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# THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE®

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Volume 18 Number 2

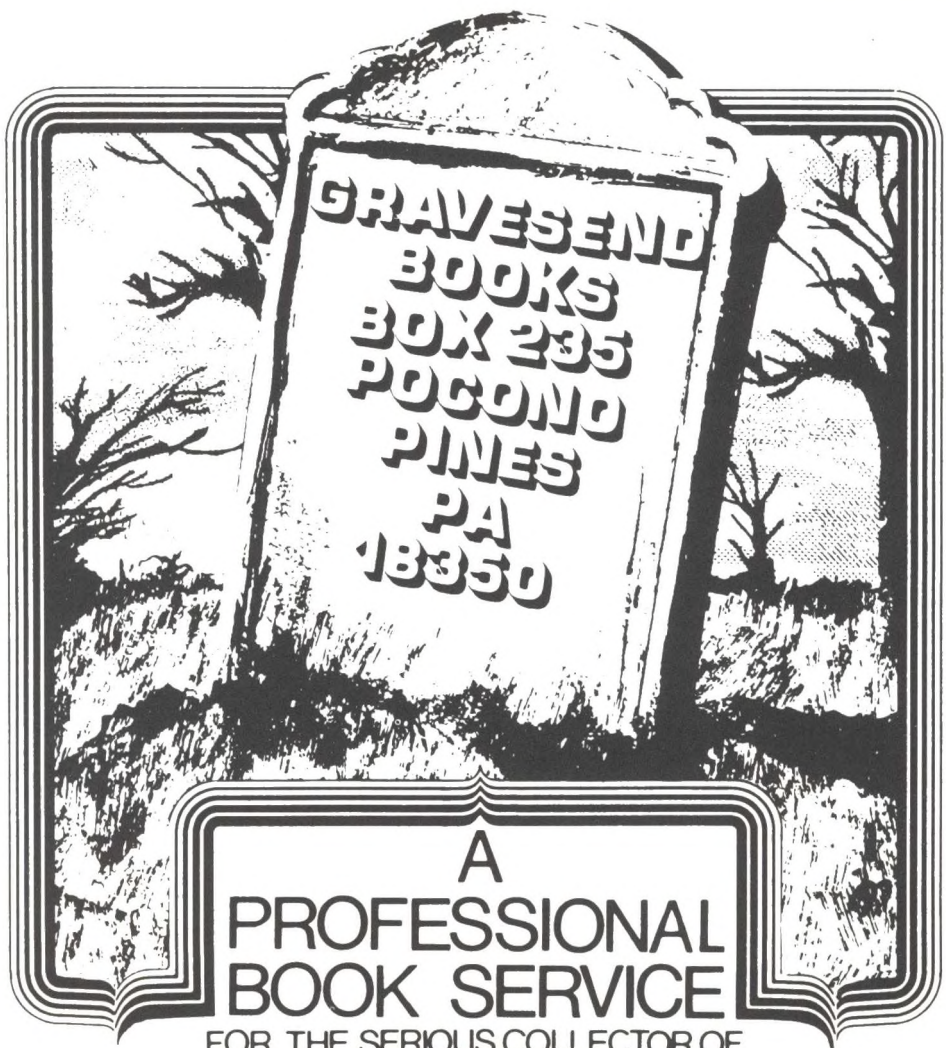
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# THE UNEASY CHAIR

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Dear TADian:

The tradition is, seemingly, as old as the genre. It is time, therefore, to reconsider it and change it. The tradition? The mockery of local law enforcement agencies in detective novels.

Granted, the entertainment in the locked room mystery, and other forms of pure puzzle mysteries, lies in the reader's contest with the hero. "I have all the clues, and so do you. I know who did it. Do you?" The fact that most crimes are not committed—and thus not solved—under the conditions presented in these novels is beside the point. What matters is that the local constable is invariably depicted as an incompetent ninny, barely capable of finding his billy club with both hands.

This grotesque mockery of the police has continued and spread to other forms of mystery. The private eye novel is a prime example. While any rational person must admit that the courts have tied the hands of law enforcement agencies, giving the private operative more latitude in which to work (he can, for instance, plant a bug or wiretap without going to a judge), and while that conflict in operating procedure must give rise to a certain animosity, it does not excuse the depiction of the police officer as a boor, more interested in arrest records than justice or, again, simply incompetent.

Most police procedurals, of course, do not fall into this demeaning category. On the other hand, the police force displayed in William Caunitz's *One Police Plaza* seems to be made up of men more

interested in free meals and the slaking of thirsts (for whiskey or women) than any other aspect of their jobs. The opening pages of *The First Detective*, a new procedural by a former New York City police officer, presents three of the ugliest minions of the law in recent procedural writing.

The incompetent, the selfish, the self-centered, the promotion-minded, the dirty—these are the policemen given to readers, movie-goers, and television watchers. "Hunter" would work just as well if the C.O. had some common sense; that has been proven on "Miami Vice" and "Hill Street Blues," and in any number of novels by Thomas Chastain, Joseph Wambaugh, Lawrence Sanders, and, certainly, Ed McBain.

Yes, it is admitted that not all policemen are what we would want them to be. By the same token, not all people are, either. Watching Angela Lansbury wend her way through a crime which baffles the local police chief may provide a pleasant alternative to football or "Hardcastle and McCormick" for some. However, I find it insulting and possibly dangerous. After all, it leaves my daughters with the impression that the next time they are in trouble, they should call a writer, not a cop.

Best mysterious wishes,

*Michael Seidman*

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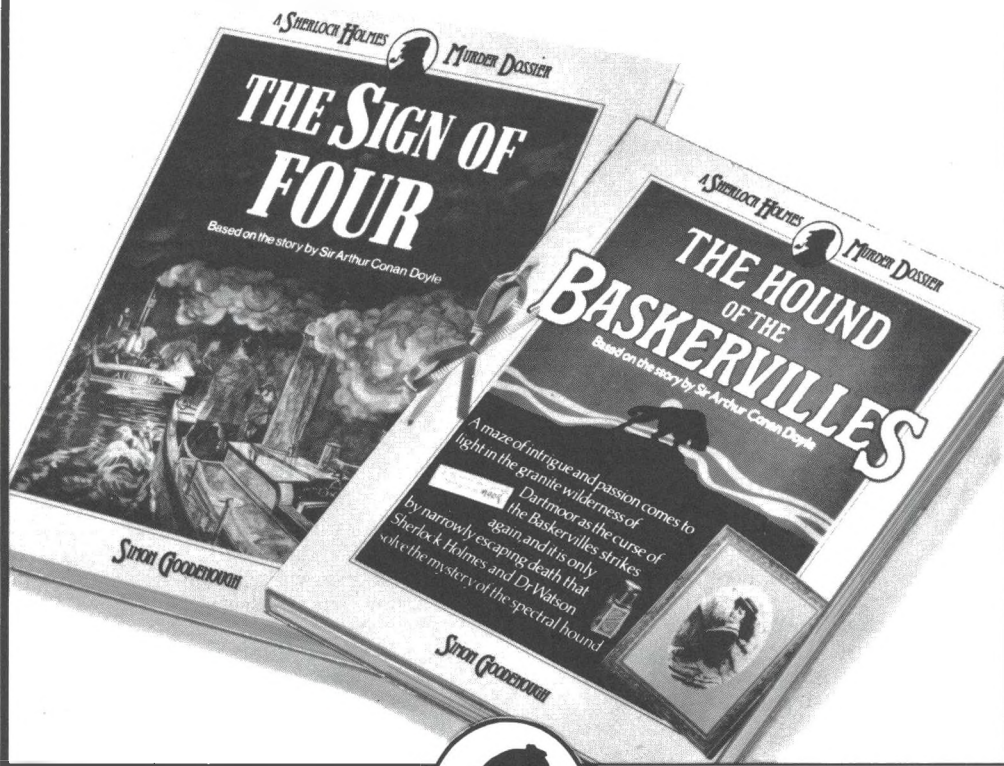
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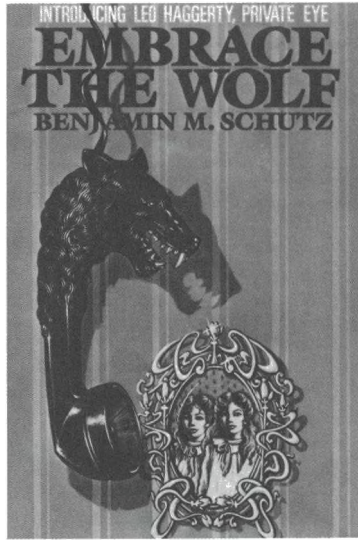


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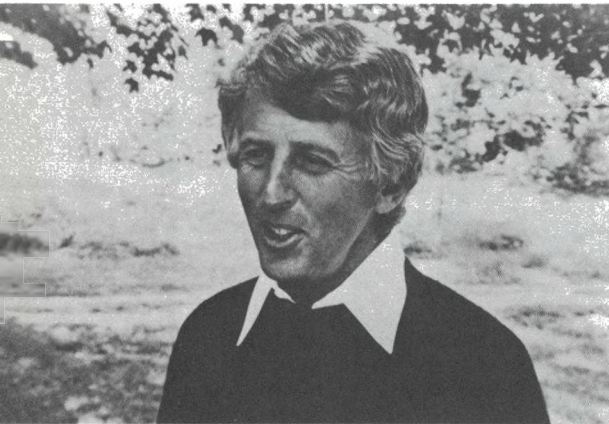
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# An Interview with Gregory McDonald



**Lorenzo Carcaterra**

He was one of the angry ones. As critic-at-large for *The Boston Globe*, Gregory McDonald watched as America changed and he recorded those changes. It earned him a high salary, the respect of his peers and the jealousy which comes with that respect, and a beating for writing a column against the war in Vietnam. It also earned him an education he would not have received had he not been covering American events from 1966-73.

Then, he turned his back, left journalism and hit the high road to fiction. Mystery fiction. He started by creating a character with the anger, irreverence and intelligence shown by many young journalists of the late '60s and early '70s. He gave that character the language of the day, a cynical mix of movies, TV, magazine and street talk. He called him Irwin. Irwin Maurice Fletcher. I. M. Fletcher for short. Fletch for those who want it even shorter.

He had intended to write the one book, but Fletch was too strong a character to be held within the boundaries of one, well-structured, highly stylized novel. There were more, each one outselling the other and soon the angry young man of journalism had become the soft-spoken, bestselling, but still angry, author of *Fletch*.

Fletch led to another character, this one from a

somewhat different world. Boston Police Inspector Francis Xavier Flynn is truly mysterious, with a past as dark as the circles under his often tired eyes. He is as brash as young Mister Fletcher, only in a much quieter manner. To date, there have been three in the series, with a few more sure to follow.

Gregory McDonald is now 48 years old, has hair the color of clean sand and a voice as light as a cloud. He wrote his first book, *Running Scared*, in 1964. The novel, which he calls "a rational look at suicide and a loud complaint about how people were being turned into computer punch cards," was met with strong critical reaction, most of it favorable. It was later filmed by David Hemmings, shown in Europe, never released here. Warner Books will re-issue *Running Scared* in 1986.

Ten years after that book and hundreds of newspaper and magazine pieces, *Fletch* was born. In May, 1985, the film version of that first novel, starring Chevy Chase, will be released. In August, *Fletch Won*, the eighth in the series, will be distributed in hardcover, while the paperback version of *Flynn's In* will hit bookstore shelves.

In addition, a collection of McDonald's angry, often poetic journalism, *The Education of Gregory McDonald*, will be released in April, while October

brings *Safekeeping*, a non-mystery set in World War II America. 1985, after the dice are rolled, will belong hands down to Gregory McDonald.

He sells nearly two million copies of his books each year, has twice won Edgar awards for his Fletch stories, is a Harvard graduate, has been married to the same woman for 22 years (eat your heart out Fletch) and has two still-growing sons, Christopher and Douglas.

At heart he is still a journalist and his novels reflect that. They are filled with the reporter's eye, his insights and doubts, his questions and his answers. McDonald brings to fiction the tantalizing taste of a daily newspaper, only with a greater depth, a great deal more care and concern for language and a larger, much larger, dose of heart.

Once a rebel with a cause, Gregory McDonald has become an author with a tale to tell. Each tale gets better, sounds more interesting than the last. It is the way of the true storyteller. And with Gregory McDonald, the feeling persists that Fletch and Flynn are merely a tease of what's to come. There are many other tales, some mysterious, some not, that need to be told and Fletch's daddy seems more than willing to oblige.

**The Armchair Detective: Would you characterize Fletch as an anti-hero?**

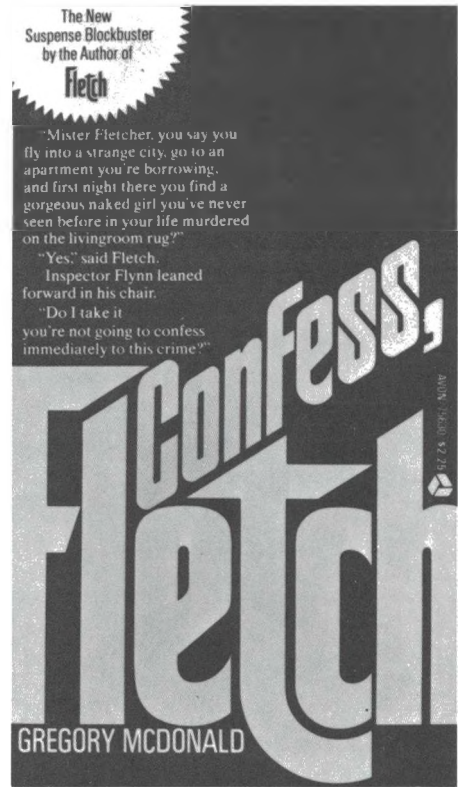
**McDonald:** No I would not. I'd rather characterize him as a hero who couldn't have existed prior to the socio-cultural changes of the 1960s. He has a whole new attitude toward authority, toward women, toward society as it currently exists. This makes him a neo-hero, not an anti-hero.

The books in the *Fletch* series are social criticism. That Fletch is used as an instrument of social criticism does not make him an anti-hero. He is a man with very contemporary attitudes. He isn't hard-boiled nor does he have an easy answer for everything. Americans love to put things in their little boxes and give them specific titles. That approach doesn't work with Fletch.

**Q: What differences do you feel exist between the American mystery and the British mystery?**

**A:** There is great misapprehension regarding the mystery. The British prefer the crossword puzzle. They're pure entertainment, totally devoid of any form of social criticism. Nor do they bother showcasing the elitism of the society which they're writing about.

The American is hard-boiled. They seem to be overburdening an entertainment medium with social comment. *Everyone* is presumed guilty until proven poor. They are much more than simple crossword puzzle mysteries.



But, frankly, there are distinct uses for both forms. I would hate very much for there to be one without the other.

**Q: Are you aware of any differences between readers of mysteries and readers of other forms of fiction?**

**A:** Certainly, just as there is a difference between a reader who reads for a continuation of his social education and one who reads in order to have something to say at a cocktail party. Fifty-three percent of mystery readers go through more than one book a year. For many, a mystery is a sort of religious experience. We all have mysteries in our life and are unable to solve them. For the majority of us, who are not church-goers, it is indeed a blessing to be given something chaotic like murder and have that chaos put into a fine order by the last page of the book. This could apply to any work of fiction, but it does seem to fit the mystery and the mystery fan much better.

**Q: Are Fletch fans as fanatical as they seem to be?**

**A:** There is a group which has formed here in Boston who call themselves the Fletch St. Irregulars and they



are truly frightening. They meet once a month and know things about Fletch that I've totally forgotten. I always have to look up information about Fletch. They seem to have it all committed to memory.

**Q: What are your feelings about seeing Fletch on screen in the person of Chevy Chase?**

**A:** There is a Fletch who is known to me and has been for the past 10 years. That won't be changed by a movie. I'm looking at the whole situation intellectually, not emotionally, much like I do when one of my books is released. My judgment on it is not good at all. I've been to the various film locations and found it mind-boggling, just standing there and listening to actors speaking lines which I had written, watching characters I had created come to life.

Also, I feel Chevy Chase brings the kind of puckishness to Fletch that is required. And I know that they have to approach a film far differently than I approach a novel so I know that there will be some changes, some things which perhaps were not meant to be. But, I'm very happy with the people involved. Whether or not I'm happy with the end result will be determined at a future time.

**Q: How did your journalism background help you as a novelist?**

**A:** Being a journalist is the greatest license in the world for an education a person can have. A journalist is nothing more than a shy person with a press card, a card which gives him access to everyone. Writing the columns, the way I was for the *Boston Globe*, taught me to set a scene, establish the situation and then pull away and let the story take over. I employ that same technique to my fiction.

The type used by the *Globe* got larger in the late '60's which meant I had less space to write what I felt needed to be said. This made me a more concise writer which, I like to think, is another trait carried over to the novels.

**Q: Why did you stop the journalism? Why didn't you do both journalism and fiction?**

**A:** I couldn't do both at the same time. I don't think it's fair to even try. When you're a columnist and an editor, as I was, you're on the job all the time, learning new things, discovering fresh situations, developing new approaches. Everything you see, everything you do, everyone you talk to, becomes a potential column. You have little time for anything else.

Besides, my wife and I were making babies at the time and a weekly paycheck was better than taking a long-range flyer on a novel. I couldn't focus the needed energy on both the column and a book. The most precious time a novelist spends is usually time

spent not writing—chopping wood, going for long walks, sitting by a fire—doing things which do not leave you emotionally spent. You can do many other things and be a novelist. I don't think you can be a journalist and a novelist. One or the other eventually suffers.

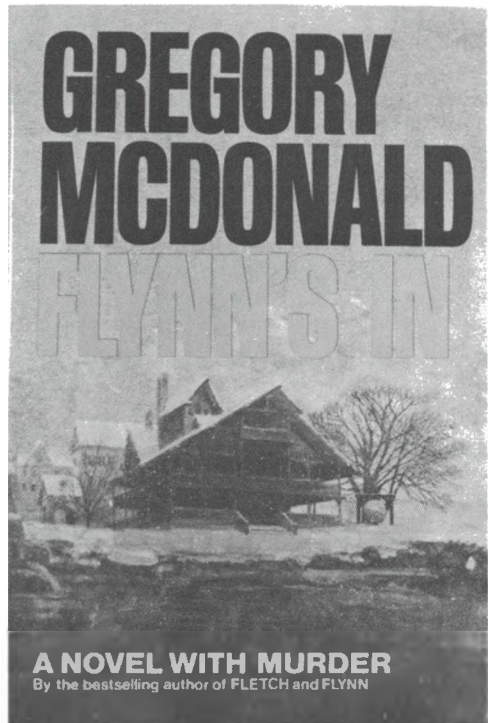
**Q: Can you define the Fletch style and contrast it with the Flynn style?**

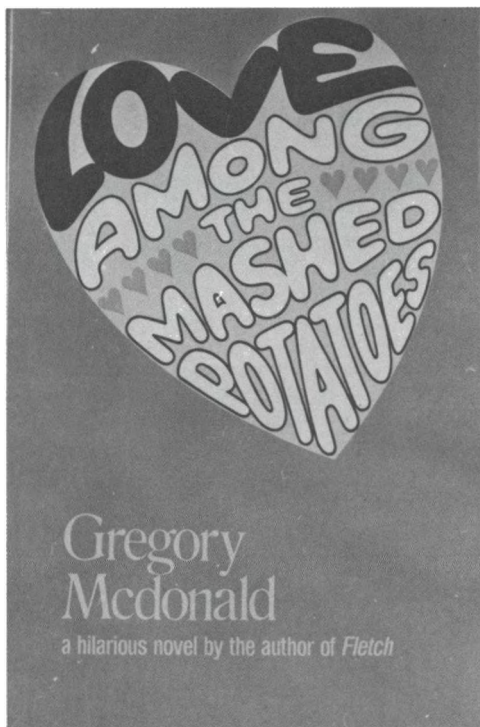
**A:** Fletch is written in a breezy sort of way. I write scenes in such a way that everything is set up in the simplest fashion and then I withdraw. I would like you to hear with your eyes. I would like the reader to be as involved in the story as the writer.

Flynn tackles slightly more esoteric topics—what is elitism? what is currency?—takes on a bit more. He looks at the universal human institutions and the way they function.

**Q: Had you intended for either Fletch or Flynn to develop into a series of books?**

**A:** No. When the first *Fletch* was finished, I thought *he* was finished. Then I won the Edgar Allan Poe Award for the best mystery, and letters and calls kept coming asking for another Fletch. So, I thought I'd do one more.





The second one, *Confess, Fletcher* also won an Edgar and we went on from there. Flynn first appeared in that book and I was taken with the character, so much so that I phoned my editor and told him I was thinking of doing a book on him. Naturally, they were horrified. Here was a happily married man, with children who seemed to like him, heading toward the far side of forty. My publisher at the time advised against it. Naturally, that served as a great incentive to go ahead and write the damn thing.

**Q: Are there advantages for you, as a writer, not living in a large city like New York?**

**A:** The reason that I live where I do is because I'm a health nut. I can jog, go hiking, mess up my garden. Also, I'm raising a family and I don't think that's possible in a city like New York. I admire anyone who even tries to accomplish such a feat.

There may also be a greater detachment, which enables you to concentrate on your work, but that possibility exists everywhere. You can disappear in a city like New York. It is a great place for a writer. You can lock yourself up in your apartment and no one will ever check on you. That's not true in London, Paris, Rome, but it is true in New York. You are totally alone—providing you want to be.

**Q: What kind of women is Fletcher attracted to?**

**A:** The condition of the American woman in today's society is dreadful. The media attacks her from all directions. If she's home raising children, she's betrayed the movement by not having a career. If she has a career and no children, she's not a total woman. If she has both a career and children, she's not devoting enough time to either one. There has never been a time in our history when women have been so assaulted and so utterly confused. This confusion has been passed over to the men as well.

Having said that, you can then understand Fletcher and his women. For someone like Fletcher, for someone from his generation, the old institutions do not work. He would very much like them to, but they don't. He likes contemporary women, likes their sexuality, their aggressiveness and the idea of having a woman as a friend and equal. He likes all those things a great deal. But there is something about all those things which precludes total commitment and I think Fletcher truly craves total commitment and keeps discovering that in today's society, it's just not possible.

**Q: How do you compare the mysteries you write to those of your contemporaries?**

**A:** I'm accused of originality in the mystery field and that's simply because I don't know what I'm doing. Sometimes, that's the best way to do things. When I first went to receive the Edgar Award, I was somewhat embarrassed, sitting among Eric Ambler, John D. MacDonald and Robert Parker, since I hadn't read any of their works. I made a mental point that night to read at least one book from each of the authors present.

**Q: What did you discover?**

**A:** For the most part, I enjoyed them. I liked the Eric Ambler body of work—the ordinary guy involved in internationally intriguing situations. But, that genre became less real to me as the Cold War turned into the Vietnam war. The intelligence network in this country, and I've had some contact with it, is far more frightening, far more ruthless, than what has been written about it. Their approach is to tell the story straightforward, almost matter-of-fact. My tendency is to have fun with that danger and spoof it.

**Q: You've been away from newspapers for 13 years. Do you miss working on one and would you ever go back?**

**A:** After I wrote *Fletcher*, I was 100% ready to go back to journalism. It's really a marvelous life.

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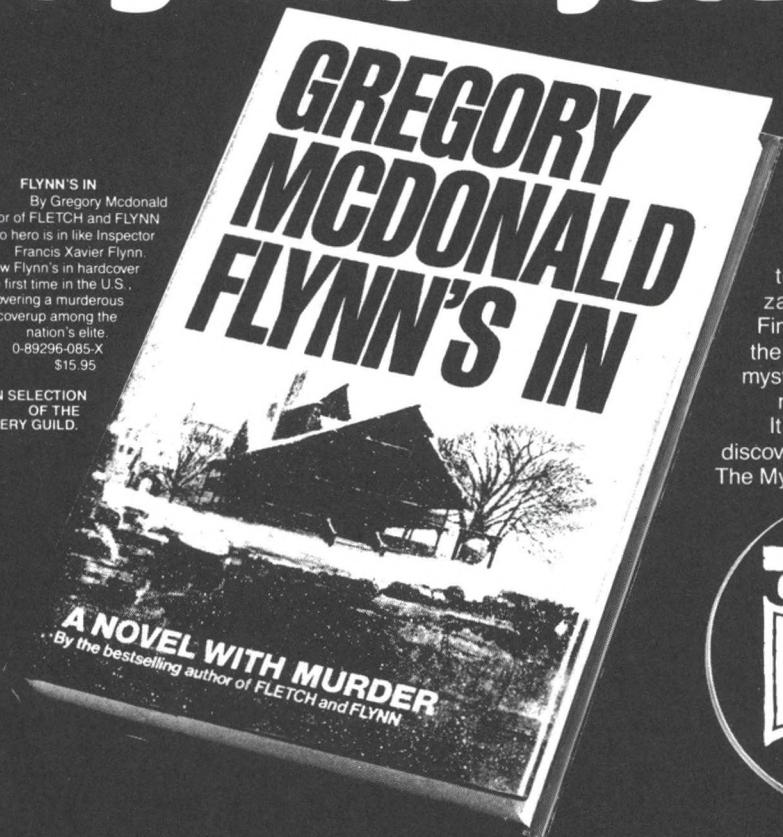
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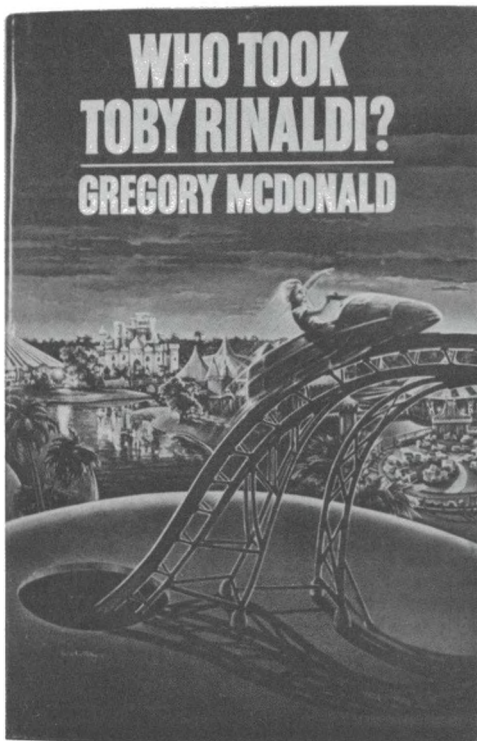
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Despite all the things wrong with it, and there are many, it's one of the best ways I know to both make a living and learn as you do so. A journalist is someone who works on the presumption that everyone he is talking to is lying. When he sits down to write his story, he must somehow find the truth among the lies. That I miss—a great deal in fact. I doubt I will ever go back to it. When I first left, I would get these impulses to cover a particular story, but as time passes the impulse fades as does the instinct it takes to be a good journalist.

**Q: You were a very angry journalist. Have the passing years softened that anger any?**

**A:** I'm still angry and will always be angry. The reputation I had may well be in excess of what I deserve. *The Boston Globe*, still one of the nation's most liberal papers, had, when I joined it in 1966, never shown a photograph of a man's legs nor had the word pregnant appeared anywhere in that paper. Meanwhile, out on the streets, there were movements—civil rights to pre-war to womens and gays—led by people who had long hair, talked differently and acted differently from anyone else



who may have preceded them. Their stories were not getting into the papers at all. *The Boston Globe*, to their credit and with great uncertainty I'm sure, gave me the job of writing about those people.

**Q: Why do you think you were chosen?**

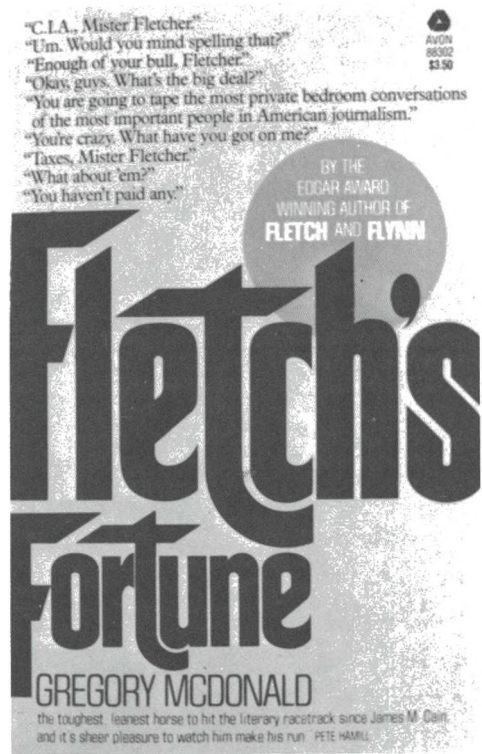
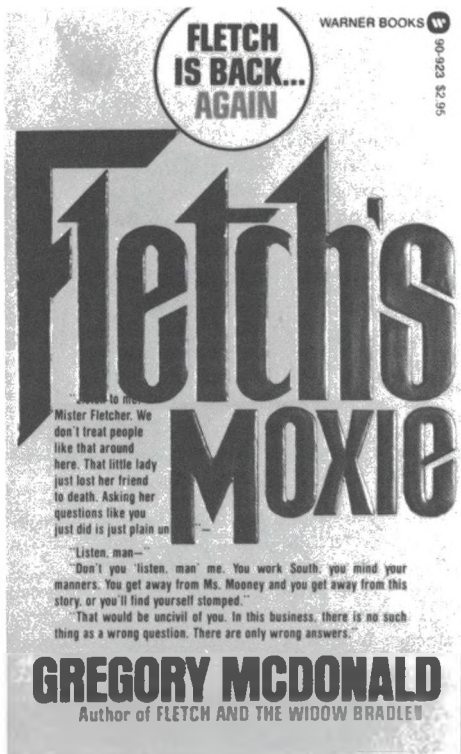
**A:** I was the right age, about 27, and had just published a book, *Running Scared*, which was very well received. I guess they thought I would be able to reflect what was going on in those streets.

**Q: Were you?**

**A:** I listened. I spent my days listening to people who were being ignored and went back to the paper and wrote about them. I was not one of the founders of subjective journalism, as some people have claimed. I was just doing what a good journalist should do—listen.

**Q: Would you have been as good today?**

**A:** I doubt I would have been as good. Those years I was covering events, from 1966 to 1973, was a marvelous time to be a reporter. So much was happening so quickly. To be successful, or give the



appearance of being successful, you must always work with the sense that you're confronting the new but have the intelligence to know that there hasn't been anything new for centuries. I don't think I would have that discipline today. Besides, the times couldn't possibly be as exciting and I feel much more comfortable allowing my anger to escape through my fiction.

**Q:** A collection of your journalism, *The Education of Gregory McDonald*, has recently been released (April). Do you think the work holds up?

**A:** I pray it does. The work sketched the people of a particular era within the context of that era. If the collection serves the purpose it's supposed to, then it will give a reader some of the feeling of that decade, and re-ask him some of the questions which were asked back then to which we have yet to receive any answers.

**Q:** In October, Penzler Books will issue *Safekeeping*, a new novel which is neither a Fletch nor a Flynn. Does this mean you will in the future move away from mysteries and head toward mainstream fiction?

**A:** What the future holds I don't know. 1985 promises to be a dazzler. I'll wait until I get into 1986 or 1987 before I look at what I'm going to do. Then, I'll probably take a survey, see where I'm going and where I'd like to go. I assure you of this—I will not repeat myself. I have no intentions of being Johnny One-Note and writing books simply for the sake of money. *Safekeeping* is a change of pace for me. It's witty and somewhat lovable. But, in many ways, it's a summation of much of what I've been saying in the Fletch and Flynn books—looking at human institutions and how they are dealt with.

**Q:** Does this mean that there will be an end to the *Fletch and Flynn* series?

**A:** When I was asked to do the second Fletch, I sat under a tree in my backyard and had a long talk with my dog as to whether or not I should bother. I'm not going to continue something just because I can sell it. The *Fletch* books, and there will be nine, that much I can assure you, will have become one enormous book. In that enormous book, broken down into nine sequential volumes, we will see Fletch grow from a very young kid, an anti-authoritarian figure

into an establishment figure. That transformation was begun in *Fletch and the Man Who*. The main piece of the nine volumes, the one which will hold it together, is *Carioca, Fletch*.

*Fletch*, therefore, has been written to end, to not repeat. I hope historically that he one day may be viewed as the *Tom Jones* of the 20th Century and as a series of books which made strides toward developing a post-cinematic form of literature.



**Q: What about *Flynn*?**

**A:** The *Flynn* books are quite different, are not connected and can end at any time.

**Q: Is it upsetting to you that, despite their sales and following, neither series is viewed as critically as it should be by most major critics. In fact, in many instances, both series have often been ignored?**

**A:** I don't care about that. Critics who ignore things that should not be ignored do so at their own peril. The answer is in history. Nothing else matters. The social darlings, the lunch mates of the critics, are all names which history will forget. A writer has a choice. He can be a social darling, a party darling and work that way, or he can truly concentrate on the

work and let the people read, not the critics. I don't care about the critics or the works of the writers whom they're having drinks with.

**Q: Who are the *Fletch* and *Flynn* readers?**

**A:** Judging from the mail, everyone in the world. Factory workers in Detroit; doctors in New York; postal employees in San Francisco. They all read for a variety of reasons. But, the reason is never important. The fact that they're reading is. Norman Mailer once said that everyone buys his books but no one reads them. Then, he wrote a mystery, not a very good one from what I understand, to try to get people reading. There are many writers out there whom people are reading but who don't get much in the way of critical appraisal. Let others have the praise. I want the readers.

**Q: Are the books as popular in Europe as they are in America?**

**A:** I think more so. It's somewhat ironic that critical America prefers the British mystery while the critics of Europe much prefer the works of Americans.

Why that is, no one knows. Perhaps it's because the European expects less of the world. Years ago, someone in Europe sent me a letter addressed to Gregory McDonald, author, U.S.A. A very ingenious mailman put it aside and shortly afterward stapled it to a letter which was correctly addressed to me. So, I got that letter within two weeks of its mailing date. I've never quite gotten over that.

**Q: Should a mystery writer maintain an aura of mystery about him?**

**A:** I guess it helps a bit. People are always curious to know more about an author than they've a right to know. I'm very often asked if *Fletch* is based on me—he isn't—or if I'm anything at all like the characters I write about—I'm not. So, it's not so much maintaining an aura of mystery but of leading a private enough life which allows the writer to do what he does best and that is observe and study people, from the menial laborer doing his daily chores with a quiet brilliance to a busy executive rushing about endlessly to God knows where. If people know who you are they don't let you watch. They're too busy watching you.

**Q: Do you foresee a time when you won't be writing, either fiction or non-fiction?**

**A:** I certainly hope not, but I guess it's a possibility.

**Q: What will you do then?**

**A:** I guess it'll be time for another long chat under the tree in my backyard with my dog. He'll know what to do. □

# AJH REVIEWS

ALLEN J. HUBIN Consulting Editor



Short notes...

The fourth of William L. DeAndrea's novels about TV network troubleshooter Matt Cobb is *Killed on the Ice* (Doubleday, \$11.95). This one employs the unexciting (to me) stratagem of the dying message, as a wide-eyed and aged psychiatrist drags himself across the rink to die clasping an American flag. Cobb's network is filming a famous skating star, and the murderous commotion somehow—if accidentally—surrounds her. Readable enough, but I think the death clue is sufficiently obscure that you shouldn't waste your energies on it.

The title of Susan Dunlap's *An Equal Opportunity Death* (St. Martin's, \$12.95) does not seem particularly to fit, but this is otherwise a pleasant enough representative of the self-imperiled maiden variety. Vejay Haskell, a San Francisco dropout, settled in the little California town of Henderson to read meters for the local power company. The town experiences annual flooding during the rainy season, and this year the corpse of a bar owner is added to the damp festivities. Vejay is thought by the police a fine suspect. The dead man may have been involved in some roguery or other, and Vejay sticks her neck out all

over town to get herself off the hook, if you'll pardon the mixed imagery.

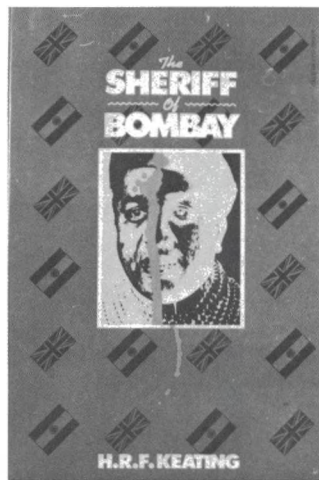
David Gethin's second espionage tale, *Wyatt and the Moresby Legacy* (St. Martin's, \$13.95) is not quite up to the remarkable standard of the first, but makes a good, if fear-somely bloody, read. Moresby, long head of British Intelligence, dies, leaving a message indicating his successor to be of the genus mole, species Russian. If true, this would be a fabulous Moscow coup, and anyone in the know should expect to die violently. Mixed up in the matter are the affairs of an oil-rich Middle East principality and the machinations of vastly corrupt businessmen. Enter Wyatt, who pays his debts to friends like Moresby...

H. R. F. Keating's Inspector Ghote returns in *The Sheriff of Bombay* (Doubleday, \$11.95), in which the poor fellow is badgered into taking a doddering old movie star on a scenic tour—of Bombay's brothels—where a dead whore is provided for their edification. And Ghote spots that honorary luminary, the titular sheriff, taking to his polished heels. Poor Ghote. Who would believe him? How could the sheriff's guilt be proved? Entertaining and amusing.

Another of a host of capable debuts in the last year or two is *A Healthy Body* by Gillian Linscott (St. Martin's, \$11.95). Policeman Birdie Linnet lost his cool, his wife, and his career when a drug investigation came apart in his hands because his wife became entangled with the principal villain. No longer thinking clearly, he follows villain, ex-wife, and daughter to a summer resort in France devoted to the maximum exposure of epidermis and to the tuning of muscles. There his mental muddle produces violence, and when a corpse turns up he

is absolutely the prime and single visible suspect. Can he re-wire his thinking apparatus in time to avoid becoming a terminal guest of French police? Suitably puzzling, with some well caught characters.

*The Mourning After* is a novel by Harold Q. Masur which seems to have sunk with the demise of Harlequin's transient mystery imprint, Raven Books, and is here rescued by St. Martin's (\$12.95). Also rescued is a series character, Scott Jordan, not seen since 1967. Jordan is a NYC attorney whose clients include art dealer Victor Maxim, dead of a heart attack. Acting for the estate involves Scott in resisting assaults on Maxim's business ethics, and, ere long, in murder, with Maxim's widow the principal benefactor.



Somewhere a devious mind is at work... Agreeable light suspense.

The first I've read of Colin D. Peel's eleven books is *Firestorm* (Doubleday, \$11.95), an acceptable tale which could have been better—the author's string-pulling is too evident and the makings of a pair of very good characters is too much

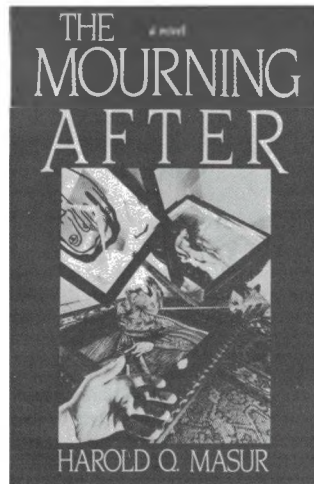
wasted. Paul Harwood, explosives expert who's lost his true love and gained an alcoholic monkey on his back, is hired to protect a German oil storage depot from terrorist threats to blow it up. Blow it up they do, which is just what Harwood's self-esteem needed. A winsome American lass comes to suggest that bombs blowing up where they couldn't exist is a rather widespread phenomenon, to ask his help to avenge her father who was a victim of similar villainies. Then killers rap on the door. . .

Sheila Radley's fourth case for Insp. Douglas Quantrill is *The Quiet Road to Death* (Scribner's, \$11.95). Here a decapitated corpse is eluding identification, not to mention apprehension of its killer, when threats against a local woman, accompanied by a decapitated cat, redirect Quantrill's attentions. The woman, who sleeps around at will and entertains the most crackpot of business ideas, is worshipped by her husband and viewed with contempt by her brother-in-law, the wealthy entrepreneur of a computer company. Radley's good mix is ready, her stirring is smooth, and only unconvincing motivation weakens the final blend.

Richard Ben Sapir's *Spies* (Doubleday, \$16.95) is not up to the intensity of his previous *Bressio*, but is an intriguing exploration of high society and aging spies. Just prior to WWII, three American-born Germans were trained in Germany and sent to Newport, Rhode Island. Their mission: to help German warships prevent American supply lines from reaching Allies in Europe. This trio did well enough and, unsuspected, they lived on to the present in increasing affluence. One is co-owner of a hardware store, another a ruthless near-billionaire determined to be accepted on Bellevue Avenue, the third the beautiful widow of an Avenue pillar. Their tranquility is disturbed by discovery of evidence of their existence. Enter the FBI; one of the three loses his cool, and the hounds

begin to run.

Walter J. Sheldon adds to the roster of cleric-sleuths in *Rites of Murder* (St. Martin's, \$13.95). This engages Bishop Paul Burdock of the Roman Catholic archdiocese of Washington, D.C. in the garroting of the city's "finest" call girls. He's involved innocently, through a favor done to the daughter of one of the victims, but the publicity surrounding his continuing efforts to track the killer in no wise charms His Eminence Cardinal Styres, nor Chief of Police Joshua Prell. Burdock picks up pieces of evidence here and there, shares them not with Prell, and provokes the highly placed citizenry who were serviced by the victims. The actions of amateur detectives frequently require some suspension of disbelief; such is the case here, too, but Burdock and his milieu are certainly interesting enough for a novel or two.



Howard R. Simpson's *The Jumpmaster* (Doubleday, \$11.95), set largely in Marseilles, is built on a WWII incident in which bags of gold, intended for the Resistance, disappeared. Now a small reunion of Resistance fighters is attended by McCallister, the Englishman who

led the group assigned to retrieve the gold, the hated Englishman who was observed to turn tail when the enemy struck. Also in attendance is murder, and Insp. Roger Bastide, gourmet and fornicator, finds his investigation treading on tender political toes. A tale of some interest, but hastily wound up and shy several degrees of credibility.

The pseudonymous J. C. S. Smith brings back retired NYC transit cop Quentin Jacoby in *Nightcap* (Atheneum, \$13.95). I was apparently in the minority in not being hugely excited by *Jacoby's First Case* (1980); I like this one more. Quentin agrees to do a favor for a friend—play nightwatchman at a fancy new restaurant atop a Manhattan skyscraper. His boss is the mercurial and fabulously successful restaurateur Johnny Lombardo. And, on Jacoby's first night of duty, the fabulously dead Johnny Lombardo. Not an auspicious beginning. While fending off a racetrack friend with a psychic in tow and diverting the attentions of the police, he tries to figure out how someone besides the three obvious suspects (of which he is chief) could have killed Lombardo. Some nice touches here.

Rebecca Schwartz, (mildly) feminist Jewish lawyer, returns for another homicide in *The Sourdough Wars* by Julie Smith (Walker, \$12.95). Rebecca's partner Chris is currently sleeping with the penniless scion of an Italian baking family. His only asset is a frozen "starter" (yeast and bacteria) for the legendary Martinelli sourdough bread. Rebecca and Chris conceive of the notion of a starter auction, but a series of corpses intervenes which Schwartz bids fair to join. Rebecca is currently sleeping with a reporter, whose loyalties to her and to his craft collide over these deadly events. Thankfully not much is made of bedroom antics—they apparently are only offered as proof of feminism—and this tale is otherwise pleasantly flavored of San Francisco mores, manners, and murders □



# Collecting Bibliomysteries

John Ballinger

My wife Emily and I first began to collect Bibliomysteries as a lark. Wouldn't it be fun, we thought, to collect mysteries that had as part of their plots something to do with book selling, rare books, book collecting, libraries, or publishing—in short, something to do with *books*. For us, it seemed like a perfect collection. We were both booksellers with lively interest in the world surrounding our profession, and Emily was a lifelong reader of mysteries. More importantly, with two growing boys and a very modest income, we felt that it was one of the few collections that we could develop which wouldn't strain our finances. After all, an expansive collection couldn't be more than a shelf or two of stray titles, we thought.

The idea for the collection had initially come from Paul Koda, who was then the newly hired director of rare books at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We started buying these mysteries for him, beginning with A. N. L. Munby's *The Alabaster Hand, and Other Stories*. We inherited his collection a short while later when we purchased his reference library of books about books. At that time, the bibliomystery shelf consisted of ten books.

There is a peculiar aura surrounding some collections in which the collector feels that he is the only person interested in a particular subject. I had observed this trait once before when I was interested in collecting the English author Anthony Powell. This was before he had completed his twelve-novel sequence *A Dance To the Music of Time* and most of his works were long out of print. I sincerely felt that I was the only person interested in finding his books to read, and then over a period of several years I met other people who were trying to collect his books.

The interesting trait which we all shared was that we were stunned that anyone else was also interested in the writer, thinking that individually we were the one and only being interested in Powell. I have yet to analyze if this type of collector is more interested in discovery and exploration or in the pursuit of the virginity of his subject, but this phenomenon definitely was true with bibliomysteries when Emily and I began to collect them. I was very surprised to learn—six years after we began collecting—that the Lilly Library and U.C.L.A. both had longstanding collections in this genre.

When we started, we were in uncharted waters and alone. Our initial problem was to discover what titles fit into our collection. The mystery specialist dealers to whom we talked were not used to thinking in terms of subject collections and were at first of little help. They were also unaware of the existing institutional collections. Since a goodly portion of our book business consisted of selling reference books, we had a natural inclination to start there. At that time, however, there was very little in bibliographies or reference books to help. There was, of course, Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor's *A Catalogue of Crime*. This book had subject entries listed in its index which did identify some titles for us. The index was woefully inadequate, however, with six entries under "Libraries" and only eleven for "Bookshops," but, since the main entries did give brief plot summaries, I was able to locate another fifty or so titles by reading through the bibliography cover to cover. I did this as bedtime reading, and in retrospect I would only recommend it to the most hardcore insomniac. I must admit to later reading through John Reilly's excellent book *Twentieth-*

*Century Crime and Mystery Writers* with the same verve and blind ambition. All of this work on my part created a growing list of want cards. Emily meanwhile was sensibly reading and enjoying the books we found.

The most helpful reference work for us was Allen Hubin's *The Bibliography of Crime Fiction*, which was first published in 1979. This is, as you know, a comprehensive laundry list of mystery and detective books. It contains a wonderful alphabetical list of book titles which allowed me to scan the titles for book-related words such as "library," "manuscript," and "book." Once I struck on a likely title, I would go back to the author's entry and see if there were any more bibliophilic-sounding titles by the same person. I did this on the theory that, once a writer took the trouble to understand the book world, he would most likely write about it again. This quirky exercise produced some excellent results as well as some grand misses. I did come across *Folio on Florence White*—a likely title which on examination proved to refer to a police file rather than to a large printed book. I have a pile of similar mistakes in our living room closet.

A great number of titles in our growing want list, however, came from people and not reference books. It was gratifying to receive so much help on the collection from people who knew that Emily and I were interested in the subject. Once we got a book in the mail from Sidney F. Huttner, who was at that time curator of rare books at Syracuse University, simply because he had read it and felt that it fit into our collection. A similar "find" came to us when the Canadian librarians David Esplein and Desmond Neill introduced Emily and me to Stanley Hyland's *Top Bloody Secret* and *Who Goes Hang?* both of which involve research in the House of Commons Library to advance the plots.

As we became more aware of other collectors, their generosity in sharing their knowledge with us helped a great deal. Edward F. Ellis, who wrote *The British Museum in Fiction: A Check-List* and *The New York Public Library in Fiction*, was most helpful in sharing his information with us. His interests lay over a wider scope of all fiction, and his enormous knowledge drawn from a lifetime of reading was certainly an inspiration. Stuart B. Schimmel, a noted collector and member of the Grolier Club, was also very kind in allowing me to look over his collection of mysteries that deal with rare books, antiques, and the art world. The Schimmels have relegated this collection to a bathroom in their apartment, a symbolic gesture which has helped us to keep our own efforts in perspective.

These are certainly not the only people who have helped us with the collection, but a longer list would run the inevitable risk of omitting an important

name, so I will stop here.

Armed with a list of books that we wanted to include in our collection, Emily and I had to make decisions about other aspects of our collecting. Since our early thoughts were of building a small, limited collection, we made an initial decision to buy the best copies that we could find. We wanted first editions in dust jackets, presentation or signed copies from the authors when we could find them, and advance review copies when they presented themselves. We also made a point of buying the first copy we were offered of a new title and if necessary upgrading its condition at a later date. This policy of buying the first copy offered turned out to be a good one. In many cases, that first copy was the only one we ever found. We bought a copy of Marion Boyd's *Murder in the Stacks* even though the dust jacket was missing. We never were able to locate a second copy, in any condition, of this rare book by a professor's wife from Miami of Ohio. Being in the book

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business, we also had the luxury of being able to buy duplicate copies of a book already in our collection, either to compare it for condition or to sell it to one of several of our customers who were becoming as enthused about bibliomysteries as we were. In this way, we were able to replace nice copies of two books, Harry Stephen Keeler's *The Book with the Orange Leaves* and W. E. D. Ross's *One Louisburg Square*, with copies presented by the authors to the persons to whom the books were dedicated. In several other cases, this ability to buy duplicate copies of books and compare them to our collection led us to finding variations in the books themselves. There were, for instance, totally different stampings on the spines of two copies of the first edition of Michael Salkeld's *Missing from the Shelf*, and two separate colored cloths used to bind an early American bibliomystery, Frederic B. Perkins's *Scrope; or, The Lost Library*. In other instances, the publisher changed the colors used for the dust jackets. All of these points are of little interest to most people, but they reflect how books are published, and this is of great interest to both Emily and me.

During a middle period in our collecting, Emily and I decided to include later printings of books on our shelves next to the first editions. Texts change in these editions, and we felt that it would be interesting for someone to be able to look back and see the entire publishing history of each title in our bibliomystery collection. While this still sounds like a good idea in theory, the practical result of adding this bulk to our shelves led us quickly to reverse this decision. I think the final insanity of looking at nine of the thirteen printings of Marco Page's *Fast Company* in the Pocket Book edition caused us to ask ourselves where this madness would all end and cooled our ardor.

With a view to adding scholarly interest to the collection, we added four original manuscripts for novels. Two of these were by Lawrence Block, including *The Burglar Who Liked To Quote Kipling*, and the remaining two were by Bill Pronzini. We were fortunate to meet both authors, which greatly added to the personal appeal that the manuscripts had for us.

Research, contact with other collectors, a willingness to buy books, and available money are not enough to develop a good book collection. The essential missing ingredient in this list is the help of a great bookseller. Emily and I were fortunate to have the assistance of both Peter Stern of Pepper and Stern and Otto Penzler of The Mysterious Bookshop. They were the people who were being offered the fine and unusual books which eventually came into our collection, and without them we would never have seen the high spots that raised the collection above the average. The quality and completeness of our collection was more the result of their help than of any other single factor. That, and the good luck of having the Adrian H. Goldstone collection and Allen Hubin's collection being offered for sale during the time we were collecting. Messrs. Stern and Penzler added many titles from Allen Hubin's vast collection of mysteries to our shelves—titles none of us knew applied to our subject. Telephone calls from Otto Penzler and Peter Stern telling about new finds were personally the most satisfying moments I had during my years of collecting, and I am grateful for them.

