day race to Halifax, the crew fought to confine the fire to the one hold, and, although the bulkhead into Hold #4 had collapsed under the heat, the danger had passed by the time the ship reached port.

With the safe arrival of the *Minnehaha* and thesudden demiseof Holt, the casepromptly lost itsfull-spread headlines and in a few days passed from public view, leaving a trail of bits and pieces which floated to the surface Frustrated Justice berated the guard whose ineptitude had allowed Holt to escape the law. His Harvard acquaintances of a decade ago formally identified thecorpseof Holtas thatof Muenter. Belatedly, it appeared that Holt's disguise hadbeen pierced at leastonce

There was one person who for a while had known that Holt was Muenter. In November 1914, Professor Chester Nathan Gould, of the Germanic Department of the University of Chicago, visited Cornell to do some research. While there, he was introduced to Holt and thought he reminded him of someone else. Later, after several meetings and talks with Holt, Gould had become convinced that it was the man he knew at least ten yearsbefore. Thoughadmittingthat he felt a little nervous with this knowledge and that he was not confident of his own safety, he decided not to disclose what he knew. "He seemed to be gettingalong nicely and to be a credit to the department. Everything I knew about him was good, except the charge, unprovenso far as I knew, of killing his wife. I thought it better to let well enough alone." Later, when a Professor Bennett spoke to Gould about Holt, saying that the latter had applied for membership in the Masons, Gould had in confidence revealed to him Holt's background, and Bennett saw that Holt was not admitted to the order

Holt's wife finally decided to have his remainsshipped to Dallas for burial, which was done. Beforetheydeparted, however, his brain was removed for scientific study It was delivered to Dr. Carlos MacDonald, a noted alienist who had seen Holt while he wasalive and who had pronounced him a paranoiac The brain was said to be an unusually large and heavy one. The wholeepisode smacks of the days of phrenology, when the standard forlargebrainswasset byDaniel Webster.

Even in death, among the many unanswered questions as that of the criminal's identity. The death certificate certified the remains to be those of Frank Holt, born in Wisconsin, March 25, 1875, the same date but four years later than the birthdate of Erich Muenter. □

a SHOT in the DARK

A. D. Accampo

A crime was committed last Tuesday,
a deed of the mostviolentkind.
A womanwas shot verydead,
and theone man to see it was blind.
It wasalmostthe perfectmurder,
foronly oneclue had been left;
a note in the dustthatthe victim
hadwrittenthereprior to death.
Thisnote wasnoteasyto read;
every lightwasturnedoff inthe house,
butit seemed to be somethingabout
a mooseor perhaps 'twasamouse.
"It's hopeless," detectivesall muttered.
"Themurderergotclean away."
Besides, by the general consensus,
itwastime to go homefor the day.
Withsuspectstheircup overflowed:
a butler, a maid, and a lover
who'd married hersisterfor money;
notto mention her long misplacedbrother.
In ordertoget things in motion,
"Itappearsshewas shot," someonesaid.
This wasan acuteobservation
fromthe bulletwound in the girl'shead.
One quicker thanmostmade a statement
thatitmusthavebeen suicide,
holding up a bottle of poison
he'dplanted tosolvehowshe died.
"Thebutlermustsurelyhavedone it,"
anotherman quicklyspokeup.
"Forthat's how'twas done in the movies
I saw as a ladgrowingup."
"But why aretwoholes in thewall?"
someonesaid and everyonegroaned.
"Thebutler'sa championmarksman,"
headdedand everyonemoaned.
"If you'reso smart," thechieftoldhim.
"Reveal who committed the crime.
I want to get home in a hurry.
It'salreadypastdinner time."
"I know,"someoneelse interrupted.
"Hersisterissurelythe killer,
andjealousyisclearlythe motive,
for bothwomen hadthe samelover."
"Nonsense," saidthe previousspeaker
"It'sclearfromthe facts herepresented,
thesistercould never havedoneit;
heralibi'snot even dented
And now," he said,"to solvethiscase
I should haveseenitfromthe start.
Onlythe blindmanseeswellenough
toshoot by the sound of her heart
As she fell he kepton shooting
neverseeing theclueleftso nice.
Thus, twobulletholes in the wall
and a rhyme aboutthreeblind mice."

REX STOUT Newsletter

John McAleer

The first weekend in December saw two hundred members of the Wolfe Pack gathering in New York City at the Gramercy Park Hotel (where the Pack foregathered for the first time in 1978) for the sixth annual Black Orchid Dinner, the fifth Nero Wolfe Assembly, and the fifth presentation of the Nero Wolfe Award, which goes to that author who, in the current year, has published a novel which, in the eyes of the judges, best upholds the standards Rex Stout brought to detectivefiction

The Assembly, moderated by that staunch Neronian, Marvin Kaye, came first on the agenda, and the Gramercy's penthouse suite was witness, over a five-hour span, to such hardly applause and guffawsthat no one need wonder why the Gramercy had exiled us to the eighteenth floor

Barbara Burn, who edited Rex'slast novels *and* the *Nero Wolfe Cook Book* took us behind the scenes to see the Wolfe books in the process of passing through the press. She shared with us one letter Rex had sent to a copy editor who undertook to refineArchie's idiom. It made the vituperations of Jonathan Swift, in his most irascible moods, read, by contrast, like ascolding from Snow White

The next speaker was Chris Steinbrunner, whose topic was "Tons of Fun: A Parade of Fat Detectives on the Air." Since Chris is portly himself, he could speak on this topic with great authority. One clear fact emerged: the fat sleuths of radio and television—the Fat Man,PeterSalem,Cannon(WilliamConrad's dressrehearsal for his Nero Wolfe)—alldrew freelyon Stout'sstout conception. Chris gave us one further insight which he acquired by means none of us would care to replicate Recently, on a New York street, he was twice stabbed by a mugger. The wounds were deep but reached no vital point. "Just thank God your're fat," said the doctorwho bound them up. This was great news to hear just before we headed down to eat a seven-course meal cooked from the *Nero Wolfe Cook Book*

Chris was followed by Marvin Kaye, who gave a superb reading of Rex's immortal "Watson Was a Woman" address. Marvin modestly allowed that Rex's prose is so exquisite that no one would miss with it Maybe so, but even the *Mona Lisa* needsthe right lighting to be seen at its best. Marvin provided that lighting

Incidentally, in November 1983, Bostonians mourned the death of Jim Keddie, the eminentHolmesian. Both Jim and his father, also Jim Keddie, werepresent at the January 1941 meetingof the BakerStreet Irregularsat which Rex first delivered his "Watson Was a Woman." The address was a bombshell. It even got editorial coverage in the *New York Times*. What is most astounding, Rex delivered itextemporaneously, relying only on a few bookmarks in a text of the Holmesian

The first half of the Assembly presentation concluded with an address by Judge Neil Jon Firetog of the New York judiciary, an eminent orchidologist. His "Guided Tour of Orchidaceae" was quite the best account of this aspect of Wolfe's activities which we are ever likely to hear. And Judge Firetog did not carp. He even established that orchids which Robert M. Hamilton ("The Orchidology of Nero Wolfe," *The Gazette: Journal of the Wolfe Pack* 1:2 [Spring 1979] 18-27) supposed to be creatures of Stout's fancy, were *bona fide* species. He also disclosed that there is now an orchid which bears the name *Phalaenopsis Nero Wolfe*. When the judge spotted a lady in the audience wearing an orchid corsage, he promptly identified it as a *Dendrobium bensoniae,* then playfully added that that was the Latin for "floozy." He rallied, however, from this judicial lapse to leave us all with the assurance that, for as little as ten dollars, we could get a start on growing orchids at home. Take heed. Buy orchid shares. Once the Pack converges on the greenhouses, the Dutch tulip mania will become a forgotten footnote in history. Alexandre Dumas take note.