The other wonderful moments were in reading the books themselves. Emily had always loved mysteries. I approached them with a certain amount of prejudice placed in my mind by narrow-minded academicians during my years as an English major. I have now escaped the world of *belles lettres* and learned to enjoy, if not to wallow, in the mystery genre. My tastes in mysteries seem to run counter to Emily's. Emily likes the classic English mystery more than I. My tastes run to the tough, contemporary hardboiled fiction. We had thought of writing a checklist at one time, *à la* Barzun and Taylor, giving our reactions to various books. It would have read

like "Point/Counterpoint," but, alas, we never took the time to do it. We both like the writings of Ross Thomas, who is represented in our collection by *If You Can't Be Good and No Questions Asked*, and Lawrence Block, whose character of Bernie Rhodenbarr is most appealing, as are Block's well-turned phrases and impeccable sense of plot and pace. Several personal favorites are Jeremy Potter's *The Dance of Death* and Michael Innes's *Operation Pax*, which ends with a wild chase through the bowels of the Bodleian Library. I also get great pleasure in reading the perfectly dreadful books of the genre. Bad writing has the effect of riveting my attention. I can only compare it to watching a disaster on network television news with blood, gore, and horror wafting over my consciousness. The publishing firm of Arcadia House is a personal favorite. Their imprint is a virtual guarantee of bad writing—at least for bibliomysteries. One of their titles, *Murder First Edition* by Truman Garnett, for theme, plot, sensibility, use of language, characterization, and simple observance of the rules of grammar, has to be one of the worst novels I have ever read. It is also a very scarce book, but one which, when found, is almost always in very fine condition. Thankfully, there were no second printings. A recent favorite in the bad book category is Vera Kelsey's *Whisper Murder!* (Doubleday, 1946), in which a main character is the town librarian. Emily found the perfect line given by a doctor at the coroner's inquest: "Evidence of carbon monoxide in her lungs demonstrate she was alive and breathing when she died." Would it be out of order to ask for a second opinion, or should we be satisfied with the name of the book's editor?

A final note about our bibliomystery collection has to be the ending of it. In 1982, my partner in a book business decided that he wanted to dissolve the partnership, and I was in a position of suddenly needing cash. One of the regrettable decisions I was forced to make was to sell our collection. Once we made the decision to sell, we began looking for a buyer. At that point, other opportunities presented themselves which allowed me to join John Curtis as a partner in The Bookpress Ltd. in Williamsburg, Virginia. This new situation allowed me to withdraw the collection from sale. Once I had made the decision to sell the collection, however, I emotionally washed my hands of it. As the old blues song says, "The thrill was gone." I discussed the matter with Emily, and we finally agreed to catalogue the collection at The Bookpress and offer it for sale in March of 1984. Since then, I have spoken with other collectors who experienced similar changes of feeling toward their collections and now realize what a common circumstance this is.

Emily and I still buy and read bibliomysteries. I

think now and then of building another collection of them, but we will probably not do that. Betty Rosenberg of U.C.L.A. is beginning to work on a bibliography of the subject, and we have been sharing our information with her. We also have customers who are still building their bibliomystery collections, and we are content to read the books and pass them on. The wonderful thing about collecting bibliomysteries or any other subject collection is that there is no real end to it. New books are always being written which will fit into the subject, and older books are always being discovered. Someday I would like to start another collection in another field, perhaps, but I have not yet found an idea that has captured my imagination like the bibliomysteries did. But someday soon, I will.

#### THE COLLECTION

This is merely a checklist of the titles represented in our collection of Bibliomysteries. Consequently, I have taken certain liberties. For many of the titles, we had both the first English and the first American editions, as well as other printings. To save space, we have listed only the earliest edition in the collection. In the few cases in which we did not have the first edition of a title, we have listed the first edition information and marked these titles with stars (★). This list is meant only to be a guide. There are hundreds of additional titles that could be added, which is the wonder and fun of an open-ended subject collection.

Allingham, Margery. *Flowers for the Judge*. London: Heinemann, 1936. (★) Albert Campion investigates a scandal-plagued publishing house.

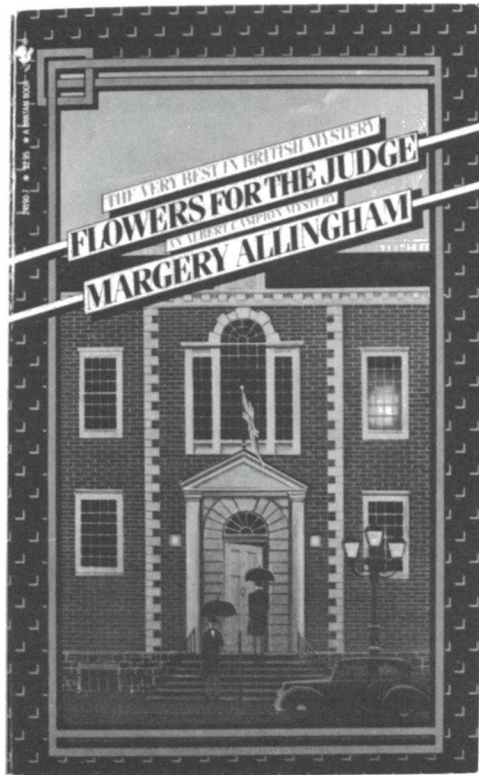
Allsop, Kenneth. *The Leopard-Paw Orchid*. London: Quality Press, 1954. A bohemian London novel which extends from the Soho jazz clubs to the Charing Cross Road bookshops. There is murder and suicide in this scarce mystery by Allsop.

Ames, Delano. *The Body on Page One*. New York: Rinehart, (1951). Murder in a bohemian community. Included are second-hand bookdealers among the characters.

Anderson, J. R. L. *A Sprig of Sea Lavender*. New York: St. Martin's Press, (1978). While concerned with art forgeries in the main, Piet Deventer, an inspector from Scotland Yard, finds many of his clues by digging through public libraries.

Anderson, Poul. *Murder in Black Letter*. New York: Macmillan, 1960. Trygve Yamamura is a detective hired to trace the whereabouts of a six-hundred-year-old manuscript on witchcraft.

Anonymous. *The Forged Will; or, The Orphan and the Foundling*. Leeds: Fred. R. Spark, n.d. (c.1867). By the author of *Jessie the Bookfolder*, the hero in this moral tale is a proofreader for a publishing firm that specializes in Bibles. There is an explanatory chapter in which the author tells of such firms established in Scotland where the right to publish the Bible was not restricted as it was in England.

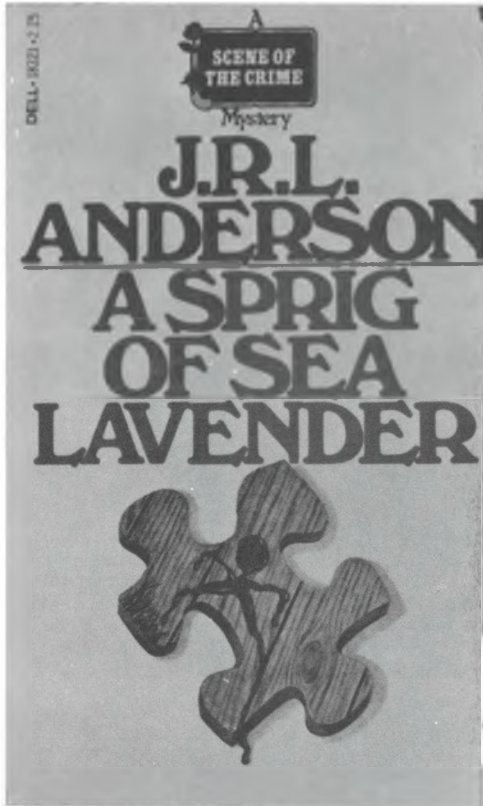


\_\_\_\_\_. *Jessie the Bookfolder; or, The Heroism of Love*. Leeds: F. R. Spark, 1865. A moral tale in which the heroine works as a bookfolder. There is no copy listed in the National Union Catalogue or at the British Library Catalogue. Not in Hubin.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Ms. in a Red Box*. New York: John Lane, 1903. In the manner of Washington Irving, the publisher claims that this manuscript was left at his door. He decided to publish it after many failed attempts to find the identity of the author.

Ashdown, Clifford. *The Queen's Treasure*. Philadelphia: Oswald Train, 1975. Originally written by R. Austin Freeman and John J. Pitcairn (c.1905) under their combined pseudonym, Clifford Ashdown, this novel remained unpublished until 1975 when it was rediscovered in the Pitcairn papers. It involves decoding a cypher in a book that leads to the discovery of Francis Drake's fabled treasure.

Asimov, Isaac. *Casebook of the Black Widowers*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1980. This is a collection of short stories involving members of a club called The Black Widowers who meet once a month for gourmet meals, fine wine, and an evening of solving mysterious riddles. Included here is "The Next Day," the story of a missing manuscript and a perplexed publisher.



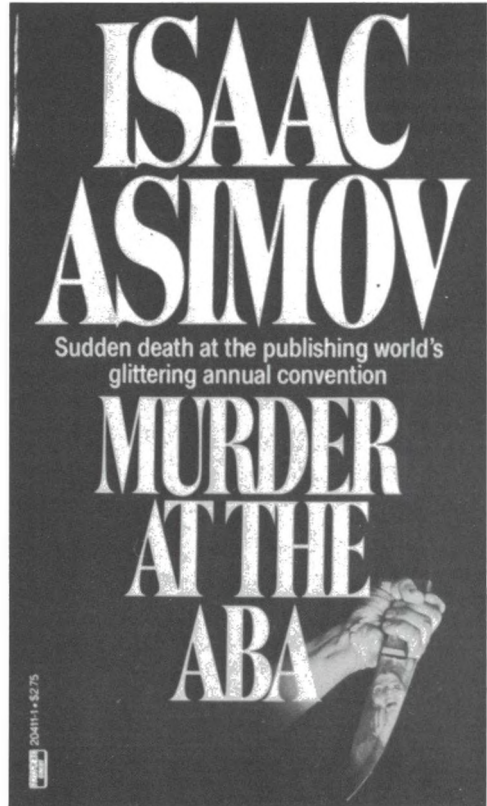
\_\_\_\_\_. *More Tales of the Black Widowers*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1976. A group of short stories involving the club. All the short stories here are book-related.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Murder at the ABA*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1976. A bestselling author manages the ultimate publicity stunt: he turns up dead at the prestigious American Bookseller's Association annual convention.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Union Club Mysteries*. New York: Doubleday, (1983). In the manner of the Black Widowers books, Asimov has four gentlemen solving mysteries in the comfort of the aristocratic library of the Union Club. Several of the stories are bookish in nature, including "The Thirteenth Page" and "The Library Book." The stories were originally written for *Gallery* magazine.

Austwick, John. *The County Library Murders*. London: Robert Hale, (1961). Vandals destroy a collection of books given to the Ludby County Library over a hundred years before. Other people become involved in strange events, including a second-hand book dealer, a relative of Shakespeare, and an antiquarian.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Mobile Library Murders*. London: Robert Hale, (1964). The murder of two teenagers with a plastic bomb and mysterious television interference is somehow linked with the route of a mobile library truck.



Avallone, Michael. *Dead Game*. New York: Holt, (1954). A man purchases an "undiscovered" Poe diary only to find that it is a forgery. Its return leads to murder.

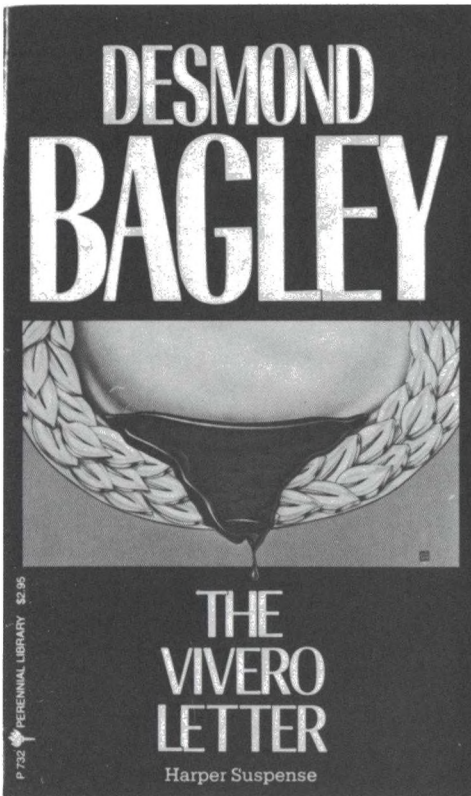
\_\_\_\_\_. *The Man from Avon*. (New York: Avon, (1967). This spy spoof features Larry McKnight, "the government's most secret UFO investigator and Avon Books' top salesman." A paperback original.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Paperback Quarterly*. Brownwood, Texas: The Pecan Valley Press, (1980). A group of interviews and related articles on Michael Avallone, mentioning *The Man from Avon* with a photo of the cover.

Bagley, Desmond. *The Vivero Letter*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1968. A computer expert finds his brother dying in their family farmhouse. He inherits the farm and a curious letter from Manuel de Vivero Y Castuera dated 1539, which leads him to Mexico to unravel a historical jigsaw puzzle. Much research is done in finding the solution.

Baharav, I. D. *The Winds of April*. New York: Primary Sources, 1965. A chance meeting in the Fifth Avenue Library leads a woman into a world of stolen manuscripts, arson, and death.

Bailey, H. C. *The Bishop's Crime*. New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1941. Reggie Fortune is able to use his knowledge



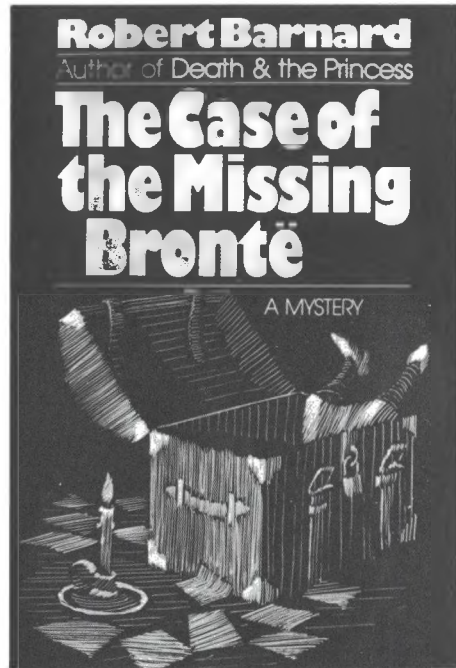
of medieval manuscripts, Dante, and English ballads to uncover the murderer of a tramp identified as Dirty Dick.

Baker, Carlos. *The Gay Head Conspiracy*. New York: Scribner's, (1973). A cryptogram in a book provides the solution to a murder on Martha's Vineyard. Written by the Hemingway scholar and Woodrow Wilson Professor of Literature at Princeton.

Baker, Richard M. *Death Stops the Manuscript*. London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. A schoolmaster and amateur detective investigates the murder of Dr. Carson in his library. A manuscript he was working on provides the vital clue.

Ballinger, John. *Bibliomysteries*. In, *The American Book Collector*. Volume 3, Number 2. An essay about collecting detective fiction about bookstalling, libraries, and rare books.

Barnard, Robert. *The Case of the Missing Brontë*. New York: Scribner's (1983). Perry Trethowan meets Edith Wing on a visit to his relatives' house near Hutton-le-Dales and she shows him a page of a manuscript which could be a lost work of Emily Brontë's. Edith is mugged and the manuscript stolen, leading Perry Trethowan to investigate. Along the way he meets a librarian, American book-collector, scholar, and other assorted bookish types.



\_\_\_\_\_. *Death of a Literary Widow*. New York: Scribner's, (1979). The successful author Walter Machin dies, leaving his literary remains to his two ex-wives. Then one of the widows dies under suspect circumstances. An American scholar is given grudging access to Machin's manuscripts and makes interesting discoveries in them.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Death of a Mystery Writer*. A mystery writer with a large adoring public and a small group of close enemies is murdered. His son stands to inherit his father's estate, but an unpublished manuscript worth over one million dollars is missing.

Bartram, George. *The Aelian Fragment*. New York: Putnam's, (1976). Samuel Teck purchases a priceless Cyrillic manuscript desired by the Russians, the Israelites, and wealthy American collectors, all of whom would kill to acquire it.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Fair Game*. New York: Macmillan, (1973). A corporate librarian is drugged and kidnapped. He escapes and leads his potential killers to Zurich, Iowa, and central Florida.

Barzun, Jacques. *The Delights of Detection*. New York: Criterion Books, (1961). Contains "The Professor's Manuscript" by Dorothy L. Sayers.

Bayne, Spencer. *Murder Recalls Van Kill*. New York: Harper, 1939. Hal Van Kill is a scholar and expert on ancient manuscripts by training and a detective by force of circumstance. He attempts to get away from crime by temporarily accepting a job as a tutor in Professor Cameron's household. Then the professor is murdered.

Beck, Henry Charlton. *Death By Clue*. New York: E. P. Dutton, (1933). A much-hated book reviewer was murdered in his house in the New Jersey Pine Barrens. He was reviewing a book entitled *Murder in Green*. Investigation leads into the world of books.

Bell, Josephine. *Treachery in Type*. New York: Walker, (1978). A famous author writes a book after forty years of inactivity. The manuscript is surreptitiously copied by the author's typist, who gives it to her boyfriend. He in turn sells it to a publisher and it becomes a success. Then, not surprisingly, the boyfriend-"author" is found dead.

Berckman, Evelyn. *The Blessed Plot*. London: Hamish Hamilton, (1976). Mr. Clerq is appalled to discover that a large part of the garden belonging to the Archive of State Papers is being taken away from the organization. This situation has relevance to something that happened to King John in 1214 and the connection between the two events becomes clear.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Crown Estate*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1976. First printed in England as *The Blessed Plot*.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Fourth Man on the Rope*. London: Hamish Hamilton, (1972). Alison Pendrell left London to catalogue newly-acquired material in a country library. She became involved with an elderly lady in a boarding house who supposedly had a trunk full of letters and manuscripts from the literary giants of the past.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Hovering Darkness*. New York: Dodd, Mead, (1957). Denise Gilbert, a bookseller, meets the Freeman Gerrards on a cruise on the *Queen Alexandra*. The Freeman Gerrards have just received extortion letters and Denise uses her bookselling attributes to help them.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Journey's End*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1977. A book with a priceless secret becomes the prized possession in Madame Amaranthe de Leovil's estate. After the elderly lady dies, her daughter seeks to sell the antiques, including the book, and encounters danger.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Strange Bedfellow*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1956. Martha Haven, a young American working in a London museum, uses research to uncover a tale of Gothic terror involving a ruby given by a Princess to her lover in 1720.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Victorian Album*. London: Hamilton, (1973). A Victorian photo album is the focus for a novel about an elderly lady and her strange, convoluted past.

Bernard, Robert. *Deadly Meeting*. New York: Norton, (1970). A group of scholars at a convention discover that one of them is a murderer. Their petty academic jealousies and hatreds come to light.

Bierstadt, Edward Hale. *Satan Was a Man*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1935. A psychological novel about what happens to someone cooped up in a large house with a library of crime books to read. Dust jacket by W. A. Dwiggin.

Blackburn, John. *Blue Octavo*. London: Jonathan Cape, (1953). A young bookseller becomes suspicious when a fellow bookseller pays an extremely high price for a relatively slow-selling book on mountaineering, *Grey*

*Boulders*. The high-spending bookseller is found dead and the young man's research into the book leads him to discover that someone is buying all available copies of the book from the trade and defacing copies in libraries.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Bound to Kill*. New York: M. S. Mill, 1963. Published in England as *Blue Octavo*.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Bury Him Darkly*. London: Jonathan Cape, (1969). Mystery surrounds the life and death of Sir Martin Railstone, the eighteenth-century poet, painter, scientist, and libertine. Two hundred years later a bishop is murdered, and strange satanic events happen. Research through Railstone's works helps solve this mystery, which has touches of science fiction.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Packed for Murder*. New York: William Morrow, 1964. "The trunk in a dilapidated London house contained a Bible, a dictionary, a Times Atlas and a body." The body was Tania Vitgeff and as her last act she scratched a message inside the trunk indicating that a Russian leader was going to be assassinated on his arrival to London. Other diaries and documents help in preventing the murder.

Blackstock, Charity. *Dewey Death*. London: Heinemann, (1956). One of the classic library murder mysteries. Each chapter is headed with a title and its Dewey Decimal Number. A very scarce novel.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Foggy, Foggy Dew. Dewey Death*. New York: London House & Maxwell, (1959). The first American edition of *Dewey Death*, here combined with another of Blackstock's novels.

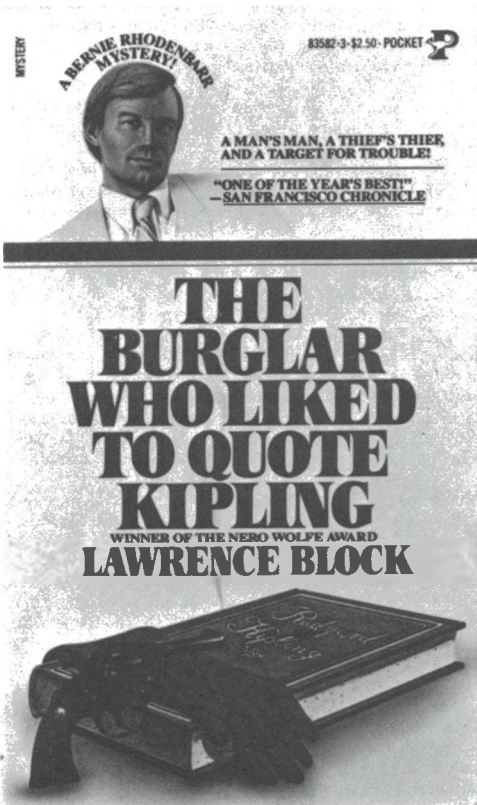
Black, Nicholas. *End of Chapter*. London: Collins, (1957). Someone had maliciously tinkered with the proofs of a controversial autobiography, making the text libelous. The publisher hires Nigel Strangeway to investigate the matter but before he can begin there is a murder.

Blake, Nicholas. *The Smiler with the Knife*. New York: Harper, 1939. An espionage novel about an attempt to set up a dictatorship in England. Chapter Eight is "The Episode of the Proof-Copy," which plays an integral part in the plot.

Blankford, Michael. *The Widow-Makers*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946. A spy leaves a container of film in his daughter's copy of *Alice in Wonderland*. He dies, and the daughters search for the manuscript that goes with the film.

Blau, Ernest E. *The Queen's Falcon*. Washington Square: David McKay, (1947). Eva and Harry Fay took a book from a French chateau as a souvenir on their last night in France while fleeing from the invading German army. The book was a gift from the queen to her illustrious son Benvenuto Cellini and had gold clasps shaped like a falcon's claw. Soon after this night, Harry Fay was found murdered with marks on his shoulder and neck resembling damage from a falcon's claw.

Bleek, Oliver. *No Questions Asked*. New York: William Morrow, 1976. Philip St. Ives, a professional go-between, attempts to recover a rare book which is being ransomed for \$250,000. Included is an excellent description of the Library of Congress's Rare Book Department. Oliver Bleek is a pseudonym of Ross Thomas.



Bloch, Robert. *Out of the Mouths of Graves*. New York: Mysterious Press, 1979. A collection of short stories containing "Night School," which begins, "You find them on the sidestreets of every large city, and you wonder, sometimes, how the proprietors manage to make a living." The author refers to used bookshops, naturally.

Blochman, Lawrence G. "The Aldine Folio Murders." In *The Dolphin*, Fall 1940. Number 4, Part 1. Illustrated by Fritz Kredel. A clue is provided by a cleverly forged copy of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.

Blochman, Lawrence G. *Death Walks in Marble Halls*. New York: Dell, (1951). This story was originally printed in *American Magazine* as "Murder Walks in Marble Halls" and was later made into a motion picture, *Quiet Please, Murder*. This is the first book appearance. The story takes place in the New York Public Library.

Block, Lawrence. *Burglars Can't Be Choosers*. New York: Random House, (1977). Very little here about bookish subjects, although Bernie teaches the reader how to effectively hide money in books and how to hide evidence à la Edgar Allan Poe.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling*. New York: Random House, 1979. Secondhand bookstore owner Bernie Rhodenbarr is a master thief who becomes involved

in the theft of a scarce Kipling book. This is the classic bibliomystery of the 1970s.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Burglar Who Painted Like Mondrian*. New York: Arbor House, (1983). Bernie Rhodenbarr leaves his bookshop to steal a Mondrian painting in order to rescue his friend's cat.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Burglar Who Studied Spinoza*. New York: Random House, (1980). Bernie Rhodenbarr is the proprietor of a Fourth Avenue secondhand bookshop. He is also a professional thief, this time involved with a stolen 1913 V-Nickel and a fence who collects books on Spinoza.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Mr. Rhodenbarr, Bookseller, Advises a Young Customer on Seeking a Vocation*. New Castle: Oak Knoll Books, 1980. Printed by The Bird & Bull Press, this is the first chapter of *The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling*, with an introduction, unsigned, by John Ballinger.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Vol et Volupté*. Paris: Gallimard, (1979). Originally published in English as *The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling*.

Bloomfield, Anthony. *The Tempter*. New York: Scribner's, (1961). A London bookshop is the headquarters for a group of pornographers in this story.

Boland, John. *The Shakespeare Curse*. New York: Walker, (1969). An emaciated girl was found alive in a Warwickshire grave. She claimed to be three hundred and fifty years old and a contemporary of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, both of whom drank at her father's tavern. The police investigate the truth behind this cruel hoax as half of England begins to believe it.

Bond, Raymond T. *Famous Stories of Code and Cipher*. New York: Rinehart, 1947. This collection contains Anthony Boucher's classic short story "QL 696.C9." Obviously the story centers on a library.

Bonett, John and Emery. *The Sound of Murder*. London: Harrap, 1970. Included in the cast of characters is Julian Killigrew, editor of *Bookman's Weekly*.

Bontly, Thomas J. *Celestial Chess*. New York: Harper & Row, 1979. David Fairchild is on leave doing research at Cambridge University when he stumbles on a series of deaths connected with a twelfth-century manuscript written by a mad priest. A curious blend of mystery and fantasy.

Borowitz, Albert. *Innocence and Arsenic*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977. A nonfiction book in a fictionalized format, with many book-related chapters such as "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" and others on C. P. Snow and Pamela Hansford Johnson. A final chapter is on "How To Do Research in London."

Bosse, Malcolm. *The Man Who Loved Zoos*. New York: Putnam's, (1974). Warren Shore is a disturbed Vietnam veteran living with his librarian aunt when he discovers a bus filled with dead people on the streets of San Francisco by the Zoo. No one believes him except for Alexander Boyle, a professional hit man sent to kill him.

Boucher, Anthony. *The Seven of Calvary*. London: Hamilton, 1937. (★) A Swiss humanitarian is killed on an American campus. The only clue is a Seven of Calvary



symbol on a piece of paper next to the body. Dr. Ashwin, a professor of Sanskrit, and Martin Lamb, a graduate student, pool their talents to solve the murder, mostly from Dr. Ashwin's study and reference works.

Boyd, Marion. *Murder in the Stacks*. Boston: Lathrop, Lee and Shepard, 1934. An incredibly scarce novel, written by the wife of a professor at Miami University of Ohio, about a murder in a college library.

Bracken, C. P. *Roman Ring*. London: Cassell, 1968. A young woman is blackmailed in Rome to help a ring of bookdealers steal valuable books and manuscripts there.

Brean, Herbert. *Hardly A Man Is Now Alive*. New York: William Morrow, 1950. This story is set in Concord, Massachusetts, and involves a newly discovered manuscript and a letter from Emerson to Thoreau.

Brebner, Percy James. *Mr. Quixley of the Gate House*. London: Frederick Warne, 1904. A man disappears from the gatehouse of an estate. One of the clues is a series of cartons of books examined by a bookseller, Mr. Tuke, a nasty man who abuses his staff.

Bristow, Gwen and Bruce Manning. *The Gutenberg Murders*. New York: The Mystery League, (1931). Nine leaves of the Gutenberg Bible were reported stolen from New Orleans's Sheldon Memorial Library. Among the leaves stolen was the one with the Ten Commandments, which included "Thou Shalt Not Kill." Someone didn't listen, because a dead body turns up.

Bronson, F. W. *Nice People Don't Kill*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, (1940). Set in a shore community in Connecticut, this mystery involves a book of Keats poems which leads to murder and a treasure in diamonds.

Brown, Wenzell. *Murder Seeks an Agent*. New York: Green Publishing, 1945. A meek professor, Peter Aswell, was about to finally meet his literary agent about the same time as a gruesome murder takes place. The mid-mannered professor then meets assorted Broadway types and finally solves the crime. A paperback original.

Browne, Douglas G. *Death in Seven Volumes*. London: Macdonald, (1958). Mr. Tuke sets out to discover what is behind the substitution of books at the London Library and enters the bizarre world of book collecting and rare-book selling.

Bryan, John. *The Difference To Me*. London: Faber and Faber, 1957. A fine detective story involving John R. Branding, a wealthy Canadian, who was collecting things Elizabethan with special interest in Sir Walter Raleigh. This tale of mystery involves his collecting.

Bryant, Dorothy. *Killing Wonder*. Berkeley: Ata Books, (1981). India Wonder gives a party at her house in Berkeley, and all the women writers in the Bay Area attend. Then, at the end of the party, Ms. Wonder dies of poisoning. As a famous writer and part of the publishing world, there were many who had motives for her murder.

Buchan, John. *The Gap in the Curtain*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1932. In a story of mystery and fantasy, five men read next year's newspaper and attempt to outwit fate. One of them is a rare book collector.

Burke, J. F. *Kelly Among the Nightingales*. New York: Dutton, (1979). Samuel Moses Kelly, a native of Harlem and a private investigator, is hired to look into the death of Bart Manfredi, a famous editor who fell forty floors to the sidewalk during a party he was giving to toast a new book.

Burke, John. *The Black Charade*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, (1977). Psychic investigators look into the disappearance of a young father and a daughter of a cabinet minister in turn-of-the-century London. This strange story includes a bookseller who "cannot understand his overwhelming infatuation for a fifteen-year-old girl of the streets."

Burnett, Hallie. *The Brain Pickers*. New York: Messner, (1957). "A searing uncompromising novel that strips the literary veneer from the book publishing business." A power-hungry man attempts to gain control of an established, old-line publishing house.

Bush, Christopher. *Dead Man's Music*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, (1932). The answer to a murder is found in a music manuscript given by a soon-to-be murder victim to Ludovic Travers, a noted author.

Caldecott, Sir Andrew. *Not Exactly Ghosts*. London: Edward Arnold, (1947). Included is the short story "A Room in a Rectory" about messages coded in books.

Campbell, Julie. *Ginny Gordon and the Lending Library*. Racine: Whitman Publishing, (1944). A juvenile about a theft in a lending library. Illustrated.

Campbell, R. T. *Bodies in a Bookshop*. London: John Westhouse, 1946. An enthusiastic book collector discovers the body of a bookseller in the private office of his shop. An excellent locked-room murder written by the poet Ruthven Todd under a pseudonym.

Canning, Victor. *The Kingsford Mark*. London: Heinemann, 1975. (★) A strange story on the Exmoor wilds centers on the decoding of a diary written in the late nineteenth century.

Canning, Victor. *Memory Boy*. New York: William Morrow, 1981. Peter is a young boy with an incredible memory. His father, a bookseller, allows his son to be used by British intelligence to help with a problem of dire national interest.

Carmichael, Fred. *Exit the Body*. New York: Samuel French, (1962). A woman mystery writer rents a house in New England where some stolen jewels were hidden. The play is a farce, with disappearing dead bodies and various people searching for the jewels. Paperback.

Carter, Amanda. *Write Me a Murder*. (New York): Zebra Books, (1979). A novel about the death of a publisher, with hidden clues throughout. To be solved by the reader. A paperback original, with a sealed final chapter.

Carter, Diana. *Ghost Writer*. New York: Macmillan, (1974). A manuscript appears on the desk of a literary agent six years after the author died. This leads the agent into the dead author's world of the occult. The manuscript and a mysterious copy of Sherlock Holmes stories are instrumental in solving the mystery.

Carvalho, Claire and Boyden Sparkes. *Crime in Ink*. New York: Scribner's, 1929. A novel of literary forgery with many samples of documents illustrating the book. One of the earliest novels to use scientific methods to investigate forged writing. The work was based on a factual crime, but is fiction.

Chandler, Raymond. *The Big Sleep*. New York: Knopf, 1939. Marlow investigates murder and finds a rare book shop that fronts for a pornography ring, where he discovers key clues in the case.

Chesterton, G. K. *The Scandal of Father Brown*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1935. A series of short stories involving the priest-detective Father Brown. Included is "The Blast of the Book."

Childers, James Saxon. *The Bookshop Mystery*. New York: Appleton, 1930. Spies follow a young collector as he searches through the used and rare bookshops of England and Europe for an elusive manuscript.

Christie, Agatha. *The Body in the Library*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1941. Whimsically included in this collection because, despite its title, it does not have anything to do with libraries, books, or book selling. The first victim is merely found in the library of an English country house.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Secret of Chimneys*. London: Lane, 1925. (★) A complex Christie plot involving a manuscript that was sent from Paris to London via South Africa, and a final battle to the death in the library of a famous house.

Clarke, T. E. B. *Murder at Buckingham Palace*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981. The solution to the murder lies in the palace library and research which must be done there.

Clason, Clyde B. *Murder Gone Minoan*. New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1939. An archeological novel that makes heavy use of research throughout the plot. There is a two-page list of nonfiction books on culture in Crete at the end of the story.

Clemeau, Carol. *The Ariadne Clue*. New York: Scribner's, (1982). Using libraries and research techniques, Antonia Nielsen searches for her prize student of Greek who disappeared shortly after a major art theft at the University museum.

Cleveland, John. *Minus One Corpse*. New York: Arcadia House, (1954). Sara French, a bookseller, finds a body in Paul Calway's apartment. She calls the police but by the time they come the body disappears. Sara investigates.

Coates, John. *Time for Tea*. New York: Macmillan, 1950. James Etheridge is a young author who toys with the idea of writing a murder mystery. He is invited to an English estate and decides to act out his plot to see if it would work. At the end of his dry run, he finds his victim already a corpse.

Colton, James. *The Outward Side*. New York: The Other Traveller, (1971). A homosexual novel involving the small town of Ocatillo, where the town librarian is arrested for being a child molester. Marc Lingard, a gay minister, seeks to clear his friend of the charges. Paperback.

Conner, Kevin. *New Departure*. New York: Jefferson

House, 1962. Two thieves, now serving as prison librarians, plan a perfect crime involving a six-day bicycle race and an attempt to switch seventy-five thousand dollars worth of coveted paintings with forgeries.

Converse, Florence. *Into the Void: A Bookshop Mystery*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1926. A poet claimed that he could disappear into the fourth dimension during a poetry reading in a Boston bookshop. The next day the bookshop owner disappears, followed by the poet, leaving a puzzle for the college community.

Conway, Peter. *Revised Proof*. London: Macdonald, (1947). Ralph Julius Lancaster, a most successful publisher, was murdered and the solution to the crime concerned the labyrinth of his publishing empire.

Cory, Desmond. *Bennett*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1977. The murder of a Spanish *au pair* girl in London leads the police to only one suspect: William Bennett, writer of high-brow detective stories and distinguished lecturer at Oxford (*a la* Michael Innes?), who in turn has disappeared.

Craig, Philip. *Gate of Ivory, Gate of Horn*. Garden City: Doubleday, (1963). Professor Cyril Ashman was the butt of many campus jokes because he thought that Beowulf was an actual living being. Then he set off with three friends to locate Beowulf's tomb in an ocean-going, thirty-six-foot sailboat, and found unexpected adventure.

Cranston, Maurice. *To-morrow We'll Be Sober*. London: John Westhouse, 1946. A body is found in the house of a famous publisher, and an investigation probes into the lives of the London *literati*.

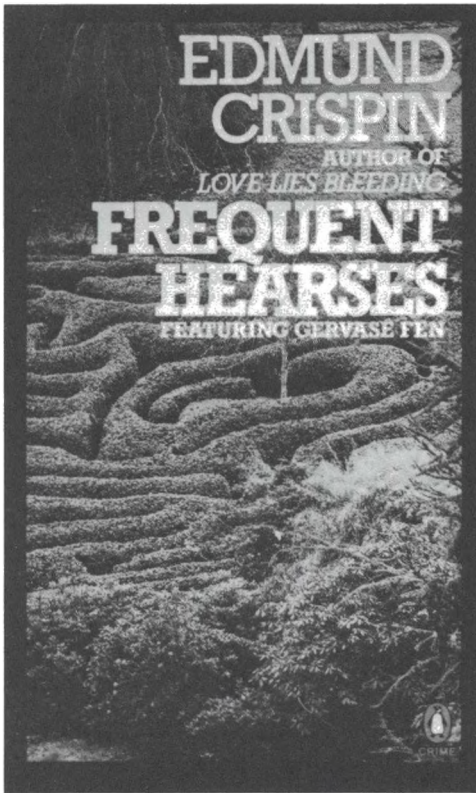
Creasey, John. *The Theft of Magna Carta*. New York: Scribner's, (1973). Superintendent Roger West of Scotland Yard is assigned to rescue the Sarum Magna Carta after a band of international art thieves steal it from the Salisbury Cathedral.

Crispin, Edmund. *The Case of the Gilded Fly*. New York: Walker, (1979). Originally published in England in 1954, this is the first of the Gervase Fen mysteries, written when Crispin was still a student at Oxford. A leading lady from a touring acting company is murdered. There are assorted academic crazies, including a parrot who quotes Heinrich Heine in German and a team of monkeys with typewriters to test the statistical hypothesis that they will eventually re-create all the books in the British Museum.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Frequent Hearses*. London: Gollancz, 1944. (★) A Gervase Fen mystery involving his acting as a technical expert on the filming of a movie based on a plot by Alexander Pope. The clue to the mystery is found in the works of Pope.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Love Lies Bleeding*. London: Gollancz, 1948. Set in Oxford, the plot involves a special copy of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and a sequel in manuscript.

Cross, Amanda. *Death in a Tenured Position*. New York: Dutton, (1978). In 1979, Harvard University receives a bequest, contingent on Harvard hiring a female tenured professor. The English Department hires a friend of Kate Fansler. When she is killed, Kate looks into her death and finds a surprising culprit.



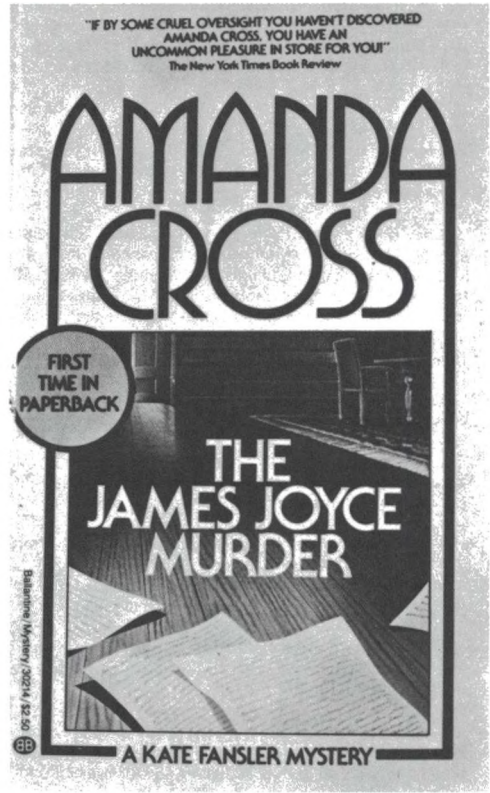
\_\_\_\_\_. *The James Joyce Murder*. New York: Macmillan, (1967). A great American publisher dies, leaving a large cache of letters by James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, and others. Kate Fansler is asked to edit them and becomes involved with murder. *The bibliomystery of the 1960s.*

\_\_\_\_\_. *Poetic Justice*. New York: Knopf, 1970. Kate Fansler stumbles on a murder during a student demonstration. W. H. Auden is a character in the book and actually participates in solving the crime.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Question of Max*. New York: Knopf, 1972. Kate Fansler helps Max Reston with his job as executor for the "literary remains" of a famous English novelist after a murder clouds his work.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Theban Mysteries*. New York: Knopf, 1971. Kate Fansler is teaching a seminar on *Antigone* at an exclusive girls' school when a scandal involving some of her students threatens to ruin the school.

\_\_\_\_\_. Heilbrun, Carolyn G. "Conversation, Sweet Reason – and Gore." In *The Gazette of the Grolier Club*. Numbers 20/21, June/December, 1974. An address given by the mystery writer Amanda Cross at the opening of the exhibition "Murder by the Book" at the Grolier Club. Wrappers.



Cushing, E. Louise. *Blood on My Rug*. New York: Arcadia House, (1956). Miss Talmadge discovers a dead body in her bookshop and becomes involved in the search for the murderer.

Daly, Elizabeth. *And Dangerous To Know*. New York: Rinehart, (1949). Gamadge looks for the missing daughter of a conservative Upper East Side family.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Any Shape or Form*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, (1945). There is some talk here of Gamadge working on the detection of a forged manuscript, but there is not much of a book-related plot here.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Arrow Pointing Nowhere*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, (1944). Henry Gamadge's name is found on a circular implicating him as a collector of "curiosa." This draws him into a friendship with another collector and a mystery about a missing plate from one of his books.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Book of the Crime*. New York: Rinehart, (1951). Rena Austen's new husband turned into a raving maniac when he saw that his wife was reading a book she innocently picked up from a shelf in their home. Henry Gamadge finds out the reason for this using his bibliophilic skills.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Book of the Dead*. New York: Rinehart, (1944). Henry Gamadge is left alone in New York City for the summer and becomes involved in the Crenshaw case, in which the only clue is a time-worn volume of Shakespeare.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Book of the Lion*. New York: Rinehart, (1944). A fine novel featuring Henry Gamadge and his involvement with a lost book written by Geoffrey Chaucer. A tale designed to take full advantage of the hero's bibliophilic knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Deadly Nightshade*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, (1940). The second Gamadge novel, wherein he is busy working on verifying a manuscript when he is again called to Maine to investigate a murder involving gypsies, an old legend, and a poisonous plant called "nightshade."

\_\_\_\_\_. *Death and Letters*. New York: Rinehart, (1950). Henry Gamadge uses his book-collecting skills to investigate a case of stolen letters and an involuntarily incarcerated woman.

\_\_\_\_\_. *An Elizabeth Daly Mystery Omnibus*. New York: Rinehart, (1960). A reprinting of *Murders in Volume 2*, *Evidence of Things Seen*, and *The Book of the Dead*.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Evidence of Things Seen*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, (1943). Clara Gamadge, Henry's wife, is the main suspect in a murder case, and Henry, just back from the war, is mustered into service to find the real killer.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The House Without the Door*. London: Hammond, Hammond, (1945). A Henry Gamadge story with little of bibliophilic interest.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Murders in Volume 2*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, (1941). A young lady disappears with the second volume of a set of Byron and returns with it one hundred years later. Henry Gamadge is asked to look into the matter of an elderly gentleman who has befriended the woman one hundred years after the theft.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Night Walk*. New York: Rinehart, (1947). Henry Gamadge is asked to go to Frazier's Mill, Connecticut to investigate the murder of Mr. Carrington. While he is there the local librarian is murdered, and the newly donated collection of books is involved.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Nothing Can Rescue Me*. New York: Rinehart, 1944. Another Henry Gamadge novel.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Shroud for a Lady*. New York: American Mercury, n.d. A reprint of *The Wrong Way Down*. Paperback.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Somewhere in the House*. New York: Rinehart, (1946). Henry Gamadge investigates strange circumstances in the Clayborn mansion when a room, sealed off from the rest of the house for twenty years, is finally opened. Not much bookish here, except that a key murder weapon is hidden in a hollowed-out book.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Street Has Changed*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941. Daly's only non-mystery novel, dealing with the theater. There is nothing bibliophilic here. We have included this novel merely to complete her published works.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Unexpected Night*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart,

(1940). This is the first Henry Gamadge novel. It is set mostly in Maine while Henry is on vacation there. The murder of a rich and sickly young man involves parasitical relatives, gypsy actors in a summer theatre, and interesting local types. Very little of a bibliophilic nature here.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Wrong Way Down*. New York: Rinehart, (1946). Henry Gamadge is faced with the disappearance of a Bartolozzi engraving of a Holbein portrait. This brings him in contact with 75-year-old Miss Julia Paxton, who lives alone in a fading area of New York City.

Dane, Clemence and Helen Simpson. *Author Unknown*. New York: Cosmopolitan, 1930. A complicated novel about the English publishing industry, involving an artistic murder "designed to stir the admiration of connoisseurs."

\_\_\_\_\_. *Enter Sir John*. New York: Cosmopolitan, 1928. The story uses the London theater as a background for murder. The murderer is caught with the help of a neatly rewritten play.

Darby, J. N. *Murder in the House with the Blue Eyes*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, (1939). The staff of a bookshop in a small Southern college town is involved in a series of Christmas season murders—both as suspects and as amateur detectives.

Davey, Jocelyn. *The Naked Villany*. New York: Knopf, 1958. Ambrose Usher, Oxford don turned secret agent, becomes involved in a plot with some lost Bach manuscripts, Dead Sea Scrolls, and a colony of kidnapped monkeys.

Davidson, Lionel. *The Chelsea Murders*. London (1978). Literary clues to a murder in the form of excerpts from well-known authors lead to the capture of a murderer. Published in the United States as *Murder Games*.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Murder Games*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, (1978). Published in England as *The Chelsea Murders*.

Davies, Robertson. *The Rebel Angels*. New York: Viking, 1982. Set in a fictional college in Toronto, the story concerns a missing Renaissance manuscript and the people whose lives are affected by its disappearance, resulting in murder and suicide.

Davis, Frederick C. *Tread Lightly, Angel*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1952. Schyler Cole is hired by a famous artist to find out why his daughter is depressed and goes wandering at night. Among other characters that he meets are a children's book author and her handsome illustrator friend. Some talk of publishing, but a minor entry in the collection.

Davis, Lavinia R. *Reference to Death*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1950. Alden Bancroft found the body of Stillbridge Connecticut's librarian, Miriam Purvis, lying on the rocks outside the library. There was a suicide note, but she had just written to Alden for help and he didn't believe it. Bancroft then set out to find the murderer.

DeCaire, Edwin. *Death Among the Writers*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, (1952). The writers of a major London publisher begin dying, one by one. An excellent mystery in the British tradition.

De la Torre, Lillian. *Dr. Sam: Johnson, Detector*. New York: Knopf, 1946. A group of short stories, all mysteries solved by the great Samuel Johnson himself. While all the stories are bookish and literary, "The Stolen Christmas Box" involves a manuscript in cypher and a library.

Delving, Michael. *Bored to Death*. New York: Scribner's, (1975). The American edition of *A Wave of Fatalities*, being the fifth of the Dave Cannon series featuring the American rare book dealer. "Bore" in the title refers to a tidal wave on the Severn river, so called by the local people.

Delving, Michael. *The Devil Finds Work*. New York: Scribner's, (1969). Dave Cannon and his partner Bob Eddison are young American rare bookmen. They come to Bartonbury on a book-buying trip and become involved in a mystery surrounding a missing silver cup.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Die Like a Man*. London: Collins, (1970). Dave Cannon buys an ancient wooden bowl in Wales while on a book-buying trip. The owner claimed the bowl was the Holy Grail. He is murdered the next day and Cannon finds out why.

\_\_\_\_\_. *No Sign of Life*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1979. Dave Cannon, on his annual buying trip to England in search of rare books, stops to see an English book dealer to ask about an unpaid bill. The book dealer promises to pay him the next day, but when Dave returns he finds the dealer murdered. (There is a moral about credit in the book business here, I'm sure.)

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Shadow of Himself*. New York: Scribner's, (1971). Bob Eddison, who deals in antiquarian books and works of art, returns to England and Gloucestershire on a buying trip. He also wants to find a girl he was once in love with. He buys a seventeenth-century Dutch painting and is a murder suspect. Not much about books here.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Smiling the Boy Fell Dead*. New York: Scribner's, (1966). This is the first in the series of Dave Cannon mystery novels. In this story, Cannon is offered a rare and valuable medieval manuscript and travels to remote Gloucestershire to examine it. What he finds is murder.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Wave of Fatalities*. London: Collins, (1975). Later published in America as *Bored to Death*.

(De Mille, J.) *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder*. New York: Harper, 1888. First American edition. Listed in Hubin as a mystery, this story involves the finding of a manuscript in a copper cylinder by the crew of a ship and the tale the manuscript told.

Derleth, August. *The Adventure of the Unique Dickensians*. Sauk City: Mycroft & Moran, 1968. A parody of Vincent Starrett's Sherlockian piece "The Adventure of the Unique Hamlet" this story features Solar Pons. First published in 1945 as *In re: Sherlock Holmes*.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Casebook of Solar Pons*. Sauk City: Mycroft & Moran, 1965. An entertaining group of short stories on a Sherlockian motif featuring the detective Solar Pons. The short stories include "The Adventure of the Spurious Tamerlane" and "The Adventure of the Haunted Library."

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Exploits of Solar Pons*. London: Robson, (1975). A combined printing of *The Adventures of Solar*

*Pons* and *The Chronicles of Solar Pons*. It is the first English edition of both volumes.

\_\_\_\_\_. *A Praed Street Dossier*. Sauk City: Mycroft & Moran, 1968. A group of short stories about Solar Pons, including "The Adventure of the Bookseller's Clerk."

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Reminiscences of Solar Pons*. Sauk City: Mycroft & Moran, 1961. Short stories featuring the detective Solar Pons. Included is "The Adventure of the Mosaic Cylinders."

Dewey, Thomas B. *Draw the Curtain Close*. New York: Jefferson House, 1947. A redhead, Marily Mayfair, "who can't read anything unless it's printed on greenbacks" offers \$30,000 for a rare book. The book also arouses the interest of the Mob. Then it is found in the bushes by a private investigator.

Dillard, R. H. M. *The Book of Changes*. New York: Doubleday, 1974. Hugh Fitz-Hyffen attempts to find the "Zodiac" murder killer. Some clues involve rare books and manuscripts. Dillard is essentially a poet; this being his first novel.

Dolson, Hildegard. *Please Omit Funeral*. Philadelphia: Lippincott, (1976). A far-right vigilante, Georgina Hampter, staged a demonstration in which she burned "dirty" books from the school library. Soon after, a local author, Lawrence Dilman, was murdered. The list of suspects began with Ms. Hampter and included virtually everyone in Wingate, Connecticut.

Donohue, H. E. F. *The Higher Animals*. New York: Viking, (1965). A sometime bookseller in a shop near the University of Chicago, goes into a neighborhood bar and learns of a series of senseless murders that draws him into another circle of existence.

Dutton, Charles J. *Murder in a Library*. New York: Dodd, Mead, (1931). A reference librarian is found dead in her office outside the main reading room in a classic library novel.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Streaked with Crimson*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1929. Harley Manners, a young Professor of Abnormal Psychology, finds the body of a book collector swinging from a rope in an abandoned house. A local librarian helps him solve the murder mystery.

Dwight, Olivia. *Close His Eyes*. New York: Harper & Brothers, (1961). An English professor named John Druden is hired by a Midwestern university to catalogue the papers of a contemporary poet, McNeill, who recently committed suicide. Murder follows Dryden as he begins to tackle his new job.

Dwyer, James Francis. *Evelyn—Something More Than a Story*. New York: Vanguard, (1929). Both a mystery and a fantasy novel, this story involves "a surpassing love that comes to a New York bookseller that leads him from his shop on Fourth Avenue to the everlasting loveliness that is Avignon."