Since we are now into the golden jubilee year marking the first appearance of Wolfe and Archie, I was asked to give the principal address of the afternoon—"Nero Wolfe's Golden Days." After consulting in recent weeks with Ellen Krieger, the Pack's Werowance; Larry Brooks, editor of the *Gazette;* the ubiquitous Marvin Kaye; that impeccable bibliophile, Linda Toole; Kate Mattes, proprietor of Boston's wonderful "Murder Under Cover" bookstore; and Otto Penzler, as sagacious as he is formidable, I came up with a selection of passages which satisfied most of those present. Since the Corpus contains a Fort Knox of golden moments, of course, I knew well enough that everyone present had golden moments in mind which I would not mention, so I defused the situation at the outset by conceding that point. Nonetheless, it was fun through the rest of the Pack meeting to have people sidle up to me and say, "That was great, but what about the scene in *TheSilent Speaker* when Wolfe belts that guy?" or, "How about when Wolfe accepts $4.23from Pete Drossos to handle his case in *The GoldenSpiders?*" I won't go on. You get the picture.

If you think my list of fifty golden moments will follow now, you are a witling I expect the readers of this "Newsletter" to inundate me with suggestions over the coming weeks, however. Once that happens, I promise to publish a final tally, indicating the number of votes for each. No need to send a list of fifty unless you are fiercely opinionated. Even five will be satisfactory

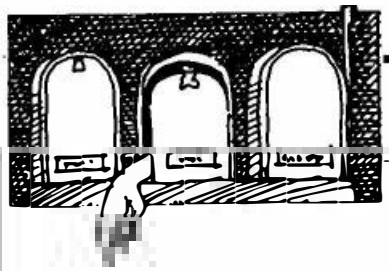
The main address at the sixth annual Black Orchid Dinner was delivered by Hi Brown, who is to radio mystery what Babe Ruth was to baseball. He took us all on a wonderful romp throughNero Wolfe's radio days

John W. Ripley, who at 86 continues to show a lively interest in his fellow Topekan, Rex Stout, sends this report:

"A few weeks ago the pastor of the First Congregational Church, the Reverend Max Hale, in a sermon wondered 'What would Nero Wolfe do in a similarsituation?' After the sermon I asked Max if he knew that young Rex Stout was the despairof a Sunday school teacher in the former First Congregational building. Max had no idea of the celebrity-to-be that once attended First Congregational Sunday school. I furnished a librarycopy(not my precious inscribed copy) of *Rex Stout: The Life and Times of the Creatorof Nero Wolfe* for his enlightenment."

John is now scheming to bring out the Kansas chapters of the book in an attractive reprinting to get the word to Kansans that Rex Stout is one of their own. That's a nice idea, especially since John had everything to do with making those chapters so interesting

There is a lot of interest in Nero Wolfe in Kansas these days. In October, the Topeka Public Library reproduced Wolfe'soffice in one of his suites and, on 18 October, the fiftieth anniversary of Rex'sfirst putting pen to paper to create Wolfe, held a Nero Wolfe Birthday Party. Jake Thompson gave the story major play in the Kansas City *Times*, as did Zula Bennington Greene and Nancy Nowick in the Topeka *Capital-Journal* Three local TV stations and a radio station, moreover, converged on the library to cover the party, which was attended by 150 guests I was lucky enough to be invitedand cherish



LETTERS

the handsome printed invitation I received But a family wedding here kept me from speeding to Kansas. Tom Muth, assistant director of thatmagnificentlibrary, stood in for Archie. After some deliberation, it was decided that no one should impersonate Wolfe. Andjust as well,too. Tom Muth was scolded by one lady for wearing glasses because Archie didn't. "I saw no point in explaining to her," Tom confesses, "that I would have been tripping over my feet if I took them off." Tom has compensated handsomely forthose ofus who could not be in Topeka on 18 October 1983 with a thorough accountofthe highlights:

Newshas reached us lately of the death of Marshall Best,Rex'seditor duringmostofhis years with Viking. Marshall, Viking's senior vice president, belonged to that nobleschool of editors who produced Maxwell Perkins and Arthur Thornhill. "Pray do not disabuse anyone of the idea that Rex Stout is God. I sometimes think so myself." Thus Marshall counseled me when work on Rex'sbiography began. It was a loving tribute from a grand humanbeing

The Reverend Frederick G. Gotwald, a Lutheran clergyman of Salisbury, North Carolina, has just published a *Nero Wolfe Handbook*. A delight. Soon to follow is Frederick Ungar's eagerlyawaitedbiography of Rex Stout, a glowing addition to its Recognition series. Itsauthor,David Anderson, a professor of Englishat Texas A&M, is an establishedauthority on the Wolfecorpus David is a vice-president of the R. Austin Freeman Society

Winner of the 1983 Nero Wolfe Award is Martha Grimes, author of *The Anodyne Necklace* and creator of Superintendent Richard Jury. Martha is an English professor at Montgomery College, Maryland and took specialdelightin receiving the Award because shehasbeen a longtime Stoutfan. Her grand [illegible] speech [illegible] the two hundred Wolfe Pack members on hand to see the presentation. As chairman of the committee which determined the Award, I can report that 140 books were read this yearbefore thechoice wasmade. Tostand to thefore inthat packis impressive indeed

The crossword puzzle in the December 1983 issueofEastern Airlines'*EasternReview* asks readerstosupply for DOWN 112 a four-letter word meaning "Member of a wolf pack." I consulted with Margaret Farrar on this, since she was crossword editor of the *New York Times* for more than forty years and virtuallyinvented this intellectual game We agreed that those four letters had to be N-E-R-O □

From Jack Miles:

A longtime reader of TAD, I have never before written a letter, and I can't say that therewas any overwhelming motivation for this one. May beit wasjust time

Enclosed are some reviews, which I have also not done before. Again, no special reason. I guess I'vebeen reading TAD for so long, enjoying what other people contribute to it, that I decided I owe a contribution of myown

Just to go back over the past two issues (TAD 15:4 and 16:1, as I write this), I very much enjoyed the interviews with James M. Cain and Stephen Greenleaf and would like to see more of the hardboiled authors interviewed, specifically Jon Valin and Loren Estleman,who are rapidly making this genre theirown. I alsoenjoyed the"CityofIllusion" piece by Nicholas Warner and the Nick Carterarticle by Will Murray. Things I could havedone without: the Oriental article, the rabbi article, the Classic Corner (always!), and the Stout and Sayers newsletters. In fact, my "can do without" list is virtually identical to Bruce Taylor's. He must be a heck of a guy

FromEdwardS. Lauterbach

Readers of TAD will probably want to order a copy of the detective and suspense issue of *Modern Fiction Studies*, Volume 29 (Autumn 1983), whichcontainsarticlesabout Sayers, Lem, P. D. James, Le Carré, the hardboileddetective, andother essays about mystery and suspense fiction. This is a fine collection of articles, and I think it should have a place in most collections of mystery stories. Cost is very reasonable at $3.00 a copy ($4.00 outside the United States). This issue of MFS can be ordered from Prof. William T. Stafford, Editor, *Modern Fiction Studies*, Department of English, Purdue University,West Lafayette,IN 47907

FromOlaStrøm

In his survey covering Chesteron's Father Brown stories (TAD 16:3), Otto Penzler mentions one unpublished shortstory. There also seems to be one *publlished* short story not included in the lbook collections – for obvious reasons, I think.

The story is listed in Ferret Fantasy's catalogue Q33 as No. 430. George Locke [illegible]

"The Premier Magazine October and November 1914. . . The October issue has 'The Donnington Affair' by Max Pemberton in which a murder mystery is contrived. The November issue has 'Father Brown and the Donnington Affair' by G. K. Chesterton, in which Chesterton has Father Brown solve the mystery with reference only to Pemberton's text. . ."

Let me use this opportunity to agree with those correspondents lately complaining about your author newsletters. There is a flood of trivia these days. Although trivia may be enjoyed in smallportions, it is quite i[illegible]bl[illegible]ing [illegible]. I [illegible] that the contents of these newsletters have enoughsubstancetojustifytheircontinuation at all; at least, theyshouldnotoccupyregular space in a journal such as TAD. TADshould be a journal of variety

Pleaseletallcontributions berated by their quality and originality, not by the appeal of the name of the author described

[illegible]

Why has "TAD on TV" made no reference to—let alone discussed—the series of five Chandler/"Marlowe" stories adapted as one-hour TV programs and shown on HBO in April and May of 1983? I know there is inevitably some time lag in your production schedule, but a number of mystery-related programs shown since May have been dealt with in "TAD on TV." Has no one on your staff seen the series?