*Continued in vol. 18, no. 3*

# The Science Fiction

By Robert A. Baker and Michael T. Nietzel

Even though, on the whole, mystery fans and private eye lovers tend not to read science fiction, and *vice versa*, this is not true of the creators of the two genres. From the literary point of view, a logical extension of the private eye format into the science-fiction field was certainly inevitable. In fact, it is rather remarkable that this particular combination of mystery story and science-fiction tale was so long in coming. Historically, the blending of the straight detective and science-fiction categories is far from new. Anthony Boucher foresaw the amalgam and made a hesitant move in this direction as far back as 1942 with his *Rocket to the Morgue*. In an author's afterword, Boucher said, "I hope that some of the regular readers of whodunits may find this picture of the field [SF] provocative enough to make them investigate further." Whether the readers did or did not is conjectural, but the science-fiction writers themselves have taken his words to heart, and within the past few years a number have made efforts to combine the two themes.

Yet, according to Brian Stableford and Peter Nichols, "detective stories depend very heavily on ingenuity and generally require very fine distinctions between what is possible and what is not. It is difficult to combine SF and the detective story because in SF the boundary between the possible and the impossible is so flexible" (1979). They feel that only Isaac Asimov has achieved any real success in writing futuristic detective stories. This is untrue, although Asimov certainly has been highly successful with his detective pair Lije Baley (human) and R. Daneel Olivaw (robot), who investigate murders in the future in *The Caves of Steel* (1953), *The Naked Sun* (1956), and in his most recent success *The Robots of Dawn* (1984). True, we did have some early precursors in which straight science and straight mystery were

combined. One of the SF pioneers, Hugo Gernsback, published a pulp magazine *The Scientific Detective Monthly* in 1933. It lasted, unfortunately, less than a year. Another original and more recent SF detective was Randall Garrett's Lord D'Arcy. D'Arcy works in an alternate world, historically similar to our own, in which magic works and good progress has been made in ESP. D'Arcy, whose investigative procedures are clever and rigorous, showed up in a series written for *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1964 and 1965. A novel, *Too Many Magicians*, featuring D'Arcy was published in 1967, followed by two collections of short stories, *Murder and Magic* (1979) and *Lord D'Arcy Investigates* (1981).

In general, there have been many more futuristic policemen than PIs. In Hal Clement's *Needle* (1950), an alien policeman pursues a criminal to Earth. *Logan's Run* (1967) of course deals with a policeman who refuses to die at his appointed time. H. Beam Piper's "Paratime Police" series (1948-65) also featured some interesting and unusual cops. An excellent novel, made up of a number of short stories, about state highway patrolmen enforcing traffic laws in the future, is Rick Raphael's *Code Three* (1966). Two rather unconventional and female law enforcement officers also appear in *Sibyl Sue Blue* (1966) by Rosel G. Brown and Ian Wallace's *Deathstar Voyage* (1969). Chronologically closer is Larry Niven's 1980 investigator Gil "The Arm" Hamilton, who—in spite of the fact that he is a member of the United Nations' police force, the Amalgamated Regional Militia—is closer in style, manner, and behavior to the contemporary PI. Gil, the hero of *The Patchwork Girl* (1980), is tough, hardboiled, and gets himself into scrape after scrape in the classic manner of our unarmored knights.

There are also a number of anthologies concerned

# Detective Story: Tomorrow's Private Eyes

with SF and crime. One of the earliest was *Space Police* (1956) edited by Andre Norton. Another was Miriam Allen DeFord's *Space, Time, and Crime* (1964), and more recent and best of all is Isaac Asimov's superb *Thirteen Crimes of Science Fiction* (1979), co-edited with Martin Greenberg and Charles Waugh. This last anthology does have one short, but splendid, PI novelette, "The Detweiler Boy" by Tom Reamy. It is highly likely that Reamy would have produced more hardboiled SF detective stories in the Chandler mold were it not for his untimely death at an early age. Finally, there is *Asimov's Mysteries* (1968), a collection of SF mystery stories by Asimov alone. In the introduction to this collection, Isaac argues that blending SF and mystery should be "pie easy" since science itself is so nearly a mystery and the research scientist so nearly a Sherlock Holmes. Asimov also provides some ground rules for such an amalgam that every would-be merger should read and heed. According to Asimov:

You don't spring new devices on the reader and solve the mystery with them. You don't take advantage of future history to introduce ad hoc phenomena. In fact, you carefully explain all the facts of the future background well in advance so the reader may have a decent chance to see the solution. The fictional detective can make use only of facts known to the reader in the present or of "facts" of the fictional future which will be carefully explained beforehand. Even some of the real facts of our present ought to be mentioned if they are to be used—just to make sure the reader is aware of the world now about him.

Once all this is accepted, not only does it become obvious that the science fiction mystery is a thoroughly accepted literary form, but it also becomes obvious that it is a lot more fun to write and read, since it often has a background that is fascinating in itself quite apart from the mystery.

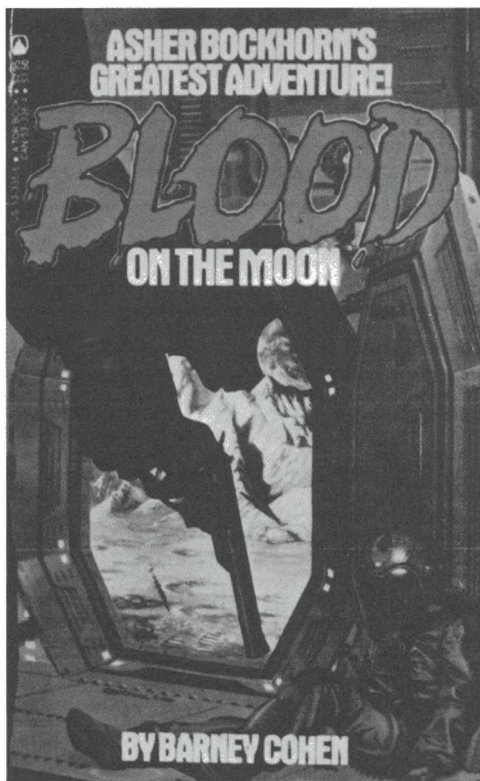
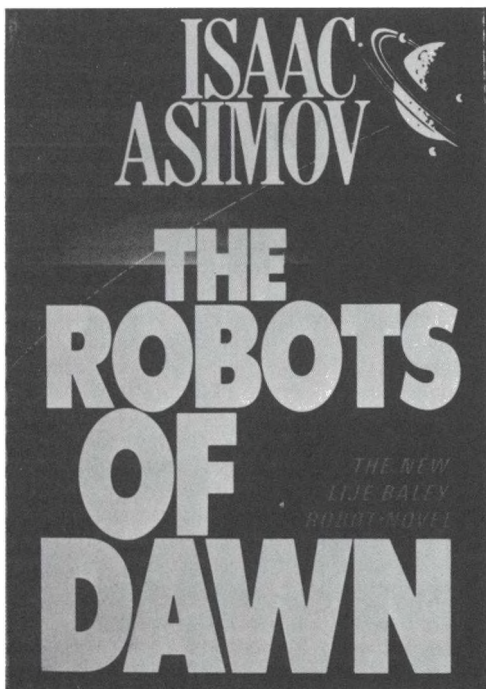
There are, of course, a select few SF writers who have

managed to successfully move the private eye novel with its classical structure complete and intact into the years ahead. A good example and very much in the PI vein is Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968). A part of this novel formed the base for the very successful movie *Blade Runner* (1982). Set in Los Angeles in 2019, the story is concerned with an overpopulated and polluted Earth. People are crammed into huge cities with skyscrapers as high as 400 stories. Traffic jams clog the streets and the city is drenched with continual rainfall. The police keep control with the Spinner, a flying car that hovers over traffic, and the Esper, a supercomputer that allows them to search a room without being present. Genetic engineering is one of Earth's biggest industries, and genetically engineered humans called replicants are sent to the space colonies and to the military for use in deep space. The top replicant manufacturer, Tyrell Corporation, has created a new model, the Nexus 6, which has superhuman strength. Though replicants are outlawed on Earth, some manage to return and pass as human. This is when the police call in the Blade Runners, special private detectives who use an elaborate type of detector called the Voight-Kampff to tell the difference between humans and replicants. It is the Blade Runner's job to track down the replicants and eliminate them. After the police receive an emergency report that four Nexus 6 replicants have returned to Earth after taking over a space shuttle and killing the crew, they send for the one man most capable of finding them: Rick Deckard, played in the movie by Harrison Ford.

*This article is taken from PRIVATE EYES: ONE HUNDRED AND ONE MODERN KNIGHTS by Robert A. Baker and Michael T. Nietzel, to be published by the Bowling Green State University Popular Press early in 1985.*

Deckard is an ex-cop and an expert Blade Runner. The movie tells the story of how Rick tracks down and eliminates the four replicants one by one. It is superb, both as science fiction and as a private eye tale of pursuit and capture.

Another novel that should not be ignored is Gardner Dozois and George Effinger's *Nightmare Blue* (1975). Here it seems that a PI named Karl Jaeger is the last private eye on an Earth which is under attack from a race of aliens called the Aensas. The Aensas also control some vicious dog-like monsters, the Dktar, which they use to hunt down and kill human beings. Ten years earlier, the Aensa space ships moved into the orbit of Mars and made contact. Following a brief war between the space ships, the Aensas declared a truce and claimed they came in peace and were only friendly interstellar traders. In return for certain mineral and trading rights, the Aensas lords were given a ten-mile-square area of land in Southern Germany for use as a local base of operations. Everyone was happy until the Aensas started hunting men at night for sport and hiding their activities from all outsiders. The Aensas also kept slaves in their area. One of these slaves, Corcail Sendyen, an intelligent, octopus-like



creature, turns out to be a secret agent spying on the Aensas. As for our PI Jaeger, Karl is "a huge man, cat-muscled, deeply tanned, dark blond, with a grim weather-beaten face; his expression was dominated by a strong, almost unpleasantly massive jaw line and large, canny gray eyes, which were recessed beneath bushy eyebrows." Karl attended several universities on government scholarships, did postgraduate work in criminology, and then went into the Intelligence Section of the Army. A hand-grenade put a load of shrapnel in his leg and got him an honorable discharge. After earning a master's degree, he worked for the Southern European Police Group (SEPG) but then after a year or so formed Jaeger Incorporated, selling only one thing — himself. The SEPG network, instead of local police, enforces the law and keeps the peace. Where the SEPG and its like are leviathans, Jaeger is a lone shark and the last and only PI on Earth. Jaeger operates out of an expensive office suite in Nurenberg, likes Jack Daniel's and Scotch, and is as tough as they come. After Karl is hired to find out exactly what the Aensas are up to, Jaeger and Corcail team up against



the Aensas and uncover the real purpose of their mission on Earth. In doing so, they discover the Aensas have developed a horribly addictive drug called Nightmare Blue. With this drug the Aensas intend to conquer the Earth and the rest of the universe. In a rip-roarer, Karl and Sendjien combine forces to free the slaves and defeat the monsters.

Another well-crafted series starring a future PI is Lloyd Biggle, Jr.'s four-novel sequence recounting the adventures of one Jan Darzek. The biggest problem with this series of books is that they are hard-core SF and bear little resemblance to the PI-type novel. True, there is an element of mystery in the problems posed by evil alien forces, but on the whole SF characters, tools, and techniques dominate the pages. Handsome, blond, and blue-eyed Darzek is a late twentieth-century PI hired by the Council of the Supreme, rulers of our home galaxy, to solve the problems posed by the inimical Udef, a dark force that is destroying civilization after civilization in the Smaller Magellanic Cloud, a nearby galaxy. Darzek is aided in his missions by one of the most charming characters in either the mystery or the SF categories: Miss Effie Schulppe. Schluppy, as she is affectionately called, is a gray-haired little old lady, slightly under sixty, who wears old-fashioned, rimless spectacles, types 130 words a minute from an office rocking chair, and who can pick pockets with uncanny grace and drink most any man alive under the table. "Three purse snatchers who thought her a likely victim had regained consciousness in hospitals with broken bones. Darzek loved her as he would have loved his own mother if she'd been a jujitsu expert and owned an unsurpassed recipe for rhubarb beer." Seems that in the late 'eighties people moved from place to place by means of matter transmitters called trans-locals. Darzek bought stock in the Universal Transmitting Company at the outset, and it made him independently wealthy. But, since he loves his detective work too much to retire, he still takes on challenging cases—especially those commissioned by the Council of the Supreme. The four novels chronicling Jan's adventures are *All the Colors of Darkness* (1963), *Watchers of the Dark* (1969; one of the best and one replete with comic interludes), *This Darkening Universe* (1975), and *Silence Is Deadly* (1977).

Biggle is a professional musician and has a Ph. D. in musicology. He has had stories published in all the major SF magazines, and in 1974 he was elected secretary-treasurer of the Science Fiction Writers of America. Biggle is a veteran of World War II and he served in the infantry in the European Theater. He is married and lives with his wife and two children in Ypsilanti, Michigan. He has written a dozen novels and several collections of short stories and also edited *Nebula Award Stories Seven* in 1972.

### ***Mystery fiction criticism***

#### **Private Eyes: One Hundred and One Knights**

*Robert Baker and Michael Nietzel*

The private eye novel is one of the most popular forms of the always popular mystery novel. Nietzel and Baker discuss some of the most popular private eyes from the early beginnings in *Black Mask Magazine* til the present time.

May 1985, approx 375 pp., illus., price undetermined.

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Apr 1985, approx 200 pp., illus., price undetermined.

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Two other novels blending both SF and a PI are William Dorsey Blake's *My Time or Yours* (1980) and Daniel Bear's *Keeping Time* (1979). Both use the theme of time travel. In the former, a PI named Reggie Moon takes a Concorde ride from Paris to attend a New Year's party in New York. After a truly wild party, Reggie wakes up the following morning back in the year 1846. The beautiful girl he has been with at the party is also with him and very real. Equally real is a very dead sheriff and a murderer who is running loose. Even though Reggie knows that this whole nightmare just has to be a dream, things seem very, very real. Reggie has to solve the murder and figure out how he can get back to the twentieth century. In *Keeping Time*, which is a first novel and the better of the two, the time is 1991 and the setting is Manhattan. Jack Hughes, the world's finest PI and possibly the only one left, is hired by Ivory Wightman, owner of the world's only time-deposit bank, to recover some missing tapes. The bank is a place where the rich and famous can store their most precious moments, literally, and at a later time relive them. Storage is on audio-visual, 3-D, holographic tapes. Not only are some tapes missing but two depositors are dead, murdered. Hughes also has another problem—he has to work under the pressure of a four-day deadline. As he crawls through the dying remains of New York City, he encounters mass suicides, Park Avenue slum dwellers, roaches that are indestructible, and a host of apathetic people who have lost all will to live. The rough, tough, hard-nosed, but knightly Hughes has to protect the other depositors on the thief's hit list, protect the remaining tapes, and recover those already pilfered. Hughes and Bear pull it off in a very satisfactory fashion. The roaches, however, escape and remain indestructible.

Mention should also be made of Katherine MacLean's detective, George Sanford, hero of *Missing Man* (1975). Sanford is a telepathic PI and works with New York's famed Rescue Squad—an elite corps of Espers—who locate people in trouble by zeroing in on their mental distress signals. But even experienced tracers of lost persons such as Sanford have trouble finding people in the New York of 1999. Rapid population growth has forced society into strict regimentation. Communal life has developed to the point at which all human physical and psychological needs are met. There are various theme communes, where you can live like a Medieval knight, or an Aztec, or even like people who lived in a country village back in 1949. There are over two billion people in the metropolitan area alone. George is challenged to find a missing computer expert being held captive by a band of crazed revolutionaries called "Larry's Raiders," whose aim is to destroy the city. After an exhaustive mental search, George finds

the Raiders and the computer man, but in so doing he is himself captured. Larry, the Raider's leader, turns George's powers against the city, and George now becomes the hunted and wanted "missing man."

Though it isn't exactly SF, James Gunn's fascinating story about Black Magic and a nice guy PI in the middle of a magicians' convention is very readable. Titled *The Magicians* (1976) and featuring a PI named Casey, the novel has Casey being hired by a sweet old lady to find the real name of a man known only as Solomon. Solomon, however, is a Magi and the head of a powerful organization of black magicians, witches, and warlocks. Casey then meets a beautiful girl named Ariel and finds himself in a full-fledged war between the forces of good and the armies of evil. The reader should be warned,

**It is difficult  
to combine SF and the  
detective story because in  
SF the boundary between  
the possible and the  
impossible is so  
flexible.**

however, that the novel is more of a heartwarming love story than anything else.

Five other future PIs worthy of mention are: (1) Anthony Villiers and his alien companion Trove the Trog, featured in Alexei Panshin's *Star Well* (1968), *The Thurb Revolution* (1968), and *Masque World* (1969); (2) Miro Hetzel, the titular hero of Jack Vance's 1981 novel; (3) Victor Slaughter, hero of *Gomorrah* (1974) by Marvin Karlins and Lewis M. Andrews; (4) A. Bertram Chandler's John Peterson, a PI spaceman caught in a time loop in *Bring Back Yesterday* (1982); and (5) Asher Bockhorn in the employ of MexAmerica and Pacific Security in two novels by Barney Cohen, *The Taking of SATCON* (1983) and *Blood on the Moon* (1984).

◆ TOMORROW'S CHAMPIONS: BEARERS OF THE GRAIL ◆

The writers who have most successfully moved the private eye novel into the future and who have kept its classical structure complete and intact are few in number. The few, however, are worthy of considerable attention, and their feats should be heralded with banners and trumpets. Four of the most successful have been J. Michael Reaves and his marvellous PI, Kamus of Kadizar; Mike McQuay's Matthew Swain; William Nolan's parodic Sam Space; and Ron Goulart's Jake and Hildy Pace. All are vastly entertaining and should be read by every

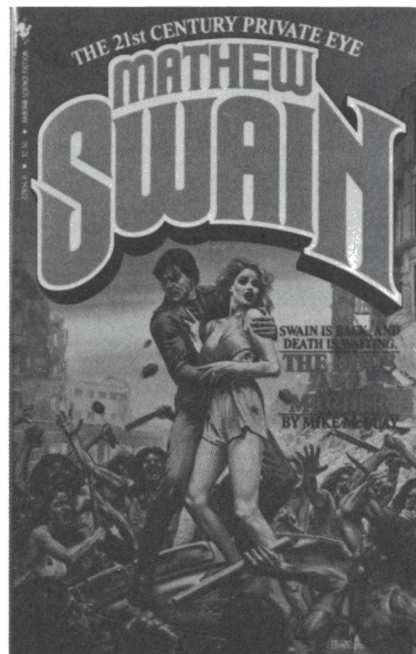
lover of the PI novel. Let us begin with Kamus of Kadizar and the novel *Darkworld Detective* (1982).

◆ Kamus of Kadizar — J. Michael Reaves ◆

Kamus (possibly Shamus?) is a young private eye, in fact the only PI on the planet Ja-Lur, also known as the Darkworld. The time is far in the future, when there are hundreds of populated worlds in the Unity of Planets System. Earth is only one of the older populated planets. Kamus is a half-breed. His mother was an earthling and his father a darkling. It seems that Kamus was the product of a situation in which his mother was raped by the darkling during a time called Shadownight when the two moons of Ja-Lur eclipse and form the Bloodmoon. “They don’t roll around too often. The last time one occurred was when I was conceived.” The Darklanders have the ability to cast spells merely by repeating magical phrases. These spells are powerful and can be used as deadly weapons.

Like all classical PIs Kamus has his office in a rundown neighborhood at the edge of the slums, the thieves’ maze, in the city of Mariyad in the state of Adelan. Mariyad is made up of a cosmopolitan group of visitors from other planets—Outworlders and the Darklander population. Mariyad is also the home of the planet’s spaceport. Ja-Lur is called the Darkworld because noon on Ja-Lur is just a little brighter than twilight on Earth. Communication on Ja-Lur is achieved by way of small pets, black furry creatures similar to cats, called phonecubs. Kamus has a cub named Dash. You tell them who you want to talk to and they call the other person’s phonecub and the two cubs communicate via ESP, mimicking the voices of sender and receiver. Kamus doesn’t smoke; he chews imported gum instead. As he explains, “Some private eyes smoke, but that habit isn’t popular on the Darkworld—polluting someone else’s air is a good way to get hurt.” Instead of a gun, Kamus wears a sword. With his sword and his spells—some of which are rather unreliable because he is only half Darkling—he is capable of handling most any problem coming his way. Kamus’s fee is seven hundred wechels a fortnight plus expenses. Like other PIs, his office is rather decrepit and his sword needs polishing and his trenchcloak is usually grimy. Kamus is licensed on both Ja-Lur and on Earth, and when he is not working he patronizes the Blue Lotus Tavern, his second home, where he drinks ale and picks up bits of useful information. The police on Ja-Lur are of two kinds: the locals, called the Guard and Guardsmen; and the Unity Service, similar to our FBI, who guard the Spaceport and have authority everywhere in the System. Kamus has a friend among the Guard—Sanris of Taleiday—who helps him out when he is in a bind.

Some years before, Kamus was in love with an Earthwoman, Thea Morn. He had applied for a cultural exchange program between Ja-Lur and Earth and won the opportunity to study at the finest universities on Earth. Even though he had to have genetic adjustments to shrink his pupils and protect his skin from sunlight, he went to Earth. While there, he met and fell in love with Thea, the beautiful blonde daughter of a rich man. Thea also loved Kamus, and they were together for several years until Thea was accidentally killed by a teleportation malfunction. The tragedy had affected Kamus’s relations with other women to the point that he, in knightly fashion, does all in his power to aid and abet the course of true love wherever he may find it. In his own words, “I think true love is a wonderful thing. It



happens about as often as a snake wears sandals, but when it does, it’s always worth waiting for.” Kamus relies heavily on his suspicions and feelings, i.e., “those intuitions that form the bulwark of detective work.” He is tough, strong, and a skilled swordsman. He is smart, and he is superb at spotting a tail. But he also has a very suspicious nature, and, as he puts it, “Paranoia is an occupational hazard is my business.”

Thus far, Kamus has appeared in only one novel, *Darkworld Detective* (1982), which is made up of four separate but related cases. Each of the cases is named after a mystery classic. The first is titled “The Big Spell”; the second, “The Maltese Vulcan”; the

third, "Murder on the Galactic Express"; and the last, "The Man with the Golden Raygun." The similarity of their plots to their classical predecessors is, however, remote.

"The Big Spell" has Kamus lured by the beautiful Darklander girl Valina into locating another Darklander, Kaan Ta'wyy's of Thanare, who has disappeared after refusing to enter into a plot to overthrow the ruler of Ja-Lur, the Darklord. In this part of the novel, Kamus completes his mission, but not before his friend Sanris is killed, and Kamus comes into possession of the Synulanom, a treasury of very powerful and effective spells.

Part Two, "The Maltese Vulcan," has him working for a tentacled cephalopod, Stam, whose god Taqwatk— a Darklander humanoid—is under threat of assassination by a group of fanatical Earth colonists, the Knights of Malta. After an attempt on Stam's life, Kamus tries to protect his charge but is rejected by the god. He then discovers that Taqwatk has a friend, Apolgar Zad, whose daughter Lohvia is in love with a poor minstrel. After the minstrel is murdered, Kamus is not grimly determined to unwrap the entire package. His prime suspect is an incredibly strong flying guardsman named Xidon, who also loves Lohvia. Kamus next meets and makes an ally of another Darklander—a very powerful one, Jann-Togah, who it turns out is the son of the Darklord himself. With Jann-Togah's help, the murder is solved and the assassination attempt is foiled.

The third case, "Murder on the Galactic Express," has Kamus in the employ of an Earth-manufactured android, Orpheus Alpha, who hires Kamus to help him locate a crashed starliner, the *Galactic Express*. Aboard the *Express* is a machine and some material called pseudoplasm which can restore flesh to the bones of Alpha's living skeleton lover, Lady Thanatos. As a reward, Alpha promises to lead Kamus to the legendary Black Mask, a formidable weapon for the wearer. The Mask enhances the spells cast by the wearer and blunts those cast by other Darklanders. Although Kamus figures taking a case like this "makes about as much sense as playing leapfrog with a unicorn," he does, again because of his sentimentality and sympathy for Alpha's improbable romance. There are plot twists and turns and surprises galore before Kamus and Alpha put the lady skeleton back together and accomplish their missions.

The final case, "The Man with the Golden Raygun," has Valina and Kamus running into one Polaris Lone, an adventurer who carries a golden laser gun and offers them a ride south. Kamus and Valina are trying to get to the southern part of the planet and out of the way when Shadownight begins. Kamus, now that he has the Black Mask, is also

seeking a confrontation with the Darklord. The rest of the story concerns their voyage south, back to Kadizar, and on to the Dark Spire—the home of the Darklord—and the events of Shadownight and the final showdown with the Darklord.

Despite the somewhat comic-book aspects of the plot, the novel has wit, intelligence, and credibility. It is both enjoyable and suspenseful, and it is an excellent and well-concocted synthesis of the two fictional media. As for J. Michael Reaves, he is a young TV scriptwriter under contract with Warner Bros., and he is a resident of Los Angeles. No stranger to science fiction, he has written a number of short stories, and one of these was nominated for the 1979 British Fantasy Award. Another SF novel, *I-Alien*, was published a few years back, and he is co-author, along with Bryon Preiss, of the well-received novel *Dragonworld* (1979). Reaves is also a regular contributor and reviewer for Delap's *Fantasy and*

**Isaac Asimov argues  
that blending SF and  
mystery should be "pie easy"  
since science itself is  
so nearly a mystery and  
the research scientist  
so nearly a Sherlock  
Holmes.**

*Science-Fiction Review*. With his strong narrative skills and fertile imagination, Reaves is a writer whom all lovers of mystery and SF should support and encourage to keep Kamus of Kadizar alive and kicking.

◆ Mathew Swain — Mike McQuay ◆

Our second major SF private eye, Mathew Swain, is 33 and operates out of an unnamed urban complex vaguely identified as somewhere in South-Central Texas (more than likely Dallas-Fort Worth) in the year 2083. Matt also operates at the edge of the slums—i.e., his office is located in the low-rent district. The office number is 2313 on the second floor of "a lean, tall building." His office is simple, "which suits my tastes and financial disposition." His desk is old but made of real wood. He has two windows that let in the afternoon sun, a coat-and-tunic rack in the corner, a small, flowered, cloth-covered settee, a swivel chair, and several folding chairs for the conferences which never seem to occur. The Vis, i.e., the TV screen, takes up most of the wall opposite the sofa. His weapon, when he uses one, since he doesn't like guns, is a frump gun which fires pellets which

explode on impact, "leaving nothing but a pile of warm goo on the ground." He keeps a bottle of Black Jack—an unnamed booze of some sort, but most likely bourbon—in his bullet (automobile) and in the big bottom drawer of his desk. Most of his regular work consists of follow-ups on death claims for the Continental Insurance Company. Matt refuses to do divorce work. He also has a girlfriend, Virginia "Ginny" Teal, one of the "flowers of Texas" Matt has known for some while.

Mathew lives about a kilometer from his office, in the converted basement of a fifteen-story, also-ran building. The place is liveable, barely, with paneled walls and a cheap but wearable carpet over a cement floor. Red-brick pillars run, in double rows, through the entire length of the flat. Since they can't be ignored, Matt hangs dart boards, pictures, and mirrors on all their sides. The place is naturally cool in the summer, and, since the windows open up to the sidewalk level, he gets a "pretty good leg show" whenever he wants to watch. Matt also keeps a sleek, black cat named Matilda, who attacks all enemies who invade the premises. Mathew's best suit consists of a "black, form-fitting polyester one-piece that opened in the front down to the sternum." Over this he wears a tan waistcoat that remains open with the suit collar overlapping the lapels of the coat. Zippered boots the same color as the coat come up to mid-calf.

In knightly fashion, Mathew says: "I'm a very elementary kind of guy, and the electronic limbo of the rich boys went right past me. Life was people to me—a shiv in the throat I could understand; good whiskey I could understand. The city, even crumbling and financially crippled, was real to me. Everything else was just confusing." His standard fee is three hundred a day plus expenses, payable upon completion of the job to the customer's satisfaction. In the society in which Matt lives, garbage fills the streets most of the time. The government has given up the war against drugs and provides free, monthly welfare drug and food rations to the needy victims of Old Town. For pleasure, the average citizen wears alpha rings around his forehead. These rings stimulate the pleasure centers of the brain. To dance, you merely stand on the dance floor and the floor jerks you around in time to the music.

Death on the streets is so common that roving garbage-like trucks, called Meat Wagons, scoop up and instantly atomize the corpses as a hygienic measure. Smog covers the city most of the time, and there is a part of the city called Old Town and Ground Zero. Ground Zero used to be the city until, sometime in the late 1980s, there was a meltdown of the fission reactors that provided power. As a result of exposure to the concentrated doses of radiation, a number of mutants were created, and they spread

their contagion until a Quarantine Bill was passed, forcing them to stay in Old Town, where they lived off government handouts and got crazier and crazier. Keeping the law and maintaining an adequate police department has become so expensive that the police have to charge for their services and bonuses are expected if quick service is wanted. Killings—especially of ordinary citizens—are so common that only a rare few are ever investigated. Only the wealthy get anything in the way of priority from the police. Therefore everyone who can afford it hires personal and private bodyguards and security agents—known as Fancy Dans—for protection. Most of the work and factory labor is done by androids called "andies."

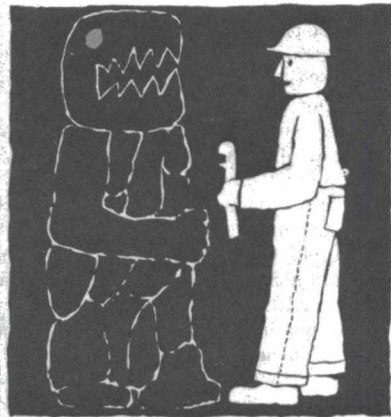
This is the social milieu in which Swain operates and the backdrop and setting for the four novels. Matt doesn't like it, but his attitude is philosophical:

"Maybe I *am* thick-headed. I'm just a poor slob trying to earn a living. But it seems to me that something has got to matter. . . . I do what I do because I like people, because deep down inside I feel like I'm helping somehow. That makes me feel good, Harry, helps me sleep at night. Now if that's a simplistic view of life to you, I offer my sincerest apologies—I guess I'm just a simple guy."

*Hot Time in the Old Town* (1981), the first Swain, has Mathew looking into the odd murder of one of his former clients, Phil Grover. Odd because Phil's corpse is only half there. The murder weapon is something completely new and unknown even in the year 2083. Phil's father, a wealthy old man, hires

## ODD JOB #101

*And Other Future Crimes and Intrigues*



RON GOULART

Swain to find his son's killer. Even though Swain has friends—better to call them acquaintances—on the force, he is still hauled in, beaten, and given the third degree in the “truth chair” because he sticks his nose into the case. Once Matt's innocence is established, he and a blind friend, George Wesley, go after the weapon used in the murder. This trek leads to the Bermax Corporation, a government-sponsored advanced-weapons research project, and a sinister individual who owns and manages the laboratory—one Rick Charon. From the megalomaniacal Charon's questions and attitude, Swain is convinced that Charon knows something about Grover's death. From this point on, things get hot and heavy, with Swain taking his life in his hands. He then ventures into Old Town to see his friend and former lover, Maria Hidalgo, and to enlist her help with Charon. After Charon kills Wesley and threatens Ginny's life, Swain goes after Charon in a savage and shattering climax.

The second novel, *When Trouble Beckons* (1981), has Swain answering a call from Ginny, who wants him to visit her on the Moon. It is obvious, however, that something is very wrong. After Matt is almost assassinated by a zombie Fancy Dan, he heads for the Moon and Freefall City. Here he encounters another couple of murders and finds Ginny drugged and naked in a catatonic stupor with a dead man at her feet. Following a visit to the Psytronics Ward at the hospital, Swain learns from a friendly doctor that Ginny has been brainwashed with a strange new technique. According to the doctor, Ginny is dying of fright. Something has scared her so badly that she is running away, consciously, subconsciously, and physically. Swain's job is to find out what it is and how he can save Ginny. He finally manages this after an intriguing and exciting chase involving endorphins, hypnosis, and alpha conditioning in a psychological plot to end all psychological plots.

The third novel, *The Deadliest Show in Town* (1982), has Swain, still reeling from Ginny's narrow escape, taking a contract from a tycoon called the Fish Man. This character heads up a media conglomerate which plays with reality as a baby plays with fire. Swain's job is to locate the media's prize anchorwoman—Maria, a sleek redhead who gets her kicks in some of the city's sleaziest sex shops. While Matt is keeping ahead of a rival network which is trying to kill him, he uncovers a plot to assassinate the Governor. It takes all of Swain's luck, brawn, and brains, plus help from Maria, before the mess is straightened out and he comes up on top.

In the latest and last of the Swains, *The Odds Are Murder* (1983), we find Swain back in the DMZ, run down and flat broke. After obtaining psychiatric help, Matt's license is revoked and he is out of business. To add insult to injury, the entire city is

suffering from a plague. While Swain is drinking at a nearby bar, an old lawyer friend, Felix Bohlar, tells Matt that someone is trying to kill him and that he needs Matt's help. Matt refuses but is persuaded when Felix shows him a list of victims and Swain sees not only Felix's name but the names of several other friends. Some of these friends are already dead. Before Matt can act, Felix is also murdered right before his eyes in the bar. Matt goes back to work with a vengeance, and he quickly finds himself involved in a plot concerning millions of dollars as well as one of his former lovers, whose husband was one of the hit-list victims. A lot of fist- and legwork plus luck are necessary before Matt solves the case and avoids the plague.

All of the McQuay novels are interesting, credible, and well written in an exciting, witty, tough-guy style. Mike McQuay is a very talented writer with a wry sense of humor, and he has dedicated the entire series to the memory of Chandler. Yet in no sense of the word is McQuay's style imitative of the master.

**Taking a case  
like this “makes as  
much sense as playing  
leapfrog with  
a unicorn.”**

There are, on occasion, flashes of ironic, Chandler-like wit and insights that are sharp and biting. In *Hot Time*, for example, Swain remarks, “I felt like I was sitting on a razor blade: no matter which way I slid, I was going to lose my ass.” Again, a few pages later, “What they brought me was a cross between scrambled eggs and a piece of pebble board. They called it health food, and I figured that it was because a person had to be in peak physical condition to choke it down.”

McQuay is a Vietnam veteran who also served in Thailand, Japan, and the Philippines. He is also a Texan who graduated from the University of Dallas and is currently teaching a science-fiction writing course at Oklahoma Central State University. For fun he watches B movies on late-night television. If we are lucky, he will keep the Mathew Swain stories coming. Swain is both too good and too young to die.

◆ Jake and Hildy Pace — Ron Goulart ◆

The only conceivable word for the antics of a twenty-first-century pair of private eyes dreamed up by Ron Goulart is “zany”—absolutely zany! Jake and Hildy Pace, a husband and wife team who operate Odd Jobs, Incorporated, one of the top private

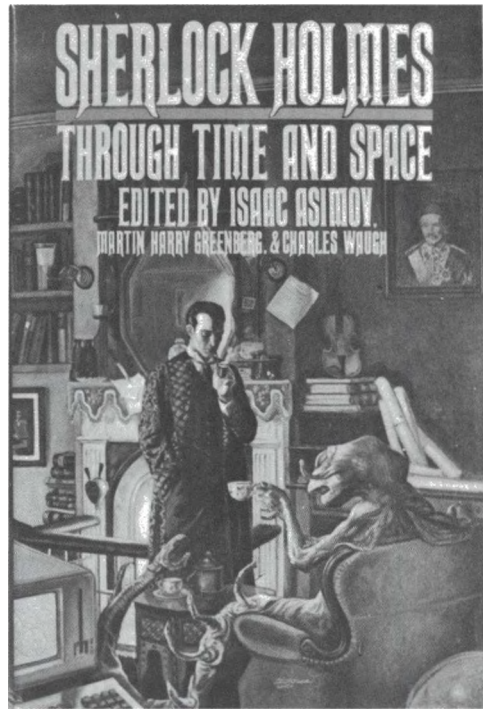
inquiry agencies in the galaxy, are as crazy and as funny as the Marx Brothers at their zenith.

Odd Jobs, Inc. is no ordinary agency. Oh, no! It specializes in only the most difficult and most unusual cases with settings, characters, and plots that would bring delight to Salvador Dali. Four of the Pace novels are already published, and the fifth, *Brains, Incorporated*, is due in 1985. Those still available are *Odd Job 101* (1975), *Calling Dr. Patchwork* (1978), *Hail Hibbler* (1980), and *Big Bang* (1982).

One of the best, and characteristic of the others, is *Big Bang*. Set in 2003, 34-year-old Jack Pace wakes up on a strange bed, incarcerated in a murderer's cell, accused of a brutal sex crime. It seems that a while ago Jack was found in bed with a dead call girl in underground Chicago, CHI-2. The girl had been killed by a lazgun still clutched in Jake's hand. Also, it turns out that this girl had some information about one of Odd Jobs' former cases known as "The Big Bang Murders." When Jake went to see her, he was knocked out and framed for her murder by persons unknown. To solve the Big Bang thing, the Paces are offered \$250,000—in lottery tickets unfortunately, not dollars. The Secretary of Security in Washington considers this a bargain price. The Secretary also get Jake out of jail, and the pair are then off and sailing in pursuit of the killers. Furthermore, the Big Bang murders, it seems, are exactly that: leaders of a new South American nation, the head of a Black African republic, and five big business tycoons have all, quite literally, exploded. So far there have been no clues. Over fifteen agents assigned to the case have been killed—but none, so far, have exploded.

It quickly becomes obvious that the novel, written in typical Goulart fashion, is not to be taken seriously as either SF or mystery. In Goulart's world of 2003, Fergus O'Brien is Prime Minister of Free Ireland. A pair of Siamese twins—joined at the elbow—are the President and occupy the White House. Everything else in the nation is equally absurd. People drink "Chateau Discount Muscatel with Dr. Pepper added" or "Sparkling Burgundy with Hawaiian Punch and the MDR of Vitamins, A, B, et al." All characters in the novel also have unusual names such as "Ross Turd III, a fine old New England name" since "Boston has been full of Turds for generations." There is also an "Overweight Liberation Army" and a "House Committee on Fair Play for Gross and Disgusting People" and the "PlainsKlothes Klan," an improvement on the Ku Klux Klan. A popular magazine is *Time-Life and Mammon*, and the most popular weeklies are *The National Intruder* and *Muck*. After many addled adventures and cockeyed chases from one end of the country and the Moon to the other, the Paces finally pin down the Big Bang gang and wind up the case.

Goulart is also the creator of the legitimate PI,



John Easy, who is the star of a four-novel series published between 1971 and 1974.

Two other Goulart PIs are Jim Haley, featured in *After Things Fell Apart*, an Edgar certificate winner in 1970, and Max Kearny in *Ghost Breaker*, published in 1971.

◆ Sam Space — William F. Nolan ◆

Finally, no survey of science-fictional PIs would be complete without referring to William F. Nolan's Sam Space. Sam is, of course, a parodic tribute to Hammett's Sam Spade. As Nolan sees him, Space is the best private eye on this or any other Earth. Space is trained in seventeen forms of solar combat and can snap the trunk of a small pine tree with a double-reverse dropkick, provided his shoes are on. Seems he tried it once barefoot and broke a toe. Space is, according to Nolan, a hard-headed detective deliberately cast in the Warner Bros. mold of the 1930s, "out of Bogart by Chandler, a Hammettized op thrown gun-first into the future."

In *Space for Hire* (1971), set in 2053, Nolan runs Sam around the entire Solar System and pops him in and out of alternate universes. Sam also manages to change his shape, sex, age, and mind, while struggling with monsters, mad scientists, and quirky time machines. In a veritable orgy of outlandish

situations, Space, in true knightly fashion, beds a robot, fights a fire-breathing dragon, rescues a three-headed damsel in distress, gets cursed by a witch in a candy forest, and goes to work for a client who keeps losing his body. In the process, like our classical PIs, Space gets hypnotized, seduced, slugged, double-crossed, tortured, brainwashed, drowned, and fatally shot.

Space drinks imported Scotch, and, as an Earth-Op working Mars and as an ex-rocket jockey out of Chicago, he reminds all of his clients that the detective business is in his blood. His great-grandfather was a PI named Bart Challis in a place called Los Angeles, California back in the 1970s. Space is licensed to pack a .38 notrocharge, fingergrip Colt-Wesson under his coat, and he's had to use it more than a few times in his somewhat checkered career. Sam's lusts are twofold: hard drink and soft women. While a sucker for a sob story, he's nobody's patsy.

With this background, Space takes off in a totally wild, bizarre, and funny space opera with totally fantastic, improbable, and surrealistic situations and scenes. It's great and good fun and delightful comedy that no lover of either science fiction or mystery should miss.

Nolan is also the author of the famous *Logan's Run* (1967) and *Logan's World* (1977). Logan, as mentioned earlier, is a policeman who refuses to die at his appointed time in an overpopulated world of the future. The novel was made into a successful movie and then a popular, but short-lived, TV series.

With the current popularity of both science fiction and the private eye, it is highly likely that we will see many more such blends in the years ahead. Maybe also in the movies and on the watching box. How about *Hans Solo: Private Eye*, or *Mike Hammer in the 23rd Century*, or *Thomas Magnum: Star Rover*, or *Star Cases*? Only time will tell.

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# Foreign Intrigue



By William L. DeAndrea

PARIS—

I had just told Otto that Orania and I would be living at 56 Avenue Émile Zola in Montparnasse on the Left Bank for the rest of the year.

“How did you arrange *that?*” he demanded. He was talking about a couple of writers winding up on a street named for a writer. I said it was just a coincidence. There are a lot of streets in Paris named for writers. No mystery writers, though. It would have been a kick to wind up on the Rue de Gaston Leroux, or the Avenue Georges Simenon, but Zola will have to do.

If it were up to me, there would be an Avenue Mickey Friedman. With typically immaculate timing, Orania and I decided to quit London for Paris the very week the collections were shown. It does not take Eugene Valmout to deduce that this will have a serious effect on the number of hotel rooms available in Paris—i.e., it eliminates them completely. In desperation, I decided to impose on Mickey Friedman, someone a mutual friend had told me I must look up when I was in Paris.

Mickey had enough on her plate already. She was (1) preparing to move to New York, where her husband Alan had been hired as director of the city's museum of science, (2) awaiting French publication of her first novel *Hurricane Season* in the Serie Noire, (3) awaiting publication of her second novel back in the States, (4) preparing to give a public reading of her works.

Graciously (though graciously is a fairly feeble word in this context—make it “miraculously”), she interrupted all this to find us a room in a very nice two-star hotel on the Rue Racine (another writer). She even paid the deposit for us.

Three weeks and another hotel went by before we got the apartment, but here we are.

Before we go into detail on that one, however, let's clear up the last of the London business.

First, about Jeffrey Archer and *First Among Equals*. You may recall that there was speculation about how its serialization in its entirety in the British *Mail on Sunday* would effect sales. Well, the British papers are all available in Paris, and the *International Herald-Tribune* publishes the *New York Times* bestseller list only slightly later than the sports scores, so I've been able to keep track. Since the book has been firmly esconced on the bestseller lists of both countries for months, the obvious deduction is that serialization *in toto* must be *good* for sales, and, if a writer can get it, he should go for it.

Incidentally, *The Times* (British version) reports that Archer's American editor asked for, and got, significant changes from the British version. *The Times* says that in the States there are only three main characters instead of four, and that a different one altogether becomes Prime Minister at the end. Collectors will be driven insane by Archer before he's done.

A couple of crime shows premiered on British TV before we left. BBC-1 gave us *Juliet Bravo*, which is not the name of the lead character but a radio call sign. It is, however, about a policewoman, an Inspector this time, who is in command of the police station in a little town called Hartley. Anna Cateret stars as Inspector Kate Longton, short blonde hair, clear-eyed, compassionate, and competent. The stories are slice-of-life school, few murders, lots of petty nastiness. The program was created by Ian Kennedy Martin, who also crafted the ultra-violent *Sweeney* for ITV.

BBC also repeated a four-part version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* from a couple of years ago. It was entertaining and faithfully adapted, but it is memorable only for its flaws—the actor playing Sir Henry Baskerville was about four foot nine, putting a large crimp in the credibility of his romance, and Holmes was played by Tom Baker, best known in America for his portrayal of English super-science-fiction-hero and cult figure (a cult I have enthusiastically joined, by the way) *Doctor Who*. As the Doctor, Baker, with his touseled locks and heavy features, swathed in an enormous striped muffler, was an engaging figure. As Holmes, with his hair slicked back, he is just too damned ugly to play the part. It's a shame. Baker had the height, the voice, the attitude, but he was done in by his looks. For a really terrific TV Holmes, see last issue's review of the ITV series starring Jeremy Brett.

On ITV, the late crime entry was *Mitch* starring John Thaw (formerly Inspector Jack Regan, the Cockney Kojak of the long-lived *Sweeney* series) as the eponymous crime reporter for an unnamed British national daily tabloid. The show, like most British dramas, is done on videotape. It's sort of slow moving, and there's nothing new about Mitch that you haven't seen in five hundred other tough-with-a-heart-of-gold reporters, but John Thaw is a good actor, and, more importantly, he's a TV star, which means always watchable.

We did a lot of running around when we first got to Paris, much to the gratification of my wife, who is a Hemingway fanatic. We kept stumbling upon cafés where the Great Man used to hang out, or at least the ones keeping the names alive, though not necessarily in the same locations. My favorite one is the Café du Dome, not far away in another part of Montparnasse. It's in a lovely building and has a lot of glass, and it reminds me of Elliot Paul's insane Homer Evans mysteries, the first of which was called *The Mysterious Mickey Finn; or, Murder in the Café du Dome*. By the time this appears, Dover Books should be well along with a reprint of Paul's work, which is sort of a cross between Agatha Christie and

Thomas Pynchon and has to be read to be believed. Or not believed. It's hilarious, and worth catching up with even if you never plan to go to Paris.

It is an inconvenience to live in Paris if you do not speak French, just as it is an inconvenience to fall off the *QE II* if you do not know how to swim and are not tougher than a shark. Therefore, I can offer only the sketchiest impressions of the state of French mystery publishing.

There is quite a bit of it. Even the smallest local newsstand will have a few black-covered books in a rack next to the fourteen or fifteen TV magazines. (A digression—it is hard to figure out how the French manage to support such a library of TV magazines when they only have three channels in the whole country to keep track of). The selection seems to be much the same as it was in England—Christie, Marsh, etc. and hardboiled Americans. Lots of hardboiled Americans. They really go for hardboiled Americans. A few words about that later.

The books themselves, as I've said, are bound in black, as mysteries in Italy are bound in yellow. Unlike the practice in Italy, however, the French publishers do honest-to-Dieu paperback books, instead of digest-sized magazines. There are mystery sections, and seemingly very complete ones, in practically all the bookstores.

Furthermore, publishers seem to keep more books in print by one author at the same time than they do in the U.S. or in England. I'll tell you one thing—if I could read French, my Lawrence Block collection would be a lot more nearly complete than it is now.

There are two things they don't tell you about Paris. One is that practically *everything* is closed on Monday. The other is that loving Paris in the autumn when it drizzles is so much *saucisse Bolognese*. In the autumn, in Paris, it pours until the sewers spout like geysers. Surely, you say, he exaggerates. *Au contraire*. It rained eighteen of the first twenty days we spent in Paris, and at least three times a week since.

But what the hell. You didn't shell out five bucks for this magazine (about 47 French francs as this is written) to listen to me sit in Paris and grouse. The point I'm making is that all this rain-enforced leisure has led us to seek out all the English-language bookstores in the city.

The first one we got to was The Village Voice, on the Rue Princesse. This was where Mickey Friedman gave her reading to a large crowd. The crowd filled up the store, because The Village Voice is half bookstore, half café, and all cozy. It is also relentlessly intellectual (very Left Bank) and so in terms of mysteries offers primarily the hardboiled stuff the French (and too many Americans) think mystery writing consists of in its entirety.

The store is run by a lovely woman named Odellie who is witty and charming and helpful and who seems genuinely delighted to see you again when you stop in the store.

One mysterious item available at The Village Voice that I haven't seen anywhere else in Paris is a facsimile of the December 1953 issue of *Manhunt* magazine. This, apparently, was one hell of an issue, featuring stories by Craig Rice ("Murder Marches On!" starring John J. Malone), Harold Q. Masur (which they spelled Mansur; "Richest Man in the Morgue" featuring Scott Jordan) and three stories by Evan Hunter—"The Wife of Riley" under his own name, "Switch Ending" by Richard Marsden, and "Sucker" by Hunt Collins. If Ed McBain had shown up, he could have had a bridge game with himself.

Unfortunately, they didn't reprint any of those stories, just the cover—inside and out, front and back—and the cover story—"Black Pudding" by David Goodis. Goodis is a French favorite, like Jerry Lewis, though unlike Jerry Lewis he is virtually unknown in his own country. "Black Pudding" is a Spillane-like tale of revenge, astonishing in its mediocrity, and it's published here twice, in English and in French. All I can say is the man's translator must be a genius, because the English does less than nothing for me.

The cover painting, however, is a treat, featuring as it does a robust blonde wearing a bright red merrywidow that's almost an afterthought looming over a torn-shirted man clinging to a pipe in a basement.

The most famous English-language bookstore in Paris is Shakespeare and Company, located just across the river from Notre Dame. This place has gotten a lot of mileage out of the fact that the woman who founded it used to loan money to writers who became great, famous, or both. Today it is, not to put too fine a point on it, a hole. The floor is uneven, the roof leaks, the whole place smells of mildew, and they stamp a big picture of Shakespeare into every book you buy and tell you it adds to the resale value. I would welcome the opinion of an expert collector such as our Esteemed Publisher on that one.

The best places to go for mysteries in English here are branches of foreign chains. Brentano's, the American company, has a large store on the Place de l'Opéra, near the Paris Opera. This is the same opera, incidentally, that Erik was the Phantom of. Anyway, Brentano's is primarily concerned with selling books in French, but there is a sizeable and well-organized English-language section, with a good selection of mysteries.

But for my money (and they charge a lot of it), the best English-language bookstore in Paris is the W. H. Smith on the Rue de Rivoli, near the Louvre and the

Place de Concorde. Not only is it the best place for a English-reading mystery lover in Paris, it's better than any W. H. Smith I encountered in eight months in Britain. There is a terrific selection of American and British crime, detective, and espionage fiction, as good as you could ask of a non-specialty bookstore. Now if they could only get their prices down a little. . .

One thing the French are much better about than we are in America is showing movies. The other day, Ric Meyers (who is here visiting) and I caught up with Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope*, a movie I've been wanting to see since I first learned of its existence twenty years or so ago. The theatre was neat and clean, and the seats were well padded. The picture was a good print, and, most important of all, V.O., which means *version originale*. The French have much more respect for the original language of a film than we seem to, and they never spring a dubbed version on their audience without warning.

I suspect, though, that things get lost in the translation no matter what. Small example. At one point in *Rope*, one character calls another a "dirty dog". The subtitle renders that as "invidious individual." Just not the same somehow.

The best thing on French TV is V.O. Hitchcock as well. In this case, the V.O. could also stand for Very Old, since they've given us *Murder*, *Blackmail*, *Secret Agent*, and *Number Seventeen*, the last two of which I'd never seen before. They also showed *Spellbound*, from the late 'forties, but that was an aberration.

Most of the crime shows on French TV are old American shows. Seventeen percent of French TV is imported from the States. The title translations are a little feeble to my unexpert ear—*The Fall Guy* becomes *L'Homme Qui Tombe à Pic*, for example, and Nero Wolfe is *L'Homme à Orchidée*. These are not, alas, V.O., and it gets very frustrating to watch them. One thing that can be watched in French or English with equal enjoyment is *Inspecteur Gadget*, an internationally produced animated cartoon that features some of the best rendering and absolutely the best limited animation I have ever seen.

Since *Inspector Gadget* is on in the States as well, and, since Ric Meyers has seen more episodes of it than I have, he'll tell you all about it in the "TAD on TV" column elsewhere in the magazine.

We come back to the States a week after New Year's. Next issue, I will try to clean up unfinished business. For example, there's a French film out called *Le Humeau*, or *The Twin*, based on Donald E. Westlake's novel *Two Much*. I hope to get to see it, though I won't understand much. And I will reflect, with as much tranquility I can muster upon returning to New York after 53 weeks in lesser places, on the Significance of Our Trip. □

# The Self-Conscious Sergeant Beef Novels of Leo Bruce

By Earl F. Bargainnier

*Haven't you ever noticed in detective novels what a good time everybody has with a few tragic circumstances?*

—Sergeant Beef in *Case with Ropes and Rings*

The convention of characters in detective fiction discussing the genre or making such comments as “this is just like a detective novel” has often been noted, but no other writer has employed the convention to the extent that Leo Bruce does in his Sergeant Beef novels.<sup>1</sup> What is a casual, minor convention in other works becomes the structural principle, the source of much comedy and satire, and the basis for the development of the two central continuing characters in the eight novels.

They are classical British whodunits: puzzles with all clues carefully laid out. Beneath the surface puzzle-plot, however, is another pattern: the consideration of how the case will be “written up” as a novel. Thus, while playing with the formulas, devices, and techniques of the very type of novel he is writing, Bruce provides himself with a structure for the puzzle-plot, a structure which comments upon itself and offers extra surprises. Without giving most titles, some examples of Bruce's ability in accomplishing this double trick are offered. What appears to be an

inverted novel in which the reader follows a man's plan to kill actually is not. Suicide is made to seem murder and murder suicide in a single work (false suicide in one form or another is present in five of the novels). The police correctly arrest two murderers, but for each other's crime. There is a murder on p. 283 of a 313-page novel after one has been predicted by a gypsy at the beginning of it; instead of an investigation of the murder—the usual procedure—the novel consists of an attempt to determine who will be the victim. The entire investigation in another novel is itself a red herring, and *Case with No Conclusion* does have a conclusion: a man is hanged for a murder he did not commit, thus making the case seem a failure for Beef, but a final twist shows that it is not. Bruce's extensive knowledge of the features of classical detective fiction is obvious, for the tricks he plays are firmly based upon reader expectations of the genre. He self-consciously uses

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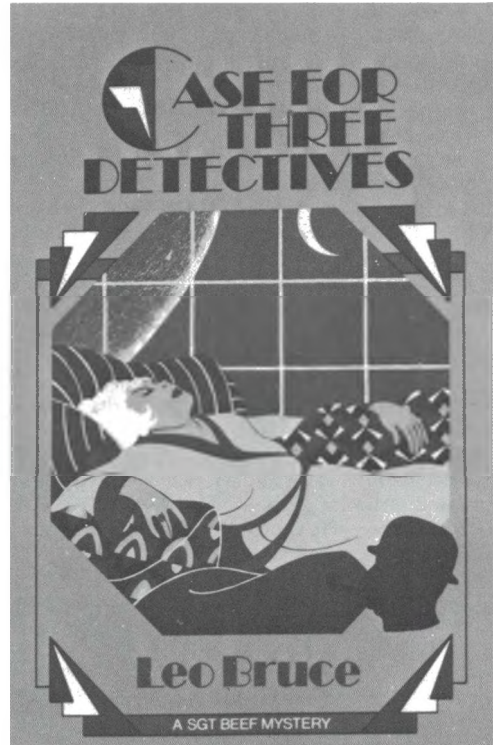
*Earl F. Bargainnier professes English in Georgia. He is the author of THE GENTLE ART OF MURDER: THE DETECTIVE FICTION OF AGATHA CHRISTIE and editor of and contributor to TEN WOMEN OF MYSTERY and TWELVE ENGLISHMEN OF MYSTERY. He is co-editor with George N. Dove of the forthcoming COPS AND CONSTABLES.*

the genre's own repeated conventions and formulas to create comic novels of detection, enabling him to laugh good-naturedly at its clichés while still mystifying readers with ingenious manipulations of those same clichés.

The world of the novels is populated by people with such improbable names as Mrs. Pluck, Mrs. Scuttle, Miss Pinhole (a dressmaker), Bristling, Eels, Fagg, Flippo, Flusting, Adrian Lovelace, Hilton Gupp, and Wellington Chickie. Young constables have literary names like Galsworthy, Watts-Dunton, and Spender-Hennessy, and one character's dogs are named Stalin, Molotov, Lenin, Vishensky, etc. This comic world is centered, however, on Sergeant William Beef; Lionel Johnson Townsend, his "Watson"; and the interplay and infighting between them.

Sergeant Beef's wife, who plays little part in the novels, says of him: "Play-acting half the time and thinking he's a real detective. I tell him he'll get into trouble one of these days" (Blood, 205). Her view is not different from many with whom Beef comes into contact. Inspector Stute of Scotland Yard, who appears in four novels and whose motto is "System, Method, Efficiency," finally comes to realize Beef's ability, but not until he has long been contemptuous. The same is true of the three private investigators in *Case for Three Detectives* and the superior Constable Spencer-Hennessy of *Cold Blood*, but, as will be seen, most of the disparaging comments come from Townsend. Nevertheless, Beef does solve his cases. A village sergeant in the first two novels, he decides to become a private detective as he is not promoted; moves to Lilac Crescent near Baker Street, which he considers the Harley Street of detection; puts up a brass sign "W. BEEF, INVESTIGATIONS"; but apparently fails his first attempt on his own in 1939. But he redeems himself in two others and, after service in the Special Investigative Branch of the Corps of Military Police during World War II, has three later successes.

Though meant adversely, Townsend is correct when he describes Beef as "the most plebian of literary investigators...he was *not* a gentleman" (Ropes, 180). Beef has no pretension to being a gentleman or anything else except himself, and he does not accept pretension in others. He finds the uniform of the French police fanciful, always says dinner and supper instead of lunch and dinner, wears a blue serge suit and mauve tie, is not impressed by Oxford University because the bathrooms are too far from the sleeping quarters, is proud of having attended Purley Board School, and adores—the only appropriate word—beer and darts.<sup>2</sup> He does not like "larking about," and his favorite expression is the noncommittal "Ah." In the first two novels, his speech is misspelled Cockney, but, when he argues



with Townsend that critics find that "tedious," the response is, "If ever you have another case...and I have to report it, I promise you your language will go in with all its aspirates, and none misplaced" (Conclusion, 13), and, fortunately for both Beef and readers, Townsend keeps that promise. Yet Beef remains a vigorous, middle-aged, red-faced, lower-middle-class detective "with a straggling ginger moustache, and a look of beery benevolence" (Three, 32).

Though he has a boyish enthusiasm for his cases, and though his methods may seem haphazard to Townsend, he has "a curiously orderly mind." In the first novel, he says that he simply depends upon police procedure—and knows the murderer by p. 50, but no one will listen to him. But later, though he can be as enigmatic as any of the great detectives, he is the personification of common sense. Eschewing elaborate theories, he states that he does not believe anything he is told and only half of what he hears, nor is he concerned with more scientific methods of detection: "I don't do a lot of skylarking with microscopes and that, and I have no opinion at all of what they call psychology. I just use my loaf" (Ropes, 97). Using his loaf, his common sense, he listens,

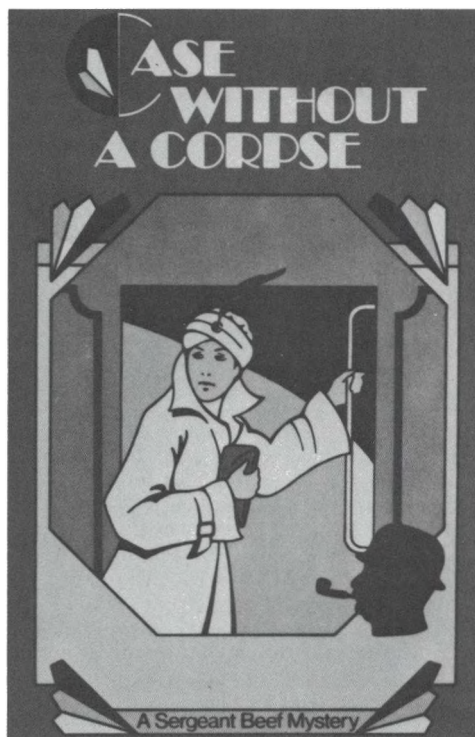
observes, and looks for motive, which he considers the key to any case. Even Townsend eventually realizes that Beef's greatest power is "his hardy common sense, so blunt and English, so boorish as I sometimes thought" (Neck, 14). Boorish at times, perhaps, but that hardy common sense overcomes contempt and exposes the guilty, however more clever they may seem to be.

As the narrative voice of the novels, Lionel Townsend is of equal importance—if not intelligence—to Beef. He is the stupid chronicler and recognizes his role; he thinks of a chase as seeming "to throw over my shoulders the mantle of my immortal predecessor, Dr. Watson" (Ropes, 165). Bruce has fun with his obtuse narrator, even having him open *Case Without a Corpse* with—shades of Bulwer-Lytton and Snoopy—"It was, I shall have to admit, a dark and stormy night" (3). Whatever his style or lack of it, Inspector Stute calls him "a splendid foil" and wishes he would describe his cases instead of Beef's. At times, he accepts "this role of enquiring and credulous fool, to whom the great

**Beef states that he  
does not believe  
anything he is told  
and only half of what  
he hears.**

investigators would voice their conundrums" (Three, 99), but at other times he wishes to prove that he has "a quick and effective brain which will some day surprise Beef by finding the solution to a problem before he has done more than fill his giant notebook" (Ropes, 6-7). He makes lists, summaries, and extensive analysis of findings but can find no meaning in the facts after doing so. (Since Beef does not make lists and rarely tells Townsend what he is thinking, these attempts at analysis have a functional purpose: to provide a summary to that point for readers.) Though Townsend is insulted by the remark, Beef properly introduces him as the man "who does the clerical side of my work" (Beef, 11). When he tries to participate personally in an investigation, he interferes at the wrong moment, causing problems for Beef, as in *Case Without a Corpse* and *Case with Ropes and Rings*. Occasionally, Bruce seems to take pity on him and allow him to come close to the truth of a case early, even before Beef seems to know—but only close; he can never follow up his intuitive "insights" (See Three, 61-62; Corpse, 135; Ropes, 143).

In his early thirties, Townsend is a young Colonel Blimp: priggish, pompous, snobbish, and totally



lacking a sense of humor, though he thinks of himself as "a young successful writer...good looking, cultured, with easy pleasant manners" (Clowns, 240). He is also a coward, becoming nervous at any sign of possible danger. Though his only work besides the writing of Beef's cases has been as an insurance agent and marine inspector, he considers himself a gentleman and an intellectual, though he can mistake an allusion as readily as Beef. His frequent proud references to his public school, St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate, is a joke on himself; no school in Ramsgate could be first class. Yet at times he sounds like a character by P. G. Wodehouse, as when he saws of a murderer's weapon for strangling: "The Marylebone Cricket Club tie! Surely he wouldn't have used *that*? The man must be an absolute cad!" (Ropes, 191) His brother Vincent appears in two of the novels, and Townsend is always uneasy around this superior schoolmaster, who suggests to Beef that he should have E. M. Forster or Aldous Huxley chronicle his career. Needless to say, Townsend disagrees, for he thinks Beef is lacking in *savoir faire*: "Not to put too fine a point on it, Beef, you're crude. Rough and ready. Bourgeois" (Beef, 9). But he is continually surprised by others' reactions to

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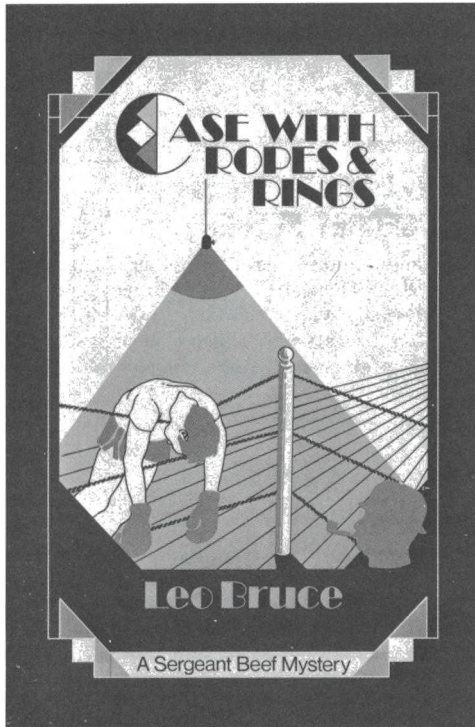
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Beef, whom he grudgingly acknowledges has “the facility for being accepted in many different circumstances and by many different kinds of people” (Ropes, 101). Townsend does not have that facility. The clearest evidence is his desire to be the romantic interest in the novels. His attempts are feeble and, if not rejected immediately, are quickly put down by Beef: “This isn’t a love story. . . . It’s a detective novel. I never like to see the two mixed up. None of the best of ’em ever did it” (Ropes, 140). Townsend never gets the girl, remaining throughout the eight novels the gullible, obtuse aide and chronicler of Beef’s successes.

In spite of those successes, Townsend is nearly always afraid that Beef will fail. He feels that his novels are the reason for Beef’s reputation; again and again he says, “I made Beef,” and he resents what he considers Beef’s lack of appreciation. He also worries that, even if Beef does find the solution, there will not be enough action or surprise for him to get “a good story.” On the other hand, Beef complains that “Townsend always writes up my cases as though I was a half-wit who luckily tumbles on the solution” (Blood, 202). The result of Townsend’s fears and Beef’s complaints is that they are continually at odds

as to course of action, proper deportment, their respective roles, and the criteria of novelistic success. Their disagreements contain, both consciously and unconsciously on their parts, Bruce’s satirical comments on many elements of classical detective fiction.

One of their continual quarrels is over who is responsible for the novels not being bestsellers. Townsend claims that Beef’s personality is not distinct enough to attract readers:

“You need a great deal more than successful detection to make you famous as a detective. You need a peculiar appearance, for one thing. Either enormously tall or minutely small. Very fat or wasting away. Beard, eye-glass or some such identification mark. You must resemble an alligator every few pages, like Mrs. Bradley, or talk like a peer in an Edwardian farce, like Lord Peter Wimsey.” (Blood, 6)

Beef, of course, blames Townsend for making him seem a half-wit. Nevertheless, in three of the novels, characters *are* reading Townsend’s accounts of previous cases, and there is discussion of them, usually faulting Townsend. Beef even suspects a man because he is reading one: “I thought there must be something funny about a man that would do that for pleasure” (Beef, 183). In spite of the supposedly small sales, Beef can suggest that he should have a cut of the book rights, “*And* the American rights, *and* the serial rights, if there are any, and the film rights,” to which Townsend responds, “[Y]ou’re getting beyond yourself” (Ropes, 9). Townsend is somewhat unfair, for Beef tries to point out ways of making his cases attractive to readers, as when he has to visit a dangerous Spanish café: “It wouldn’t half make a nice piece of colour, though, wouldn’t it?” (Ropes, 130)

He also notes parallels between himself and other fictional detectives, especially to Sherlock Holmes in *Cold Blood*, but most such comparisons are made by other characters; his being hired in the same novel offers an amusing example:

“Why me?” asked Beef suddenly and rather loudly.

There was hint of a smile on Theo Gray’s face as he answered.

“I wanted the best man for the job,” he said.

“There’s some a lot better known than me,” Beef admitted. “Been written up better. Why didn’t you go to Poirot, for instance?”

For the first time Theo Gray looked a trifle uncomfortable.

“As a matter of fact, I did make enquiries,” he said, “but found that he was engaged on another case.”

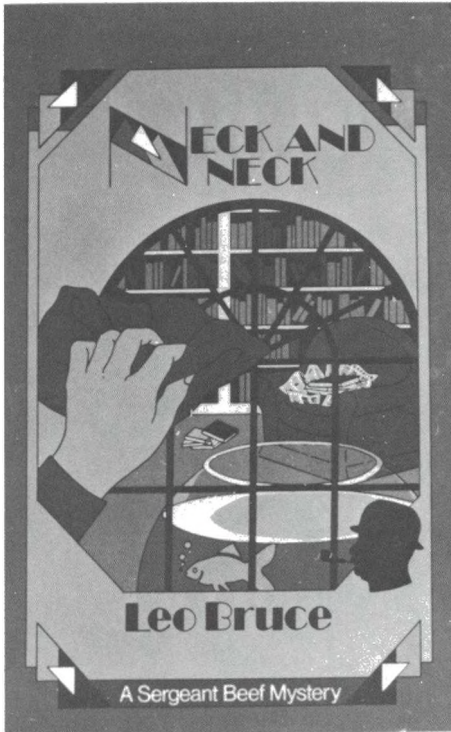
“What about Albert Campion?”

“Not interested, I gathered.”

“So as a last resort you came to old Beef. You know Mr. Gray, I don’t know whether I shan’t refuse this case. *Then* where would you be?”

“On the phone to Inspector French. . .” (14)





The most elaborate use of Beef's fictional counterparts is *Case for Three Detectives*, in which he quickly solves a murder which defeats the skills of Lord Simon Plimsoll, Monsieur Amer Picon, and Monsignor Smith. The witty and accurate parodies of Wimsey, Poirot, and Father Brown receiving their comeuppance from Beef make this novel a classic of both mystery and comedy.

Besides the quarrels and the references to other fictional detectives, there is comment upon such matters of the genre as Watsons and their presence being calmly accepted by the police: "A crime wouldn't be a crime without half a dozen of you literary people hanging about after it" (*Corpse*, 93); the necessity of butlers in mysteries; the role of the supernatural; whether single or double plots are better; the boredom of presenting inquests as narrative filler; the utter acceptance by people of strange questions from amateur detectives; and the lack of bereavement after a murder, making it "quite proper and conventional for everyone in the house to join the investigators in this entertaining game of hide-and-seek" (*Three*, 59). And this list could be lengthened considerably.

In *Case with Ropes and Rings*, a schoolboy confronts Townsend about his novels:

"God how that sort of thing bores me! All these fearful women writers and people like you, working out dreary crimes for half-wits to read about. Doesn't it strike you as degrading?"

I decided to keep my temper.

"One can scarcely expect schoolboys to appreciate the subtlety and depth of modern detective fiction," I said. "I have only to quote the name of Miss Sayers to remind you of what this *genre* has already produced."

"God!" said the boy again. "And why do you always stick hackneyed bits of anglicised French into your conversation, Ticks? You've no idea how wearisome it becomes to anyone who has to listen to you."

"My French is not usually criticized," I told him.

"It's not your French I criticize," said the boy. "I've never heard you speak it. It's your English, with all those over-used words like *je ne sais quoi*, *esprit de corps*, and *savoir faire*." (158-59)

This mockery of the fictional type Bruce is writing typifies the nature of the Beef novels. They are satirically comic versions of the classical British detective novel. The contrast of the Blimpish Townsend as narrator and the commonsensical Beef as detective and their quarrels over how the cases are to be presented to the public as novels provide Bruce numerous opportunities to comment upon the type. At the same time, the cleverly plotted mysteries which Beef solves makes them more than just mockeries of that type; they are superb examples of it. Leo Bruce's success in bringing off this difficult narrative trick is remarkable, and his novels deserve a wide readership.

## Notes

1. The editions of the Sergeant Beef novels used for this essay are listed below, preceded by the original date of publication and followed by the abbreviation which will be used for citation in the text. Unless otherwise noted, the editions are those published by Academy Chicago.
  - 1936 *Case for Three Detectives*, 1980. (Three)
  - 1937 *Case Without a Corpse*, 1982. (Corpse)
  - 1939 *Case with No Conclusion* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1939). (Conclusion)
  - 1939 *Case with Four Clowns* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1939). (Clowns)
  - 1940 *Case with Ropes and Rings*, 1980. (Ropes)
  - 1947 *Case for Sergeant Beef*, 1980. (Beef)
  - 1951 *Neck and Neck*, 1980. (Neck)
  - 1952 *Cold Blood*, 1980. (Blood)
2. Beef's dart playing is one of several elements reflecting Bruce's personal tastes. Among his many works as Rupert Croft-Cooke, he wrote a study of the game in *Darts* (1936). He also wrote or edited five books on circuses, reflected in *Case with Four Clowns*. Though he wrote nothing on ropes, he seems to have been fascinated by them, for they are significant to the plots of five novels. His most evident dislike is the clergy, who are presented as incompetent, ineffectual, or worse. The novels include one interested only in food, another only in sleep, two who are mentally deranged, and one who is a homosexual scoutmaster. Beef's attitude, which is apparently close to his creator's, is that clergymen are "gossip-mongers, spoil-sports, and enemies of Sunday darts" (*Conclusion*, 223). □

# Second City Skulduggery: Chicago's Bouchercon XV

By Edward D. Hoch

The sun barely shone all weekend, but it didn't matter for the 430 authors and mystery lovers gathered inside Chicago's Americana Congress Hotel for the 15th annual Bouchercon. One of the largest and most successful Bouchercons on record kept everyone properly enthralled for three days, and it's probable that a good many of those attending rarely ventured outside the hotel.

Though the mystery convention's official opening was not until Friday evening, October 26th, several authors and fans arrived early. On Thursday afternoon, the three organizers of Bouchercon XV—Mary S. Craig, Ely M. Liebow and John Nieminski—were hard at work with members of the Midwest Chapter of Mystery Writers of America, stuffing envelopes and checking last-minute arrangements. Early-arriving fans like Bruce Taylor from San Francisco and Bob Napier from Tacoma joined in.

As a preliminary to Bouchercon, Bob Randisi, founder and vice-president of the Private Eye Writers of America, organized a luncheon for PWA members and guests on Friday afternoon. An over-

flow crowd of 51 attended the event at Vannie's, a restaurant a few blocks from the hotel. Since the private eye has been rooted in California since the days of Hammett, it's not surprising that there was a large California contingent, including Bill Pronzini, Marcia Muller, William Campbell Gault, Sue Grafton and Michael Collins (Dennis Lynds). Among those also attending were John Lutz from St. Louis, Ed Hunsburger from Minneapolis, Shannon O'Cork from Connecticut, Max Allan Collins from Iowa, and Percy Spurlark Parker from Chicago. PWA's outgoing president, Lawrence Block, missed the event. He'd been at Marshall Field's earlier, signing books as part of the department store's week-long Mystery Madness promotion.

Perhaps it was this promotion, with other publicity, that attracted so many mystery fans to the Americana Congress that evening as the convention opened. Bouchercon IX, held in Chicago in 1978, had attracted only 150 people. This time Mary Craig and the other organizers planned for 400, but even that number was exceeded and they were forced to

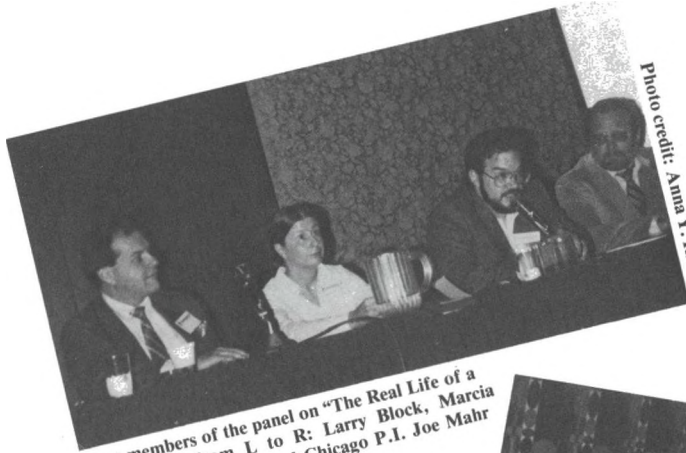


Photo credit: Anna X. Randisi

Some members of the panel on "The Real Life of a Private Eye" from L to R: Larry Block, Marcia Muller, Bob Randisi, and Chicago P.I. Joe Mahr



At the PWA luncheon, clockwise: Max Collins, Warren Murphy, Molly Cochran, Linda Barnes, unknown, Jim Traylor

turn away late arrivals. A total of 430 people were finally allowed inside. The traditional book dealers' room next to the auditorium was constantly filled over the weekend, and this helped relieve the crowding at the scheduled events.

The only bad news of the weekend came at the beginning. Phyllis White, widow of Anthony Boucher, was hospitalized in California and for the first time in fifteen years was unable to attend the convention named in honor of her late husband. The evening session opened with a greeting from Don Yates, who'd seen Mrs. White a week earlier, followed by greetings from Mary Craig, Ely Liebow and John Neiminski. Robert E. Briney read from some of Boucher's published reviews and articles, in tribute to him. The next evening was a birthday salute to Nero Wolfe by Art Scott, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Fer-de-Lance*, Rex Stout's first novel about Wolfe. Del Close and Jamie Swise, Chicago actors and comedians, offered an improvisation workshop on making a mystery. Chris Steinbrunner and Stuart M.

Kaminsky discussed Chicago in films, as an introduction to the screening of 1949's *Chicago Deadline*, starring Alan Ladd, and an episode from the television series *M Squad*, with Lee Marvin. The session ended by 12:30, with people drifting off to the hotel bar and to private parties in the rooms.

In order to insure good attendance at the early morning sessions and those immediately following the lunch and dinner breaks, the Bouchercon committee awarded free paperback mysteries to early arrivals and began the sessions with a drawing for a door prize. The scheme seemed to work well, and a good share of the audience was seated when the first Saturday morning session began. First came a panel discussion on the state of the mystery, chaired by Donald A. Yates and bringing together the opinions of editors and agents like Dominick Abel, Edward F. Breslin, Sara Freed, and William J. Reynolds. The second morning session was a panel on Rising Stars, discussing new writers on the mystery fiction scene. Barbara Metcalf moderated the discussion among John Ball, Jane S. Bakerman, Connie Fletcher, Allen

J. Hubin and Kathleen Maio. Al Hubin made special mention of Willian Hjortsberg's *Fallen Angel* (1978), a very different sort of private eye novel which managed a successful blend of fantasy with a legitimate and surprising detective story.

The high point of the Saturday morning session was a panel on the real world of the private eye, moderated by Robert J. Randisi. Real-life Chicago private eye Joseph P. Mahr was questioned by writers Lawrence Block, Michael Collins, Loren D. Estleman, Marcia Muller and Sara Paretsky. It turned out that fictional private eyes aren't all that different from their counterparts in reality, although Mahr made the point that he is usually working on scores of cases at any one time instead of the single case generally portrayed in private eye books. He also offered the age-old complaint about the misuse of gun silencers in fiction, stating that they are noise suppressors at best and that they don't work at all on revolvers. The morning session closed with a tribute to fan guest of honor Marvin Lachman, who told how his love of mysteries began, and mentioned some of his favorite books and authors. He also reminisced about the parties for authors and fans held at his former Bronx apartment beginning in the late 1960s.

Following a lunch break, the Saturday session continued with Max Allan Collins moderating a panel on creating a detective. Kenn Davis, Sue Dunlap, William Campbell Gault, Arthur Maling, Warren Murphy and Ross Spencer all told how they went about it, with Murphy admitting that all his characters are really him. In an afternoon filled with high points special mention must be made of the hour with Bouchercon guest of honor Bill Pronzini, who answered a series of astute questions put to him by Allen B. Crider. Pronzini, who writes five to ten pages on an average day, talked about his collaborations with eight different writers. Much as he likes to collaborate, he feels it's twice as much work. Pronzini talked about "Nameless," his private eye character, who wasn't meant to be nameless in the beginning, and hinted that his first name might be Bill. He also mentioned his western writing, which often contains a mystery element.

Next came the annual Shamus Awards of the Private Eye Writers of America, a part of the Bouchercon program for the past three years. Robert J. Randisi introduced Max Allan Collins, who presented the award for best paperback private eye novel to Paul Engleman for *Dead in Center Field* (Ballantine). Sue Grafton presented the short story award to Bill Pronzini for *Cat's-Paw* (Waves Press limited edition). The Shamus for best private eye novel was presented by Warren Murphy to Max Allan Collins for *True Detective* (St. Martin's Press). The Life Achievement Award was given by Bill

Pronzini to William Campbell Gault. Bob Randisi then announced the results of the election for the next PWA president, and declared Michael Collins the winner by a narrow margin over Stuart Kaminsky. Collins gave a vigorous inaugural speech, decrying the creeping spread of censorship in mystery writing, and promising to be an active president of PWA.

The afternoon's program closed with a panel of mystery short stories chaired by Edward D. Hoch. Robert Edward Eckels, H. Edward Hunsberger, T. Robin Kantner, John Lutz, Percy Spurlark Parker and Dick Stodghill all took part, telling why they write short stories and mentioning some of the writers who had influenced them. Following a dinner break the evening session opened with Ely M. Liebow discussing Dr. Joe Bell, the model for Sherlock Holmes and the subject of Liebow's 1983 book. Tony Hillerman entertained the audience with his account

**Bouchercon XIII  
In San Francisco attracted  
600 people for a  
one-day film event. . .  
which remains the  
all-time record.**

of some bungled crimes of the southwest. Then Stuart Kaminsky and Chris Steinbrunner returned to introduce the evening's William Powell mystery films, *Private Detective 62* and *The Thin Man Goes Home*.

Early risers on Sunday morning heard Otto Penzler moderate a panel on collecting crime fiction, with some valuable advice from Allan J. Hubin, James Pepper, Robert O. Robinson and Brice Taylor. The next panel, chaired by Francis M. Nevins, Jr., asked the eternal question, Where do you get your ideas? Answers came from Stanley Ellin, Joe L. Hensley, Tony Hillerman, Julie Smith and Teri White, who also paid tribute to editors like Fred Dannay, Joan Kahn and Lee Wright who helped them. When asked about books or authors they especially admired, both Stanley Ellin and Tony Hillerman mentioned Graham Greene's *Brighton Rock*, with Ellin also mentioning Hammett's influence and Hillerman praising Eric Ambler. Nevins told of his liking for two completely opposite types of mystery writer—Ellery Queen and Cornell Woolrich.

The women took over for the final panel, on lethal ladies. Ellen Nehr moderated the discussion among Linda Barnes, Dorothy Salisbury Davis, Charlotte MacLeod, Barbara Mertz, Marcia Muller and



Stanley and Jean Ellin



Bill Pronzini and Marcia Muller

Shannon OCork. Two of the panel members confessed to keeping a journal, and some admitted they might even have used the phrase "Had I but known" once or twice in their books, but all spoke strongly of women's place in the mystery field.

Bouchercon's closing ceremonies, usually filled with routine thanks for all concerned, took on new excitement as a contest developed over where to hold the 1985 gathering. Bruce Taylor spoke in favor of Berkeley, California, while John Ball and others favored Los Angeles. After hearing the case for both sides, those in attendance voted for Berkeley. Bruce Taylor announced that Bouchercon XVI would be held at the Clairmont, a resort hotel in Berkeley, from Friday, October 11th to Sunday, October 13, 1985. Guest of Honor will be the California Crime Novel, with Len and June Moffatt as Fan Guests of Honor and Tony Hillerman as Toastmaster.

In other closing business the convention voted to approve a set of Bouchercon rules drawn up by Len and June Moffatt. The rules state that Bouchercon shall be an annual non-profit event, held preferably in October, with the site rotating from west coast to east coast to midwest. There will be a professional Guest of Honor and, optionally, a Fan Guest of Honor, with Phyllis White having a place of honor at all Bouchercon events.

After the close of business the Bouchercon Banquet was held Sunday afternoon in the hotel's grand ballroom. Plaques were presented to Fan Guest of Honor Marvin Lachman and Guest of Honor Bill Pronzini. After a kidding introduction by Bruce Taylor, Pronzini read several examples of truly bad writing, by nameless authors, which didn't make his 1982 volume *Gun in Cheek*.

Comment from just about everyone was favorable following Bouchercon XV. Bruce Taylor felt it was

the best organized of all the events over the past fifteen years, and the attendance of 430 was close to matching the largest of the New York City Bouchercons. (Bouchercon XIII in San Francisco attracted 600 people for a one-day film event as part of its program, which remains the all-time record.) The 36-page program for Bouchercon XV was especially good, including an essay on Anthony Boucher by Francis M. Nevins, Jr. (reprinted from *Exeunt Murderers*), articles on Bill Pronzini and Marvin Lachman, and a checklist of all Pronzini's published fiction to date. Also included were a list of past Bouchercons, a Nero Wolfe quiz by Art Scott, and notes on the speakers and panelists.

To one observer it seemed that there was far more professional publishing activity at this Bouchercon than at those in the past. Jeri Winston from the new *Espionage Magazine* attended all the sessions, and the magazine's first issue was given to everyone who registered. Mystery and science fiction anthologist Martin Greenberg was present, discussing a number of upcoming projects. Editors and publishers from Academy Chicago, Bantam Books, the Mysterious Press, Walker, and Warner Books were in attendance, and plans were discussed for at least two forthcoming mystery series. Cathleen Jordan of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* was there, as were literary agents Larry Sternig and Dominick Abel. There were even representatives of Mayfair Games, busy developing a new series of mystery games in conjunction with *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*.

This could well be remembered as the year in which Bouchercon really came of age, offering not only a superior, well-organized program for mystery fans but an important meeting place for writers, editors, agents and publishers. □

# The Unanswered Questions About Asia:

## Mysteries in the Far East

By Mark Schreiber

The countries of Asia have more than their share of history's unsolved mysteries, both real and in contemporary fiction. Surely one of the twentieth century's most classic puzzlers is the fate of the fossil remnants of Peking Man. The 500,000-year-old bones (they may have been much older; accurate dating by Carbon-14 analysis wasn't developed until years later) were considered one of the most important paleontological "finds" of the century. Just before the outbreak of war, Chinese museum authorities gave the bones to a detachment of U.S. Marines in Tientsin for safekeeping from the marauding Japanese army. Somewhere in the confusion, the bones disappeared virtually without a trace, never to be seen again.

In *The Peking Man Is Missing* (1977) by Claire Taschdjian, the ancient and venerable bones of *Sinanthropus* are pursued across China and abroad on a strange odyssey that ends, ironically, in a basement of a New York City tenement. Another excellent book with the same general theme is *The Blue-Eyed Shan* (1982) by Steven Becker. In Becker's tragic story, the exit point for the fossils from China is via muleback over trails into a sort of no-man's-land in Northern Burma. Intended to be sold by a Chinese Nationalist general to the highest bidder, the bones and their seller, once again, never make it back to civilization.

### Whatever Happened to Amelia Earhart?

The unexplained fate of flyer Amelia Earhart, America's famous aviatrix, is another mystery which has yet to be satisfactorily unraveled. Ms. Earhart disappeared somewhere over the Pacific while attempting to fly solo around the globe in 1937. One theory has it that she served as a spy for the U.S. War Department and was asked to observe secret Japanese naval operations near Saipan. If shot down, she may even have been captured. The endless speculation over the years has produced at least one

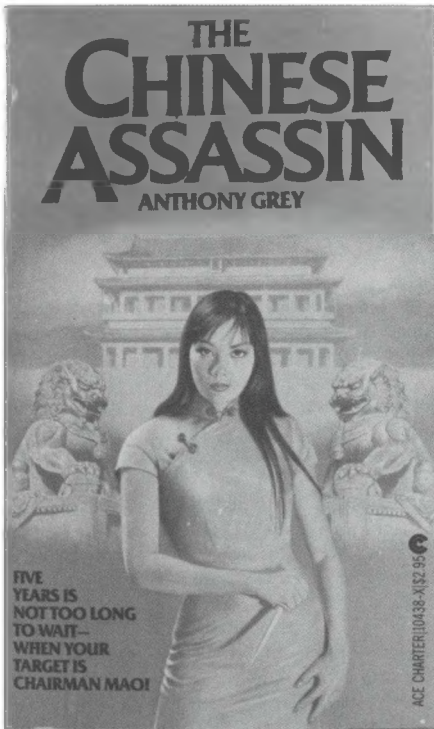
interesting novel, *The Earhart Betrayal* (1980) by James Stewart Thayer.

### The Manhattan Project and Its Aftermath

One of the great untold stories of the twentieth century that still hasn't exhausted all the possibilities for fiction is the top-secret Manhattan Project. History tells us that the A-bomb came as a surprise to the Japanese. In *Steal the Sun* (1981) by Ann and Evan Maxwell, a Japanese agent code-named "Kestrel" actually infiltrates the test area in New Mexico and observes "Trinity"—the first successful test—on July 16, 1945. On the West Coast, Kestrel later vies with Soviet agents in an attempt to steal the uranium needed to set off the bombs.

There are numerous other stories about the bomb and how things might have been different. Were there in fact any American attempts to warn the Japanese? In *Fair Warning* (1980) by George E. Simpson and Neal R. Burger, the U.S. considers a humane gesture to warn the Japanese to surrender before it is too late. Another novel by Robert Duncan, *The Day the Sun Fell* (1976), has a team of American soldiers dispatched to Nagasaki disguised as priests, the idea being to give Japanese Catholics a chance to evacuate the city before the fatal drop. Both novels are surprisingly plausible and thought-provoking.

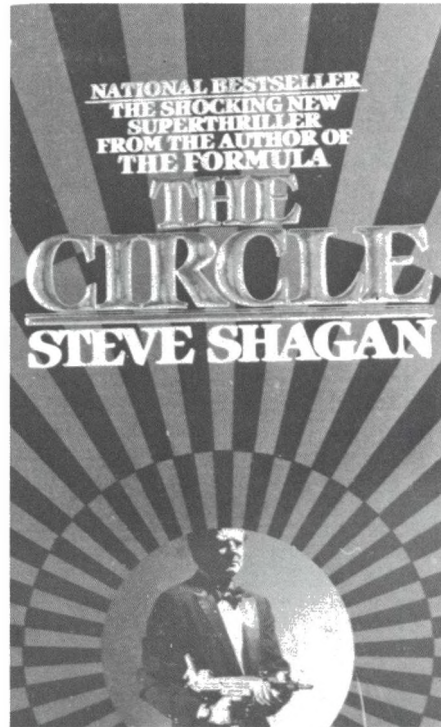
Although it is not widely known, Japan also had its own fledgling atomic project. In a MacDonald Harris novel entitled *Yukuko* (1977), a team of American saboteurs are parachuted onto the northern island of Hokkaido to destroy Japan's only facility for production of Deuterium (heavy water). With the war almost won, their objective is to make sure the Russians don't move into Japan and take over the plant. Although the book is basically a love story about an American commando and an Ainu (aboriginal Japanese) woman, it does contain plausible background about a little-known aspect of history.



### Old Soldiers Never Die?

Indoctrinated to believe it was their duty to die for the Emperor, very few Japanese soldiers in World War II allowed themselves to be taken prisoner. Still, over a thousand POWs were captured by the Allies, enough to fill a large POW camp in Cowra, Northern Australia. On August 5, 1944, these men staged a suicidal “Banzai” breakout which was suppressed with hundreds of fatalities. How could such an incident still be the subject of a cover-up three decades later? A gravestone at the site bears the name, not of a soldier, but of a Japanese fairy tale character—and a hint that one soldier’s death just might have been murder. The mystery is unwoven in *The Death of Urashima Taro* (1981), an unusual novel penned by Australian author and playwright Roger Pulvers.

Speaking of Japanese soldiers, who knows how many there are still hiding out in the tropical jungles of Asia and the South Pacific? This writer by coincidence was residing on the island of Guam in 1971, when former Imperial Army Sergeant Shoichi Yokoi resurfaced after 28 years of self-imposed solitude. Accounts of other “stragglers” still occasionally appear in the news each year, although most of them are aware that the war, by now, is over. The majority of these ex-soldiers have “gone native,”



having married local women, and they appear content not to return home to Japan. But in an intriguing novel titled *Amok* (1978), a really bad one is still terrorizing the locals in the Philippines. Kurusu, a hulking giant who was a former Kempeitai (military police) officer, has been prowling the jungles years after the war’s end. Totally fearless, cunning, and deadly, he has even become somewhat of a local legend; the natives believe him to be an “Amok,” a monster in human form. How has he survived for so long? A wartime informer and collaborator must shield him or risk exposure.

### Another Seldom-Told Story— The Occupation of Japan

What happened to all those long-departed American GIs who fathered the thousands of half-Caucasian or half-black children known to the Japanese as *ai-no-ko*, and how do these children, now adults, tie in with a sinister Japanese ultra-nationalist organization? You can find out about it in *The Papa-san Files* (1979) by Henry Henn.

There are skeletons in the closet of at least one ex-GI who came marching home, as he chose not to forget the girl he left behind. But, if people are

unwilling to let the past die, would they kill to preserve its secrets? In *The Japanese Mistress* (1972) by Richard Neeley, we learn something of what it was like to be a GI's "only-san" (as these women were called) in the years after the war.

#### Treasure—Buried or Otherwise

Some entertaining novels represent no particular case but are gleaned from an amalgamation of true accounts, stories, and rumors which still persist. One regularly-developed plot is the legend of unrecovered World War II treasure. In Stephen Becker's *The Last Mandarin* (1979), a notorious Japanese war criminal with the key to the location of hidden war booty in China is hunted down just as the Communists are about to close in on Peking. Another story along similar lines can be found in Japanologist Jack Seward's *The Cave of the Chinese Skeletons* (1966).

With the Communists closing in on mainland China, everyone is out to grab as much as he can before fleeing. In *The Yangtze Run* (1977) by Patrick O'Hara, a Chinese banker attempts to transport stolen gold out of the country before the Communist takeover. A variation on this tale makes use of the Japanese in '41 rather than the Reds in '49: John Tarrant's *China Gold* (1982), a thriller about an attempt to hijack Hong Kong's gold reserves from under the noses of the invading Japanese.

#### Political Mysteries

Another still-fresh enigma of modern times is the mysterious attempted *coup d'etat* by Chinese Field Marshall Lin Biao in 1971. Once designated Chairman Mao's heir apparent, Lin is said to have turned against his mentor in September 1971 and was reportedly shot down over Mongolia while attempting to flee to the Soviet Union in a Chinese Air Force jet. This has inspired three highly entertaining novels. The best is *The Chinese Assassin* (1978), written by former Reuters correspondent Anthony Grey, who himself spent two years in Chinese prisons during the Cultural Revolution. Another two are *Goodbye Chairman Mao* (1979) by Christopher New and *The Confucius Enigma* (1982) by Margaret Jones.

Chinese intrigue in the inner circles of the Communist leadership brings us to the Machiavellian conspiracies of the "Gang of Four" and Comrade Jiang Qing, in such titles as *The Peking Mandate* (1983) by Peter Siris.

#### Korea—Keeping a Low Profile

The Korean War and its aftermath produced few notable works of fiction. The most successful was the story of a U.S. soldier who was decorated with the Medal of Honor for supposed gallantry in action. What really happened was that Raymond Shaw fell

into the hands of the Reds and was transformed into a human time bomb. Richard Condon's bestseller *The Manchurian Candidate* (1959) is a biting satire both on Communist brainwashing techniques and U.S. politics—but who is to say that such an incident never really happened?

Again, who knows the *real* story behind the 1979 assassination of President Park Chung-hee of South Korea? There's a lot more to the facts than you read in the papers, especially in Steve Shagan's disturbing novel *The Circle* (1982). After the KAL flight 007 incident last September, one can't help but wonder when a good novel about that puzzling affair will appear.

#### Traditional Asia in Fiction

Asian history abounds with mysterious legends and unknown places. For instance, what catastrophe caused the ancient Khmers to abandon their magnificent capital of Angkor Wat? Then there's the still-undiscovered site of the legendary Mongol capital of Korakorum—said to contain all the booty the Mongols looted during their centuries of conquests. On another tangent, Sinologist-author Robert van Gulik found grist for his fiction mill by weaving a story about a popular Chinaware illustration, the Willow Pattern, in a Judge Dee novel of the same title. The actual Willow Pattern design is said to have come from England—but stands as another mystery of sorts as no one has been able to place the exact origin.

#### Stranger Than Fiction

Finally, because we are on the subject of mysteries, I would like to mention two fascinating works of nonfiction, both of which were published in 1955. The first is *The Man with Three Faces* by Hans-Otto Meissner, the story of Soviet master spy Richard Sorge. Posing as a German newsman in Tokyo from the mid-1930s onward, Sorge and his spy ring sent information back to Moscow (such as Japan's decision not to open a second front against the Russians in the Far East) which may very well have turned the tide of the war. Some even say, although there is no proof, that Sorge also informed Stalin of Japan's plans to attack Pearl Harbor. Although officially reported as having been executed by Japanese authorities, rumors persisted that Sorge was kept alive as a bargaining chip and survived the war, only to be later executed by Stalin.

Lastly, former military intelligence man Kurt Singer's excellent work, *Spy Stories from Asia* is to be highly recommended. Containing factual and entertaining accounts of incidents and agents from Manchuria to Singapore, this book provides ample proof that the most fascinating mysteries of Asia are often the true ones. □



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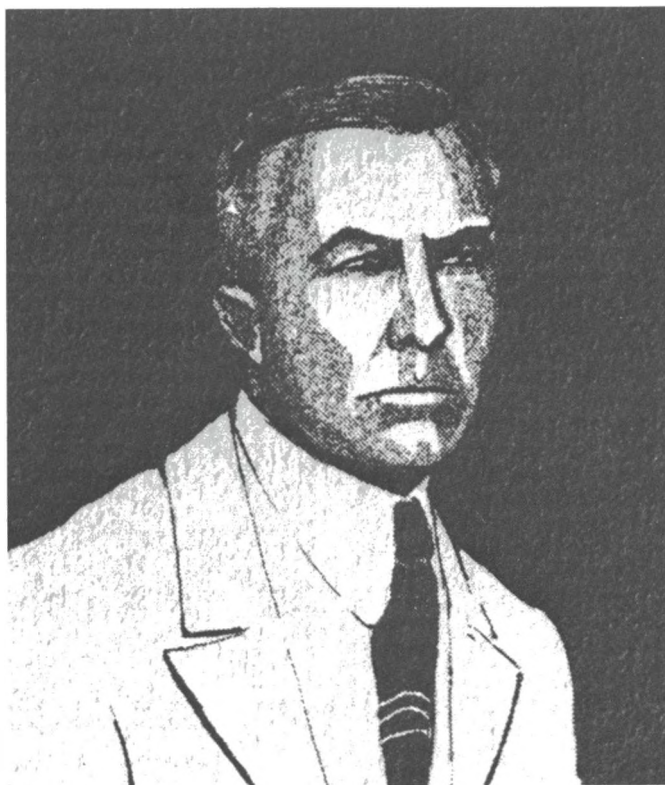
# COLLECTING MYSTERY FICTION

MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

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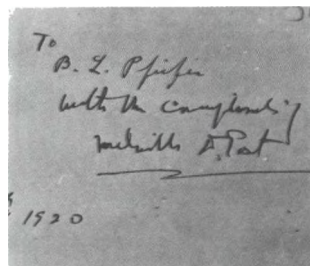
By Otto Penzler



Much like music, painting, film, drama and other art forms, literature is subject to ebbs and flows of public opinion, sometimes shifting from tidal waves of enthusiasm to low water levels of contempt or indifference. Mystery fiction, as one of the many forms that literature can take, seems to be less volatile in its range, but is nonetheless far from predictable.

Today, it is difficult to remember that Anna Katharine Green and Mary Roberts Rinehart were once the most popular mystery writers in America, and that Edgar Wallace enjoyed such enormous success in England that, for more than a decade, it was reported that one out of every four books sold in Great Britain had been written by him.

Times change, tastes change, styles change, and today's brightest star may slowly, or sometimes very quickly, fade into oblivion. It is hoped that the finest writers will survive and be read in their own time and in the future, since their prose and their ideas possess a timelessness that will keep the work vital and appropriate forever. While it is not



universally true, it is reasonable to suggest that the writers for the ages are not necessarily the most successful writers of their own time. But, as time proceeds and historical context benefits from hindsight, the cream rises and stays in clear view, while the lesser works slowly slip into the mists of time.

It's not a bad system but it occasionally breaks down. Sometimes, inexplicably, a superb writer receives acclaim in his own day and becomes less and less read with each succeeding decade.

No matter that critics continue to hold high that unfortunate author's banner, or that publishers persist in issuing (unsuccessfully) new editions of his work. No matter that the work continues to vibrate with strength and originality and intelligence. Further and further into oblivion falls the unhappy author, until there is hardly anyone left to sing his praise.

It has not quite come to that yet for Melville Davison Post, but the reputation certainly seems to be dimming. And that is a tragedy, as few authors had the extraordinary ability to write such exquisitely crafted short stories as he. His characters were unique to their time and still muscle their way into our memories.

Post is best remembered, if at all, for his stories about Uncle Abner, the towering figure of backwoods justice in the Virginia hills during the decades preceding the Civil War. Abner, although without official status as a keeper of peace and administrator of justice, regards it as his duty to act on God's behalf in those situations that require his wisdom and integrity.

Ellery Queen often wrote that the collected tales of this heroic figure, *Uncle Abner*, is second only to Poe's *Tales* among all the books of detective short stories written by an American. It would be a difficult statement to refute. Post created or refined several important elements in these brilliant stories. Abner is the first historically significant non-detective who detects, and the first of note to eschew the ploddings of the law to administer justice himself. Perhaps of greatest interest is that Abner did not rely exclusively on physical clues or technical breakdowns of alibis to find the evil-doer; he investigated human character, found flaws in the spiritual make-up of a suspect, and was able to identify the culprits in a manner previously unknown to detective literature.

In Randolph Mason, Post created one of the first and greatest of rogues in mystery fiction. His adventures mark the creation of a totally new kind of crime story. In the past, as in most traditional forms of detective fiction, even to the present day, criminals had concerned themselves with eluding capture. In the Randolph Mason stories, the paramount factor is avoiding punishment.

Mason is an unscrupulous lawyer who recognizes that justice and the law are often unrelated, so he advises his clients to conduct their affairs in a manner that will elude the arms of the law. In one instance, he informed a client that the only solution to his problem was for him to murder his wife.

In his introduction to *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason*, the first book about the lawyer who later gave his name to Erle Stanley Gardner's more famous criminal lawyer, Perry Mason, Post wrote: "The law provides a Procrustean standard for all crimes. Thus a wrong, to become criminal, must fit exactly into the measure laid down by the law, else it is no crime; if it varies never so little from the legal measure, the law must, and will, refuse to regard it as criminal, no matter how injurious a wrong it may be. There is no measure of morality, or equity, or common right that can be applied to the criminal case."

Mason once described his philosophy, which is a monument to amorality: "No man who has followed my advice has committed a crime. Crime is a technical word. It is the law's term for certain acts which it is pleased to define and punish with a penalty. What the law permits is right, else it would prohibit it. What the law prohibits is wrong, because it punishes it. The word moral is a purely metaphysical one."

While criticized for faulty construction, the Randolph Mason stories were terrifically powerful in their time, on occasion resulting in badly needed changes in the law. In concept, as well as stylistically, they remain as shocking and memorable today as when they were written—nearly ninety years ago.

While Post is generally discussed as a mystery writer, the fact is that much of his work has little or no trace of mystery. Charles A. Norton, Post's biographer, regards the short novel, *Dwellers in the Hills*, a story about a boy and a horse, as a masterpiece, and some of the tales in *The Nameless Thing* have been praised by students of fantastic fiction. Even some of the most obviously titled volumes of mystery stories have many stories with no elements of mystery or detection. This article will restrict itself to a description of his volumes of mystery, crime and detection.