Theyseem to me to be of consistentlyhigh quality in scripting, production, and performance. I could quibble about the superimposed format (complete with a regular girlfriend named Annie and a crusty police detective named "Violets" Magee who alternately helps and competes with Marlowe) or about Marlowe's more Southern than Southern Cali[illegible]nia accent or evenabout the [illegible] that only one of thesestoriesoriginally had Marloweas protagonist. Still, these are only quibbles. Thestories are full of the flavorof Chandler and of the '30s, and they are quite faithful to the originalplots

For the record, the stories adapted (in order of showing) are "Smart Alec Kill," "Finger Man," "The Pencil," "NevadaGas," and "The King in Yellow." I would vote for "ThePencil" asthe best of the groupandone of thebest (movie orTV program) I saw last [illegible]

I was sorry to learn of the death of Jonathan Latimer, which occurred shortly after I first encountered his work in *The Lady in the Morgue*. This hardboiled novel mixes action, suspense, mystery, and screwball humor into a brew that keeps the reader even more off balance than the inebriated detective (i.e., hard*boiled*), Bill Crane. Great fun. It's still the only one I've read because I can't find any others. Why doesn't some enterprising paperback house reprint them? For that matter, why doesn't someone start a "Hard-boiled Classics" series and include works by Latimer, Frederick Nebel (collecting some of the "Kennedy and McBride" stories), Paul Cain, Norbert Davis, etc.? If the regular reprinting of Hammett and Chandler is any indication, then surely there must be a market for them, too.

As always, I enjoyed the latest (TAD 16:4) very much. The quality and variety remain quite high. As soon as I receive the current issue, I begin watching the mail for the next one. From my position by the window, book in hand, I remain...

✓ As you've undoubtedly noticed by now, Dean, this issue makes up for the lack of attention to the HBO series—perhaps not in the depth we'd like—and there should be more to come.

William Morrow and Harper and Row are both actively acquiring and reprinting some of the great hardboiled writers, and you should start seeing them soon. —*Michael*

* * * * *

From Doug Greene:

I am probably the 331st to mention the following to you, but being late has never bothered me: I don't know whether there is an unpublished Father Brown story surviving in manuscript (TAD 16:3), but *The Chesterton Review* did discover and publish an uncollected adventure of Father Brown in its Winter 1981 number. The story originally appeared in Max Pemberton's *The Premier* magazine and was forgotten for more than 65 years. The October 1914 *Premier* contained Pemberton's crime puzzle, "The Donnington Affair," and Chesterton solved it in the November issue under the title "'Father Brown' and the Donnington Affair." *The Chesterton Review* published both halves of the story together, and they formed a surprisingly enjoyable whole.

Writing this letter gives me the opportunity, Otto, to ask you about bibliographic descriptions of new binding materials. It was easy to be accurate in the good old days when cloth was cloth and boards were boards, but now we have all sorts of materials which try to look like something else. What I'm getting at is that you describe the cover-casings on the British first printings of the Judge Dee books as "cloth," but my three firsts (which I purchased on publication) seem to be bound in boards masquerading as cloth. Describing pseudo-cloth covers as "hardback" seems to me to be waffling, but what other choice is there?

✓ The unpublished Father Brown story possibly *falls into the category of rumor, with the following explanation: A few years ago, I saw an advertisement for* THE CHESTERTON REVIEW *which offered, as an inducement to potential subscribers, the prospect of receiving "a previously unpublished" Father Brown story. A couple of letters asking for further information (including a request to purchase copies for resale in my bookshop) went unanswered. Later, correspondence with William White informed me that Father Ian Boyd, editor of* THE CHESTERTON REVIEW, *had been attempting to gain access to this unpublished story, the manuscript of which is in the possession of Dorothy Collins, Chesterton's literary executor. Does the story actually exist? Probably. Could the advertisement have referred to the newly discovered "Father Brown and the Donnington Affair" and the Collins manuscript be a "ghost"? Possible, but unlikely.*