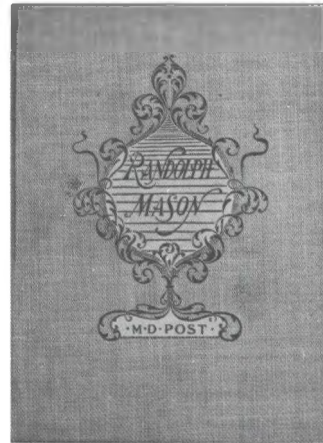
Virtually all of Post's early works are extremely scarce, and downright rare in fine condition. One copy, and one copy only, of *Uncle Abner* is known in dust jacket (illustrated here for the first time), even though it was not an early title in Post's canon and was instantly recognized as his masterpiece. The first two Randolph Mason volumes appeared simultaneously in paper covers and in cloth, and very few copies appear in true collector's condition. I have yet to see a copy of *The Nameless Thing* in dust jacket, although it was certainly issued in one. No copies of the first two Mason books have been recorded in dust jacket, but it is likely that they, too, were issued with them.

Post does not appear to have inscribed many copies of his books, with the possible exception of two non-mysteries, *The Revolt of the Birds*, a fable, and *The Mountain School-Teacher*, a reconstruction of the life of Christ, of which several autographed and inscribed copies have been seen.

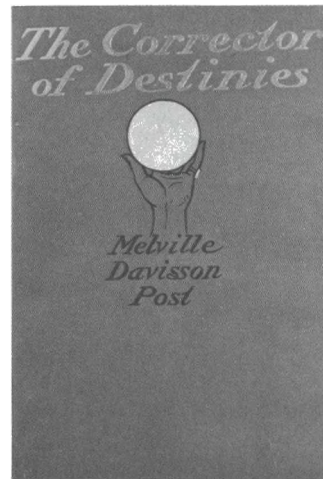
In relation to their scarcity, the books by Post are inexpensive. While it is likely to be a tortuously slow process to find collector's

copies of the majority of his works, this is not a bad time to attempt to compile a collection. One must believe that the extraordinarily high quality of Post's fiction will assure him a secure place in the history of American detective fiction, and that his star will once again shine a little more brightly than it does at the present.

For a greater examination of the life and



work of this neglected author, refer to Charles A. Norton's *Melville Davison Post: Man of Many Mysteries*, Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973. The complete list of Post's periodical appearances (of fiction), which appears at the end of this



article, is taken from Norton's important work.

Post's non-mystery books are beyond the scope of this article but are listed herewith for those interested:

*Dwellers in the Hills*: New York, Putnam, 1901.

*The Gilded Chair*: New York, Appleton, 1910.

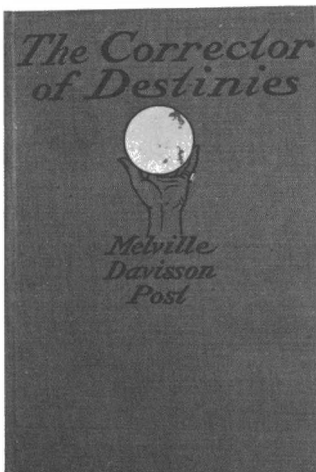
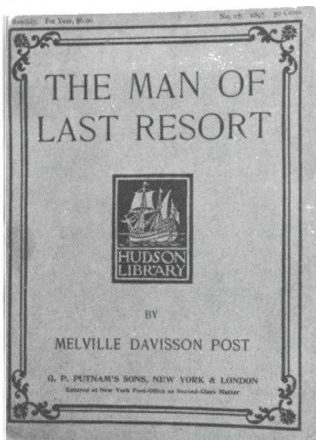
*The Mountain School-Teacher*: New York, Appleton, 1922.

*The Man Hunters*: New York, Sears, 1926 (non-fiction).

*The Revolt of the Birds*: New York, Appleton, 1927.

#### The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason

*First Edition*: New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896. Natural buckram, front cover printed with green lettering and highly ornamental design, partially printed on a white background; spine printed with green



lettering and one small ornament; rear cover blank. Also issued in tan-yellow printed wrappers.

*Note*: There is no priority between the issues in cloth and in wrappers, and they seem to be of approximately equal rarity.

*The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason*

was selected by Ellery Queen for inclusion in *Queen's Quorum*—a list of the 125 most important books in the history of crime fiction.

Since no copies of the dust jacket have been recorded it would be folly to attempt to assign values to a copy with one. Should it appear on the market, its estimated retail value would be . . . plenty.

<i>Estimated retail value:</i>	<i>Cloth</i>	<i>Wrappers</i>
Good	\$ 75.00	\$ 75.00
Fine	200.00	200.00
Very fine	300.00	300.00

#### The Man of Last Resort; Or, The Clients of Randolph Mason

*First Edition*: New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897. Natural buckram, similar to above volume. Also issued in tan-yellow printed wrappers.

*Note*: There is no priority between the issues in cloth and in wrappers, and they seem to be of approximately equal rarity.

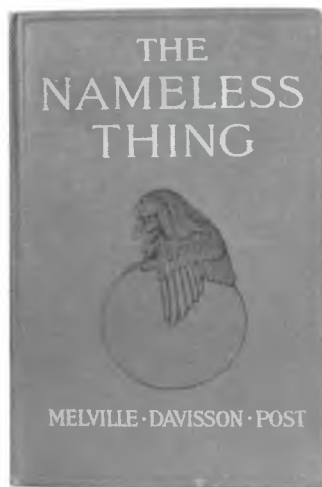
Like the author's first book, this is a collection of short stories without prior publication in periodical form.

No copies of this book have been reported in dust jacket.

<i>Estimated retail value:</i>	<i>Cloth</i>	<i>Wrappers</i>
Good	\$ 35.00	\$ 35.00
Fine	150.00	150.00
Very fine	200.00	200.00

#### The Corrector of Destinies: Being Tales of Randolph Mason as Related By His Private Secretary, Courlandt Parks

*First Edition*: New York, Edward J. Clode, (1908). Red cloth, front cover stamped in gold lettering, a white ball, and black lettering and illustration; spine printed with black lettering and illustration and stamped with white ball; rear cover blank.



No copies of this book have been reported in dust jacket.

Peculiar in format, *The Corrector of Destinies* employs the free front end paper as a half-title; the first page following the end paper is the title page.

There are two states of the bindings, the one described above almost certainly having priority. The red cloth on this presumed first state is smooth. The presumed second state cloth has a linen-textured finish and has no gold stamping on the front cover. The presumed second state binding has the title printed in black on the front cover, while it is gold on the earlier state. The gold-stamped binding is clearly more elaborate and expensive and is therefore presumed to be the first state; the less elaborate and cheaper binding is, in all likelihood, a later, possibly remainder, binding.

*The Corrector of Destinies* contains the following stories (listed with their first magazine appearances):

"My Friend at Bridge" (*Pearson's*, Feb. 1907)

"Madame Versay" (*Pearson's*, March 1907)

"The Burgoyne-Hayes Dinner" (*Pearson's*, April 1907)

"The Copper Bonds" (*Pearson's*, May 1907)

"The District-Attorney" (*Pearson's*, June 1907)

"The Interrupted Exile" (*Pearson's*, July & Aug. 1907)

"The Last Check" (*Pearson's*, Sept. 1907)

"The Life Tenant" (*Pearson's*, Oct. 1907)

"The Pennsylvania Pirate" (*Pearson's*, Nov. 1907)

"The Virgin of the Mountain" (*Pearson's*, Dec. 1907 & Jan. 1908)

"An Adventure of St. Valentine's Night" (*Pearson's*, Feb. 1908)

"The Danseuse" (*Pearson's*, March 1908)

"The Intriguer" (*Pearson's*, April & May, 1908)

<i>Estimated retail value:</i>	<i>First State</i>	<i>Second State</i>
Good	\$ 20.00	\$10.00
Fine	75.00	25.00
Very fine	100.00	35.00

#### The Nameless Thing

*First Edition*: New York, D. Appleton, 1912. Brown cloth, front cover stamped with white lettering and blind rule border, also printed with black illustration; spine stamped with white lettering and rule; rear cover blank.

*Note*: On the last page of text (unnumbered page 338), the numeral "1" must appear in parentheses, else the book is not a first edition. Later printings have numbers "2" and "3" and possibly more to indicate the printing. The text is followed by two pages (a single leaf) of advertising matter.

No copies of this book have been reported in dust jacket.

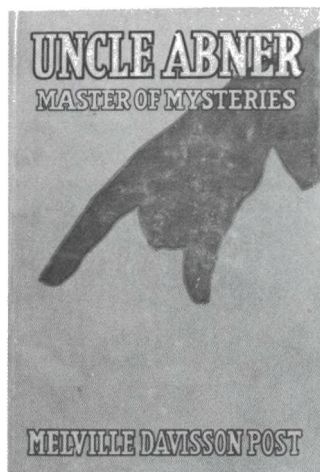
*The Nameless Thing* is a short story collection effectively disguised as a novel. New material written especially for its book publication sets a framework for several

short stories that had been previously published in magazines. The stories collected herein, together with their original appearances, are listed below:

- "The Trivial Incident" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Dec. 19, 1908)
- "No Defense" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Aug. 13, 1910)
- "A Critique of Monsieur Poe" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Dec. 31, 1910)
- "The Locked Bag" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 4, 1911)
- "After He Was Dead" (*Atlantic*, April 1911)
- "The Fairy Godmother" (*Saturday Evening Post*, April 15, 1911)
- "The Nameless Thing" (*Saturday Evening Post*, July 8, 1911)
- "The Sport of Fortune" (*Harper's Monthly*, Oct. 1911)
- "The Pressure" (*Metropolitan*, Feb. 1912)
- "The Thief" (*Popular Magazine*, Feb. 15, 1912)

Estimated retail value:

Good	\$ 35.00
Fine	125.00
Very fine	175.00



**Uncle Abner, Master of Mysteries**

*First Edition:* New York, D. Appleton, 1918. Blue cloth, front cover stamped with gold lettering and rules, blind-stamped single-rule border; spine stamped with gold lettering and rules; rear cover blank. Issued in a mainly yellow pictorial dust wrapper.

*Note:* On the last page of text (unnumbered page 343), the numeral "1" must appear in parentheses, else the book is not a first printing. Later printings have numbers "2" and "3" and possibly more to indicate the printing.

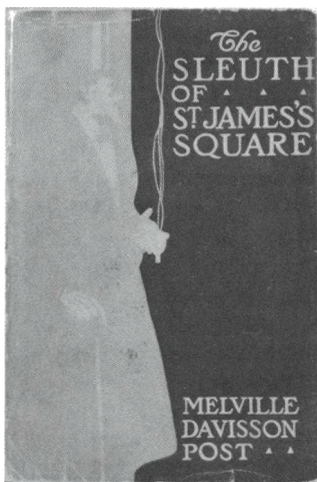
*Uncle Abner* is one of the few volumes to be selected for both *Queen's Quorum* and the Haycraft-Queen Cornerstone Library.

The short stories that make up *Uncle Abner* are listed below in the order in which

they appear in the collection, although the order in which they appeared in periodical form is substantially different.

- "The Doomdorf Mystery" (*Saturday Evening Post*, July 18, 1914)
- "The Wrong Hand" (*Saturday Evening Post*, July 15, 1911)
- "The Angel of the Lord" (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 3, 1911, under the title: "The Broken Stirrup-Leather")
- "An Act of God" (*Metropolitan*, Dec. 1913)
- "The Treasure Hunter" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Aug. 14, 1915)
- "The House of the Dead Man" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Sept. 30, 1911)
- "A Twilight Adventure" (*Metropolitan*, April 1914)
- "The Age of Miracles" (*Pictorial Review*, Feb. 1916)
- "The Tenth Commandment" (*Saturday Evening Post*, March 2, 1912)
- "The Devil's Tools" (original publication not located)
- "The Hidden Law" (*Metropolitan*, Aug. 1914)
- "The Riddle" (*Metropolitan*, Sept. 1912)
- "The Straw Man" (original publication not located)
- "The Mystery of Chance" (original publication not located)
- "The Concealed Path" (original publication not located)
- "The Edge of the Shadow" (original publication not located)
- "The Adopted Daughter" (*Red Book*, June 1916)
- "Naboth's Vineyard" (*Illustrated Sunday Magazine*, June 4, 1916)

Estimated retail value	with d/w	without d/w
Good	\$ 800.00	\$ 50.00
Fine	2000.00	225.00
Very fine	2500.00	275.00



**The Mystery at the Blue Villa**

*First Edition:* New York, D. Appleton, 1919. Blue cloth, front cover stamped with gold lettering and rules, blind-stamped with single-rule border; spine stamped with gold lettering and rules; rear cover blank. Issued in a printed dust wrapper.

*Note:* On the last page of text (unnumbered page 383), the numeral "1" must appear in parentheses, else the book is not a first edition. Later printings have numerals "2" and "3" and possibly more to indicate the printing.

The short stories collected in *The Mystery at the Blue Villa* are listed in the order in which they appear in the book, although the order in which they appeared in periodical form is substantially different.

- "The Mystery at the Blue Villa" (*Pictorial Review*, Oct. 1916)
- "The New Administration" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Nov. 20, 1915)
- "The Great Legend" (*Saturday Evening Post*, June 10, 1916)
- "The Laughter of Allah" (*Pictorial Review*, July 1915)
- "The Stolen Life" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Jan. 17, 1914)
- "The Girl from Galacia" (*Ladies Home Journal*, May 1916, under the title: "Some Girl")
- "The Pacifist" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Dec. 29, 1917)
- "The Sleuth of the Stars" (*Saturday Evening Post*, March 4, 1916)
- "The Witch of the Lecca" (*Hearst's Magazine*, Jan. 1917)
- "The Miller of Ostend" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Oct. 31, 1914)
- "The Girl in the Villa" (*Hearst's Magazine*, April 1918)
- "The Ally" (*Saturday Evening Post*, July 10, 1915)
- "Lord Winton's Adventure" (*Hearst's Magazine*, June 1917)
- "The Wage-Earners" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Sept. 1, 1917)
- "The Sunburned Lady" (*Hearst's Magazine*, Dec. 1918)
- "The Baron Starkheim" (*Collier's Weekly*, Aug. 12, 1916)
- "Behind the Stars" (*Ladies Home Journal*, Aug. 1918, under the title: "Against the Sky of the Theater")

Estimated retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Good	\$ 75.00	\$15.00
Fine	225.00	35.00
Very fine	300.00	50.00

**The Sleuth of St. James's Square**

*First Edition:* New York, D. Appleton, 1920. Green cloth, front cover printed with dark green so that lettering drops out and in pale yellow illustration; spine printed with dark green lettering and wave rule; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

*Note:* On the last page of text (unnumbered page 338), the numeral "1" must appear in parentheses, else the book is not a first edition. Later printings have numerals "2" and "3" and possibly more to indicate the printing.

The short stories collected in *The Sleuth of St. James's Square* are listed in the order in which they appear in the book, although the order in which they appeared in periodical form is substantially different.



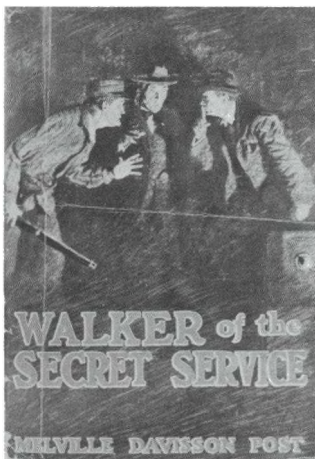
- "The Thing on the Hearth" (*Red Book*, May 1919)
- "The Reward" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 15, 1919, under the title: "Five Thousand Dollars Reward")
- "The Lost Lady" (*McCall's Magazine*, June 1920)
- "The Cambered Foot" (*Ladies Home Journal*, Nov. 1916, under the title: "The Man from America")
- "The Man in the Green Hat" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 27, 1915)
- "The Wrong Sign" (*Hearst's Magazine*, April 1916, under the title: "The Witness of the Earth"); for its book appearance, new material was added.
- "The Fortune Teller" (*Red Book*, Aug. 1918)
- "The Hole in the Mahogany Panel" (*Ladies Home Journal*, April 1916)
- "The End of the Road" (*Hearst's Magazine*, Nov. 1921)
- "The Last Adventure" (*Hearst's Magazine*, Sept. 1921)
- "American Horses" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Dec. 23, 1916)
- "The Spread Rails" (*Hearst's Magazine*, Jan. 1916)
- "The Pumpkin Coach" (*Hearst's Magazine*, Oct. 1916)
- "The Yellow Flower" (*Pictorial Review*, Oct. 1919)
- "A Satire of the Sea" (*Hearst's Magazine*, Feb. 1918)
- "The House by the Loch" (*Hearst's Magazine*, May 1920)

<i>Estimated retail value:</i>	<i>with d/w</i>	<i>without d/w</i>
Good	\$ 75.00	\$15.00
Fine	225.00	35.00
Very fine	300.00	50.00

### Monsieur Jonquelle, Prefect of Police of Paris

*First Edition:* New York, D. Appleton, 1923. Orange cloth, front cover and spine printed in black so that lettering and rules drop out; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

*Note:* On the last page of text (unnumbered page 287), the numeral "1" must appear in parentheses, else the book is not a first printing. Later printings have numerals "2" or "3" or possibly more to indicate the printing.



There are two issues of the first printing. In the first issue, pages 62 and 63 are reversed, being printed in incorrect sequence. In the second issue, pages 61-62 and 63-64 are inserted on stubs, correcting the page sequence. The second issue is slightly more common than the first. The two issues appear to be identical in all other respects, including the two pages of advertisements (one leaf) which follow the last page of text.

The short stories collected in *Monsieur Jonquelle* are listed in the order in which they appear in the book, although the order in which they appeared in periodical form is substantially different.

- "The Great Cipher" (*Red Book*, Nov. 1921)
- "Found in the Fog" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Sept. 13, 1913)
- "The Alien Corn" (*Saturday Evening Post*, May 31, 1913)
- "The Ruined Eye" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Oct. 11, 1913)
- "The Haunted Door" (*Saturday Evening Post*, Aug. 30, 1913)
- "Blucher's March" (original appearance not located)
- "The Woman on the Terrace" (*Pictorial Review*, March 1922)
- "The Triangular Hypothesis" (*Red Book*, Oct. 1921)

"The Problem of the Five Marks" (*Woman's Home Companion*, Dec. 1922)

"The Man with Steel Fingers" (*Red Book*, Sept. 1921)

"The Mottled Butterfly" (*Red Book*, Aug. 1921)

"The Girl with the Ruby" (*Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1918)

<i>Estimated retail value:</i>	<i>with d/w</i>	<i>without d/w</i>
Good	\$ 50.00	\$10.00
Fine	150.00	25.00
Very fine	200.00	35.00

### Walker of the Secret Service

*First Edition:* New York, D. Appleton, 1924. Orange cloth, front cover and spine printed in black so that lettering and rules drop out; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

*Note:* On the last page of text (unnumbered page 288), the numeral "1" must appear in parentheses, else the book is not a first printing. Later printings have numerals "2" or "3" or possibly more to indicate the printing.

"The Outlaw" (original appearance not located)

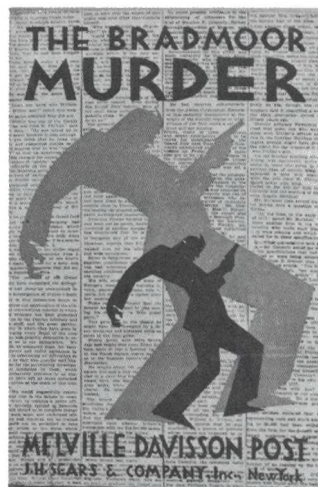
"The Holdup" (original appearance not located)

"The Bloodhounds" (original appearance not located)

"The Secret Agent" (original appearance not located)

"The Big Haul" (original appearance not located)

"The Passing of Mooney" (original appearance not located)



"The Diamond" (*Red Book*, June 1922)

"The Expert Detective" (*Everybody's*, Oct. 1920)

"The 'Mysterious Stranger' Defense" (*Everybody's*, June 1921)

- "The Inspiration" (*Red Book*, Dec. 1921)  
 "The Girl in the Picture" (*Pictorial Review*, Jan. 1921)  
 "The Menace" (*Hearst's Magazine*, Dec. 1920, under the title: "The Man Who Threatened the World")



- "The Symbol" (*McCall's Magazine*, Dec. 1923, under the title: "The Great Symbol")

Estimated retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Good	\$ 50.00	\$10.00
Fine	150.00	20.00
Very fine	200.00	30.00

**The Bradmoor Murder: Including the Remarkable Deductions of Sir Henry Marquis of Scotland Yard**

*First Edition:* New York, J. H. Sears, (1929). Grey cloth front cover and spine printed with bright red lettering, spine also printed with small ornament; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

*Note:* Published in England, with same contents but in different sequence, as *The Garden of Asia*, in London by Brentano's in 1929.

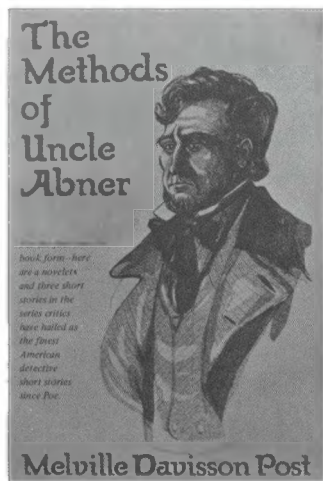
The short stories that make up *The Bradmoor Murder* are listed below in the order in which they appear in the book, although the order in which they appeared in periodical form is substantially different.

- "The Bradmoor Murder" (original appearance not located)
- "The Blackmailer" (*Harper's Bazaar*, March 1924)
- "The Cuneiform Inscription" (*Pictorial Review*, Dec. 1922)
- "The Hole in the Glass" (*Woman's Home Companion*, July 1923)
- "The Phantom Woman" (*Woman's Home Companion*, Aug. 1923)
- "The Stolen Treasure" (*Ladies' Home Journal*, June 1927)
- "The Garden in Asia" (*Collier's Weekly*, Jan. 29, 1927)

Estimated retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Good	\$ 50.00	\$10.00
Fine	\$125.00	20.00
Very fine	175.00	25.00

**The Silent Witness**

*First Edition:* New York, Farrar & Rinehart, (1930). Black cloth, front cover and spine printed with red lettering, small square also printed on spine; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.



*Note:* The Farrar & Rinehart monogram must appear on the copyright page, else the book is not a first printing.

The short stories that make up *The Silent Witness* are listed below in the order in which they appear in the book, although the order in which they appeared in periodical form is substantially different.

- "The Metal Box" (*American Magazine*, Nov. 1929, under the title: "The Witness in the Metal Box")
- "The Dead Man's Shoes" (*American Magazine*, June 1929)
- "The Invisible Client" (*American Magazine*, Dec. 1926)
- "The Survivor" (*American Magazine*, Oct. 1926)
- "The Guardian" (*American Magazine*, April 1928, under the title: "Colonel Braxton Chooses a Client")
- "The Cross-Examination" (*American Magazine*, Sept. 1926, under the title: "The Forgotten Witness")
- "The Heir at Law" (*American Magazine*, Feb. 1927)
- "The Guilty Man" (*American Magazine*, Sept. 1929)
- "The Mark on the Window" (*American Magazine*, April 1929)
- "The Vanished Man" (*American Magazine*, Feb. 1929)
- "The Mute Voices" (*American Magazine*,

- Sept. 1928, under the title: "Colonel Braxton Hears the Silent Voices")
- "The Leading Case" (*American Magazine*, June 1927)
- "The White Patch" (*American Magazine*, Sept. 1930)

Estimated retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Good	\$ 35.00	\$10.00
Fine	100.00	15.00
Very fine	150.00	20.00

**The Methods of Uncle Abner**

*First Edition:* Boulder, Col., The Aspen Press, 1974. Brown cloth, spine stamped with gold lettering; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

*Note:* The first appearance in book form of the four previously uncollected Uncle Abner stories, this edition was limited to 1,500 copies.

The short stories that make up *The Methods of Uncle Abner* are listed below in the order in which they appear in the book, although the order in which they appeared in periodical form is substantially different.

- "The Mystery at Hillhouse" (*Country Gentleman*, May 1928)
- "The God of the Hills" (*Country Gentleman*, Sept. 1927)
- "The Dark Night" (*Country Gentleman*, Nov. 1927)
- "The Devil's Track" (*Country Gentleman*, July 1927)

Estimated retail value: A very fine copy in dust wrapper may still be had for \$10 or less; there is no excuse for a collector to acquire a lesser copy.

The stories in *Uncle Abner, Master of Mysteries* and in *The Methods of Uncle Abner* were collected in *The Complete Uncle Abner*, published by University Extension, University of California, San Diego, with Publisher's Inc., Del Mar, Cal., in 1977. The volume also contained an introduction and annotated bibliography by Allen J. Hubin and additional material by Charles A. Norton, Post, Anthony Boucher and Grant Overton.

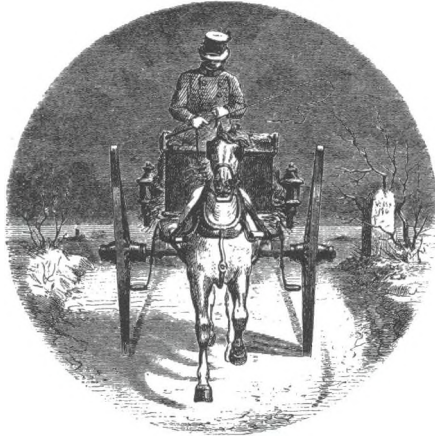
Listed below is the fiction of Melville Davisson Post that has appeared only in periodical form, remaining uncollected to this day.

- "The Ventures of Mr. Clayvarden" (*The Law Student's Helper*, Feb. 1898)
- "The Plan of Malcolm Van Smaak" (*The Law Student's Helper*, April 1898)
- "A Test Case" (*Pearson's Magazine*, Jan. 1907)
- "The Marriage Contract" (*Pearson's Magazine*, June 1908)
- "The Unknown Disciple" (*Pictorial Review*, Dec. 1920)
- "The Laughing Woman" (*Red Book*, Feb. 1923)
- "The Miracle" (*Pictorial Review*, Dec. 1924)
- "The Other Mary" (*Ladies' Home Journal*, May 1926)
- "The Mystery at the Mill" (*American Magazine*, Aug. 1929) □

# Classic Corner

## Rare Tales from the Archives

By William Austin



PETER RUGG:  
THE MISSING MAN

In the long history of American detective fiction, there have been scores—no, hundreds, or perhaps thousands—of books that have been on the best-seller lists. *Peter Rugg: The Missing Man* is often regarded as the first to enjoy that position, having achieved great success on its original publication in 1824.

William Austin, the author, was a lawyer who produced only two more works, both short, and is unremembered today. Born in Massachusetts, he attended Harvard, where he was a classmate of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's father, Stephen.

He retired from his law practice at the age of 46 to write *Peter Rugg*, and two years later wrote the relatively short sequel which will appear in the next issue of TAD. It is entitled the *Further Account of Peter Rugg* and bears the byline Jonathan Dunwell.

The Peter Rugg stories are said to have had a profound effect on Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was a student at Bowdoin College when the book was a great success, and it is not difficult to see those influences in Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales*, for example.

In spite of its huge success, the first edition of *Peter Rugg: The Missing Man* is extremely rare, its presence being unknown to the virtually infallible Allen J. Hubin. In his *Crime Fiction* bibliography, he lists no edition until the Rice printing of 1882. It was reprinted as a Christmas keepsake by the Comet Press in 1948 with a brief introduction, which provided much of the above information.

—OTTO PENZLER

Peter Rugg:

# The Missing Man

## Part I

PETER RUGG:  
THE MISSING MAN

SIR,—Agreeably to my promise, I now relate to you all the particulars of the lost man and child which I have been able to collect. It is entirely owing to the humane interest you seemed to take in the report, that I have pursued the inquiry to the following results.

You may remember that business called me to Boston in the summer of 1820. I sailed in the packet to Providence, and when I arrived there I learned that every seat in the stage was engaged. I was thus obliged either to wait a few hours or accept a seat with the driver, who civilly offered me that accommodation. Accordingly, I took my seat by his side, and soon found him intelligent and communicative. When we had travelled about ten miles, the horses suddenly threw their ears on their necks, as flat as a hare's. Said the driver, "Have you a surtout with you?"

"No," said I; "why do you ask?"

"You will want one soon," said he. "Do you observe the ears of all the horses?"

"Yes; and was just about to ask the reason."

"They see the storm-breeder, and we shall see him soon."

At this moment there was not a cloud visible in the firmament. Soon after, a small speck appeared in the road.

"There," said my companion, "comes the storm-breeder. He always leaves a Scotch mist behind him. By many a wet jacket do I remember him. I suppose the poor fellow suffers much himself—much more than is known to the world."

Presently a man with a child beside him, with a large black horse, and a weather-beaten chair, once built for a *chaise-body*, passed in great haste, apparently at the rate of twelve miles an hour. He seemed to grasp the reins of his horse with firmness, and appeared to anticipate his speed. He seemed dejected, and looked anxiously at the passengers, particularly at the stage-driver and myself. In a moment after he passed us, the horses' ears were up, and bent themselves forward so that they nearly met.

"Who is that man?" said I. "He seems in great trouble."



"Nobody knows who he is, but his person and the child are familiar to me. I have met him more than a hundred times, and have been so often asked the way to Boston by that man, even when he was travelling directly from that town, that of late I have refused any communication with him; and that is the reason he gave me such a fixed look."

"But does he never stop anywhere?"

"I have never known him to stop anywhere longer than to inquire the way to Boston; and let him be where he may, he will tell you he cannot stay a moment, for he must reach Boston that night."

We were now ascending a high hill in Walpole; and as we had a fair view of the heavens, I was rather disposed to jeer the driver for thinking of his surtout, as not a cloud as big as a marble could be discerned.

"Do you look," said he, "in the direction whence the man came; that is the place to look. The storm never meets him; it follows him."

We presently approached another hill; and when at the height, the driver pointed out in an eastern direction a little black speck about as big as a hat. "There," said he, "is the seed-storm. We may possibly reach Polley's before it reaches us, but the wanderer and his child will go to Providence through rain, thunder, and lightning."

And now the horses, as though taught by instinct, hastened with increased speed. The little black cloud came on rolling over the turnpike, and doubled and trebled itself in all directions. The appearance of this cloud attracted the notice of all the passengers, for after it had spread itself to a great bulk it suddenly became more limited in circumference, grew more compact, dark, and consolidated. And now the successive flashes of chain lightning caused the whole cloud to appear like a sort of irregular network, and displayed a thousand fantastic images. The driver bespoke my attention to a remarkable configuration in the cloud. He said every flash of lightning near its centre discovered to him, distinctly, the form of a man sitting in an open carriage drawn by a black horse. But in truth I saw no such thing; the man's fancy was doubtless at fault. It is a very common thing for the imagination to paint for the senses, both in the visible and invisible world.

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In the meantime the distant thunder gave notice of a shower at hand; and just as we reached Polley's tavern the rain poured down in torrents. It was soon over, the cloud passing in the direction of the turnpike toward Providence. In a few moments after, a respectable-looking man in a chaise stopped at the door. The man and child in the chair having excited some sympathy among the passengers, the gentleman was asked if he had observed them. He said that he had met them; that the man seemed bewildered, and inquired the way to Boston; that he was driving at great speed, as though he expected to outstrip the tempest; that the moment he had passed him, a thunderclap broke directly over the man's head, and seemed to envelop both man and child, horse and carriage. "I stopped," said the gentleman, "supposing the lightning had struck him; but the horse only seemed to loom up and increase his speed; and as well as I could judge, he travelled just as fast as the thunder-cloud."

While this man was speaking, a pedlar with a cart of tin merchandise came up, all dripping; and on being questioned, he said he had met that man and carriage, within a fortnight, in four different states; that at each time he had inquired the way to Boston; and that a thunder-shower like the present had each time deluged his wagon and his wares, setting his tin pots, etc., afloat, so that he had determined to get a marine insurance for the future. But that which excited his surprise most was the strange conduct of his horse, for long before he could distinguish the man in the chair his own horse stood still in the road, and flung back his ears. "In short," said the pedlar, "I wish never to see that man and horse again; they do not look to me as though they belonged to this world."

This was all I could learn at that time; and the occurrence soon after would have become with me "like one of those things which had never happened," had I not, as I stood recently on the door-step of Bennett's hotel in Hartford, heard a man say, "There goes Peter Rugg and his child! He looks wet and weary, and farther from Boston than ever." I was satisfied it was the same man I had seen more than three years before; for whoever has once seen Peter Rugg can never after be deceived as to his identity.

"Peter Rugg!" said I. "And who is Peter Rugg?"

"That," said the stranger, "is more than anyone can tell exactly. He is a famous traveller, held in light esteem by all innholders, for he never stops to eat, drink, or sleep. I wonder why the government does not employ him to carry the mail."

"Aye," said a bystander, "that is a thought bright only on one side; how long would it take in that case to send a letter to Boston? for Peter has already, to my knowledge, been more than twenty years travelling to that place."

"But," said I, "does the man never stop anywhere; does he never converse with anyone? I saw the same man more than three years since, near Providence, and I heard a strange story about him. Pray, sir, give me some account of this man."

"Sir," said the stranger, "those who know the most respecting that man say the least. I have heard it asserted that Heaven sometimes sets a mark on a man, either for judgment or a trial. Under which Peter Rugg now labours, I cannot say; therefore I am rather inclined to pity than to judge."

"You speak like a humane man," said I; "and if you have known him so long, I pray you will give me some account of him. Has his appearance much altered in that time?"

"Why, yes. He looks as though he never ate, drank, or slept; and his child looks older than himself, and he looks like time broken off from eternity, and anxious to gain a resting-place."

"And how does his horse look?" said I.

"As for his horse, he looks fatter and gayer, and shows more animation and courage than he did twenty years ago. The last time Rugg spoke to me he inquired how far it was to Boston. I told him just one hundred miles.

"'Why,' said he, 'how can you deceive me so? It is cruel to mislead a traveller. I have lost my way; pray direct me the nearest way to Boston.'

"I repeated, it was one hundred miles.

"'How can you say so?' said he. 'I was told last evening it was but fifty, and I have travelled all night.'

"'But,' said I, 'you are now travelling from Boston. You must turn back.'

"'Alas,' said he, 'it is all turn back! Boston shifts with the wind, and plays all around the compass. One man tells me it is to the east, another to the west; and the guide-posts too, they all point the wrong way.'

"'But will you not stop and rest?' said I. 'You seem wet and weary.'

"'Yes,' said he, 'it has been foul weather since I left home.'

"'Stop, then, and refresh yourself.'

"'I must not stop; I must reach home tonight, if possible; though I think you must be mistaken in the distance to Boston.'

"He then gave the reins to his horse, which he restrained with difficulty, and disappeared in a moment. A few days afterward I met the man a little this side of Claremont, winding around the hills in Unity, at the rate, I believe, of twelve miles an hour."

"Is Peter Rugg his real name, or has he accidentally gained that name?"

"I know not, but presume he will not deny his name; you can ask him—for see, he has

turned his horse, and is passing this way."

In a moment a dark-coloured, high spirited horse approached, and would have passed without stopping, but I had resolved to speak to Peter Rugg, or whoever the man might be. Accordingly I stepped into the street; and as the horse approached, I made a feint of stopping him. The man immediately reined in his horse. "Sir," said I, "may I be so bold as to inquire if you are not Mr. Rugg? For I think I have seen you before."

"My name is Peter Rugg," said he. "I have unfortunately lost my way; I am wet and weary, and will take it kindly of you to direct me to Boston."

"You live in Boston, do you; and in what street?"

"In Middle Street."

"When did you leave Boston?"

"I cannot tell precisely; it seems a considerable time."

"But how did you and your child become so wet? It has not rained here today."

"It has just rained a heavy shower up the river. But I shall not reach Boston tonight if I tarry. Would you advise me to take the old road or the turnpike?"

"Why, the old road is one hundred and seventeen miles, and the turnpike is ninety-seven."

"How can you say so? You impose on me; it is wrong to trifle with a traveller; you know it is but forty miles from Newburyport to Boston."

"But this is not Newburyport; this is Hartford."

"Do now deceive me, sir. Is not this town Newburyport, and the river that I have been following the Merrimack?"

"No, sir; this is Hartford, and the Connecticut river."

He wrung his hands and looked incredulous. "Have the rivers, too, changed their courses, as the cities have changed places? But see! The clouds are gathering in the south, and we shall have a rainy night. Ah, that fatal oath!"

He would tarry no longer; his impatient horse leaped off, his hind flanks rising like wings; he seemed to devour all before him, and to scorn all behind.

I had now, as I thought, discovered a clue to the history of Peter Rugg; and I determined, the next time my business called me to Boston, to make a further inquiry. Soon after, I was enabled to collect the following particulars from Mrs. Croft, an aged lady in Middle Street, who has resided in Boston during the last twenty years. Her narration is this:

Just at twilight last summer a person stopped at the door of the last Mrs. Rugg. Mrs. Croft on coming to the door perceived a stranger, with a child by his side, in an old weather-beaten carriage, with a black horse. The stranger asked for Mrs. Rugg, and was informed that Mrs. Rugg had died at a good old age, more than twenty years before this time.

The stranger replied, "How can you deceive me so? Do ask Mrs. Rugg to step to the door."

"Sir, I assure you Mrs. Rugg has not lived here these twenty years; no one lives here but myself, and my name is Betsy Croft."

The stranger paused, looked up and down the street, and said, "Though the paint is rather faded, this looks like my house."

"Yes," said the child, "that is the stone before the door that I used to sit on to eat my bread-and-milk."

"But," said the stranger, "it seems to be on the wrong side of the street. Indeed, everything here seems to be misplaced. The streets are all changed, the people are all changed, the town seems changed, and what is strangest of all, Catherine Rugg has

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deserted her husband and child. Pray," continued the stranger, "has John Foy come home from sea? He went a long voyage; he is my kinsman. If I could see him, he could give me some account of Mrs. Rugg."

"Sir," said Mrs. Croft, "I never heard of John Foy. Where did he live?"

"Just above here, in Orange-tree Lane."

"There is no such place in this neighbourhood."

"What do you tell me! Are the streets gone? Orange-tree Lane is at the head of Hanover Street, near Pemberton's Hill."

"There is no such lane now."

"Madam, you cannot be serious! But you doubtless know my brother, William Rugg. He lives in Royal Exchange Lane, near King Street."

"I know of no such lane; and I am sure there is no such street as King Street in this town."

"No such street as King Street! Why, woman, you mock me! You may as well tell me there is no King George. However, Madam, you see I am wet and weary, I must find a resting-place. I will go to Hart's tavern, near the market."

"Which market, sir? for you seem perplexed; we have several markets."

"You know there is but one market near the town clock."

"Oh, the old market; but no such person has kept there these twenty years."

Here the stranger seemed disconcerted, and uttered to himself quite audibly, "Strange mistake; how much this looks like the town of Boston! It certainly has a great resemblance to it; but I perceive my mistake now. Some other Mrs. Rugg, some other Middle Street. Then," said he, "madam, can you direct me to Boston?"

"Why, this is Boston, the city of Boston; I know of no other Boston."

"City of Boston it may be; but it is not the Boston where I live. I recollect now, I came over a bridge instead of a ferry. Pray, what bridge is that I just came over?"

"It is Charles River bridge."

"I perceive my mistake; there is a ferry between Boston and Charlestown; there is no bridge. Ah, I perceive my mistake. If I were in Boston my horse would carry me directly to my own door. But my horse shows by his impatience that he is in a strange place. Absurd, that I should have mistaken this place for the old town of Boston! It is a much finer city than the town of Boston. It has been built long since Boston. I fancy Boston must lie at a distance from this city, as the good woman seems so completely ignorant of it."

At these words his horse began to chafe, and strike the pavement with his forefeet. The stranger seemed a little bewildered, and said, "No home tonight"; and giving the reins to his horse, passed up the street, and she saw no more of him.

It was evident that the generation to which Peter Rugg belonged had passed away.

This was all the account of Peter Rugg I could obtain from Mrs. Croft; but she directed me to an elderly man, Mr. James Felt, who lived near her, and who had kept a record of the principal occurrences for the last fifty years. At my request she sent for him; and after I had related to him the object of my inquiry, Mr. Felt told me he had known Rugg in his youth, and that his disappearance had caused some surprise; but as it sometimes happens that men run away—sometimes to be rid of others, and sometimes to be rid of themselves—and Rugg took his child with him, and his own horse and chair, and as it did not appear that any creditors made a stir, the occurrence soon mingled itself in the stream of oblivion; and Rugg and his child, horse, and chair were soon forgotten.

"It is true," said Mr. Felt, "sundry stories grew out of Rugg's affair, whether true or false I cannot tell; but stranger things have happened in my day, without even a newspaper notice."

“Sir,” said I, “Peter Rugg is now living. I have lately seen Peter Rugg and his child, horse, and chair; therefore I pray you to relate to me all you know or ever heard of him.”

“Why, my friend,” said James Felt, “that Peter Rugg is now a living man, I will not deny; but that you have seen Peter Rugg and his child, is impossible, if you mean a small child; for Jenny Rugg, if living, must be at least—let me see—Boston massacre, 1770—Jenny Rugg was about ten years old. Why, sir, Jenny Rugg, if living, must be more than sixty years of age. That Peter Rugg is living, is highly probable, as he was only ten years older than myself, and I was only eighty last March; and I am as likely to live twenty years longer as any man.”

Here I perceived that Mr. Felt was in his dotage, and I despaired of gaining any intelligence from him on which I could depend.

I took my leave of Mrs. Croft, and proceeded to my lodgings at the Marlborough Hotel.

“If Peter Rugg,” thought I, “has been travelling since the Boston massacre, there is no reason why he should not travel to the end of time. If the present generation know little of him, the next will know less, and Peter and his child will have no hold on this world.”

In the course of the evening, I related my adventure in Middle Street.

“Ha,” said one of the company, smiling, “do you really think you have seen Peter Rugg? I have heard my grandfather speak of him, as though he seriously believed his own story.”

“Sir,” said I, “pray let us compare your grandfather’s story of Mr. Rugg with my own.”

“Peter Rugg, sir—if my grandfather was worthy of credit—once lived in Middle Street, in this city. He was a man in comfortable circumstances, had a wife and one daughter, and was generally esteemed for his sober life and manners. But unhappily, his temper, at times was altogether ungovernable, and then his language was terrible. In these fits of passion, if a door stood in his way, he would never do less than kick a panel through. He would sometimes throw his heels over his head, and come down on his feet, uttering oaths in a circle; and thus in a rage, he was the first who performed a somersault, and did what others have since learned to do for merriment and money. Once Rugg was seen to bite a tenpenny nail in halves. In those days everybody, both men and boys, wore wigs; and Peter, at these moments of violent passion, would become so profane that his wig would rise up from his head. Some said it was on account of his terrible language; others accounted for it in a more philosophical way, and said it was caused by the expansion of his scalp, as violent passion, we know, will swell the veins and expand the head. While these fits were on him, Rugg had no respect for heaven or earth. Except for his infirmity, all agreed that Rugg was a good sort of a man; for when his fits were over, nobody was so ready to commend a placid temper as Peter.

“One morning, late in autumn, Rugg, in his own chair, with a fine large bay horse, took his daughter and proceeded to Concord. On his return a violent storm overtook him. At dark he stopped in Menotomy, now West Cambridge, at the door of a Mr. Cutter, a friend of his, who urged him to tarry the night. On Rugg’s declining to stop, Mr. Cutter urged him vehemently, ‘Why, Mr. Rugg,’ said Cutter, ‘the storm is overwhelming you. The night is exceedingly dark. Your little daughter will perish. You are in an open chair, and the tempest is increasing.’ ‘Let the storm increase,’ said Rugg, with a fearful oath, ‘I will see home tonight, in spite of the last tempest, or may I never see home!’ At these words he gave his whip to his high-spirited horse and disappeared in a moment. But Peter Rugg did not reach home that night, nor the next; nor, when he became a missing man, could he ever be traced beyond Mr. Cutter’s, in Menotomy.

“For a long time after, on every dark and stormy night the wife of Peter Rugg would

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fancy she heard the crack of a whip, and the fleet tread of a horse, and the rattling of a carriage passing her door. The neighbours, too, heard the same noises, and some said they knew it was Rugg's horse; the tread on the pavement was perfectly familiar to them. This occurred so repeatedly that at length the neighbours watched with lanterns, and saw the real Peter Rugg, with his own horse and chair and the child sitting beside him, pass directly before his own door, his head turned towards his house, and himself making every effort to stop his horse, but in vain.

"The next day the friends of Mrs. Rugg exerted themselves to find her husband and child. They inquired at every public-house and stable in town; but it did not appear that Rugg made any stay in Boston. No one, after Rugg had passed his own door, could give any account of him, though it was asserted by some that the clatter of Rugg's horse and carriage over the pavements shook the houses on both sides of the streets. And this is credible, if indeed Rugg's horse and carriage did pass on that night; for at this day, in many streets, a loaded truck or team in passing will shake the houses like an earthquake. However, Rugg's neighbours never afterward watched. Some of them treated it all as a delusion, and thought no more of it. Others of a different opinion shook their heads and said nothing.

"Thus Rugg and his child, horse, and chair were soon forgotten; and probably many in the neighbourhood never heard a word on the subject.

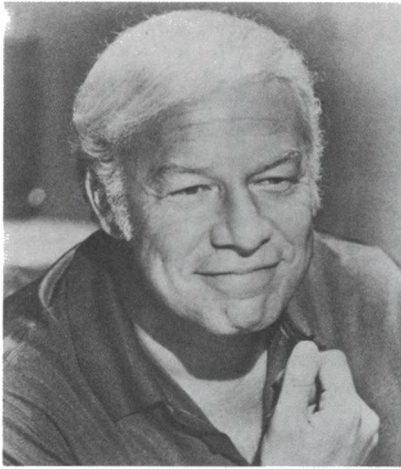
"There was indeed a rumour that Rugg was seen afterward in Connecticut, between Suffield and Hartford, passing through the country at headlong speed. This gave occasion to Rugg's friends to make further inquiry; but the more they inquired, the more they were baffled. If they heard of Rugg one day in Connecticut, the next they heard of him winding round the hills in New Hampshire; and soon after a man in a chair, with a small child, exactly answering the description of Peter Rugg, would be seen in Rhode Island inquiring the way to Boston.

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"But that which chiefly gave a colour of mystery to the story of Peter Rugg was the affair at Charlestown bridge. The toll-gatherer asserted that sometimes, on the darkest and most stormy nights, when no object could be discerned, about the time Rugg was missing, a horse and wheel-carriage with a noise equal to a troop, would at midnight, in utter contempt of the rates of toll, pass over the bridge. This occurred so frequently that the toll-gatherer resolved to attempt a discovery. Soon after, at the usual time, apparently the same horse and carriage approached the bridge from Charlestown Square. The toll-gatherer, prepared, took his stand as near the middle of the bridge as he dared, with a large three-legged stool in his hand; as the appearance passed, he threw the stool at the horse, but heard nothing except the noise of the stool skipping across the bridge. The toll-gatherer on the next day asserted that the stool went directly through the body of the horse, and he persisted in that belief ever after. Whether Rugg, or whoever the person was, ever passed the bridge again, the toll-gatherer would never tell; and when questioned, seemed anxious to waive the subject. And thus Peter Rugg and his child, horse, and carriage remain a mystery to this day."

This, sir, is all that I could learn of Peter Rugg in Boston. □

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# An Interview with George Kennedy

Richard Meyers

My first experience with George Kennedy came when he co-starred in a low-budget movie I worked on called *Just Before Dawn*. Although originally conceived as a “*Deliverance* meets *Lord of the Flies*” film by director Jeff Lieberman, it ultimately became just another slasher movie with four teenagers terrorized in the woods by homicidal machete hackers. The only thing that elevated the film besides some decent direction and acting was the strong presence of actor George Kennedy. He played a plant-loving forest ranger with the same quiet dedication he brought to his many other screen roles.

When I met him at The Mysterious Bookshop, where he was to sign his second paperback murder mystery novel, he seemed reluctant to discuss the Lieberman film (perhaps he didn’t recall it). Instead, he would rather remember roles in such movies as *Lonely Are the Brave* with Kirk Douglas, *Charade* with Cary Grant, *The Sons of Katie Elder* with John Wayne, *The Dirty Dozen* with Lee Marvin, *The Boston Strangler* with Henry Fonda, *The Flight of the Phoenix* with Jimmy Stewart, *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* with Clint Eastwood, and, of course, his roles in the *Airport* movies and his Oscar-winning portrayal in *Cool Hand Luke* starring Paul Newman.

Ultimately, however, I was there to talk to George Kennedy the writer. Despite an active, ongoing acting career, Kennedy has written two paperback murder mysteries, *Murder on Location* (1983) and *Murder on High* (1984), featuring himself as one of the major characters. Although Avon Books published, packaged, and promoted the books well, their one failing was to give the impression that Kennedy himself was the detective in the stories.

In fact, Kennedy’s fictional ex-cop friend Mike Corby is the man who breaks both cases—the first on

the set of a big-budget Western called *The Godless*, and the second on an Arab shiek’s private plane after the on-location filming of *Airport: Middle East*. In both books, Kennedy uses more real people as fictional characters than just himself. Dean Martin, Glenn Ford, Raquel Welch, Jimmy Stewart, producer Jennings Lang, and director Francis Ford Coppola are a few of the people who have cameos in the books.

It was a treat to meet and talk to the man, both because of his screen performances and his decision to write in the mystery genre. Once we had settled our respective bulks in Otto Penzler’s sumptuous inner sanctum, we had precious little time to discuss his work between his autographing session and his next appointment. Happily it turns out that Kennedy is as friendly and considerate a man as I hoped he would be. His responses to my clichéd questions were measured and thoughtful.

**RM:** Can you compare acting with writing?

**GK:** That’s not so easy to answer. When I did the first one, it was after a great deal of encouragement from pals, from relatives, and from people I had written to over the years. Letters. I try to make letters have beginnings, middles, and ends. People were telling me, “You really should write.” When I wrote the first one, and when it was in fact acceptable... Avon said, “We’ll print it.” That was the first big thing. I said, “Wow. Jeepers.” And when people actually bought it, that gave me a second “jeepers.” The first book was one of the most pleasant surprises in many years.

I am not a writer. I want people to know this... that I mean no impertinence. I am not a writer in the

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sense of Conan Doyle or Steinbeck. Writing is laborious. I know what I want to say, but I have great difficulty not “throwing the cow over the back fence some hay.” You know? Even so, I enjoy it. But acting is more instinctive to me, because my parents were both in show business. It is immensely easier for me to act. Acting is what I do for a living. Writing is something I work at.

**RM:** It shows in your work. The greatest disappointment of the books is that you are not the detective, as both books’ jacket copy say you are (*Murder on Location*: “Actor George Kennedy Stars In A New Role As Sleuth”; *Murder on High*: “Actor George Kennedy Is Back As Detective”).

**GK:** Oh, yeah, I hated that. I don’t know why they did that. I did not see that until they sent me the book . . . literally within the week it came out. I had nothing to do with that at all. What I had to do with is the dedication in *Murder on High* to Jennings Lang. He’s had a stroke. He’s recovering. He didn’t have the stroke when I wrote the book, but it immobilized everything on the right side. He can understand me, but he cannot talk to me. Anyway, everything from the dedication to the end of the book is mine. Everything else is not, nor was I asked about it.