Bibliographic descriptions of binding materials in my collecting column do seem to leave plenty to be desired. Upon pulling the Van Gulik British first editions from the shelves and re-examining them, following receipt of your letter, I see that the covers are indeed ersatz cloth. Boards is probably the correct term, though I agree that that is less precise than it once was. However, just calling the binding "hardcover" (I loathe the term "hardback," though it makes just as much sense as "paperback") is even less precise. I don't know how to describe half of the new binding materials. I guess the solution is to concentrate the column on older books. —*Otto Penzler*

* * * * *

From Dr. Lawrence Fisher:

Upon reading "Eye to Eye" in TAD 16:3, I can only hope that the readers of this particular survey take it with a grain of salt. Having recently undergone the rigors of a doctoral dissertation, I feel that I am familiar with mailed questionnaires and qualified to take the following exceptions to the above-mentioned article:

1. A return rate of 50–60% is the minimum accepted for sample populations much higher than the 80 mailed here.

2. The authors give four reasons why mail survey forms are not the best of research tools and then proceed to ignore their own advice. But yet they have a "good deal" (what is a vague term like this doing in a statistical study? how does one measure a "good deal"?) of confidence in it. Serious researchers would not.

3. Kerlinger (in *Foundations of Behavioral Research*) states that "it is inappropriate to bother with correlation coefficients of .30."

I could go on about the flaws in the "study" and the casual disregard for the ground rules of scholarly research. If the authors had presented the article in a less statistical, less scholarly, manner, I could have accepted it far more readily for its entertainment value.

But the authors were obviously attempting to get us to accept opinions by giving us a "pseudo-scientific" study. As a researcher—and a lover of the fictional or nonfictional search for logic—I find this offensive. It is not a valid study, nor a particularly reliable one, and for the authors to state that the ratings make "good sense" is somewhat like writing a paper and quoting from yourself as an expert opinion.

I therefore give the authors the following grades:

Entertainment Value: B+. Research Value: F.

✓ While Dr. Fisher's comments cannot be ignored, I stand by my decision to publish the report as it appeared in TAD. The authors' caveats regarding mailed surveys, and the fact that they expressed their "good deal" of confidence in quotes, *gave me a perspective from which to read and judge the contents of the survey. Frankly, what bothered me much more than the statistical unreliability of the report was the fact that more of the writers who received the questionnaire did not respond.*

Obviously, whether one wishes to read the survey for its statistical value or its entertainment value remains with the individual, and Dr. Fisher's demurrer must be taken into consideration by anyone reading the survey for hard fact. —*Michael* □

S226 Brown, Fredric
The Fabulous Clipjoint
Dutton 1947

It is in this folksy tale of Chicago lowlife that Ed Hunter and his uncle Ambrose first team up to investigate crime, to wit, the murder of the father and brother of the pair. The uncle takes time off from his tricks at the carnival to interview bartenders and hoodlums, accompanied by the naïve boy and in cahoots with a shady cop. The term clipjoint refers to the city of Chicago and all its institutions and denizens.

S227 Chesterton, G. K.
"Father Brown and the Donnington Affair"
The Chesterton Review, Winter 1981

A Father Brown story, buried for over sixty years, turns out to have a peculiar form as well as origin. In 1914, Sir Max Pemberton (q.v.) was editing *The Premier*, a small fiction magazine, and conceived the idea of describing a crime in one issue and asking a well-known writer to solve it in the next. The result now reprinted is interesting, though it does justice to neither of the storytellers; Pemberton is long-winded and Chesterton ill at ease. Father Brown's moral paradoxes startle as usual but lack the perfect fitness that they show when his creator has himself devised their setting. And the complex plot strains credulity.

S228 Dominic, R. B.
Unexpected Developments
St. Martin's 1984

Neither of the readers care nearly as much for Dominic as they do for his (their) former incarnation, Emma Lathen. The new atmosphere—Washington—is well done but in itself unarousing and, especially, lacking in humor. Congressman Ben Safford is too average for true excitement—not a patch on Thatcher. The present case is the authors' seventh and deals at somewhat tedious length with problems raised by the deaths of two Air Force pilots who die as the result of known but unrevealed design flaws in a new combat plane currently being "pushed" by the less than scrupulous manufacturers. There is also a murder, recognized by Safford as *not* a suicide, to provide a modicum of good detection.

S229 Fuller, Timothy
Keep Cool, Mr. Jones
LB 1950

This top-notch piece of work makes one regret that the author stopped writing in the genre—and, so far as is known, in any other. The scene of this embroilment is a tight-knit Connecticut village, where the natives and the middle-class refugees from the city mingle with uncertain results. At a square dance, four people are locked in a huge freezer and rescued just in time. It is clear that no single motive applied to the quartet. Which was the intended victim? From then on, Jupiter Jones's inquiry is steadily competent and entertaining and even socially astute.

S230 Goodman, Jonathan
The Stabbing of George Harry Storrs
Ohio State Univ. Press, 1983

The reconstructions by Mr. Goodman of various "true" criminal cases, such as *The Killing of Julia Wallace* and *The Burning of Evelyn Foster* (q.v.) have been not only readable and illuminating but sufficient to place the author at or near the top of the list of those who have explored true crime. The present book, which deals with the "Gorse Hall Mystery" of 1909, is a worthy companion to the above; but for some reason not altogether clear to at least one of us, the end result is dull. And this in spite of much picturesque detail (an alarm bell on the victim's roof, and Storr's reluctance to give any evidence as to his assailant's identity, etc.). Goodman has produced a painstaking analysis of the case and has provided a good bit of evidence regarding the motive for the crime, as well as the possible identity of the murderer.

S231 Lemarchand, Elizabeth
The Affacombe Affair
H-B 1968

A leisurely story can be a delightful relief from the machine-gun pace of modern narrative. But the dividing line between leisurely and slow is easily overstepped, and in this "Affair" the usually competent author crosses it again and again. Inspector Pollard and his sergeant come in late to disentangle the death and blackmail that frighten the otherwise ordinary inhabitants of a West-of-England town, the best part of the tale being the criminal scheme which starts the ball rolling.

Unfortunately, we find in the more recent *Unhappy Returns* (Hart-Davis 1977) that old habits have died hard and that the two mysteries facing Pollard and his assistant (a murder of an enigmatic housekeeper and the disappearance of a bejeweled chalice) fail to arouse the reader as much as was the case in the village of Pyrford. The new rector, Robert Hoyle, is a good character, ill-supported by his associates. And the provision of two quite unrelated crimes does little for the reader. Only toward the end does a nice piece of literary blackmail enliven things a bit.

S232 Mant, A. Keith
"Science in the Detection of Crime"
Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, August 1983

With the Chief Constable of the Merseyside Police in the chair, Dr. Mant gave a good summary of the latest methods and equipment used in the application of "Locard's Law," that any contact between two objects causes an exchange of material between them. There was nothing new in the forensic pathologist's principles but a very strange lapse of logic in one of the cases used for illustration. None of the assembled professional and lay people picked it up in the question period.

S233 Simpson, Dorothy
The Night She Died
Scrib 1981

This introduced a new detective, D.I. Luke Thanet. The scene is a smallish city in Kent. Julie Holmes is murdered in her own house twenty years after she witnessed the murder of painter Annabel Dacre. Thanet finally works out the links between the two killings, demolishing a critical alibi rather too easily. Readable but not outstandingly good. In the later *Six Feet Under* (Scrib 1982), a well-written account of village secrets and jealousies, is a credible account of Inspector Thanet's domestic difficulties and those of his assistant, Sgt. Lineham. As a mystery, only fair. Still later came *Puppet for a Corpse* (Scrib 1983), which gives Thanet the problem of why a successful, healthy doctor should wish to commit suicide. Here the author has given us more clues than in her earlier tales, and the puzzle is puzzling and well presented.

S234 Wakefield, H. R.
The Green Bicycle Case
Philip Allan (London) 1930

This famous case is one of the perennials of speculation. Since the foolish young man with the green wheel was acquitted, how did the chance-met girl get shot dead? The accomplished Wakefield wrote a bare ten years after the trial, and he hints at the outset that he cannot tell all he knows or thinks, because of that acquittal and because of secrecy pledged to informants. Yet so far as these readers know, further facts have not come out in the ensuing half-century. The story is simple, and this first relater of it at book length tells it well. Anyone who wants more on the trial of Ronald Light should go to Marjoribanks's *Life of Edward Marshall-Hall*, which gives details behind the scenes of the successful defense. □

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