**RM:** You’re obviously more of a Watson character in the books.

**GK:** Exactly. That’s the phrase I use. I tell people . . . again, without impertinence meant . . . “my function in the book is to be the hovering character, the Watson character, to the detective.”

**RM:** Beyond all that, I appreciated your writing. The books weren’t just novelizations of movies

unfilmed. On the second page of *Murder on Location* you have, “We lined up and gave our orders [at the catering truck]—for me, a bacon and egg sandwich with lots of onions. The onions were an indulgence; they unsettle my stomach, but I love them, and, what the hell, on location one tends to be a little reckless.” With just a few words, you got across the mood on a movie set.

**GK:** And I’ve never said a truer thing. I love onions. They don’t love me. Now let me ask you something. In the second book, in the second paragraph, after the speeding car business, I go into the “Qram [the Arabian setting of the book] is brown” number.

[“Qram is brown. Most of the countries in that portion of North Africa are. It isn’t just the color brown, though it seemed to me the sunsets, pool water, my string beans, and lemon Jell-O were all brown. There’s sort of an ambience about it.”]

When Avon first got the manuscript, they said, “We’re really not sure about this. After all, it’s not brown. It’s either dust, or it’s beige,” and they gave me a whole number. They asked me to water it down a bit. Originally it was a bit stronger. Now, I’ve been to North Africa a number of times, and I’m impatient with it because it is brown. I don’t care what adjunct of brown it is! To me, that’s a brown country with brown people and brown dirt and brown airplanes and brown Jell-O and brown. And *that’s* what I was trying to get across. Would you have done that that way or would you . . . ?

In other words, they were trying to get me to say “ochre” here, “beige” there . . .

**RM:** That’s ridiculous. Since you asked, I think a first-person narrative demands the narrator’s personality, not a watered-down milquetoast version. What’s the point of the narrative being totally objective? Character is subjective.

**GK:** Oh, bless your heart. Because I really felt strongly about it. I don’t know how old the copywriter was, but . . . it was like I wrote, “I don’t like spinach” and they wanted me to write, “There was a possibility that I might get some grit in my teeth therefore I don’t eat spinach.” What nonsense!

**RM** (*feeling self-conscious about his own literary pronouncements, among other things*): I admire anyone who writes, because I don’t know how the creative process works . . .

**GK:** Neither do I. Great labor, I think.

**RM:** Given that, why did you choose murder mysteries as a genre?

**GK:** When I was a kid, I was raised on mysteries. This (*gesturing at the floor-to-ceiling bookshelves packed with classics*) is like a toy store to me. If I



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lived here, I'd sleep on the couch, and, one by one, I'd go through the books. Ellery Queen, all of them. I really enjoy them. I only had one other big love when I was a kid, and that was airplanes. Back then they had a pulp magazine called *G-8 and His Battle Aces*. I couldn't wait for that to come out every month.

I do not find disaffection, as some critics do, for the Charlie Chan movies starring Warner Oland or Sidney Tolar or whoever. I don't care. He gets a whole bunch of people into the room at the end and says, "You couldn't do it because you have acne and you couldn't have done it because..." You know what I mean? If they were bad, they were bad. I didn't care. I loved it. If I outguessed them sometimes, I went home feeling like a king. I was weaned on this stuff.

You know, sometimes, people ask, "What was the favorite movie you did?" The answer is *Charade*. It was written by Peter Stone and it's a gorgeous mystery. Notwithstanding the fact that I'm in it—I'm in it with Cary Grant and Audrey Hepburn and James Coburn and Walter Matthau—I could see it about every two years just to get caught up in it again. That's my love of mystery.

So why did I attack mysteries? Everything in the first book had to do with something I have knowledge of—location filming. The book's location, Chirapulco, is actually Durango, Mexico, where I did four or five Westerns with John Wayne. I could take you to that bar, I could take you to that street, I could take you to that waterfall. I could take you to all of these places. It fit in like a glove with my life-long love of mystery. I'm talking too much.

**RM: You can't talk too much for an interview. You think people want to hear my voice? Okay now, process. How do you go about writing? Outline first?**

**GK:** There's a basic outline. It sometimes changes, because I'm not good at this. I want to hide the killer to the very end. I think I do that badly. That gives me more fits than anything else. Not giving away too much or pretending I gave away something when I really didn't. In the most recent one I allude to a character tamping out his pipe and palming the murder weapon. Well, when I go back through the manuscript, that sort of thing gives me fits. "Did I say he tamped out his pipe? Did I mention the smell of malted milk? Did I give away this? Did I say that?" That's the most difficult part for me. As I said before, the rest—the locations, the characters—come from my personal experiences.

**RM: How about the rest of it? Are you an extensive rewriter?**

**GK:** Paul Newman once compared himself with his wife, Joanne Woodward. He said that he labored over every page of a script. Joanne looks at it and says, "I got it." Then everything after redefines what she's going to do in the thing. In my case, I have a basic outline in my head as to how "A" is going to get to "Z." But because my business is show business, I do things in chunks. For instance, the one that's in the computer now—it's called *Murder on the Rocks*; I may not do it—I found that there was a unit in New Jersey that transports rock groups from concert to concert. The things that happen as part of transporting these tours are phenomenal! Fascinating. So that's a chunk of it. I learn and write chunks of these books.

**RM: So you write out of order sometimes?**

**GK:** Yeah, and the order changes. You see, I'm not doing humble pie. You're a writer. I'm an actor. I get things wrong—really foul up. It isn't until later—sometimes much later—that I'll go away, then come back and say, "Gee, you can't do that."

**RM: You mentioned you might not do the third novel. Why not?**

**GK:** That has to do with Avon. I was in the throes of writing it... four chapters into it, in fact. But when *Murder on Location* came out, I did publicity. I did what they wanted, then I did all of the Western states, Alaska, and Hawaii by myself. Then, months later, after I had started *Murder on the Rocks*, I went back to some of the places I had been and I ran into more than a dozen bookstore owners who said, "Yeah, we had your book, we sold it out, we reordered, and Avon hasn't supplied."

I said, "You're kidding!" The guys would take me in the back and show me their computer readouts. "Here's the day we reordered, here's how many copies we reordered," and then there's a zero with a

You know what  
would please me? To do  
a book as a film . . .  
the way I see it in  
my head. I see it  
in pictures.



slash through it. I called the agent, I called Avon, and said, "Hey, guys, this isn't fair. You got me out selling the book and then nobody's getting the book." So I stopped. We're talking about eight months ago [February 1984]. I simply stopped. I thought, "Who needs this? Who needs this?"

Avon has had a big reshuffling, and they promise this won't happen again.

**RM (resisting the temptation to reel off dozens of associates' similar horror stories): Another thing I appreciate in your writing is how you comment on the confessional aspect of the dialogue. "Why do they always pour out their hearts to me?"**

**GK:** That's marvelous that you picked up on that. But in reality that actually happens. I don't want to belabor the point, but that happens a lot. It's happening on the movie I'm working on now. As soon as I show up in the morning, the young leading man and the young leading lady: "Should I do this? Should I say this?" I appreciate that, but I don't have all the answers. Dear God, I'll go to my grave not knowing where I'm going either. But I'm curious about everything. I listen to everybody. And somewhere, everything I hear will find its way into what I write.

You see, my background, and everything I do, is film oriented. I could not be a film critic because basically I'm a positive fella. And I try to breed it into my kids. Like, if you look out today, you say, "Well, it's not raining that hard," instead of saying, "Jeepers, what a rotten day." But the thing I get impatient with in films is when a scene just goes on and on and on and on. And on. Say what you've got to say, then get off.

Filmmakers say to me, "Well, it's the editor. . ."

No, it's the writer, too. He gets enraptured with his own words. And I get impatient with that. So in my own work I don't want to stay with something too long. Move it here, move it there, move it along. But I'm not sure I do that particularly well.

**RM: How long did it take you to write the books?**

**GK:** The first one was harder. It took over a year. The second was more a labor of love. It took about two and a half months of really hard work. Most of which was in August and September of 1983. And finally, when I put it together it was like working night and day. It was flowing.

**RM: What kind of feeling do you get when you finish a book?**

**GK:** There are two things. There's an emptiness because you don't have to rush back to that thing and hit it again. The other part of it is relief that it is over. That feeling when I take that big sheaf of papers and send them off to Avon. I remember my letter to my editor when I sent the first one off. "Whew."

**RM: Although your reading background is with Holmes and Queen, your detective character, Mike Corby, is more hounddog. Besides the fact that you've already said you're no Conan Doyle, was his plodding purposeful?**

**GK:** Corby is more like Columbo. Yeah, that was purposeful. Do you realize how many of these guys I've played in my life? *The Blue Knight*, *Sarge*—I've played a lot of cops. Every time you play a cop in one of these things, there's a technical advisor. When we did *The Boston Strangler*, I played Phil DeNatalie, and Phil was there with me every day. He meant to help me, but what he showed me disgusted me. . . almost made me retch. He showed me all the pictures of the things this maniac did. And we're not talking about eleven murders, which he eventually got tried for. We're talking about a hundred and seven! A hundred and seven women he raped and murdered.

Well, you have a technical advisor for every film you do. And if you listen to them long enough, a little bit rubs off.

**RM: In the first book, you make a case for the movie Western. Now that your second books is out, do you want to make more serious statements in your future work?**

**GK:** I don't know. I think I'd rather read and enjoy other people's books. Writing is not my profession. It really isn't. It's nice that someone said, "Hey George, you're not really bad as a beginning writer." You know what would please me more? To finish the screenplay of the second book. And do it as a film. Do it the way I see it in my head. I see it in pictures. □



# The Short Career of Robert Reeves

By John L. Apostolou

Although undergoing a period of decline, the pulp magazines of the 1940s provided an outlet for several fine young writers. Among the regular contributors to the crime pulps were Ray Bradbury and John D. MacDonald, then just beginning their illustrious careers. Discussing the *Black Mask* writers of that era, Anthony Boucher says:

One of the last of the writers developed by *Black Mask*, and one of the best, was Robert Reeves, who began pulp writing with the off-beat equipment of a degree in anthropology and a career as stage manager for the Theatre Guild. Today he's possibly the least known of the major tough writers—probably because he died young without going on to the great success in slicks or films or radio that so many others achieved.<sup>1</sup>

The writing career of Robert Reeves spanned less than a decade. His first work was published in 1939 and the last in 1945. His contribution to the mystery genre, though small in quantity, was impressive. My research indicates that he produced three novels, nine short stories for *Black Mask*, and two short stories for *Dime Detective*. He may have written for other magazines, but I have been unable to locate any additional stories by him.

Little exists in print on the life of Robert Reeves. Dust jacket notes tell us he was born in New York City in 1912 (or in the last months of 1911) and raised on the south shore of Long Island. The best source of information on his education and early work experience is a short piece in *Black Mask*, from which we learn that he

acquired an A.B. at New York University, Washington Square Branch, where he majored in History, English and Anthropology. He promptly put his education to work as

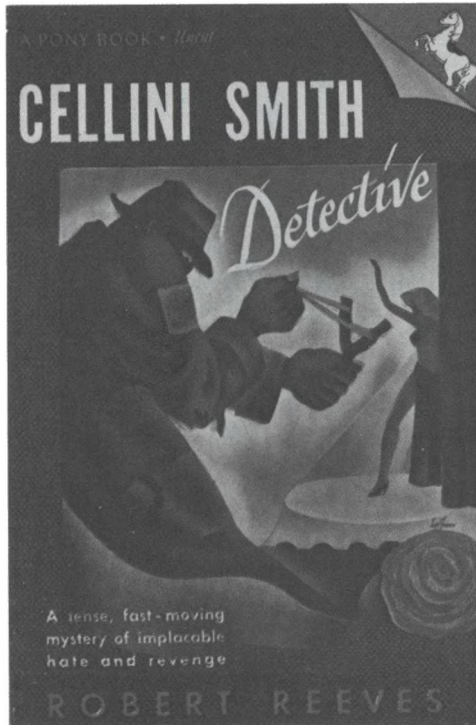
driver of an armored Post Office Department truck. Among other activities that engaged his attention from time to time are carpentry, cabinet-making, candy-making, reading for Fox Films and various and sundry Broadway play-brokers. He had several years experience in show-business as a casting director, play doctor, stage manager and assistant producer. Stage manager for the Theatre Guild at one time. Has forsaken his other interests now to concentrate on the problem of making Cellini Smith support him.<sup>2</sup>

And Cellini Smith, Reeves's private eye character, did support him—at least for a few years.

Most, if not all, of the Cellini Smith novels and short stories were written after Reeves moved to California in the late 1930s, probably in 1938. It is likely that he hoped to break into the movie industry, but all we know for certain is that he settled in geographical Hollywood, that section of the sprawling city of Los Angeles where members of his family had lived for some years.

Cellini Smith made his initial appearance in *Dead and Done For*, published by Knopf in 1939. The second Smith novel is *No Love Lost* (1941), which is also known as *Dog Eat Dog*—an earlier and shorter version had been serialized in *Black Mask*—and as *Come Out Killing*, the slightly abridged 1953 paperback edition. The third and last in the series is *Cellini Smith: Detective* (1943).

Strictly speaking, *Dead and Done For* is not a private eye novel. The main character, Cellini Smith, keeps books for a gang that runs the pinball machines—an illegal activity—in New York's Lower East Side. Cellini is a college graduate, his education paid for by the boss of the gang, Tony Moro. When Moro is arrested for the murder of a Broadway producer, Cellini investigates the crime in order to



prove his boss innocent. Making a swift transition from bookkeeper to detective, he solves the case, but not before the number of corpses multiplies. In this book, and in this book only, Cellini bears some similarity to a character in Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* named Tom Hagen, the role played by Robert Duvall in the movie.

*Dead and Done For* is a superior first novel, firmly in the hardboiled tradition. Reeves makes good use of his background in the theatre, and a minor character, Nicky, seems to be modeled on Reeves himself.

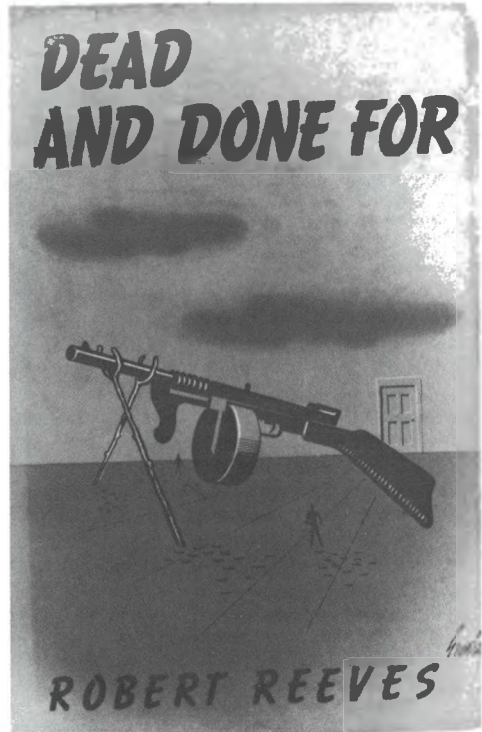
The next two Cellini Smith novels are set in Los Angeles. No longer tied to the underworld, as a result of certain events in the first novel, Cellini becomes a private investigator. Assisting him is sometime boxer Duck-Eye Ryan, formerly a gunman in the Moro gang, who functions as a comic sidekick. Another running character in these novels, and in the Cellini Smith short stories, is homicide detective Ira Haenigson, Cellini's friendly enemy in the Los Angeles Police Department.

In *No Love Lost*, Cellini is hired by a group of prizefighters to solve the murder of boxing promoter Miles Morton. The boxers are certain that local professional wrestlers, whom they despise, are responsible for Morton's death, but Cellini finds

other suspects and uncovers a link to a scheme to ship crude oil to Japan (the time is shortly before the attack on Pearl Harbor).

*Cellini Smith: Detective* has a similar plot. Here the victim is a young hobo, Danny Meade. The clients are Meade's friends, also hoboes, and the likely suspects are members of a rival hobo organization, the Ramblers. The motive in the case involves the location of a deposit of tungsten ore, a material needed for the war effort. Much of the action takes place in a burlesque theatre, giving Reeves another opportunity to display his knowledge of show business.

As may be gleaned from the above remarks, neither of these latter two novels is to be taken seriously. In *Dead and Done For*, Reeves maintains a nice balance between toughness and humor. In the Los Angeles books, however, humor predominates. Some evidence can be found to support Anthony Boucher's comment that Cellini "is unique among hardboiled private eyes in being admittedly an intellectual—and tough enough to get away with it."<sup>3</sup> Cellini does read books on anthropology and does occasionally make a witty quip, but his methods of detection rarely exhibit any real thought or ingenuity. I tend to agree with Ron Goulart, who says that Cellini Smith is "vaguely incompetent" and that the



Reeves novels are "fine examples of the screwball side of the hardboiled school."<sup>4</sup>

Of the eleven short stories Robert Reeves wrote for the pulps, seven feature Cellini Smith. All seven are set in Los Angeles, and most of them are mildly comic. The murders Cellini solves often occur in unusual settings: on an airplane in flight ("The Flying Hearse"), in an Army induction center ("Murder A.W.O.L."), in a sanitarium for alcoholics ("Alcoholics Calamitous"). During World War II, Cellini becomes the security foreman at a Burbank aircraft plant, unhappy that he is frozen on the job and cannot volunteer for military duty.

Reeves created one other series hero, Bookie Barnes, who appears in three amusing short stories. Barnes is a truck driver who investigates crimes he encounters on the highway. He is called "Bookie" not because he makes book but because he attended college and once read a book.

The only non-series short story by Reeves is "Dance Macabre," a crime story with a nightclub setting. The main character is Firpo Cole, a former pickpocket who does odd jobs in the club. This downbeat tale is not at all typical of Reeves's work.

The fiction of Robert Reeves is worthy of further discussion, but I have chosen to devote the remainder of this article to an account of his final years—a story that, to my knowledge, has never been told. Despite an extensive research effort, this account is incomplete. Perhaps there are TAD readers who can provide additional facts.

On July 22, 1942, a spectacled, balding, thirty-year-old bachelor named Robert Reeves enlisted in the United States Army. After basic training, Private Reeves returned to Los Angeles to work at the recruiting and induction center. Later he was assigned to the Army Air Corps, serving in the 500th Bombardment Squadron of the 345th Bombardment Group.

While in the service, Reeves continued to write. In the years 1943 to 1945, he had one novel—*Cellini Smith: Detective*—and three short stories published. On the dust jacket of the novel, he mused about the postwar years:

Ambitions and aspirations after the war is over? It is difficult to say. I know one writer who wants to go to Tibet on a donkey, preferably in the company of Jane Wyatt, and another who wants to have his ashes scattered over the M.G.M. lot from a P-38. My ambition is to march down *Unter Den Linden* and then get a thirty-foot twin-screw boat strictly for fishing purposes.

But Reeves did not celebrate the Allied victory in Berlin, nor did he fulfill the dream of owning a powerboat.

His unit, the 500th Bomb Squadron, flew B-25 medium bombers on combat missions in the South

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Pacific from June 1943 to the end of the war. The squadron was stationed on New Guinea, Biak, Leyte, and other Pacific islands. By the summer of 1945, it was flying from Clark Field on the Philippine island of Luzon. The Japanese in the Philippines had been defeated, but B-25s were carrying out sorties over Formosa and night attacks on Japanese shipping.

I have been unable to establish whether Reeves flew combat missions or performed duties on the ground, but official records show that he died on July 11, 1945, only a month before the war ended. At the time of his death, Reeves held the rank of captain. His body was buried in foreign soil and re-interred, in 1950, at Fort McPherson National Cemetery near North Platte, Nebraska—far from the cities of New York and Los Angeles where he had spent most of his life.

Although now virtually forgotten, Robert Reeves was a talented mystery novelist and an important *Black Mask* writer. His untimely death cut short a career which had the potential of becoming a notable one.

#### Notes

1. Anthony Boucher, Introduction to *Come Out Killing* by Robert Reeves (New York: Mercury, 1953), p. 4.
2. "Behind the Black Mask" (department), *Black Mask*, October 1940, pp. 44-45.
3. Boucher, p. 4.

4. Ron Goulart, ed., "An Informal Reading List," in *The Harboiled Dicks* (Los Angeles: Sherbourne, 1965), p. 196.

#### ROBERT REEVES: A CHECKLIST

The three listed novels feature Cellini Smith. Series characters for the short stories are abbreviated as CS for Cellini Smith and BB for Bookie Barnes.

#### Novels

- Dead and Done For*. Knopf, 1939; Ryerson (Toronto), 1939; Cassell (London), 1940; Grosset & Dunlop, 1941. Also published as *Pas folle, la guêpe!* trans. Jacques David and Henri Robillot, Gallimard (Paris), 1951.
- No Love Lost*. Holt, 1941; Oxford (Toronto), 1941. Also published as *Come Out Killing*, Mercury pb, 1953. (An earlier, shorter version serialized as *Dog Eat Dog* in *Black Mask*, September-October-November 1940.)
- Cellini Smith: Detective*. Houghton, 1943; Allen (Toronto), 1943; Pony pb, 1946.

#### Stories in *Black Mask*

- 3/41 "The Flying Hearse" CS  
 4/41 "Dance Macabre"  
 6/41 "The Cat with the Headache" CS  
 8/41 "Murder in High Gear" BB  
 1/42 "Bail Bait" CS  
 11/42 "A Taste for Murder" CS  
 11/44 "Murder A.W.O.L." CS  
 1/45 "Blood, Sweat and Biers" CS  
 9/45 "Alcoholics Calamitous" CS

#### Stories in *Dime Detective*

- 3/42 "Over a Barrel" BB  
 6/42 "Murder Without Death" BB

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# Through a Glass Darkly:

## A Consideration of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*

By Louis Phillips

I have subtitled this short piece “A Consideration of Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*,” but, in point of fact, screenwriter John Michael Hayes should also be given considerable credit for the film’s success. Far different in tone and scope from the Cornell Woolrich short story which provided the film’s initial image, Hayes’s script displays solid craftsmanship and sophisticated (for 1954, at least) dialogue from start to finish. This point is underscored also in Donald Spoto’s biography of Hitchcock, *The Dark Side of Genius*. In that book, John Michael Hayes says:

We met infrequently while I was writing the script, but afterwards we sat down and broke it down shot for shot, and he showed me how to do some things much better. The stamp of Hitchcock’s genius is on every frame of the finished film, but the impression that he did every bit of it alone is utter nonsense. I did what every other writer did for him—I wrote! But to read Hitchcock’s interviews, it’s possible to get the impression that *he* wrote the script, developed the characters, provided the motivation.

In interviews, Hitchcock often referred to Hayes as a “radio writer” who contributed dialogue to the structure. This certainly was a not-so-subtle way of downplaying the screenwriter’s contribution. Thus, when I lapse and talk of Hitchcock’s *Rear Window*, remember that it is John Michael Hayes’s film as well.

I wish to emphasize the screenwriter’s contribution to *Rear Window* because the movie is a carefully constructed environment of vignettes. When the movie opened, Bosley Crowther, film critic of the *New York Times*, compared it to Elmer Rice’s *Street Scene*, calling the movie a “*Street Scene* of middle class conflict viewed from the back instead of the front.” Secondly, my enjoyment of *Rear Window*





Wendell Corey, Grace Kelly, and James Stewart in *Rear Window*

pivots on an essential structural point, a point of writing.

### 1

*Rear Window* shows us a photographer named Jeff, played by James Stewart. Jeff has broken one of his legs and is confined to a wheelchair in his apartment (no one in fact ever thinks of taking him outside for a walk!). To relieve his boredom, Jeff begins to spy upon his neighbors across the way. He soon discovers what turns out to be a murder plot. A traveling costume jewelry salesman named Lars Thorwald is burdened with an invalid wife. One morning, Jeff discovers that the wife is no longer there. In a very short period of time, his glamorous girlfriend Lisa Fremont (Grace Kelly) and his insurance company nurse Stella (Thelma Ritter) are caught up in the whirlwind of peeping and snooping and discovering.

Most of the film is shown from the photographer's point of view, with some of the scenes being shown through the photographer's 400mm telephoto lens.

But here is the irony. At the turning point of the film (the night of the murder), the photographer falls asleep in his wheelchair. From his apartment window, the camera shows us the hallway outside Thorwald's apartment. The salesman is going out with a woman.

Is the woman the salesman's wife? That's a key question in the coming investigation. And yet, the photographer who has been spying from morning to night has missed the exit.

What graceful irony! A film about seeing holds at its center a moment that is not seen by any character, a moment that is seen only by the movie audience. We have out-voyeured the voyeur.

### 2

Motion pictures (and stage plays) make us into Peeping Toms of sorts. We are on the outside looking in at intimate and violent moments. We, the audience, are shameless. We want to know more and more and more. But, of course, actors know that they are being watched. Men and women and children in the apartment house across the way do not know they are being looked upon. In *Rear Window*, our moral judgment of the main character's shameless spying is subtly diluted, because we are in his place, we are sharing his sin.

### 3

"Mr. Hitchcock's film is not 'significant.' What it has to say about people and human nature is superficial and glib. But it does expose many facets of the



The scene of the crime in *Rear Window*

loneliness of city life and it tacitly demonstrates the impulse of morbid curiosity.”

—Bosley Crowther, *New York Times*, August 6, 1954.

The characters of the movie are superficial (we know very little about the photographer), and the artificially happy endings (Miss Lonely Hearts meeting the lonely composer) are glib and, I think, cynical, but what the movie says about human nature is *not* superficial. What the film says about human nature well might even be significant, though I think it has little to do with an impulse toward morbid curiosity.

John Russel Taylor, in his book *Hitch*, contends that, “Whatever Hitch is saying about human nature, he is saying totally without emphasis—the meaning of the film is completely articulated in its action.”

But what is its action—especially in a film in which so little of what we may call action takes place?

Whatever Hitch is saying without emphasis, John Russel Taylor does not venture to say.

#### 4

“That *Rear Window* can be profitably misunderstood and underinterpreted is a tribute to both the grace and deviousness of Hitchcock and Hayes in diverting attention from the moral sickness lurking in the darkness.” So wrote Andrew Sarris recently in the *Village Voice* (October 18, 1983). But what is the moral sickness? Can we pinpoint it? Is it really there?

François Truffaut, the great French film director who also happens to be one of the leading authorities on Hitchcock’s films, thinks not. In his dialogues with Hitchcock, Truffaut confesses:

I was still a working critic the first time I saw *Rear Window*, and I remember writing that the picture was very gloomy, rather pessimistic, and quite evil. But now I don’t see it in that light at all: in fact, I feel it has a rather compassionate approach. What Stewart sees from his window is not horrible but simply a display of human weakness and people in pursuit of happiness.

Truffaut goes a step further. He views *Rear Window* as a group of stories “mirroring a small universe” with all the stories concerned about love—the lonely woman who dines with an imaginary dinner companion; the sexy dancer who fends off “wolfish” suitors while waiting for her not-so-attractive (Hitchcock-looking?) true love to return; the newlyweds who barely or rarely get out of bed; the bachelor musician; the childless couple who give their love to a dog.

Ah, love, sweet love. But what isn’t about love or the lack of it? *Macbeth* is a love story gone awry. And so is *Oedipus Rex* for that matter. No, Truffaut was correct in his original estimate: *Rear Window* is gloomy, rather pessimistic, and, not evil in itself (should we impute such moral terms to works of art?), but quite insightful about the evil in human nature.

The man at the rear window of his apartment does not wish to love his neighbors. He is the man who observes. He is not involved. He does not even wish to love the elegant society woman who loves him. He sheds no tears for the plight of those around him. Oh, no. His single purpose is to prove himself right. How disappointed he and Lisa will be if the salesman across the way proves to be a saint. How disap-

pointed we all would be! We relish our fellow man's failures. It moves us, we think, that much closer to God.

As for contending that the photographer is merely watching others in the pursuit of happiness, that is misleading to the core. Does not the most depraved murderer seek happiness? Does not the most misguided politician?

Does not God in *Faust* warn us that to strive is to err?

5

"And confess in the end to your shame: man in his dark impulse always knows the right road from wrong."

*Faust* (translated by Barker Fairley)

Alfred Hitchcock himself was indeed quite aware of the pessimistic view of human nature displayed in *Rear Window*. In 1954, at a talk given to members of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences, he provided the key to the film's action. The action is not tracking down the murderer; the action is not climbing up fire escapes; the action is not breaking into apartments. The action is a mental and spiritual action. It is the action of a dark river flowing. Hitchcock himself said:

If you want to be really mean towards the character in this film, you would call him a Peeping Tom. I don't think it's necessarily a statement of morality because it's a statement of fact. You don't hide from it, there's no point in my leaving it out. When Grace Kelly says that they're a couple of fiendish ghouls because they're disappointed that a murder hasn't been committed she's speaking the truth. They were a couple of ghouls.

The significant tragedy upon which *Rear Window* touches is not that terrible and terrifying actions take place in the world. The true tragedy, the meaning of the Fall of Man, is that we desire evil to happen. We are on the side of the Devil. He is our true compatriot. What Jeff the photographer sees from the window is his uncompassionate self.

Nor will human nature change. At the conclusion of the film, Grace Kelly, for all her desire to globe-trot with her lover, still takes up the fashion magazine. And the photographer now has two broken legs. As Ernest Borneman commented in *Films and Filming*, "This may seem funny but it inevitably poses the question of how many more murders Stewart is going to witness till his second leg has healed."

We are the Peeping Toms, and what we wish to see is the pursuit of happiness, but not happiness itself. This is the moral sickness lurking in the darkness. Looking through the photographer's lens, one indeed sees through a glass darkly. □

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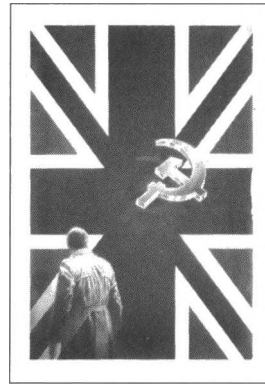
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# TAD at the MOVIES

By Thomas Godfrey

The phenomenon of Clint Eastwood is not easy to explain. The facts are these: he was born in San Francisco, the son of an accountant and grew up on the West Coast. He appeared in pictures in the early 1950's playing bits in forgettable things like *Francis* (the talking mule) in *the Navy* and *Tarantula*, before landing the role of a scout on a cattle drive in a television series, *Rawhide*. When it finished he went to Italy where his inert style was deemed suitable, by director Sergio Leone, for a string of spaghetti westerns (*Fistful of Dollars*, *For a Few Dollars More*, etc.). They were enormously successful in Europe, and later in the States; so much so, that he was able to transfer his career back to Hollywood without missing a paycheck.

He was, as he had been as Rowdy Yates on television, a tense, blunt loner with one sullen expression. But, it was an age of loners and heroes outside society, and presumably this accounted for his success. He presented a new standard in minimalist acting. He did little in many of his scenes but appear. Most of the elocution came from his gun. Critics later would compare his style to Gary Cooper's, but he missed Cooper's relaxation and physical command, and there was a brutality to his characters Cooper seldom showed. The closest comparison is his contemporary Charles Bronson, another loner, though he lacked Eastwood's American middle class roots and appeal. Perhaps Henry Fonda's late westerns come closer to the mark.

Eastwood was later cast in more adventuresome work with bigger names like Shirley MacLaine, Geraldine Page, and Richard Burton. There was even a musical, *Paint Your Wagon*, for those with a tin horn and tin ear to match, but this was not how the public wanted him, so he was back being sullen and brutal, most often as a cop. He

had a big success replacing Frank Sinatra in the law-and-order / revenge piece *Dirty Harry*, where his gun again did all the acting, but it established him as a certified Box Office Attraction.

Since then he has expanded into production and direction, but is most often found on-screen fighting off all forms of corruption single-handedly, unthreatened by any real emotive challenges. The appeal is limited, but a loyal audience continues to follow these assembly-line products.

Part of the pre-release interest with *Tightrope* was to be his departure, in the central role, from the straight-and-narrow. And, in fact, there is no mistaking that his Lt. Block is sexually involved with the prostitutes he questions during the murder investigation. The quirk is not as startling as it sounds, because the film shows no inclination to pursue the matter very far. The explicit sex scenes stop as soon as they start, and we are constantly being reassured that this is still basically good old Clint. It all started when his wife left him with the two kids, you see. And it was certainly not a factor in the break-up of the marriage. The wife wanted to go out and "fulfill" herself. Cue yet another glimpse of Eastwood as the loving single parent.

Then we're back after the murderer, a vicious psychopath with an attraction to hookers, who seems to want to involve Eastwood in his killings. At one murder scene, he leaves Eastwood's tie wrapped around a statue's neck. (The other investigators ignore this. They know our Clint would never get involved in anything like this. They have also read the script, which would have benefited from a few more runs through a typewriter.) The psychopath is one of the new breed, already familiar to most

avid film-goers; the type who seems to be everywhere, doing everything the scriptwriter wants at any given moment. He defies logic and physics, but new breed psychopaths are like that.

Several potent plot possibilities are waded in our faces and then abruptly discarded. The psychopath is revealed as a corrupt cop Eastwood once arrested. The wife keeps showing up looking like a Golem who has just come from the beauty parlor. But nothing more is made of any of it. The picture is chock full of ideas writer-director Tuggle seems unable to handle. Some things just get by him all together. Out of a totally heterosexual milieu comes a short scene in a gay bar as the psychopath suddenly decides to lead Eastwood on a treasure hunt. Then we're dropped into a theatrical warehouse, and out at a parade, all treated like random thoughts just coming into Tuggle's head.

Then there's a scene where the psychopath breaks into girlfriend Genevieve Bujold's apartment and assaults her. Several scenes later Eastwood is bringing his kids over there for safe-keeping. Bujold says nothing of the attack. (Maybe this sort of thing is routine after-dinner entertainment for her.)

Amateurism also crops up in Bruce Surtee's attempts to give the film a *noir* look. At first the shadowy quality does evoke some of the Bs' of the late 1940's. Then the film just starts looking underlit, and murky, with vast expanses of unexposed silver nitrate.

The possibilities offered by the New Orleans setting are largely ignored. In spite of some costumes, the parade, and a few strains of Dixieland music on a riverboat restaurant, this could be Poughkeepsie on Halloween for all Tuggle gets out of it.

Eastwood's acting is contained and unvaried. He punches in a door and gets to show his gun a few times, but in the acting department he is easily outclassed by his own daughter Alison, playing one of his daughters. (So, it wasn't a great dramatic challenge. One doesn't go to an Eastwood film for the acting, and this is no exception.)

But one does expect to see more than the passable film-making skills on display here, the follow-the-dot mentality of the screenplay, the failed imagination of its execution. Without Eastwood's name behind the project, I doubt it ever would have been made. Does anyone care that an audience is going to have to sit through this after it has been put together?

I never thought I'd complain about a film paying too much attention to its mystery elements, but that, in fact, is my major gripe about *A Soldier's Story*, as directed and co-produced by Norman Jewison (*In the Heat of*



Klaus Kinski and Diane Keaton in *The Little Drummer Girl*

the *Night, Fiddler on the Roof, Rollerball*.) The elements of Charles Fuller's play that won it the Pulitzer Prize were not its merits as a detective story but its deeper considerations as a study of self-hatred and self-enslavement told within the mystery form.

A rough career officer, Sgt. Waters (played with rasping authority by Adolph Caesar) rides his company of black baseball players converted to an army unit stationed in Alabama during the latter days of World War II. He squashes their spirit, belittles them constantly calling them "niggers" and "geechees," badgering them with his own black ideals. His punishment is more savage than any white officer might inflict because he himself is black.

One night, as he staggers home drunk and drooling self-pity, someone shoots and kills him. Blame first falls on the Klan. A black lawyer, a Capt. Davenport (Howard E. Rollins, Jr.) is dispatched from Washington to look into the killing. Eventually he finds the real murderer, but not before he has been deceived by everyone involved, from the commanding officer on down.

What he also discovers is the full extent of Waters's racial self-hatred and misguided "betterment" policies within the unit. The murder is a violent expression of the feelings associated with it. This is clearly what motivated Fuller to write his play. The mystery was a convenient device on which to hang his thoughts.

But Jewison has unbalanced all this by emphasizing the detection at the expense of exploring these feelings. The complexity of black issues has progressed since Jewison directed his much acclaimed version of *In the Heat of the Night* (1967), but his handling of it has not. He is wrong to punch up the small black triumphs of the story. Wrong to tack on an upbeat we-shall-overcome ending. Fuller's story has been telling us otherwise, and Jewison is insensitive not to notice.

I think he's also wrong to try to make Rollins play Davenport like the new Sidney Poitier. There are some nice moments in his performance, but over all Rollins, so powerful in *Ragtime*, seems inhibited and



Burt Lancaster starring in *The Killers*

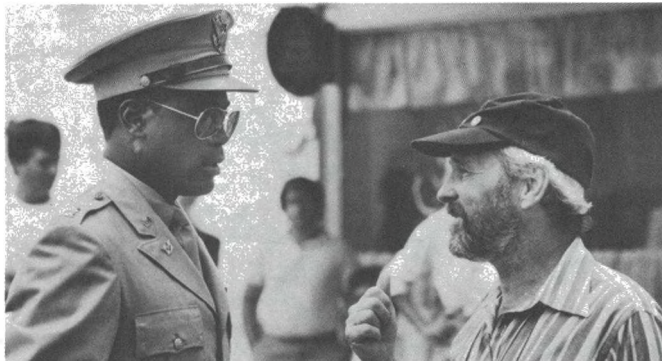
inappropriately light. He might have been helped if he had been able to develop the character first on stage as Caesar and several other members of the cast had done. We might have had the sense he was more involved in the implications of this investigation, as well he should be. When he turns to the window, after confronting the murderer, and sheds a tear, it's too little too late.

Fuller's screenplay opens out the play nicely, making effective use of the camp and its environs. Only once, when Davenport goes to question a man during mock combat, did I feel he had overdone it.

The strongest reactions come to the individual performances of the members of Waters's harrassed unit. Denzel Washington's strong, defiant PFC Peterson deserves special mention, but then, so does Art Evans' spineless Wiley, Larry Riley's rustic guitar-picking C. J. Memphis (the Billy Budd of the story), and briefly (and musically) Patti La Belle as the rollicking Big Mama, the local bar owner. She gives the film a tremendous send-off and you keep looking for her to come back.

The triumph of *A Soldier's Story*, over the miscalculations of the production, is the power of Fuller's thoughtful theater piece. It makes for a fascinating two hours. Anyone concerned about the fate of the mystery-suspense film over the next decade ought to go see this. Like *Boomerang* (1947), *Crossfire* (1947), *Trial* (1956), and *Heat of the Night*, it is a potent reminder of how effective the mystery genre can be, when used by a writer with a good sense of drama and something to say about society.

One of the major disappointments of recent films just has to be the adaptation of le Carre's *The Little Drummer Girl*, directed by George Roy Hill (*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, The Sting, Slap Shot*). Those who have read the book will find compensation in seeing many of its best scenes brought to life. Those who have not will sit through long stretches of film wondering what is going on and why they should care about it. By the time they find out, they will probably wish the film were over long before it is. Without le Carre's deft framing prose and acute obser-



E. Rollins, Jr. and director Norman Jewison (right) on the set of *A Soldier's Story*

vations to maintain interest, the problem of the transferral to the screen is not that what has been retained is not well done, but that too much has been left out. The film lacks perspective.

Diane Keaton gives a commendable performance as the actress recruited by Israeli Intelligence to trap an elusive Palestinian terrorist commando, but she is really too old, and there are several scenes where you are just painfully aware of her up there on the screen acting up a storm. I wish the filmmakers had taken a chance on a younger English actress, as the book requires, instead of banking on Keaton's name. Klaus Kinski gives a fidgety performance as the head of the operation, neither commanding nor brilliant, but filled with a tedious air of self-importance. The rest of the cast is unknown and adequate, save for a teutonic terrorist named Helga who looks dragged in from every cliché-ed spy programmer in the last forty years. The damage is not fatal, but one has come to expect more from le Carré, who, incidentally, turns up in a bit in a police car outside Keaton's London flat.

With the excellence of the George Smiley adaptations for television still fresh in mind, and Lumet's earlier filming of *Call for the Dead*, *The Deadly Affair* (1966), still fondly recalled, the trouble with *Little Drummer Girl* is not that it is bad, but that it is just not good enough, considering the source.

*In Retrospect:*

★★★ **I, the Jury** (1982) Armande

Assante, Barbara Carrera, Paul Sorvino (D: Richard G. Heffron)

Hey Marie. Guess what? Mike Hammuh's a *paisan*. No foolin'. At least as portrayed by Assante in this version of Mickey Spillane's 1947 blood-and-guts classic. Assante invests the up-dated Hammer with enough swagger and punch to make you believe this was what Spillane must have had in mind all along, even if he didn't know it himself.

Although this modernization changes some of the names and secondary details of this tale of revenge and retribution among the good, bad, and kinky, the spirit of the original, meaning gratuitous sex and violence at its most wholesome, is preserved intact. Even the sleaze has a ruddy glow to it.

In this era of *Body Double* and *Halloween 3*, the uniquely ordered, codified world of Mike Hammer looks rather cozy. Spillane's killers still kill for a reason, even if at someone else's behest. You can always sort out the bad guys from the good (there aren't many) by the end. Identifying these elements is an important function of Spillane's stories. There's never much mystery as to who's what once the truth is exposed. Shades of gray are rarely seen.

The plot careens from one exciting sequence to another with passable logic. Cerebration is another rare commodity. Any thoughts come as revelations. There's also an after taste of paranoia to the proceedings but that's part of the Spillane mystique too.

Occasionally the story tips over toward ripe melodrama and the ludicrous, but it never

takes the fall. Assante somehow makes it all seem to work. While investing Hammer with the requisite machismo and talent for survival, he humanizes him as well, making him plausible and dramatically viable, sort of a Jersey City folk hero.

Carrera's velvety hot sex therapist is true to the cause. So is Sorvino's wimpy Lt. Pat Chambers. You have the feeling this sort of bureaucratic apologist is the fuel that fires up Spillane's typewriter.

Fans will probably love it. Detractors will find plenty of ammunition for their gripes, but for the first time, in a Spillane film, you don't have to make excuses for the production. Art-of-sorts for some, trash-of-sorts for others.

★★★ **The Killers** (1946) Burt Lancaster, Ava Gardner, Edmond O'Brien (D: Robert Siodmak)

The first fifteen minutes of this film are as good as anything put on celluloid in this decade. The dialogue is crisp and terse, the acting pointed and well-characterized, the tension tightly drawn. But it is the lighting and sets that leave the greatest impression, German Expressionism at the service of American Post-Romanticism.

This film expansion of Hemingway's famous short story is the finest film done in Hollywood by director Siodmak, whose skilled chiaroscuro technique graced such noir productions as *Phantom Lady* (1944), *The Suspect* (1945), *The Spiral Staircase* and *The Dark Mirror* (both 1946) and *Cross*

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(1947). What makes *The Killers* stand out as an achievement is the array of outstanding, understated performances he gets from newcomers Lancaster and Gardner, as well as erstwhile hams like O'Brien and Sam Levene. In what might have become a muggers' slugfest, dramatic elements roll in as gently as a fog off the bay.

I can't say enough for Anthony Veiller's skilled screen adaptation either. It starts with a faithful rendering of the short story about an ex-fighter who acquiesces in his own impending gangland slaying, then goes on to a series of clever flashbacks in the course of a detailed murder investigation.

Lancaster, in his screen debut (another film had been made but held back) does not push his part as the victimized Swede into the mannerisms he developed later. He lets his youth and freshness work for him, and the haunting, haunted quality of the result stays with you longer than any other role he's ever done.

Similarly Gardner, promoted into her first starring role, is voluptuous and sexy, but in a more tantalizing less exotic fashion than we would see later. Her acting is only competent, but she was always prized more for her screen presence than her ability to read lines, and she projects herself very appealingly here.

Perhaps the best way to document the level of performance Siodmak has elicited from his cast is a consideration of Virginia Christine, later to become a household face in a number of Nordic parts, most famously Mrs. Olsen of TV coffee commercials. Here, as the

Swede's first love, she suggests a combination of Ginger Rogers and Eleanor Parker with a performance worthy of either. No caricaturing, just solid, inspired acting.

As in all of Siodmak's films, he knows just where to put the camera, and where to put the lights. The scenes develop a hypnotic flow. The sets catch you up immediately. The back-lighting of the diner in the first exterior looks so stylized that you are startled when two men walk into it. The diner's interior seems to close in on the actors. The effect is claustrophobic. Shadows rake menacingly across a character as he escapes. No one used German technique like this more effectively than Siodmak. Not Hitchcock. Not even Fritz Lang.

No doubt producer Mark Hellinger was behind the decision to experiment with a pseudo-documentary style, which he expanded when he made *The Naked City* in 1948. Here its use is limited to a sequence in which police inspector Donald McBride reads an account of a hold-up over a re-enactment of the crime. It's a little gem in and of itself, and does not jar with the more stylized elements of the film.

There were Academy Award nominations that year for Siodmak (direction), Veiller (screenplay), Arthur Hilton the editor, and also Miklos Rosza's rather insistent score. No wins, 1946 was the year-of-the-century for mystery-suspense cinema, but at least someone noticed.

A touchstone of the American mystery-suspense tradition.

With Jeff Corey, Vince Barnett, William Conrad, Charles McGraw, and Albert Dekker.

★ ★ ½ **The House Across the Bay** (1940) George Raft, Joan Bennett, Walter Pidgeon (D: Archie Mayo)

The house, of course, is Alcatraz, and that's where wheeler-dealer Raft ends up when his devoted wife and nightclub star Bennett is tricked into exposing his income tax peccadillos to crooked lawyer Lloyd Nolan. She moves to her own house across the bay from the prison to be near him, but it isn't long before complications appear in the form of aeronautics whiz Pidgeon who starts making her forget all about poor George. Nolan, who wanted Bennett for himself, gets wind of this, and tells Raft one visiting day. The expected happens.

Mayo's direction is just too plodding for this type of film. Too many scenes crawl along. None of the principals is at his or her best. Raft isn't very believable when he isn't being smooth and oily. Bennett seems too refined for a moll. (Fritz Lang would do better with her in *Scarlet Street* and *Woman in the Window*.) Pidgeon lacks a forceful presence.

Nolan, on the other hand, underplays the lawyer interestingly, but it is Gladys George, as a hard-drinking fellow "rock widow" Bennett meets on the boat, who gives the picture what life it has. She appears to be having one hell-of-a-good-time with the part. Sadly it doesn't rub off. □

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# RETRO REVIEWS

**He Who Whispers** by John Dickson Carr. Harper and Row, 1946.

Written at the end of World War II *He Who Whispers* contains many references to the war and its effect on daily life. The horror and carnage of that nightmare seem to have snapped Carr's ability to create terror and chills out of vampires and haunting maidens who remain mysteriously silent when it would have been more natural to speak out.

Battle-shocked Miles Hammond is the hero to whom things happen. On a rainy night he is invited to London's Murder Club as a guest of Dr. Gideon Fell. Oddly, two other guests show up, but all the club members have vanished. One of the other guests tells a story of a murder committed in France shortly before the war. A murder committed on top of a watched, inaccessible tower. A murder that no living person could have committed.

All of Carr's usual elements are here, but the overall effect was missing. The mood and spellbinding fascination of Fay Seton did not captivate. It was interesting to watch Carr manipulate his pieces into a new mosaic, but only on an intellectual, puzzle-solving level.

— Fred Dueren

**The Wheel Spins** (Filmed as *The Lady Vanishes* by Hitchcock); by Ethel Lina White, 1936.

Having recently seen Hitchcock's version it is interesting to read White's original novel and compare. I would not try to conclude that either is better because the demands of film versus book make each version admirable. The last fourth of the film adds action and adventure that was not felt necessary for a suspense novel of the 30's.

Action is notably lacking in *The Wheel Spins*. After an introductory section, where Iris Carr becomes dissatisfied with her life and friends, little happens as the train moves through Eastern Europe, headed toward Trieste. Iris meets a gossipy, rather stereotyped governess on her way back to England between positions. Later, Miss Froy, the indomitable governess, disappears and all other passengers deny ever seeing her.

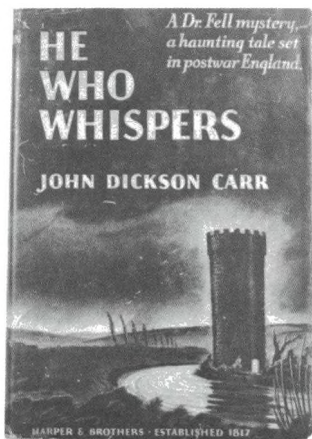
White has quite a bit to say about people and the interactions of fate based on whims and self-concern. She also freely uses these chances to create suspense—opportunity after opportunity to find Miss Froy slips unknown past Iris. The mood and unrest of Europe in the 1930's come through in both plot and attitude of characters. More harm and danger come from inaction and reluctance to get involved than from deeds actually committed.

White has given us several telling portraits in the assembly of passengers. Most of them are not kind portraits yet each has a truth we can recognize and often sympathize with. Particularly noteworthy are the Flood-

Porter sisters and the Professor.

The main reason for Miss Froy's disappearance is better explained and more logical in the book than in the film. But Hitchcock was seeking a more lurid thriller so the change was necessary. He also added several stock characters and humor situations that were apparently expected for films. It is good to see that White did not feel so compelled to submit to formula in the original.

— Fred Dueren



**For Honor and Life** by William MacLeod Raine. Grosset & Dunlap, 1933.

This is a compelling double murder mystery, set in the Rockies, unusual in having an obligato of machine gun fire; and unusual also in its author, a top-line writer of Westerns. Raine was a working cowboy around the turn of the century, later rode with the Arizona Rangers, and eventually wrote many novels of six-guns, buckaroos, and saddle leather; his nonfiction works of the West are still authoritative. It is the fate of any super-star *artiste* to be ignored and forgotten when he invades a related field

(who remembers Sir Arthur Sullivan's grand opera, "Ivanhoe," today?) and so Raine's mystery novel has escaped recognition for the past half century. In its time it was classed as a Western because of a Colorado setting but locale does not *per se* create genre.

The novel opens with the court-room acquittal of Sally Sloane, a wealthy debutante, of the murder of a somewhat caddish English suitor. Sally feels keenly the stigma of suspicion and realizes that the only way to establish irrefutably her innocence is to solve the crime. She links it with the near-coincidental slaying of a Sicilian gangster, for which Webb Chittenden has been convicted. Chittenden, a typical Raine hero (Randolph Scott would have played the role), escapes from the death house and joins Sally and her ally, Freddie Mallinson, a World War I veteran and staunch friend and unsuccessful wooer of Sally. Having initially something of the insipid exterior of a Wodehouse hero, Mallinson proves to be fast thinking, hard talking, and superbly unflappable as he patiently unravels the double crime. A host of secondary characters enter, including a private eye, all drawn with the skill one expects from as experienced a writing waddie as WR.

Raine plays fair with clues while plot development and action are equal to the best of the period. The solution is clear-cut and a tartly ironic denouement is provided by the brother of the slain gangster, a fascinating realist, an articulate and complex rogue. There is taut counterplay between Antonio and Mallinson that is expertly drawn. As an action mystery, this book is well worth one's time, bearing in mind the limitations of characterization and plot coincidence typical of the period.

The title is not listed in Hubin although two others are, *Tangled Trails* (1921) and *Cry Murder* (1947).

Incidentally, Raine also ventured into non-Western crime in *Luck*, an *Argosy* 1926 serial subsequently issued in book form.

— Alvin H. Lybeck



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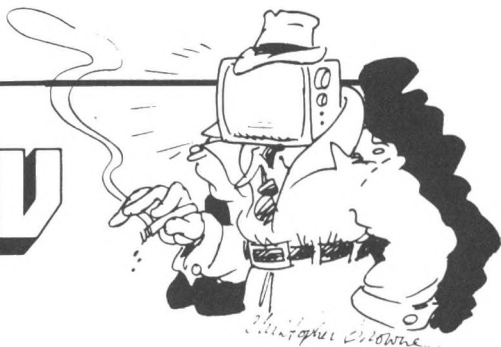
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# TAD ON TV

By Richard Meyers



Famine, then feast. If anyone noticed, this column did not appear last issue. Two reasons; *une*, I was constipated by a plethora of contractual novels (*Dragon Rising* by Wade Barker should be out by now) and non-fiction books (ditto *Martial Arts Movies* co-written with Bill and Karen Palmer). *Deux*, there wasn't much mystery TV to talk about. The summer of '84 was a parched period for the videotec.

You might have noticed the foreign numbers. That's because I'm sitting here in Bill DeAndrea and Orania Papazoglou's apartment on the Avenue Emile Zola in Paris at this moment. And because I couldn't haul all my research material (consisting of a few publicity handouts from the networks and a couple of *TV Guides*) to France, I'll be writing my reviews from faulty memory. You don't have to excuse the missing cast and crew names, but that's why they're not there.

B.T.A.I.M. (Be that as it may), the fall 1984-85 new season shows are prodigious if not impressive. Of interest: Hollywood seemed to unanimously agree to dropkick the sitcom and jumpstart the cop show. About the only thing the many action series have in common embody two of my most prevalent attitudes. One, that American television is the best in the world, and two, that American television is the most callous in the world.

Death is for sale on TV and murder is biodegradable. Near perfect examples of this are *Who Killed the Robins Family* and *Murder She Wrote*. On the literary front, it's the solution of the book's puzzle that irritably reveals its lack of morality and logic. Not only could several of the contest/novel's solutions be reached by the most pedantic of policemen, but the more vicious of the crimes are left apathetically unpunished.

It seems that as long as the solution of the deaths is merely revealed in the most perfunctory manner, the indifferent reader can go away happy—the fictional characters be damned.

This ultimately destructive attitude has permeated entertainment. The idea that writers are supposed to create characters readers care about, not to mention tension that can be released at the climax, now seems secondary. Look at *Who Killed the Robins Family* in books, the slasher murder movies in the cinemas, and, in its own minor way, *Murder She Wrote* on TV.

"Bout time I got back to the tube, eh? The opening of *Murder She Wrote* features

the most jolly of these music as the word Murder is splashed across the small screen—then juxtaposed with charming scenes of the author-heroine going about her business. Her business is to write bestselling murder mysteries while solving "real life" murder mysteries which plague her gigantic, widespread family and friends.

There are some good things about this show. It is the only "pure" mystery program on, complete with a puzzle to be solved and a murderer to be unmasked each and every week (no mean feat, I think we can assure each other). The casts are also extremely watchable—filled with hearty, perennial, easily recognizable TV veterans. It's like watching the *Love Boat* with assassinations. Holding it all together is stage veteran Angela Lansbury as Jessica Fletcher, the busybody/author/murder magnet.

To credit producer Peter Fisher and co-creators Levinson and Link, they have attempted to incorporate the positive concepts that writing mysteries is not absurdly simple and that murder is not nice. Still, the program is only mildly diverting and the basic idea that this sweet woman can trip over a corpse every seven days and still maintain a cheery disposition is personally aggravating.

Speaking of violence, there's *Miami Vice*. The city government has complained that this series is harmful to Miami's reputation. In this, they are completely correct. The show makes Florida look like downtown San Salvador. But they do it in a very energetic way. Many have considered the show fallout from the MTV explosion, what with its rock music soundtrack, razzle photography and dazzle editing. But, actually, it's essentially a spin-off of the recent remake/update of *Scarface* (with its music, razzle and dazzle) starring Al Pacino and a popular four letter word.

Sonny Crockett and Ricardo Tubbs (the first TV Ricardo since *I Love Lucy*) are hip Miami Vice officers who take on the worst sleazoids imaginable: drug pushers, pornographers, gun runners, pimps, hookers, and other assorted sundry maniacs, psychos, and street crazies. Crockett (Don Johnson, once a young ingenue type in the cult SF film *A Boy and His Dog*) is white, alienated, divorced, and lives on a housesloop with his pet alligator. Tubbs (Phillip Michael Thomas) is a black, cool, Manhattan detective who came to Florida to take vengeance on a drug kingpin who killed his brother.

Anthony Yerkovich, once a *Hill Street Blues* writer, created this razor sharp mess for producer Michael Mann, who created *Starksy and Hutch* and wrote/directed the movie *Thief* starring James Caan (a real neat film if you haven't seen it...heck, it's a goodie even if you have). Because of their origins, you might see names like David Soul (who played Hutch) and Paul Michael Glaser (Starksy) under the episodes' director credit.

Everybody does a real good job in their departments, making the show a unique viewing experience. The hours are filled with graphic, extreme mayhem utilizing the most esoteric of weapons as well as overwrought cinematic technique. To add a strange sort of charm to the vicious proceedings, the crew and the characters fail as often as they succeed. That is, some episodes can be as flat as others are exhilarating, while, for every scumbunny Crockett and Tubbs put away, another waltzes free.

As much as I profess that TV is belittling murder, *Miami Vice* is so stylized and ambitious, it can be loads o' fun. Also loads o' fun in it's own way is *Hunter*. I was expecting (hoping, in fact) to hate this show. Why? Because it is a categorical ripoff of *Dirty Harry*, that's why. But, much to my teeth grinding surprise, it's the best Dirty Harry ripoff it could be. Part of Harry's charm was his deflating of corrupt pomposity. *Hunter* does the same in spades.

Most of its superficial success comes from star Fred Dryer, the ex-football star, who plays supercop "Head" Hunter—the Clint Eastwood clone. To go into any detail here is unnecessary since Dryer's character is exactly the same as Inspector Harry Callahan's. The major differences are that instead of "make my day" Hunter says "works for me" and has the most beautiful woman partner central casting could come up with.

Again, I was expecting to dislike this female character immensely because she was so unrealistically good looking, but the "Brass Cupcake" (the only name I can remember—character or actress) is another surprisingly ingratiating person. The byplay between the partners is entertaining and the plots are snugly designed by the same production team which brought you *The A Team* and *Riptide*: producers and creators Stephen Cannell and Frank Lupo.

Yes, yes, I can hear the howls. "He likes *Hunter* and *Miami Vice*, but he comes down hard on *Murder She Wrote*!?" Well, I like

*Murder She Wrote* too. What I *don't* like is the impression murder can be laughed off by the masses. In the *Hunter* and *Miami* shows, the heroes are alienated, hard bitten pros. But Jessica Fletcher is a sweet old lady. Big difference.

There's also a big difference between this trio and *Hawaiian Heat*, a pathetic little color-by-numbers program seemingly designed to fill the network's, but *not* the viewers', needs. That need appears to be a cop show set in *Magnum P.I.* territory.

James Parriott is responsible for creating and producing the story of two Chicago cops who find their thrills in Honolulu hills. But on this show, things happen because they do, not because they make any particular sense. In the opening two hour telefilm, for instance, the heroes are fighting a hulking thug in the back of a speeding truck the villain is driving. At first, they are being unmercifully pummeled. The next second the thug considerably steps off the moving vehicle. Then, the very next moment, the bad guy goes hundreds of feet out of his way to drive right off a convenient cliff. Our heroes leap off the truck before it falls and explodes in an oh-so-filmable and oh-so-unrealistic ball of flame.

About the only good thing I can say about the feeble exercise in slot filling is that the acting, by such folk as Robert Ginty (*The Paper Chase* TV show, *The Exterminator* movies) and Mako (an all-purpose acting Oriental) is earnest and the locations are colorful. Otherwise the show seems to satisfy only one need: to create Hawaiian junkets for ABC-TV executives. Enjoy it while you can, gentlemen. If the show does not improve, it's back to visiting the *Dynasty* soundstages for you.

ABC, in fact, is suffering a run of bad judgment which has led to it taking up residence in the rating cellar. This is hardly surprising considering *Hawaiian Heat* and *Jessie*. At least this latter series is earnest. Maybe a little too earnest, in fact. Lindsay Wagner stars in the title role of a police psychiatrist. Hey, why not? We've had police surgeons, police lawyers, and even a police dog. Why not a police psychiatrist? Why not indeed?

I'll tell you. Roy Thinnes played a TV psychiatrist and there have been psychology shows like *Breaking Point* and *The Eleventh Hour* in the past. But all those shows failed and times have hardly changed. I feel the public doesn't like or trust psychiatrists, Bob Hartley aside. Of course it doesn't help that the series has more going against it than the '62 New York Mets. On the basis of information, even ABC doesn't like or trust psychiatrists, since they changed actress Wagner's original well-meaning conception of a caring shrink show into just another cop series with car chases and gunfights.

Tony Lo Bianco co-stars as a "by the book" cop who doesn't want some bleeding heart liberal to screw up his arrests or bleed all over the scene of the crime by interfering with a maddened criminal. Once the program premiered, a steady stream of veteran TV street cops went bonkers and the star's makeup and

costume crew worked overtime. Immediately after every stress-fraught situation is set up, Wagner sweeps in like some sort of Freud-dripping Loretta Young.

Although it would be easy to say "anybody who watches this show should have their head examined," I, for one, shall not opt for the common critic's cutesy rhetoric. Instead I shall say "it's your move." But if you want to see *Jessie* in action, hurry. I've got a feeling it's not long for this world.

WE INTERRUPT THIS COLUMN FOR A "COMPARATIVE GENRE REVIEW!"

Not of this world is *V*. *V* was a highly rated miniseries. Then it was another immensely popular miniseries; *V-The Final Battle*. Then it was a lie, because now it's *V-The Series* (followed, no doubt, by *V-The Final Series*). In all it's incarnations, *V* is science fiction,



Angela Lansbury and Claude Akins in "Murder, She Wrote"

not mystery. No, wait a minute. *V* is too lousy. It doesn't deserve the noble definition of SF. *V* is "sci-fi."

In fact, *V* is sci-fi. The term sci-fi could have been coined for *V*. *V* is exactly the sort of illogical, inconsistent, and irredeemable dreck sci-fi is best used to describe. When will filmmakers learn that science fiction is *future fact*? When will they learn that SF is not an excuse for unrealistic plot and character devices?

*V* stands both for "Visitors," i.e., lizard-faced aliens with bitchin' human bodies who wear "human" masks, and "Victory," i.e., the battle to repel the outer space bozoes. Producer Robert Singer and company had the unenviable job of continuing a dead-end story that should have been left alone. Instead, Singer combined soap opera and space opera. There's a large cast fighting aliens and feuding with each other, but none of it is believable, entertaining, or even biologically possible.

However, if you like seeing beautiful, buxom California girls in nifty crimson togs rip off their faces to reveal green, scaly, snouts underneath or stuff entire muscrats into their craws (something they seem to do at least once an episode), this is *your* show!

WE NOW RETURN YOU TO THE REGULAR TAD ON TV COLUMN

ALREADY IN PROGRESS.

From the Paris Bureau:

The state of the French TV detective is terrible. For all intents and purposes, it's non-existent. What they've got, for the most part, is dubbed American shows, like *Starky et Huich* and *L'Agence Tous Risques (The A Team)* starring Monsieur T. At the moment, there is no continuing crime or mystery character native to these shores.

Instead, there's *Serie Noire*—a weekly broadcast of mystery-oriented telefilms. The week I was here they showed *Neige a Capri (Snow in Capri)*, a French-Italian coproduction starring the beautifully vacuous Philippine Leroy-Beaulieu (*all* French starlets are beautiful but have the empty expressions of days dead carp) who's able to twist all Naples men around her finger except the wily, world-wise Commissaire (Luigi de Filippo)—who prevents her gang from stealing a whole bunch of money bags. But even he is unable to prevent a whole bunch of people from getting shot in the head and shoulders.

Of far greater entertainment value is *Inspector Gadget*, a cartoon show produced in France, Canada, Los Angeles, and the Orient which combines Inspector Clouseau with *Get Smart* and *The Six Million Dollar Man*. It is an ambitious animation project, telecast five days a week in America, for a half hour each day. There, the main character is Inspector Gadget, given surprisingly effective voice by Don Adams. Effective, because, although this cartoon character is similar to Adams' own Maxwell Smart, the two personalities don't clash.

This is even more surprising, given Gadget's personality. He was once just a plain old International Police Inspector, but emergency surgery was called for when he slipped on a banana peel. His interior was replaced by biomechanical gadgets, making him a superhero, but an incredibly naive, dense one. Now he lives in Metro City with his niece Penny and his wildly intelligent dog, Brain—who cannot speak but is a master of disguise and walking on his hind legs.

In France, Inspector becomes *Inspecteur*, Penny becomes "Sophie" and Brain becomes "Finot." Still, the niece has her wrist-TV/Radio and versatile computer book which allows her to foil the evil machinations of the enemy organization, MAD, and it's insidious leader, Dr. Claw (who is never seen). Gadget's French voice is patterned neither on Max Smart or Clouseau. It is a high pitched, familiar voice, but neither Bill DeAndrea nor I could read the incredibly small voice credit at the end of the show—which is shown in five minute chunks on weeknights and then in complete form on weekends.

The humor may be sophomoric, but the animation and action set pieces are so impressive that *Inspector Gadget* ranks as the best cartoon on TV in either Paris or New York. If you or your children have to watch something animated, this is your best bet. As a TV Detective, Gadget ranks right up there with the likes of *T. J. Hooker* and *Matt Houston*. □

# The Radio Murder Hour

By Chris Steinbrunner

Once again, the Friends of Old Radio Convention held this past October proved a good mix of scholarship and showmanship in service of radio history. Some of the great performers from the golden age of the medium staged—exactly as it happened in the sound studios decades ago—a “live” episode of a late thirties’ *Mr. District Attorney* program, with some of the same actors who had done the original show! The plot was about Nazi fifth columnists shipped in secret from Europe to a New England coastal town—when originally broadcast, the incident was so close to actual headlines the day after that the program caused a flurry of interest from the FBI!

(Another re-staged show at the Convention was the annual Christmas fantasy of the *Grand Central Station* anthology program; no murder here, but despite that lack still interesting and moving.)

However, the high point of the panel sessions was the interview in-depth by erudite radio historian William Nadel of the legendary Edith Meiser, who brought Sherlock Holmes to radio and scripted his adventures for many years. Nadel’s introduction is worth noting: “This is a very special anniversary. Fifty-four years ago this day [October 20, 1984] the first Sherlock Holmes radio broadcast was aired on NBC. It was written by Edith Meiser. Seated next to me is Edith Meiser. Starring in the broadcast was William Gillette and Edith Meiser. Seated next to me is Edith Meiser...” The conversation which followed presents personal recollections of a largely lost era of radio drama.

The energetic and vivacious Miss Meiser—looking not a bit elderly (she is 86)—told first of how she was introduced to the Sherlockian writings: crossing the ocean on the transatlantic liner *Bremen* when she was 13, Edith was subject to sea-sickness. Her mother asked the purser for something exciting for the girl to read, and was given the Holmes stories. She read them the entire voyage, “and neglected to be sea-sick, much to my mother’s pleasure.” Her love for Sherlock Holmes has continued all her life.

(That summer in London, on a foggy Baker Street, the girl was sure she caught a glimpse of the famous detective himself turning a corner.)

Many years later, Meiser and her husband Tom McKnight became radio producers, although in those early years (the late twenties) nobody knew very much about the medium. They had seen William Gillette in a stage revival of *Sherlock Holmes* and thought the character would make a wonderful radio series. G. Washington Coffee agreed. The books themselves were at this time *out of print*, and it took them three years to sell the

idea. (Fortunately, Holmes himself was a coffee drinker in the stories, despite all those afternoon tea breaks, which was helpful to the sponsor.) The elderly Gillette (84), who had never been on radio, was approached to star on the first broadcast, before an invitational black-tie audience on the rood garden of the New Amsterdam Theater. Gillette, Meiser recalled, “a beautiful man—a strange thing to say about a man, but he was beautiful,” was provided because of his age a sit-down mike. Gillette inquired: “Are the rest of the actors sitting? If they can stand, I can stand.” And he did. He was splendid. (The show was “The Speckled Band,” and Meiser played Julia Stoner, a girl killed by her stepfather.)

The critics loved Gillette, but didn’t think much of Holmes—calling him *old-fashioned!* Fortunately, G. Washington Coffee had the courage to continue, and by the end of the season in a poll of radio critics the show was declared the number one favorite. Richard Gordon—a flamboyant actor—took on the role of Holmes after the initial Gillette broadcast (the latter was to play Holmes one more time in a Lux Radio Theater adaptation—by Meiser—of his own famous stage play). Gordon left after a contract dispute: he wanted to be paid twice for redoing the show each week over a telephone line for the West Coast.

The series was a huge success, and sparked the reprinting of the Doubleday complete Holmes stories volume, which was also a great success. After some years, Doyle’s original stories were of course depleted, and Meiser obtained permission from the estate to do free adaptations: “I could dream up a plot of my own using case titles which Watson spoke of but were never written.” Meiser wrote more than 64 original scripts for the series, and adapted 58 Doyle stories. *The Valley of Fear*, because of its mine-strikes

undercurrents, was a much too delicate topic for the Depression-ridden thirties. It was a challenge for her, however, to invent plots for such “lost” Watson cases as “The Politician, the Lighthouse and the Trained Comoran” or—better yet—“The Giant Rat of Sumatra.”

Basil Rathbone’s Universal Studios movies as Holmes were produced by Meiser’s husband, but she had no part in the scripts: “I never really approved enormously of bringing Sherlock Holmes up to date.” Instead she chose to remain in New York and resume an active stage career as an actress.

The Doyle estate had to approve all the scripts, so Meiser could never use the word “spooky”—because of the late Sir Arthur’s belief in spiritualism. The other Doyle story which she did not adapt was “The Final Problem”—Holmes dies at Reichenbach at its finish, which would disrupt the continuity of the series. Years later, in other hands, the story was freely adapted for American radio so that Holmes does *not* die, in a drama called “The Walking Dead.” In the BBC John Guilgud series, Holmes dies in “Final Problem” but comes back in “Empty House.”

Meiser was at times removed from the series when new sponsors wanted to make Holmes “modern and violent,” but then the ratings always dropped and she returned to work. Incidentally, she pioneered the dramatized commercial right at the beginnings of radio with the concept of the announcer dropping in on Watson for “a cup of G. Washington Coffee” (later Petri Wine), before the good doctor starts his narrative.

Much like G. Washington Coffee itself, now no longer marketed, Edith Meiser’s fine radio dramas have largely vanished. But her contribution to radio murder are—to echo the preface on many of her husband’s Universal Holmes films—“timeless and enduring.” □



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# What About Murder?

## A Continuing Supplement

Supplement by Jon L. Breen

- Carr, John C. *The Craft of Crime: Conversations with Crime Writers*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983. ix, 349 p.

Carr's thirteen subjects are Ed McBain, James McClure, June Thomson, Jane Langton, Gregory McDonald, Robert B. Parker, Emma Lathen, Dick Francis, Ruth Rendell, Peter Lovesey, Janwillem van de Wetering, and Mark Smith. Each interview is preceded by a biographical-critical introduction. In many cases, the conversations are less about writing *per se* than about the subject matter of the authors' books. For example, Carr discusses conditions in South Africa with McClure, the Victorian period with Lovesey, and horse racing with Francis.

Carr as interviewer is provocative without being too intrusive. Some obvious questions go unasked, however. In a joint interview with the two Lathen collaborators (who seem quite open and friendly), he never inquires about their extreme low profile in the field. Carr is also guilty of numerous solution giveaways, albeit with their authors' full cooperation. He is given to rather sweeping and doubtful statements, both concerning the mystery field (that "the modern police procedural began with McBain," page 2, and that McBain's Deaf Man is "the only on-going villain since Conan Doyle's Professor Moriarty," page 8) and other things (the statement to Francis that "American racing is rather crooked at the moment," page 212). At times, post-interview footnotes would help clarify matters. Carr and McBain disagree on how many total books he has written, Carr estimating a hundred and McBain claiming only about sixty. The actual figure (somewhere in between at around eighty) might have been footnoted.

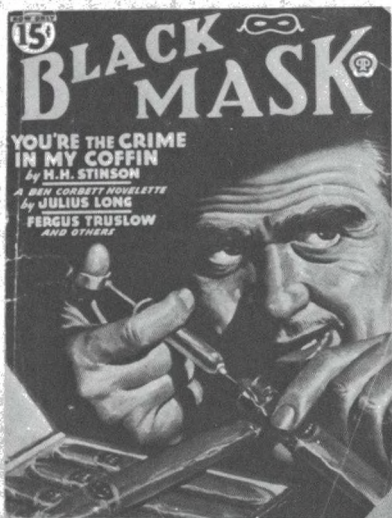
On the whole, however, the interviews are effective,

informative, and very readable. They point out just how seriously these writers, both those who are writing firmly in the detective/crime novel tradition and those who are trying to extend the boundaries of the genre, take their work. The McDonald interview, in which the creator of Fletch explains why he regards his novels as postrevolutionary, postcinematic, postexistential, postpsychiatric, and postideologic, is especially interesting. Among the most memorable quotes is Parker's statement about his fellow academics: "the average instructor chooses literature that has to be explained to the kid. Otherwise what has he got to do?" (page 151)

- Cook, Michael L. *Monthly Murders: A Checklist and Chronological Listing of Fiction in the Digest-Size Mystery Magazines in the United States and England*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1982. xv, 1147p. Index.

The title pretty well describes this massive undertaking, a very welcome one to serious collectors of mystery fiction. Cook has listed, issue by issue, the fictional contents of more than a hundred periodicals published between 1941 (the year *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, first and still greatest of the digests, debuted) and the end of 1980. The long-running survivors are here—*Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* and *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*, both newsstand staples since 1956—as well as such celebrated but departed competitors as *Manhunt* and *The Saint Magazine* (revived for three issues in 1984 under new management). Indexing of these giants is undoubtedly the most useful feature of the volume, but for the nostalgic collector, the attention given to obscure and short-running magazines

**A Comprehensive Index to  
Black Mask, 1920-1951**



**E. R. Hagemann**

(*The Girl from UNCLE, Keyhole, MacKill's, Private Eye, Malcolm's, The Mysterious Traveler, Verdict*) does much to add to the fascination. Cook also includes an index by author, allowing the user to trace all the digest-sized magazine appearances of such prolific short story writers as Edward D. Hoch (almost eight pages in the index!), Jack Ritchie, Fletcher Flora, and Robert Turner.

There are numerous errors and some unlocated issues. John Nieminski's detailed critique of Cook's work ("Closing the Gap," *The Mystery Fancier*, May/June 1983, pp. 6-15+) makes many valid points about the defects and unreliability of the product but agrees to its indispensability. Cook has included quite a bit of pseudonym information, but mystery fans (obsessed as they are with who done it) would like more still. The most notable defect is the lack of alternate title information. For example, Craig Rice's "Hanged Him in the Mornin'" is the same story as her oft-reprinted "His Heart Could Break," but that information is not here, nor is the fact that Joseph Commings recycled the same short story under several different titles in *Mystery Digest*. Admittedly, trying to include this information would have added immeasurably to an already vast project.

•Cook, Michael L. *Mystery, Detective, and Espionage Magazines*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1983. xxiv, 795 p. Bibl., index.

In a worthy companion volume to *Monthly Murders* (see above), Cook and a large group of expert consultants identify and describe nearly a thousand periodicals devoted to mystery and detective fiction. Included are pulp magazines, their digest-sized successors, and the plethora of fanzines that have appeared in recent years. The contributors form an impressive list of fans and scholars (to borrow a cliché that appears all too often and usually inappropriately in the volume's annotations, a "veritable who's who"), among them Robert C. S. Adey (specializing in British periodicals), Michael Avallone, Jane S. Bakerman, J. Randolph Cox (specializing in dime novel series), Robert Kenneth Jones (specializing in weird menace pulps), Robert A. W. Lowndes (himself one of the most prolific of pulp editors), John J. McAleer, Frank D. McSherry, Jr., Will Murray, Francis M. Nevins, Jr., and the most frequent and entertaining commentator of all, Robert Sampson (specializing in the hero pulps).

Each entry includes the following data (or as much of it as is known): index and location sources, title

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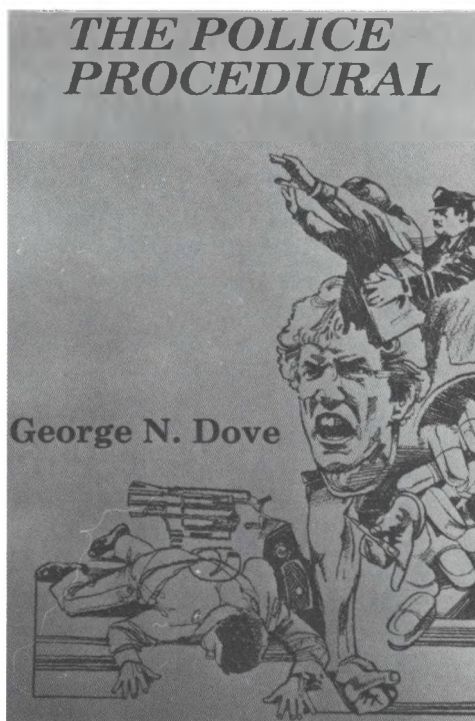
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changes, inclusive volumes and dates with number of issues, publisher's name and address, editors' names, price per issue, size and pagination, and current status (usually "discontinued" but occasionally "active"). There are cross references from variant titles. Following the main alphabetical section is a group of "Overviews of Foreign Magazines," including coverage of Australia, Denmark, France, Norway, and Sweden. (Some major markets have been omitted here, notably Japan.) Another section is titled "Book Clubs in Profile." Appendixes classify magazines by category (e.g., Dime Novels, Pulp, Digests, Non-fiction) in the U.S. and Great Britain; identify "Key Writers of the Golden Age" (i.e., pulp writers of the twenties through fifties) with the magazine titles they contributed to and the pseudonyms they used; a chronology by year of debut of magazines covered; lists of American and Canadian true-detective magazines (otherwise outside the scope of the volume); and lists of Sherlock Holmes scion societies and other periodicals of interest to collectors. The volume concludes with a two-page bibliography of monographic sources; an exhaustive index of names and titles; and a directory of contributors.

Anyone who loves the old magazines will have a wonderful time with this book. Longest entry (of ten pages) is justly accorded *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. *Black Mask* is covered in seven pages, and four of the hero pulps (*Doc Savage*, *The Phantom Detective*, *The Shadow*, and *The Spider*) rate six pages each. Most entries are much shorter, a couple of sentences in the case of some titles about which little information but the fact of their existence is available. While coverage of major publications is most valuable (and usually excellent), the accounts of lesser-known journals are equally entertaining. The description of at least one fanzine, *The Holmesian Federation* (devoted to crossing Sherlock Holmes with "Star Trek"), sounds like a hoax, though I'm confident it isn't.

As with Cook's *Monthly Murders*, one approaches this volume torn between nitpicking errors and imbalances of coverage and congratulating the editor on the unlikely fact that it exists at all. Emphasis was apparently left up to the contributors, making the coverage highly uneven in approach as well as length. In a few cases (notably *Manhunt's* two pages), the coverage is disappointingly slight. Herbert Harris, writing on the Crime Writers' Association's *Red Herrings*, contributes a history of the organization but relatively little about the contents of their newsletter. Faith Clare-Joynt's account of *London Mystery Magazine* seems more a valentine to publisher Norman Kark than an objective description of the periodical's contents. The incestuous liaisons of some contributors with their



own publications somewhat damages objectivity, of course—contributor Joseph Lewandowski pronounces his own periodical *Cloak and Pistol* "distinguished."

Though there is plenty of room for argument about emphasis and extensiveness of coverage of particular titles, factual errors (at least those obvious to the present reader) are relatively few. George Harmon Coxe is mistakenly credited with the series of stories about Daffy Dill, whose actual creator was Richard Sale. There is one reference to "Frederick" Brown, whose first name (Fredric) was constantly being misspelled by the various periodicals he contributed to. (Talmage Powell has had the same problem.)

- Corsaut, Anita; Muff Singer; and Robert Wagner. *The Mystery Reader's Quiz Book*. New York: Evans, 1981. 191 p.

The quizzes, grouped under headings like "About the Good Guys," "Whodunit and Why," "Dicks of the Flicks," "Cops on the Box," and "Little-known Facts About the Authors," are mostly multiple choice or matching with occasional fill-in-the-blank questions. There is also a crossword. For deeply-immersed buffs, most of the questions will not be very difficult, in contrast to single-author quiz books (e.g. on Doyle, Christie, and John D. MacDonald)



that to fill their pages must concentrate on obscure plot details of a limited number of stories. "Postmortem—A Master Sleuth's Quiz" finishes the book and is somewhat tougher than the rest of the book's contents.

The authors don't make many mistakes in their quizzes, but there are a few: a reference to a mystery novel called *The Man in the Cue*, which sounds like a pool-playing fantasy (page 43); to another called *Harvard Has a Murder* (should be homicide) (page 184); multiple references to an author called Edmond (should be Edmund) Crispin; and another to H. R. (without the F.) Keating (page 185). For a non-book of this kind, the miscue total isn't bad at all.

Not recommended as a library acquisition for obvious reasons.

- Dove, George N. *The Police Procedural*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1982. 274 p. Bibl., index.

With this book-length study, Dove has filled one of the gaps in the literature of mystery fiction history and criticism. In doing so, he passes the severest test of a work of literary analysis: he makes the reader want to discover (or rediscover) the great procedural writers. Dove's work is almost wholly descriptive rather than critical (though he does make occasional critical judgments, celebrating the excellence of Hillary Waugh's *Last Seen Wearing* and pointing out Ed McBain's rare failure in *Hail to the Chief*). He describes the elements and traditions of the procedural story in much the same fashion as Bruce Merry covers another branch of crime fiction in his *Anatomy of the Spy Thriller* (see WAM #51).

Dove begins with a historical summary of the procedural, dated from Lawrence Treat's *V as in Victim* (1945), then discusses the role of the police detective in classical and hardboiled mystery fiction. He devotes several chapters to the procedural's conventions, characters, and techniques; compares European and American procedural styles; discusses in individual chapters various police minorities (women, blacks, Jews, Hispanics); and gives full-chapter consideration to several of the most significant writers: John Creasey (whose name is spelled two different ways, in an untypical bit of carelessness), Maurice Procter, Hillary Waugh, Ed McBain, Bill Knox, Nicolas Freeling, Maj Sjowall and Per Wahloo, Collin Wilcox, and James McClure. In a concluding chapter, Dove states that the procedural mystery, unlike the hard-boiled, does not represent a rebellion against the classical tradition, and he offers extended discussions of two recent writers he believes are extending the boundaries of the procedural: Lawrence Sanders and Janwillem van de Wetering.

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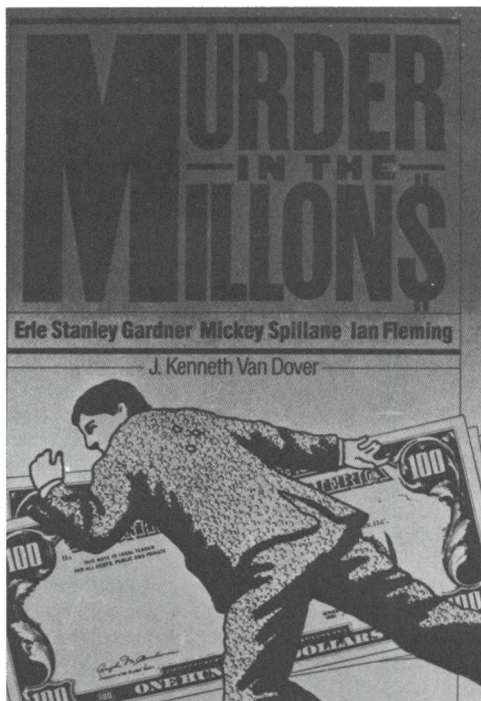
Dove discusses all the major writers of the procedural, but there are a few notable omissions: Jeffrey Ashford, Jonathan Craig, John Wainwright, the latter-day Richard Lockridge, and Ben Benson. (Dove might well claim that the police detectives of the latter two writers belong in the Great Policeman category, along with Roderick Alleyn, Maigret, and Inspector French, rather than to the procedural proper, where investigation is shared among several police).

Excellent as this book is at attaining what it sets out to do, I frankly wish there were more critical assessment. Who are the best writers and which their best novels? Dove offers a partial answer here for the careful reader. But which writers get better (or worse) as they go along? Which are most (or least) consistent? Given a choice between Dell Shannon, John Ball, and Maurice Procter, which should the discriminating reader pounce on first? Dove's stated reason for not including more criticism strikes me as distinctly odd: "The critical assumption in this study is that any work of art should be judged basically in terms of its purposes. If a story is written for the purpose of being popular, then the only basis for evaluation is the degree to which it achieves popularity. The task of the critic, then, is not to evaluate (the reading public does that) but to interpret." (p. 6) Surely, the goal of a writer of detective fiction is to write a good detective story as well as to sell copies. Following Dove's statement to its logical conclusion, the artistic success of mystery writers would be gauged by sales, and writers like Mickey Spillane and Don Pendleton would achieve a much higher ranking than some of us are willing to give them.

This, however, is frankly nitpicking. On the whole, Dove's volume is one of the most welcome contributions to mystery scholarship of recent years.

- Hagemann, E. R. *A Comprehensive Index to Black Mask, 1920-1951*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1982. 236 p. Bibl.

*Black Mask*, famed for introducing such major writers of crime fiction as Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Erle Stanley Gardner, has long been recognized as the greatest of the mystery pulp magazines. But until Hagemann's effort, there had been no published index to its contents. Hagemann indexes all fiction, with selective inclusion of letters and features. The listing includes 2509 items, arranged alphabetically by author, Cleve F. Adams to Erika Zastrow (a rare female contributor). Brief annotations identify detectives and backgrounds. A separate list enumerates editors and



writers chronologically by date of debut, listing series characters and total number of appearances. In an informative preface, Hagemann discusses the history of his project, as well as other supposed indexes of *Black Mask*, including one by the late William J. Clark which specialists swear exists but which cannot be located.

Gardner was the *Black Mask* champ in terms of volume, making 103 appearances under his own name between 1924 and 1943. He also made three early appearances as Charles M. Green (a name missing from the chronology, in a rare Hagemann lapse). Other prolific bylines: Carroll John Daly (60), Hammett (45), Raoul F. Whitfield (66 plus 24 as Ramon Decolta), Frederick L. Nebel (67), Roger Torrey (50), W. T. Ballard (43), George Harmon Coxe (27), and Cornell Woolrich (24). Chandler's appearances numbered only 11. Notable less frequent contributors included John D. MacDonald, William Campbell Gault, Lester Dent, Frank Gruber, Steve Fisher, Baynard H. Kendrick, Thomas Walsh, Murray Leinster, Frederick C. Davis, and (most surprisingly) J. S. Fletcher. The almost complete absence of women authors is notable (though probably not too surprising), even though a woman, Fanny Ellsworth, edited the magazine for a few years

in the late thirties, following the legendary Captain Joseph T. Shaw.

- Menendez, Albert. *Mistletoe Malice: The Life and Times of the Christmas Murder Mystery*. Silver Spring, Maryland: Holly Tree Press, 1982. 35 p. Bibl.

Menendez identifies 89 mystery novels with Christmas backgrounds, divides them into categories (e.g., Country House Party Thriller, Police Procedural, Department Store Glitter, etc.), and provides tantalizing plot summaries for some. The selection seems remarkably complete and the summaries, usually descriptive rather than critical, are gracefully written. It's especially nice to see notice given such relatively obscure books as M. P. Rea's *Death of an Angel* (1943), Frederick C. Davis's *Drag the Dark* (1953), David William Meredith's *The Christmas Card Murders* (1951), and Stuart Palmer's *Omit Flowers* (1937). The authors to return most frequently to a yuletide setting are Nicholas Blake, Helen McCloy, and Ed McBain (three novels each).

The main section is followed by a checklist, arranged alphabetically by author and including publisher and date of the first edition as well as alternate titles. The one minor irritant of the pamphlet is that Menendez sometimes refers to titles without their authors in his text, and it is necessary to scan through the checklist to find out who done it.

- Van Dover, J. Kenneth. *Murder in the Millions*. New York: Ungar, 1984. xi, 235 p. Illus., bibl., index.

Van Dover discusses the mystery field's three "Supersellers"—Erle Stanley Gardner, Mickey Spillane, and Ian Fleming—and tries to figure out why they have appealed to such large groups of readers. Though all have their adherents among fans and critics, I doubt anyone would claim they were the three best crime fiction writers of the Twentieth Century and I doubt very many would put more than one of them in the top ten or twenty.

Though Van Dover is an academic (assistant professor of English at Pennsylvania's Lincoln University), he is clearly also a fan, and his prose is smooth and readable. He makes some interesting points about the similarities and differences among his three subjects. For example, Perry Mason and James Bond (dissimilar as they may be in other ways) both have a respect for democratic institutions that Mike Hammer lacks. The works of Spillane and Fleming are full of psychopaths, but no one in a Gardner novel is ever insane. Fleming alone of the three is capable of irony. Fleming can make a real place come to life in his novels, while Gardner's backgrounds are sketchy to the vanishing point and Spillane's have the atmospheric exaggeration of

opera. Both Spillane and Gardner value a fast pace so much that events (if you bother to chart them) prove to be happening in an absurdly telescoped time frame. Ultimately, reading Van Dover's book helped me understand why I always enjoy Gardner's novels, can't stand Spillane's, and can take or leave Fleming's.

Not unexpectedly, though, I found Van Dover least fair to the writer I most admire. He stereotypes Gardner's novels in a reductive way, very much overdoing the alleged sameness of Perry Mason's adventures and failing to note their changes from the pulp-flavored thirties through the slick-flavored forties to the TV-flavored fifties and sixties. In dealing with a writer far more prolific than his other two subjects, Van Dover also sometimes trips over his generalizations. It is not true, for example, that no Mason case ever goes to the jury. It happens at least twice: in *The Case of the Terrified Typist* (1956) and again in *The Case of the Fenced-In Woman* (posthumously published in 1972).

The bibliography includes a checklist of the authors' books plus secondary sources on each author and a list of general references. Film and television adaptations are briefly listed and provide most of the volume's illustrations. □

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# CURRENT REVIEWS

**A Will to Kill** by John Penn. New York: Scribner, 1984. \$12.95

*A Will to Kill* begins when Peter Derwint, owner of an English family estate, Broadfields, is shot in the back during a violent rainstorm, while taking a shortcut home after a heated quarrel with his neighbor, Trevor Grayson. The crime novel ends with the confession of the murderer, but not before author John Penn has treated the detective fiction fancier to a banquet of red herrings, a roller-coaster ride of emotions, and a first-rate example of a mystery that consciously adheres to the "fair play" school.

The reader is privy to all the clues as they surface, and nothing is withheld. This takes a tremendous amount of authorial self-control, and many mystery writers who attempt it fail. Penn succeeds because he maintains throughout a third-person stylistic perspective. In most mysteries a central point of view emerges, so that the narrator is closely allied with the protagonist (be this protagonist a detective, victim, or one who has some connection to the victim) or with the perpetrator of the crime. *A Will to Kill's* narrative perspective shifts routinely from character to character, but not through the often-used convention of first-person serial narrative ("I killed X because"; "X seemed to me that day to be acting strangely"; "Had I but known that X was about to...") but rather through a third-person approach that lets the reader hold the judgmental yardstick up against each person's actions: "The Reverend Simon Kent had been wrestling with his conscience"; "Tim Railton unclenched his teeth and relaxed his fists"; and "Holly swung around, her heart thumping, her eyes bright with fear." The reader is, throughout, the judge, prodded rarely in an overt manner by the author, but manipulated throughout by Penn's control over his material.

The case of characters Penn invents

emphasizes this sense of diversity of opinion that is tightly reined in by the author. One meets the Derwint family, its fortune depleted, odd acres kept to preserve the estate, reduced so in means that the oldest daughter, Clare, must give horse-riding lessons, the mother vacuum her own house (horrors!) and the son scramble for money to study further at university. Then there is Grayson, a brooding chap, and his housekeeper, who, it seems, is carrying on an affair with the pubkeeper (Wilson, an early suspect because Derwint's last words were "Wilson"), who, in turn, has a wife suffering from chronic illness. Add to that a Derwint American cousin (who inherits Broadfields), a cleric's wife who likes to cross-dress, and a child with a graveyard obsession, and the reader confronts a challenging puzzle. The plot twists keep the criminal suggestively implicated and successfully protected until the novel's climax. And in the process the puns on the title, *A Will to Kill*, both conceal and reveal the murderer.

—Susan Clark

\* \* \* \* \*

**Pulptime** by P. H. Cannon. 96 pages. Weirdbook Press, P.O. Box 149, Amherst Branch, Buffalo, New York 14226. \$15.00 HC/\$5.00 PC (plus 75¢ postage)

Baker Street Irregulars and fans of horror writer H. P. Lovecraft alike should greet the publication of P. H. Cannon's mystery novella, *Pulptime*, with great enthusiasm. In it an elderly and rather bald Sherlock Holmes, assisted by Lovecraft and some of his real life friends, is out to recover some stolen documents in the notorious Red Hook section of Brooklyn, circa 1925. And what a tale it is.

The story, told as if narrated by author Frank Belknap Long (who was Lovecraft's closest friend and who provides the forward to the slender volume), is truly in the best tradition of the pulps. In pursuit of the aforementioned documents, which could prove highly embarrassing to a British gentleman of wide renown if made public, Holmes, Lovecraft, and Long travel from speakeasy to seance to the sewers of Brooklyn. Along the way the historical figures they encounter, including Houdini and the poet Hart Crane, provide an added sense of realism to the tale that is so often lacking in a work of fiction; Lovecraft himself virtually seems to come alive on the page. The amount of research that must have gone into the book is impressive, and while both Long, in his forward, and Robert Bloch, in his afterward, point out some minor inaccuracies, the typical reader won't even notice them, and would probably be too enthralled to care if he did.

Although Lovecraft occupies center stage more often than Holmes, Conan Doyle's immortal character is neither neglected nor forgotten. It is obvious that a lot of thought went into this affectionate portrayal of the Baker Street sleuth. While he has inevitably lost some of the vitality of his youth and does show some other signs of age, his mind is still sharp and his will focused. Holmes' own chronicler, Dr. Watson, does not put in an appearance, but his absence is explained.

Physically, the book is a very handsome product, largely due to the fine cover and interior artwork by Stephen Fabian, who based his illustrations on actual photographs of Lovecraft and his friends. Those who plan to purchase a paperback copy will be pleased to note that, like the hardcover, it, too, comes with the attractive dust jacket.

Everyone involved with the creation of this book—P. H. Cannon, Stephen Fabian, and the editor of Weirdbook Press, W. Paul Ganley—should be proud of the result. Kudos should especially go to P. H. Cannon, of course, for having written it in the first place, knowing full well that the story's appeal would be to a fairly specialized audience and that its commercial success would be limited. With a start like this though, one can only look forward to his future projects with relish.

*Pulptime* indeed!

—Will Johnson

\* \* \* \* \*

**Foul Shot** by Doug Hornig. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1984. \$13.95

One mystery writers' dictum that generally produces an atmosphere to support successful plotting is: write about something you know well. Doug Hornig knows basketball, and, in addition, he could virtually map the Charlottesville, Virginia, countryside. The result is *Foul Shot*, a "roundball" tale of suspense centering on a wealthy Southern white family's connections to Delmos Venable, the black superstar of the University of Virginia's basketball team, the Cavaliers, known to sports fans as the Wahoo's.

Hornig also knows detective fiction's conventions and literary forebears. His private eye hero, smart-mouthed Loren Swift, drinks and fights hard, picks up women (as does Robert Parker's Spenser) in offices of those suspects he interrogates, and deals with beautiful, hop-headed sisters (shades of Raymond Chandler). Hornig spins a plot as complicated as that of *The Maltese Falcon* but, because the scene of the crime is Charlottesville, after all, the mood can't match that which Hammett creates. Still, *Foul Shot* provides a satisfying puzzle for the reader.

Swift is hired by the wealthy Majors family to find the missing daughter Leigh. He soon

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Grounds for Murder

determines that Leigh and Delmos are in love. The case soon becomes complicated when Harlow Brennerman, a California private investigator, arrives and asks personal questions about the Majors' familial and financial affairs. Brennerman's murder, the violent death of a local civil rights worker, an attempt on Venable's life, and race riots in Charlottesville all complicate Swift's investigation of Leigh's disappearance. But when he locates Leigh at a Sikh commune to which her brother Bruce has retreated, the matter is still opaque—for Swift and the reader—because somehow the case has grown to include local attorney Carter Lockridge, oversexed sister Melissa, mother Elizabeth, and grandmother Sarah Jane. And somehow black roundball wizard Venable is connected to all of them as well as to the civic disturbances.

The tangle doesn't sort itself out until the mystery's end, and Hornig's plot twists take on the nature of the drives, feints, spins, and jumps that characterize "a typical Carolina/Virginia matchup." Hornig pits "the New South" against the racial tensions that have existed for generations and have been exacerbated by class distinctions and legislative injustice, and the outcome of the mystery depends upon Delmos, who is as impressive off the court as he is on it: "When this young man spoke about something that was important to him, his words took on an extraordinary power. It was a gift shared by all natural leaders. No wonder the white ruling elite was so afraid of him: That kind of impact crosses the color line." Swift's success in keeping Delmos alive and finding why someone is trying to kill him affects more than just the outcome of the Virginia/North Carolina game—and "the whole rest of the season, y'know. The NCAA's, stuff like that"—for it insures that performance on the court is not abridged off the court or by the courts. Hornig's message is that fouls must be called.

—Susan Clark

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**Close Her Eyes** by Dorothy Simpson. New York: Scribners, 1984. \$12.95

Luke Thanet is Police Inspector in the English town of Sturrenden, in Kent, and at first the disappearance of 15 year old Charity Pritchard appears to be a routine missing person report generated by an errant teenager and turned in by a relative (her father, in fact), except that it is received only minutes before Charity's dead body is found in a short-cut passageway between her home and that of Veronica Hodges, by all accounts her only friend at school. Veronica ostensibly accompanied Charity on a weekend trip to a hostel sponsored by the radical religious fundamentalist sect to which Charity's family belonged, the "Children of Jerusalem." Charity's father, despite his agitation, wants "no attempt made to find her." "God is sure to be watching over her," he states. Yet that is precisely what Thanet and his deputy, Lineham, set out to do, after her death. "Finding" Charity involves researching her present, a bleak house without bathroom and refrigerator, where the girl leads an oppressed

authority-dominated, barren existence, and delving into a past characterized, on the one hand, by unconscionable child abuse, repression, and silence, and informed, on the other hand, by a number of people prepared to testify to Charity's sexual precocity and voracity, her own method of resisting patriarchal domination ("she sharpened the only weapon she possessed: her sexuality"), and the commonly agreed-upon "barren rigidity" that characterized both Charity's home atmosphere and parental guidance.

The real Charity gradually emerges over the pages of this well-crafted mystery novel, and it is one to shock her parents as well as Thanet and the reader. An unruly child in primary school, recalled by her retired headmistress, Mrs. Foskett, as "one of my worst failures," Charity subsequently becomes a quiet loner in high school, whose only "friend," Veronica, is bound to her, we learn, because Charity is blackmailing her. In fact, Charity's lack of control over her life, as her hours are regimented by school, homework, youth group, church, piano lessons, and practicing, results in her need to exert control over others' lives. By the novel's midpoint, the reader learns not only the financial but also the desperate sexual and emotional blackmail Charity variously practices on her teachers, non-immediate relatives, strangers picked up on trains, and her only "friend." Yet, as Charity's high school headmistress notes, "one is always aware that the dead

have no right of reply, that they can't defend themselves and never will be able to again. And when someone has died as Charity did, a victim of violence, it almost seems as though one is compounding the crime by blackening all that is now left to her, her reputation." In the final analysis, Charity is more sinned against than sinning, and the suspects in the crime are all plausible, all who had legitimate griefs against her but all of whom contributed in their actions to the warping of her personality.

In *Close Her Eyes* Simpson has created a real who-dun-it, up to the very end, and the murderer's unveiling is perfectly anticipated and yet thoroughly surprising. The result is a compelling mystery puzzle that nevertheless speaks to oppressive situations in today's society, where parents' and children's values and public and private morals so often clash. Charity cannot herself speak for her motives, and the reader experiences them only through the fragmented consciousnesses of her immediate family, relatives, teachers, lovers, one night stands, and "friend." The story, while overtly about Charity's murder and its solution, is ultimately about how elements of a child's personality are killed, maimed, or wounded to heal with lasting scars. It is a telling indictment of how evil is often returned by evil, and how negativity feeds upon and even breeds negativity. *Close Her Eyes* makes for gripping, relevant reading.

—Susan Clark



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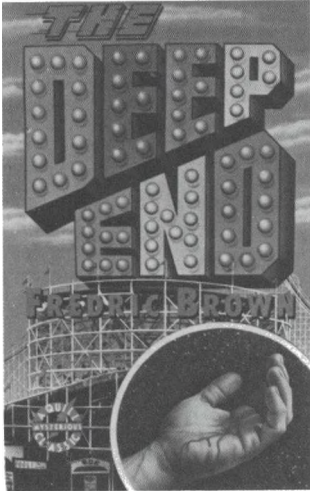
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# THE PAPERBACK REVOLUTION

By Charles Shibuk

## FREDRIC BROWN

A teen-ager is killed under the wheels of a roller coaster at a local amusement park, and it looks like an accident. Newspaperman Sam Evans becomes suspicious and starts to discover other "accidents," little realizing that he's next on someone's list. **The Deep End** (1952) (Quill) is a straightforward suspense novel, and a fairly good example of Brown's talent. This edition would appear to be its first American revival in exactly 30 years.



## JOHN EVANS (HOWARD BROWNE)

**Halo in Blood** (1946) (Quill) introduces private eye Paul Pine, and starts with the funeral of an unknown man attended by 12 ministers. Violence and murder soon follow. **Halo for Satan** (1948) (Quill) is equally violent, and concerns a bishop, a 25 million dollar manuscript, beautiful girls, and assorted gangsters.

(Note: this author is one of the better hard-boiled writers, and his work has, disgracefully, been out of print for some 25 years. His masterpiece *The Taste of Ashes* is one of the 3 or 4 best private eye novels written since World War Two, but has never appeared in paper covers in America.)

## BARBARA MOORE

Medical practitioners in crime fiction are far from unique, but Gordon Christy, the protagonist of **The Doberman Wore Black** (1983) (Dell), is a doctor of Veterinary medicine. After setting up practice in a Vail, Colorado ski resort, Christy soon discovers a murder victim and the titular character, who's far from friendly, in a luxurious condominium. This first mystery is well-written, entertaining, and very well set.

## BILL PRONZINI

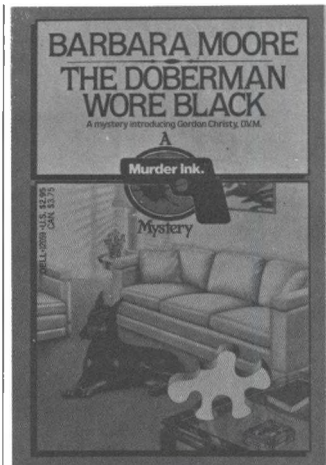
Foul Play Press continues to reprint the exploits of the popular "Nameless Detective." *Undercurrent* (1973) starts with an assignment from a jealous wife that culminates in her husband's murder in a motel room. The only clue is a paperback mystery. **Blowback** (1977) finds "Nameless" helping a friend by investigating a potentially explosive situation in a Sierra Nevada fishing camp while fearfully awaiting the results of a lung x-ray. *Blowback* is the best of its series; a short, powerful, and very impressive work.

## HERBERT RESNICOW

While recovering from a case of cardiac arrest, puzzle fan Alexander Gold is prevailed upon to investigate a locked room murder by a neighbor whose future son-in-law has been taken into custody by the police. **The Gold Solution** (Avon) is entertaining, puzzling, appealing, and probably the second best "first" novel published in 1983.

## CHRIS STEINBRUNNER, OTTO PENZLER, MARVIN LACHMAN, & CHARLES SHIBUK

The Edgar-winning *Encyclopedia of Mystery & Detection* (1976) has just been published in a trade paperback edition by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. "The basic



reference work on the mystery genre, both in written form and on film. Author biographies, checklists, plot summaries, descriptions of principal detectives and villains, with more than 300 illustrations." Robert E. Briney, *The Mystery Story*. □



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# PAPER CRIMES

By David Christie

**An Old-Fashioned Mystery** by Runa Fairleigh, edited and with an introduction by L. A. Morse, Avon, 1983, \$2.95. **Trace When Elephants Forget**, by Warren Murphy, Signet, 1984, \$2.95.

To say that a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end is only to say that an author has three chances to spoil his story. In **An Old-Fashioned Mystery**, for instance, an introduction that begins the book is agreeable enough and an epilogue that ends it is very clever, both being, to various degrees, unorthodox. But the middle, which is the main body of the story and by a considerable margin the longest stretch of the book, seems every bit as traditional a mystery as the title implies. And early on, one character picks up a paperback mystery, throws it away in disgust, and pronounces, "Books like that are filled with pages and pages of boring exposition." Another character replies, "Mostly it's necessary," to which the first responds, "Necessary or not, it's still boring." Could this be a warning to the reader? Even if not, boring exposition seems one of the traditions that *An Old-Fashioned Mystery* observes faithfully in its middle section.

The story, ostensibly by one Runa Fairleigh, concerns eight guests, two servants, and a hostess who gather in a gothic mansion on an island in the Thousand Islands region between Canada and New York to celebrate the hostess's twenty-fifth birthday; once on the island, they find they have no way off and must await the unscheduled arrival of local boatmen. The cast includes a rich and amoral man; his twin sister who, by virtue of having solved a crime or two in her past, is known as the "Society-Girl Detective"; a retired colonel and his wife (despite being set in North America, and perhaps due to its proximity to Toronto, the book has a British tone); the hostess's handsome fiance; an attractive ingenue with a secret; an insane old woman who tends to make eerie situations more so; and others. Abruptly, one of their number is murdered, and the remaining ten become simultaneously sleuths and suspects. The Society-Girl Detective, more properly named Violet Cornichon, takes charge, but despite her efforts, additional murders occur, and the game becomes not so much finding the murderer as finding him or her before everyone is killed. The situation, of course, is familiar enough; as Violet observes, "isolation, intrigue, strange characters, an escaped killer, violence, bloodshed, murder, even an ancient curse; it was just like one of those old-fashioned mysteries that everyone loved."

For a while, this very familiarity is charming; one is eager to know how many, and what, classic situations the author has

chosen to include. Yes, for instance, there is a locked-room murder, even if the characters steadfastly fail to recognize it as such for more than a hundred pages after it's committed. For another example, there is some question about whether all the murder victims are actually dead, or whether one has used the appearance of death to carry out the other murders.

But that charm pales in a short time. Precisely because the characters are so familiar, they hold no surprises. One is not supposed to know for a while, for instance, that the fiance wishes to marry the hostess for her money, but only a dolt would fail to recognize him immediately as a gigolo. That the colonel would be a turgid and violent-minded boor is expected, and the expectation is fulfilled. And so on; each character is one-dimensional and obvious, and remains by the end of the book exactly what he or she was at the beginning. Meanwhile, Violet's investigation quickly forms a pattern that also works to remove any suspense. Soon after the first murder, she offers a solution, which the reader knows cannot be correct; there's too much of the book left. And sure enough, as soon as she offers her solution, the accused killer is himself killed, and Violet is proven wrong. With each death, Violet offers another solution; with each solution, the accused killer is killed; the author, it begins to seem, could not do more to telegraph the story's action. And as victim after victim is killed, one begins to wish that the hostess had invited fewer guests, say three, for a total of six murders, so that there could have been a bit less necessary-but-boring exposition.

But on to better parts. In the introduction, editor L. A. Morse, an Edgar winner, introduces putative author Runa Fairleigh, who is said to have been embroiled in her own, unsolved mystery. She is described as settling on one of the Thousand Islands and living

there for more than thirty years without human association, during which time she wrote this book. Having completed it, she left the island, never to be seen again. Although the introduction is apparently straightforward, it has an important bearing on the story which is likely to be evident only in retrospect.

About the epilogue, the less said the better, since it is here that the mystery is solved. But one can demonstrate that it is as unusual as the story is orthodox by saying that it does not begin with the detective assembling the survivors to dictate the correct solution to them, but instead finds the victims assembling somewhere in heaven to discuss among themselves who might have killed them. And the answer, although astonishing and highly imaginative, is plainly evident in the story, if only one knows where to look. Few readers will guess it.

So, despite its tendency to drag, the book is worth reading for the cleverness of its ending. Perhaps the only valid means of judging a book like this is by the author's ability to give all the evidence necessary for the reader to solve the crimes, and yet to disguise that evidence so that the reader cannot arrive at the correct solution. Fairleigh (that is, Morse) is clearly masterful at that.

**Trace When Elephants Forget** is Warren Murphy's third novel about Devlin Tracy, Trace to his friends, an insurance investigator who lives in Las Vegas. He is called to New York City to investigate the murder of a college student whose body was found alongside a Connecticut highway; the victim's life was insured by the company that retains Trace, which explains his involvement, and the victim's family lives in New York, which explains why Trace ends up there rather than in Connecticut.

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The only available clue is the rubber Richard Nixon mask that the victim was wearing when his body was found, and the discouraging prospects of the case help explain why Trace chooses to spend much of his time on other matters. But then, readers of the first two novels know that no explanation is really necessary; Trace's antipathy to work runs deep, his investigative skills are not all that sound, and in this case at least, he has a great deal on his mind. An alcoholic and a four-pack-a-day smoker, he has made a bet with Chico Mangini, the woman with whom he lives, that he can cut down seriously while they are in New York. If he wins, he gets five hundred dollars, but if he loses, he is obliged to telephone his children, "what's-his-name and the girl," with whom he has avoided speaking for two years.

More importantly, Trace's father Sarge, a former New York City cop, has opened a

detective agency and presumes that Trace will join it as a partner. Trace is not sure he's right for the job and, in a funny parody of Robert Parker's Spenser, tests his ability as a detective by trying gourmet cooking (his Green Pepper Veal Surprise has hot dogs in place of the veal), imported beer, exercise (he's capable not of doing a dozen pushups, but of doing one pushup twelve times), and thinking "big thoughts." (In another clear reference to the Spenser books, Trace vows that "I'm only making it with lady social workers who make me listen to their sophomoric ideas of life before giving me any, if I'm still unlucky enough to be awake.")

But if Trace is apparently an unlikable guy in a seemingly rambling book, appearances are deceiving. First, the lunatic sense of invention with which Murphy endows Trace, and of which the test of his detective skills is an example, is as agreeable and redeeming as

it was in the first two books; it's hard to hold anything against Trace. (And one cannot help but think favorably of Trace for his quite sensible abhorrence of New York City.) Moreover, characterization seems more sophisticated, and Trace more generous-spirited, in this book. Earlier, Trace was largely self-absorbed; for example, his relationship with Chico, a casino dealer and part-time prostitute, was marked by lying, betrayal, and manipulation. They continue to lie to each other in this book, but betrayal and manipulation are replaced by an underlying respect for each other that is evident subtly even when they (especially Trace) behave falsely. It's as strange a relationship as it's always been but it's more readily understood, and more interesting. Sarge is also nicely realized in this book, although other characters who have appeared in previous books—Bob Swenson and Walter Marks,

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who own and work for the insurance company with which Trace is affiliated, and Trace's mother and ex-wife—are little more than mentioned here.

Trace's method of investigation is to talk with anyone who might be even remotely connected with this case—this time, the victim's father, who owns an elegant nightclub as well as a neighborhood bar, mother, aunt, and college friends, as well as some of the father's employees. He tape-records all of them secretly, and mulls over the tapes until things begin to make sense to him. It's not

inspired detection, and he gets a lot of help—Chico has most of the insights that break the case, and Trace hires Sarge's agency to help with the legwork. But Trace by no means considers himself to be an inspired detective, even if he likes to fancy himself a thinker of big thoughts. Instead, he believes that things will fall into place eventually, and that belief allows Murphy to construct a tightly plotted book in which, for quite some time, nothing new seems to be uncovered, but small facts accumulate and lead eventually to large conclusions.

There is a small fault—Trace acknowledges a need to consult with a Lt. Shriner of the Connecticut State Police, but never does, and the policeman disappears from the book without a trace. There's a larger fault as well—Trace is shocked to learn, apparently for the first time, that his father has had an extramarital affair, but in the first book in the series, Trace recalls another of his father's affairs. Neither of these faults, however, detracts seriously from a very enjoyable and often funny book. *Trace When Elephants Forget* is recommended highly. □



## Minor Offenses

By Edward D. Hoch

Anthologies of original stories have long been popular in the horror and science fiction fields but it's only recently that their popularity seems to be spreading to the mystery-suspense genre as well. In an earlier column I mentioned the British reliance on a pair of annual anthologies, *John Creasey's Crime Collection* and *Winter's Crimes*, and thanks to St. Martin's Press both have become available to American readers. In late 1983 they were joined in America by an annual titled *Ellery Queen's Prime Crimes* (Dial Press/Davis Publications), and late 1984 saw *The Eyes Have It* (Mysterious Press), the first annual anthology of the Private Eye Writers of America.

All of these books were available in late November or December, and together they provided more than 50 new stories for American audiences. *John Creasey's Crime Collection 1984* is not technically an original anthology, but eight of its 17 stories are new. Authors included are Joan Aiken, Eric Ambler, Celia Dale, Clare Dawson, Cyril Donson, Celia Fremlin, Michael Gilbert, Peter Godfrey, Ella Griffiths, Palma Harcourt, Herbert Harris, H. R. F. Keating, Jean McConnell, Anthony Price, Dorothy Simpson, Julian Symons and Tony Wilmot. *Winter's Crimes 16* features Ted Albuery, Simon Brett, Lionel Davidson, Michael Gilbert, Michael Z. Lewin, James McClure, Ellis Peters, Miles Tripp and David Williams.

The 17 authors in *The Eyes Have It* include Lawrence Block, Max Collins, Michael Collins, Loren D. Estleman, Stephen Greenleaf, Edward D. Hoch, Richard Hoyt, Stuart Kaminsky, T. Robin Kantner, Michael Z. Lewin, John Lutz, Marcia Muller, William F. Nolan, Sara N. Paretsky, Bill Pronzini, Robert J. Randisi and L. J. Washburn. All the stories are new except the Block, which had an earlier appearance in the August issue of *Playboy*. *Ellery Queen's Prime Crimes 2* adds some 20 more new stories to our list, including a short novel by William Bankier and stories by Antonia

Fraser, Edward D. Hoch, Clark Howard, John Lutz, Jane Paynter, Frank Sisk and Hillary Waugh, among others.

Occasional new stories are also to be found in some of the Fall season's reprint anthologies. Edward Wellin has a new one titled "Voiceover" in *Sherlock Holmes Through Time and Space* (Bluejay Books), and Marcia Muller's "Kingling Point" appears in *Witches' Brew* (Macmillan). Both books lean heavily toward science fiction and fantasy, but still manage some appeal to mystery readers as well.

*The Saint Magazine* seems to have vanished after just three moderately good issues. While we hope its troubles are temporary, we turn our attention now to *Espionage*, the latest entry in the field. Started as a bimonthly with its December 1984 issue, *Espionage* has the national distribution *The Saint* lacked, and an impressive list of first-issue authors. There are no special standouts among the stories, and one would wish that the cover art were a bit better, but the magazine does study the field of intrigue quite well in both fact and fiction. Interviews with some important spy novelists are promised for future issues.

More good news in the magazine field is the revival of the legendary *Black Mask* magazine as the *New Black Mask Quarterly*. It'll be sold through bookstores as a trade paperback, with the first issue due in the Spring of 1985. Both new stories and reprints from the original *Black Mask* are planned. Since the editors are Matthew J. Bruccoli and Richard Layman, we can expect it to be strongly in the tradition of Hammett, Chandler and Ross Macdonald.

The second half of 1984 saw *Playboy* publishing mystery and suspense fiction at the unusual rate of a story in every other issue. August featured Lawrence Block's "By the Dawn's Early Light," mentioned in my last column, and October had Donald E. Westlake's tale of the South American drug trade, "A Good Story." In December there

was an unusual 87th Precinct Christmas story by Ed McBain, "And All Through the House."

The Mid-December and January issues of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* offered an extra treat for readers with an Author Photo Quiz in which the reader was challenged to identify pictures of famous mystery writers and *EQMM* contributors. It was all part of a celebration to mark *EQMM's* 500th issue, published in January.

A final word about two of the better single-author collections to appear this year. Dorothy Salisbury Davis's *Tales For a Stormy Night* collects all of her admirable short fiction, published over a period of 32 years. Joseph Hansen's *Brandstetter & Others* contains five novelettes, two of them about homosexual insurance investigator Dave Brandstetter. Both volumes are published by Foul Play Press, an imprint of Countryman Press. Not quite up to these high standards but still fun to read is S. S. Rafferty's *Die Laughing and Other Murderous Shick*, a collection of mysteries about night club comic Chick Kelly, published by International Polygonics. □

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The cover price of *The Armchair Detective* will increase to \$6.00 beginning with Vol. 18, No. 3 Summer 1985.

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The cost of back issues will also increase to \$6.00. Order your back issues before August 1, 1985 while they still cost only \$5.00 each.

## CRIME HUNT



By T. M. McDade

On the afternoon of December 3, 1932, 79,000 people filled Philadelphia's Franklin Field to witness the resumption of regular football relations between the Army and Navy, interrupted in 1927. Instead of the usual rain, snow or sleet which attended this game as regularly as the Navy goat, it was a beautiful Indian summer day.

Military dignitaries filled the midfield boxes. On the Army side Secretary of War Patrick J. Hurley entertained in his box his wife's aunt and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. John H. Borden. In the adjoining box was the Army Chief of Staff, General Douglas MacArthur, while across the field Charles Francis Addams, Secretary of the Navy, and Rear Admiral W. V. Pratt, Chief of Naval Operations, greeted friends and associates.

At 2:30 P.M. the referee's whistle signaled the start of the game and, with a mighty roar, the crowd rose in its seats as Summerfelt, Army captain, kicked off.

One spectator in the crowd did not rise with the whistle. In the box of the Secretary of War, John H. Borden sat slumped in his seat, unnoticed in the excitement of the moment. As the crowd settled back it was discovered that he had collapsed and an ambulance was hurriedly called. Though he was rushed to the University Hospital, he was pronounced dead on arrival. The cause of death given by Dr. Bost was *angina pectoris*.

That night in reporting Army's 20-0 triumph over Navy, the Philadelphia papers noted the death of John Borden and chronicled in precise newspaper style the salient facts of his life—namely, that he was sixty-two years old, the husband of Margaret Chapman Borden, resided at 1215 South Broad Street and was head teller of the Central Office of the First National Bank of Philadelphia where he had been employed for forty-two years.

On the following Monday morning, Edward A. Stoops, head teller of the Main Office of the bank, went to the Central Office to check Borden's cash, as each teller keeps his cash in his own lock box. A count of the case proved it correct, but there was a curious discrepancy. A check for \$70,000 required to balance Borden's accounts and expected from the Atlantic Refining Company for money purportedly delivered the previous week, had not been received. Further, inquiry of the oil company disclosed that none of its officials knew of the transaction.

According to Stoops, on the previous Tuesday, Borden had telephoned and

requested that he be sent \$70,000 in addition to a regular cash delivery of \$6,120. Borden said that Carl Chaffee, a vice-president of the bank, told him that the Atlantic Refining Company was going to pay a Christmas bonus to its employees and wanted \$70,000 in new bills. To keep it a secret from employees, however, they requested that the charge for the \$70,000 not be entered on their bank statement. According to Borden a check for that amount would be delivered on Monday to take care of the charge to the account.

Stoops said that he had prepared a package containing \$40,000 in twenties, \$20,000 in tens and \$10,000 in fives, all new money, and put it in a sealed bag. This bag, together with \$6,120 in a canvas sack to reimburse Borden's own cash fund, was given to an elderly messenger named Ralston who apparently delivered both to Borden. Stoops held a receipt signed by Borden on which were listed the \$6,120 and "1 sealed bag 70#." On the same day, four days before Borden's death, Stoops prepared a ticket charging the Atlantic Refining Company with \$70,000, and he had this ticket approved by an assistant cashier named Hollingsworth as the bank required.

As Stoops checked Borden's accounts, he inquired about the \$70,000 check, but the other tellers knew nothing of the transaction. As for the oil company, they stated emphatically that they had requested no such amount and were not paying a bonus. Thus as December 5th came to a close the officers of the bank found themselves scratching their heads over a shortage of \$70,000 and wondering where next to look.

As the insurance investigators began their inquiries, one significant fact came to light almost at once. For some months Borden had been receiving mysterious telephone calls which disturbed him. A fellow teller noticed these calls and got the impression that someone was demanding money of Borden and that he was trying to put him off. This was reported to Carl Chaffee, a vice president. Banks feel a more than casual interest in the private lives of tellers and Chaffee instructed the telephone operator to listen in on suspected calls to Borden.

The operator soon reported that a man named "Charlie" often called Borden and asked for money and that Borden tried to put him off. She got the impression that Borden was afraid of Charlie as he usually agreed to see him when Charlie insisted. In fact, on Wednesday, November 30th, Charlie had

called Borden and told him to meet him at the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel after work. This was reported to Chaffee who went to the rendezvous himself to see Charlie who was a character straight out of Ring Lardner. Hoping to force Borden to introduce him to this man, Chaffee went up to Borden, but the stranger walked off at Chaffee's approach and the bank officer didn't learn the purpose of the meeting. This incident took place three days before Borden's death.

There was now a large number of investigators in the bank, including insurance company sleuths, state bank examiners, auditors of the Federal Reserve System, agents of the F.B.I., detectives from the district attorney's office and the bank's public accountants. They pored over the records of the transactions, old and current, and checked entries for months past. When they were done they knew no more than when they had started.

Ralston, the aged messenger who had made the delivery to Borden, was not very helpful. He recalled the sack with the \$6,120 and another package, but he described it as smaller than Stoops had described it. He said he left them on Borden's counter, that Borden signed the receipt and went on working.

Stoops himself was not free from criticism; the bank examiners found fault with his receipt for not clearly identifying the amount, although in a bank practice tellers often sign for "a sealed bag." Besides his story was fully supported by his action in preparing a charge of \$70,000 to the oil company and getting another officer to approve it *four days before* Borden's death. Investigators who left nothing to chance even checked Stoops' movements over the weekend but it was clearly established he was deer hunting in Western Pennsylvania from Wednesday to Sunday night.

All this investigation had taken several days so that when the question arose of whether Borden's death was really due to natural causes, he had already been buried. His family was naturally reluctant to permit an exhumation for a post mortem and, lacking more definite information, the authorities hesitated to apply for a court order to do so.

At the same time Borden's house was discreetly searched with particular attention to his own quarters where the bed and stuffed furniture were probed with long needles, but without a sign of the \$70,000.

In an effort to locate the unknown "Charlie" who had been calling Borden, the

bank officer examined hundreds of police photos and finally identified one, Charlie Cole, as the man he had seen with Borden three days before his death. Cole had a police record as a race track tout and gambler and was quickly located by the police. He readily admitted he had called Borden for money reputedly due him for some small bets Borden had made on races, but that the sums were never more than \$75 or \$100. As there was no reason for holding Cole he was released.

Gradually the various agencies poking about the bank concluded their checking and departed. The Federal bank examiners admonished Stoops for his casual treatment of the \$70,000; the insurance companies admitted liability under their fidelity bond, paid the bank the \$70,000 loss and closed their files. Only the F. B. I. picked away at the bare bones, still displeased with so unsatisfactory a conclusion, but its efforts lessened with the passing of time. A year later the case, while not "closed," was moribund, kept active by a brief note every sixty days.

In the F. B. I. it is the fate of every new agent arriving at a field office to be assigned the old cases which others have long since tired of. This was how Spencer Drayton, an agent-accountant newly assigned to the Philadelphia office, got the case.

Drayton first spent several days reading over the voluminous files. A tremendous amount of work had been done by all the agencies involved, and his first feeling was one of hopelessness. Drayton was not only new to that office, he had been in the bureau less than a year and his experience was small compared to those who had already worked on the case. He felt that if he were to contribute anything new it would not be done by checking what others had done before him.

In most cases, the obvious suspect is usually the real criminal. Drayton felt that, if this were true in this case, there was nothing for him to do since all those leads had been followed and Borden was dead. Suppose, Drayton asked himself, that despite all the damning evidence, Borden had been innocent? Suppose in fact that Stoops had never sent any \$70,000 to Borden in the first place? This possibility had, of course, been considered by the original investigators and dismissed because of Stoops' recording of the transaction while Borden was alive and Ralston's recollection of the delivery of a package. Drayton took the first steps to explore his hypothesis.

At Stoops' bank Drayton asked for all the tellers' tally sheets for October 4, 1932. This date, overlooked before because it was two months prior to the theft, was the date of the previous bank examiners audit. If there is anything wrong in a teller's account, this is the day it must be covered up. The date when these examinations are to be made is generally kept secret and the first warning a teller has is when the examiner walks into the bank to begin his check.

Among the items on Stoops' tally sheet for that day, Drayton found an item worth checking, a withdrawal of \$50,000 charged to

the Curtis Publishing Company. Drayton traced the item into the Curtis account and, in noting that it had actually been charged to them, he also saw that a week later \$50,000 was credited to the account, offsetting the previous entry. In an account as large as that of Curtis, publisher of the *Saturday Evening Post*, this was not unusual, but it had interesting implications.

Then Drayton took an unusual step; with the bank's record of the account he visited Curtis to see what the \$50,000 items were for. There he found an odd thing—the copy of the October bank statement sent to that company by the bank made no mention of withdrawal or deposit of \$50,000. This was the first tangible clue. As the next step Drayton made a similar check for the next previous date of a bank examination, April 14, 1932. This time Stoops' tally sheet showed a charge of \$35,000 to Curtis and the account again showed a charge and offsetting credit—and the statement to Curtis made no mention of either.

To an auditor the picture now looked clearer, though much was still a matter of conjecture. Stoops, not Borden, had been stealing from his cash. He could be short from day to day in his account, but on the day of the bank audit, he had to get his account into balance. On these dates, by making a fake withdrawal in the Curtis account, he transferred the shortage there. An auditor could have discovered this only by verifying the balances of all the accounts with depositors themselves and this was not done. A few days after the auditors had left, Stoops reversed the entry and took back the shortage into his own cash. Further, he recopied the statement which was mailed to the Curtis Company, omitting his own entries.

In reconstructing what had happened, it became apparent why Stoops had escaped suspicion until then. On the morning of November 29th, Stoops was short about \$70,000. The next day, a Wednesday, he expected to go to the western part of the state for a five-day hunting trip. While he was away it was necessary that his accounts be in order, in case the bank examiners should arrive in his absence. He did this by preparing a charge for \$70,000 to the Atlantic Company, having it routinely approved by a bank officer. Formal approval of such transactions is usual but the signing is automatic when no payment is being made.

With this charge the shortage was safely hidden in the oil company account. Had the account at the bank been compared with the oil company records, the difference would have been noted. Stoops, however, expected to reverse the entry on his return and also make sure that the statement which went out to them made no mention of those entries. He would follow the procedure he had previously used with the Curtis account in concealing his shortage.

On Sunday, December 4th Stoops arrived home from his hunting trip and learned of the death of Borden, reported in the morning papers. At that time there was born in Stoops' mind a scheme to rid himself of the \$70,000

shortage and put it on Borden.

There is, perhaps, no better example of accepting a calculated risk. Stoops must have appraised his present precarious position against the chance of dumping the whole loss on the shoulders, or in the grave, of John Borden. Fiction is full of instances of rogues blaming others for their crimes; in real life, this case is almost unique.

The following morning Stoops made his audit of Borden's cash. At that time he told the story he had invented of sending \$70,000 in cash to Borden, reputed for the oil company bonus. He could not produce a receipt for \$70,000 signed by Borden, but he did add to the receipt which Borden signed for the \$6,120 the words "1 sealed bag 70#". His greatest danger lay in Ralston, the messenger who delivered the bag. Ralston, however, was an old man and susceptible to suggestion. There was perhaps even a veiled threat of consequences to himself if he didn't recall the episode. He was shown the altered receipt, and while his own book did not list the extra bag, Stoops practically convinced him he did deliver it but had forgotten the transaction. He was also not many years from retirement and Stoops' position as head teller did not admit of much disagreement with the story as Stoops told it.

Ralston said he didn't recall the transaction very well, but at the same time did attempt to describe the package and how he had left it with Borden. Of course, the one thing which gave credence to Stoops' story was the fact that he had made a charge to the oil company four days before Borden's death, for if it were not done because of Borden's story, no other reason was then evident.

## SOLUTIONS FOR DIAL N FOR NONSENSE

- 1 a. Amber (Lambert, Larnet)
- b. Hughes (Lambert)
- c. Ty (Lambert)
- d. Innes (Lambert)
- e. Stout (Lambert)
- f. Robert (Lambert)
- g. Hamilton (Lambert)
- h. Robert (Lambert)
- 2 a. The Three Coffins by John Dickson Carr
- b. Four Days' Wonder by A. Milne
- c. The Five Day Nightmare by Fredric Brown
- d. The Seven Days Mystery by Agatha Christie
- e. The Nine Terrors by Dorothy Sayers
- f. The Little Indians by Agatha Christie
- 3 a. D-B-H, C-B, D-I, C-O, F-A, G-J, H-E, I-F, J-C
- 4 a. Sinclair Lewis
- b. Rudyard Kipling
- c. William Faulkner
- d. M. R. Hodgkin
- 5 a. Accusatory After the Fact
- b. Berclash
- c. Accret on Murder
- d. The Far Side of the Dollar
- e. Broadway Murders
- f. Double Sin
- g. Below Suspicion
- h. Dark Circle
- 7 a. Can a Merchant Kill? by T. Dewey
- b. Can Ladies Kill? by F. Cheney
- c. Who Keeps the Keys? by F. Lescie
- d. Who Saw Him Die? by John Creasy
- e. Whose Body? by Dorothy L. Sayers

Even knowing, as he did, that Stoops had stolen the money, did not resolve Drayton's problem. Unless he could trace the money to Stoops, it was doubtful there would be enough evidence to convict him. Juries do not send a man to prison solely on the strength of a few entries in books.

Embezzlers rarely, like the third servant in the Bible, bury their talent in the ground. More like the first two, they put it at risk in the hope of a return. The two arenas for quick risk are the stock market and the race track. Drayton could not see the head teller as a follower of the horses. On the other hand, the stock market was just the kind of game he would try to beat. But how—and where?

Real imagination in police work consists less in fanciful conjectures or unusual events and more in finding a simple way of doing the obvious. Drayton questioned all the office boys about Stoops, particularly about errands on which he sent them. Several days after he had talked to them, one youth recalled that Stoops had once sent him to a brokerage house—but he could not recall the

name. Patiently Drayton drove around Philadelphia accompanied by the boy, visiting all the brokerage offices, until the youth recognized the office of Hughes & Co., a member of the stock exchange.

A check of Hughes' records, however, showed that Stoops was unknown to them. Momentarily Drayton was at a blank wall. During the night, however, he had an idea, and he returned the next day with the names of all Stoops' relatives. The account was there—in the name of a brother-in-law. Later another account was located with J. S. Bache & Co. In checking these accounts, the amounts involved almost mirrored the shortage in the bank. Fifty-six thousand dollars had been lost in market trading, \$2,500 loaned to another employee, \$10,000 invested in a small company.

On February 9, 1934, fifteen months after that fateful Army-Navy game, Stoops, still working as teller at the main office of the bank, was arrested and charged with the theft. After so long a chase, it is not surprising that he refused to admit his guilt and

decided to stand trial. It may have been that by this time he had come to believe himself that Borden had taken the money.

It was a year before he was tried in Federal Court in Philadelphia, the government preparing its case against him with great care. With the arrest of Stoops, the accountants of all those agencies which had so carefully gone over the books a year before now went over them again to see how it had been done. Many a top flight auditor received his best training from the tricks of an embezzler.

At the trial Stoops repeated his story of the telephone conversations with Borden, but the United States Attorney, Tom Curtain, had too much material to work with. On March 25, 1935 a jury found Stoops guilty. He was sentenced to serve five years in a federal penitentiary.

Later, Drayton would say, in recalling this case, "I was still new enough not to be blinded by the obvious. Now, whenever I have what seems to be a foolproof case, I say to myself, 'Remember Stoops' and I check it once more." □

## LETTERS



From Mark Rose:

I just received the first issue of my subscription in the mail, and must say I was suitably impressed. A fine job, indeed.

I especially like "Collecting Mystery Fiction" and since you solicited comment in the Summer '84 column, there are a few points I would like to discuss. You state that paperback mysteries have "an avid collecting community of people specializing in 'leg' art, bondage covers, and other forms of illustrative material that may be strongly influenced by prurience. This is clearly an area of no interest to those of us who despise blatant appeals to our baser instincts."

This is undoubtedly true and inarguable, but by mentioning these collectors and no others, I feel you have cast a blight on other paperback fans, who do not collect what is called by Hancer, "esptérica." Many paperback fanciers collect strictly by the artist, not necessarily because he or she can draw good girl art "GGA" (enough of these terms). For instance, the man who drew the Mercury Mystery covers and so many EQMMs, George Salter, is a popular artist. So, there are other collectible fields in paperbacks besides enticing ladies.

I know of many collectors who stick to single publishing houses, a practice you noted a lack of amongst hardback collectors. There are also two areas you didn't mention in your column that I know are collected by various

individuals: vampirism, and books that feature skeletal remains on the cover (skulls, bony fingers, etc.). I myself would collect football mysteries if there was one base biographical list to start from. Do you know of any? I also collect mystery fiction based on heraldry, or with a coat-of-arms on the cover art.

Anyway, thank you for an interesting magazine, and keep up the good work.

From Fred Dueren:

Just wanted to give you a quick comment on the last TAD. As usual, I loved it. It seemed to be a good mixture of subjects and articles. But it is a bit aggravating to have the books being reviewed so late after publication. Even though you may have a lot in stock, would it be possible to just drop (or not print) some of the older ones and pick up new with as many fresh and current books as possible?

*I'm afraid the problem is well-nigh unto insurmountable, Fred. The reviews in each issue represent the entire stock, indeed; no "fresher" ones are held. Perhaps the following will indicate some of what we contend with: We tried for months to get galley proofs of Ross Thomas' BRIARPATCH. After the book was published, we tried to get a review copy. I finally bought one to send to a reviewer. I would like reviews to appear as*

*close to publication date as possible. I'm afraid I have to settle for being able to review the books at all.*

—Michael

From Tom Appleton:

I've known of the Armchair Detective for years, but it's only now with the arrival of the first three copies at the local public library that I've actually gotten around to seeing the magazine.

After perusing issues 16 #1 and 17 #1 & 2, I'm quite pleased with TAD, even though I do get the impression that some of the contributors seem to be somewhat gnarled men with a distinct anti-intellectual and misogynist bias. For example, I found the film *Hammelt* a perfectly enjoyable affair, and even Wender's own criticism of American film-making practices (from his intro to his next film after that one, I forget its title now) could not sway me in my opinion; I mean I thought it was an excellent film in spite of all the Hollywood movieworld interference in its making. So the Gores *et al.* interview seemed to be just so much bitterness and twisted personal ego-bending. Adding nothing to one's insight, really. Or not much. Similarly, I thought William F. Nolan's review of Diane Johnson's *Hammelt*-biography a valid enough personal reaction, if he'd written it as a letter to a friend; but not suitable for publication. Having read Johnson's book, I was

myself annoyed by its shortcomings, including a *totally insufficient amount of intellectualisation*, and some real sucking-in-air painful spots. But I don't think it's at all defended to attack the author himself in the manner Nolan does, nor do I actually think his points all that valid. The dozen or so mistakes he attributes to her wouldn't get me hot under the collar, nor the author's occasionally insufferable style. After all, that's what biography is: portraiture, sketching of lives, by implication imprecise, never all comprehensive, and always possible to be done over again. And so on.

On the other hand I was pleased about Donald E. Westlake's talk on the hard-boiled dicks, even though I disagree about the "homosexual" element in Chandler; briefly put, I consider that entire homosexual line of inquiry misleading; I'd rather like to think of it as anti-sexuality, reduced, crippled sexuality, or generally speaking a crippled (in)ability to relate. There's homo, but no sexuality. The dominant form of social relation takes place among men (white men), so the hardboiled dick deals with other (white) men. If this was science fiction land, and a planet dominated by (black) women, the hardboiled dick would be anti-white antimale and probably a lesbian to boot. Anyway, Chandler fans, it's all right, you can come out of the closet.

I also enjoyed the articles on Ard, Woolrich, and Horace McCoy (recently reissued in Britain, and hence here, in a four-pack *Black Box Thrillers* book). Good stuff, and just reading about these authors restimulates one's book-reading desire again. I was also pleased to see that Hammett's *The Return of the Continental Op* which I bought here for 30 cents (secondhand, in immaculate condition) would be worth 75 smackers in the US. (That's a saving of... let's see... don't forget the lower exchange rate!) Flipping through the index of past issues I thought I noticed an absence of articles on reviews of... oh, well, name some: *Mumbo Jumbo* by Ishmael

Reed. Some of the big names in American detective/crime fiction like John Franklin Bardin, Joel Townsley Rogers, Robert Finnegan or the greatest woman crime writer America has produced (as far as I can see): Tiffany Thayer (certainly on the evidence of the one book I've read, *One Woman*, which is like W. R. Burnett and Patricia Highsmith rolled into one and taken to the third power). Last point: what happens to writers like Kent Nelson, author of a delightful 1978 hardboiled novel, *The Straight Man*. Do they get any critical attention, do they continue writing, or do they just disappear in the morass of time to be bauldairied out of oblivion, if they're lucky, forty years later?

Well, whether this letter is suitable for publication or not I don't particularly care, but I'm coming round, in my own circuitous way, to another point of criticism, to wit, Marty S. Knepper's "Agatha Christie—Feminist." Where the opening paragraph mentions Dorothy L. Sayers, Josephine Tey, P. D. James, Amanda Cross, and Anna Katherine Green (and of course, further on, Agatha Christie) as feminist crime fictionettes. But where do I see any mention of the real feminist whose work does not have to be squeezed for a drop of feminist sentiment, but actually oozes it out all by itself, the real independent Mama of the lot: Ethel Lina White? And so: would you care for an article highlighting these aspects in La White's work, from me? I'd be only too happy to supply it, complete with illustrations and all. Unless of course you consider the author of *The Lady Vanishes*, *The Spiral Staircase*, *The Unseen* and other such classic books too dated to warrant another look. Anyway, I have enjoyed reading *The Armchair Detective* and look forward to becoming a regular reader and possibly an occasional contributor.

✓ As the letter sent separately and directly indicates, yes, an article on Ethel Lina White would be fine. I look forward to receiving it. In re: your question about Kent Nelson, the

answer is any and/or all of the above. As to the absence of articles on or about any given name, well, yes, it happens unfortunately. That is why the call goes out on a regular basis requesting more material. Because so much of the magazine is made up of readers' contributions, it very much reflects the interests of the readers. Editorially, we have no position about the place or consideration of a given writer. If someone interests you, and you are a reader, your opinion will be heard. All you have to do is shout—in the form of a manuscript.

—Michael

\* \* \* \* \*

From Patrick Elliot:

I am happy to be a regular paid subscriber to *The Armchair Detective*.

I like stories by Mickey Spillane and Ross Macdonald, my two favorite story writers.

I read every issue of *The Armchair Detective* with great personal interest.

\* \* \* \* \*

From John L. Apostolou:

Otto Penzler's column on new paths in collecting mystery fiction and Thomas Godfrey's long review of the film *Against All Odds* are, for me, the highlights of TAD 17:3. Both pieces are excellent.

Joseph Hansen's article contains some fine ideas but is marred by his rather pompous tone. In addition, Hansen makes an error when he says that after *A Queer Kind of Death* (1966), gay detective Pharaoh Love "disappears from George Baxt's books forever." This isn't correct. Baxt wrote two more novels featuring Pharaoh Love: *Swing Low, Sweet Harriet* (1967) and *Topsy and Evil* (1968).

While on the subject of the gay detective, I should mention David Galloway's *Lamaar Ransom, Private Eye* (London: John Calder, 1979; New York: Riverrun Press, 1981). It is, I believe, the first mystery novel to feature a lesbian detective. □

## DIAL IN FOR NONSENSE

1. DOWN THESE MEAN STREETS A WRITER MIGHT GO. In the sentences below, the last names of well-known mystery writers have been concealed. Can you find them? (The letters of the names will be in correct order, although punctuation marks may intervene.)

EXAMPLE: "I shall recite 'Three bags of wool,'" Richard announced.

ANSWER: Woolrich.

a. "In writing lyrics, I prefer the iamb," Lerner told Loewe.

b. The Puritan said, "Please don't hug Hester Prynne."

c. Did the heavyweight boxer suffer from a cut eye?

d. At the top of the oak tree, the birds lay eggs in twin nests.

e. The President warned: "We shall send marines to Utah."

f. Said the victim to the murderer, "Oh, mercy! Show mercy, please!"

g. "He is a sham Met tenor," announced the detective.

2. Can you count from zero to ten using mystery titles that have numbers in them? We'll give you a start.

Towards Zero by Agatha Christie  
One Cried Murder by S. H. Courtier  
Death Has Two Doors by V. Bell

(Actually, it is possible to go well beyond ten using mystery titles.)

\* \* \* \* \*

3. Some snobs (see Edmund Wilson's "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?") look down their noses at mystery stories and at the writers of such

stories. So it is amusing to note the relationship between Nobel Prizes and mystery writers. Can you answer the following?

- This young, future Nobel Prize-winning author sold the plot of *The Assassination Bureau, Ltd.* to Jack London. London started the story but never finished it; Robert L. Fish eventually completed the story. But who was the writer who originally developed the plot?
- This Nobel Prize-winning author wrote a short story called "Reingelder and the German Flag." The story was reprinted in *A Handbook for Poisoners* edited by Raymond Bond. Who was the prize-winning author?
- This writer was awarded the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature. His mystery stories include: "An Error of Chemistry" and "Hand Upon the Water." Who was the author?
- This woman was the daughter of a 1966 Nobel Prize winner and was the wife of a 1965 Nobel Prize winner. (Neither prize was in literature.) Among her mystery novels are *Dead Indeed* and *Student Body*. Who is she?

4. Detective stories have played a very important role in the history of television. Can you match the television detective to the actor who played the role?

- |                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| a. Cannon         | A. Kent Taylor      |
| b. Banacek        | B. Peter Falk       |
| c. Columbo        | C. Gene Barry       |
| d. Longstreet     | D. William Conrad   |
| e. Kojak          | E. Mike Connors     |
| f. Boston Blackie | F. Tom Conway       |
| g. Martin Kane    | G. Telly Savalas    |
| h. Mannix         | H. George Peppard   |
| i. Mark Saber     | I. James Franciscus |
| j. Amos Burke     | J. Lloyd Nolan      |

\*\*\*\*\*

5. Can you guess what mystery titles are represented by the following word play? (NOTE: Articles—the, an, a—may be omitted.)

- FACTACCESSORY (book by G. M. Reynolds)
- HSAL (book by V. Warren)
- MURDER (book by R. Lockridge)

d. R (book by Ross Macdonald)

e. **W A V** MURDERS (book by E. J. Doherty)

f. SINSIN (story by Agatha Christie)

g. SUSPICION (book by John Dickson Carr)

h.  (story by G. Ashe [John Creasey])

\*\*\*\*\*

6. Below is a poker hand made up of mystery titles. Can you find a better hand?

- ACE OF CLUBS MURDER (by J. R. Wilmot)  
 ACE OF SPADES (by H. Holt)  
 QUEEN OF CLUBS (by H. Footner)  
 QUEEN OF HEARTS (by Wilkie Collins)  
 QUEEN OF SPADES (by H. C. Bailey)

\*\*\*\*\*

7. Can you come up with six mystery titles that ask questions?

*Solutions on page 217*

# A CATALOGUE OF CRIME

By Jacques Barzun  
and Wendell Hertig Taylor

**S263 Anderson, John R. L.**  
*Death in a High Latitude*  
Scrib 1981

Colonel Peter Blair, attached to the Home Office for "odd jobs," is still suffering from a wound acquired in a previous tour of duty, but this handicap does not prevent him from taking on a new case and surviving a long trek over frozen wastes in the Arctic. He gets there because a map of the Northwest Passage is missing from the Cambridge University collection and a death in town leads him to uncover a kidnapping plot. A couple of murders emerge before Blair and his wife Ruth, a mathematics professor, crash in the pursuing helicopter. The adventures that follow form the liveliest part of the book, the author's last, posthumous work. Unfortunately, explanations at the end are over-long and not redeemed by the deft writing.

**S264 Carr, Glyn**  
*Fat Man's Agony*  
Bles 1969

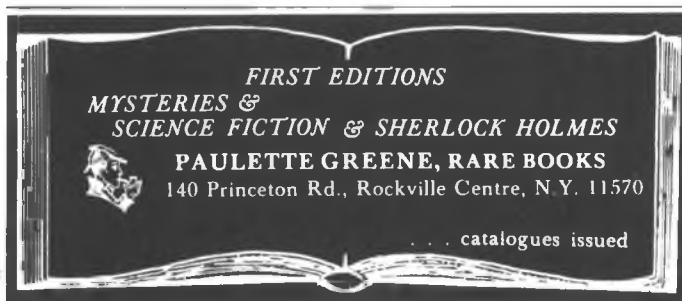
The author has exhibited the Shakespearian actor-manager Sir Abercrombie Lewker in 14 other tales, where in the midst of mountaineering the astute observer of men unravels crimes. The present tale, late in the series, shows Lewker the somewhat reluctant guest of a man whose ample means of doubtful origin provide "private crags" to challenge the climbers. One of these hazards is a chimney called by the traditional and expressive name "Fat Man's Agony." Against all probability, a very competent alpinist dies in what appears to be an accident, and Lewker has to perform a feat rather beyond his years to find the truth and spot the culprit. There is excellent Welsh atmosphere, some good love-interest, and an unusual local character, all depicted in darker tones than in previous tales.

**S265 Doyle, Arthur Conan**  
*Uncollected Stories*  
Dday 1983  
ed. with introd. by J. M. Gibson and R. L. Green

Of these thirty-three "new" stories written from 1879, Doyle's 20th year, to 1930, the year of his death, nearly all are worth reading and returning to; and two of them, "A Pastoral Horror" and "The Recollections of Captain Wilkie" are crime fiction of the best kind. The first gives us murder and detection in a Swiss setting; the second is the narrative of a thief, safebreaker, and confidence man, told with Doyle's rich mixture of humor and sharp detail. The entire collection shows indeed that the peculiar concerns that went into the making of Sherlock Holmes were Doyle's throughout his output. Read also the historical tale "An Impression of the Regency" for a powerful piece of naturalism.

**S266 Hardwick, Michael**  
*The Private Life of Dr. Watson*  
Dutton 1983

The Sherlock Holmes industry seems never in a slump (see above and below), though one may be grateful for the cessation of pastiches based more on *The Seven Percent Solution* than on the original canon of the tales. Here, the veteran scholar of Holmesiana gives us an imaginative account of Watson's early life—before the meeting with Holmes. It is a spicy saga, in which the lecherous and daredevil hero is often hard to match with the conventional Briton who shared the rooms at 221a Baker Street. Could Holmes have relied as he did on the scapegrace here presented? Never mind. The local color is excellent, and



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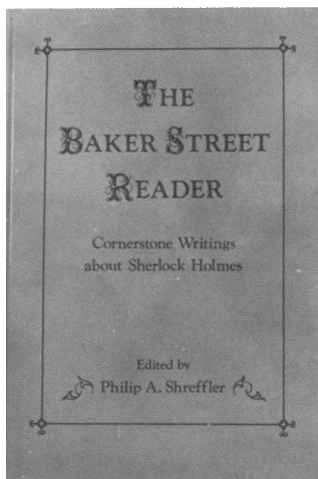
the manner in which the "clues" from the genuine tales are worked into this suppositious one is ingenious and generally delightful.

**S267 Magnan, Pierre**  
*Le Commissaire dans la Truffiere*  
 Fayard 1978

Every once in a while a sounding in foreign literature is called for, to find out if any good work in the genre is being done. The results are very scant. Though highly touted, Magnan, like his colleagues in France, Germany, and Italy (e.g. Signor Eco), are always more interested in ideas and issues than in telling a plausible story. They use the *tale* as if it were a *novel*. In the present book, the killing is done on page 23 in front of our eyes and very slowly sorted out by a commissaire in rural Provence, amid long ideological rambles. Concern with illicit love and the "psychology of violence" overshadow procedure, and suspense is defeated by fragmented narrative.

**S268 Rendell, Ruth**  
*The Killing Doll*  
 Pantheon 1984

Three deaths from "magic" connect the harmless Yearman family with a deranged youth who loves knives and tunnels. Mrs. Rendell likes to alternate her books about Wexford the wise, a sympathetic policeman, with others, not in a series, that are sometimes called psychological thrillers. These readers find them not as thrilling and not as psychological as the author might



wish, but they are bound to admire and enjoy the ever skillful writing.

**S269 Schreffler, Philip A., ed.**  
*The Baker Street Reader*  
 Greenwood 1984

This far-ranging collection of what the editor calls cornerstone writings about Sherlock Holmes brings the modern reader some pieces of criticism and praise that were

once fugitive publications and now impossible to find, for example, S. C. Robert's *Prolegomena*. It adds to these some little known letters of Franklin Roosevelt, a radio talk by T. S. Eliot, and a dialogue (still lively) between Rex Stout, Mark Van Doren, and J. B. (It was broadcast in 1942 as a CBS "Invitation to Learning" program.) Many other valuable items make this book worth a place on the Sherlockian's shelf, but it is absurd to label it, as Greenwood does, a contribution to the study of popular culture. There's popular and popular, and Sherlock Holmes isn't Nick Carter.

**S270 Simpson, Dorothy**  
*Close Her Eyes*  
 Scrib 1984

This relatively new author began well with *The Night She Died* (No. 214) and has steadily perfected her craft, reaching in the present work complete mastery of the genre. Her unusual theme—the murder of a young girl from a family dominated by the most literal and pervasive religious fundamentalism—is superbly handled. Not a scene, word of description, or line of dialogue but does its proper work, either to establish character or propel the story. The detectives, Luke Thanet and his sergeant Mike Lineham, each have domestic anxieties, as current mode requires, but they are not overblown, any more than the dozen eccentrics in and about the situation. The gradual unfolding of the victim's true self and the outcome of the bitter battles are alike memorable. □

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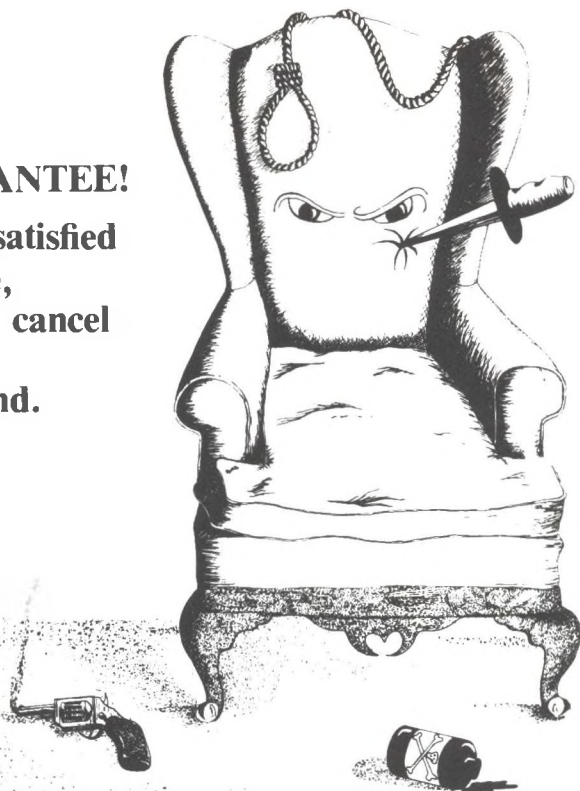
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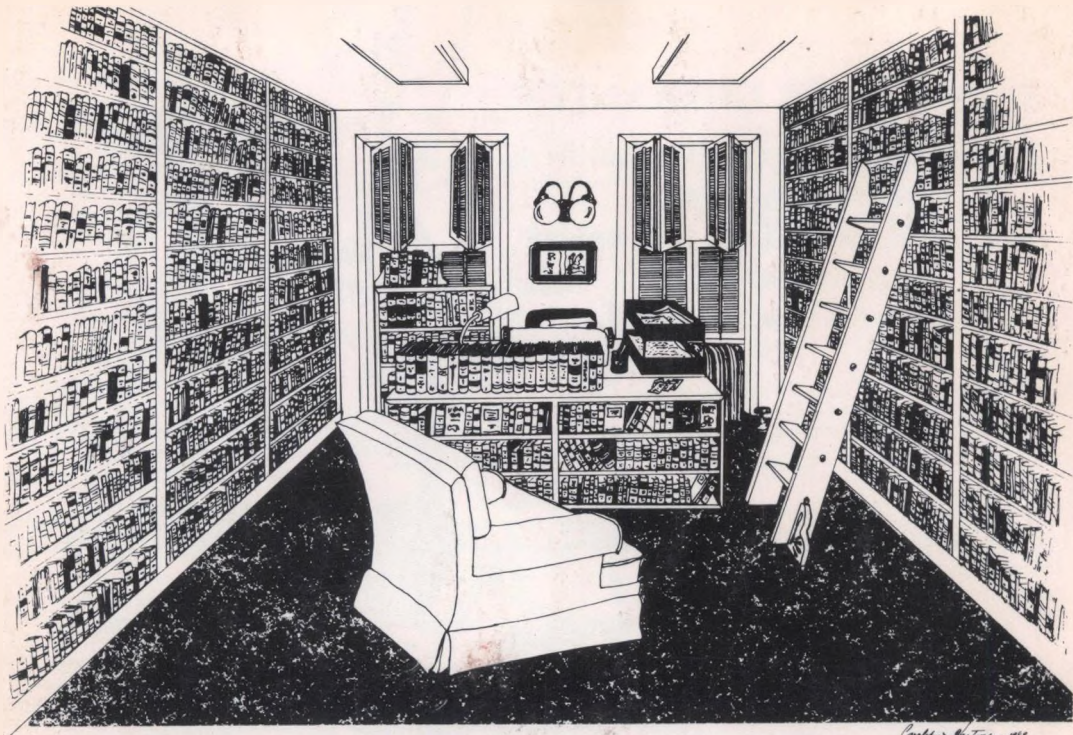
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