THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

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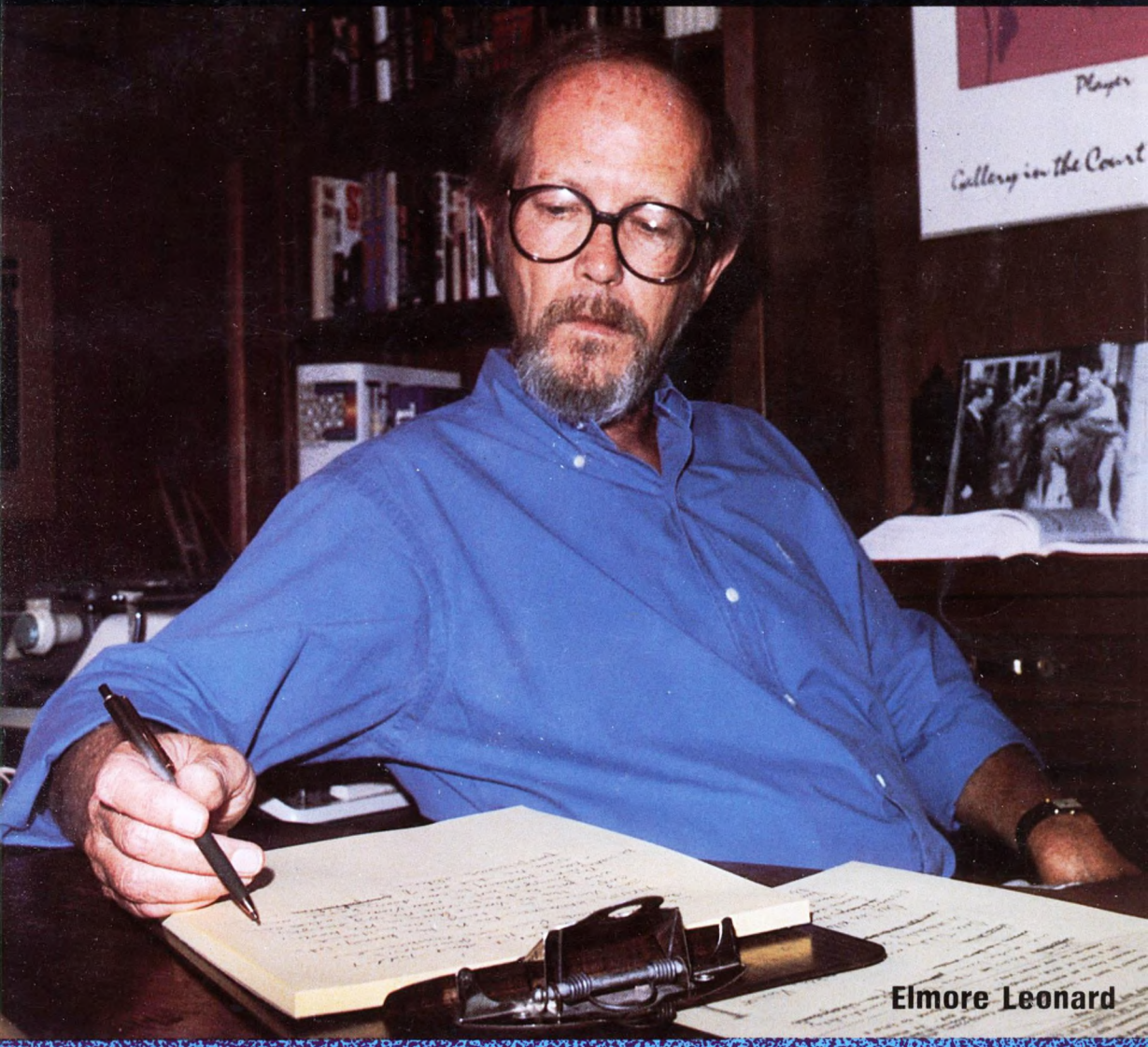

Elmore Leonard

Getting It Right:
Researching Elmore Leonard's Novels
The Spy in the Dark
The Divine Detective in the Guilty Vicarage
Sherlock Holmes in Minnesota

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE®

Volume 19 Number 1 Winter 1986

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Feature Articles

The cover photograph is by Gregg Sutter

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

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THE UNEASY CHAIR

Dear TADian:

I first heard Mary Higgins Clark address a group of writers and fans at the Los Angeles Bouchercon several years ago. In response to a question (not exactly phrased as "Where do you get your ideas?"), she talked about the value to her of attending trials. I've heard her speak three or four more times since then, and at each lecture she has talked about all she has learned as a spectator in the courtroom.

I've never made the time to attend as an observer, but I have just completed a two-week stint as a juror. It was my second experience in that role, but my first since I started publishing my own stories in addition to simply being an editor, and I have to agree with Clark—being in that room can be invaluable for a writer.

I must admit that I was rather surprised to find myself selected to sit on a jury. My background includes experience as a military policeman, and, as an editor of mystery fiction and a now-and-then author of same, I assumed that one side or the other would be more than happy to excuse me. When, during the *voir dire,* Judge Knapp (of the Knapp Commission on Police Corruption) asked whether I had ever written about a kidnapping, I looked around the room and replied: "Not yet, your honor." There was laughter, some of it extremely self-conscious. . . but no "You may step down, now."

After the trial, having drinks with one of the defense lawyers, I asked why they accepted me. (Most of my friends spend their two weeks cooling their heels in the jury pool.) The attorney said that, first, he really doesn't bother challenging jurors any more unless they express a strong and obvious bias which he feels will be hazardous to the health and future well-being of his client. On the other hand, he doesn't accept the theory that New York editors are all members of some kind of liberal elite and that I might be counted on to find the reasonable doubt it was hoped would save the three accused drug-dealing kidnappers. (It was, I learned, their second trial; they had already been found guilty once.)

I didn't find reasonable doubt, nor did anyone else on the jury. I did find, however, the basis for a wonderful drug scam—a fortuitous discovery, as I am working on a story about drug dealing—as well as learning a thing or two about human nature, items which will, in one way or another, influence my work.

So, to Mary Higgins Clark, a big thank-you for letting me know what to listen for. There was just one frustration, one which would be there for me either as juror or spectator: none of the attorneys knew what questions to ask, so that many things were left unanswered, and all of us in the jury box commented on it. Of course, I have an advantage: those questions will make excellent stories. After all, writing is asking the question, "What if. . .?"

A last bit from the trial. During the summation, one of the defense team said to us, "No one is saying that the three men on trial are nice guys. They don't inhabit the same world as you. They're right out of *Miami Vice.*" He was right. Except for the soundtrack, colors, and clothes, I had experienced life imitating art. Or is it the other way around?

Best mysterious wishes,

Michael Seidman

MICHAEL SEIDMAN

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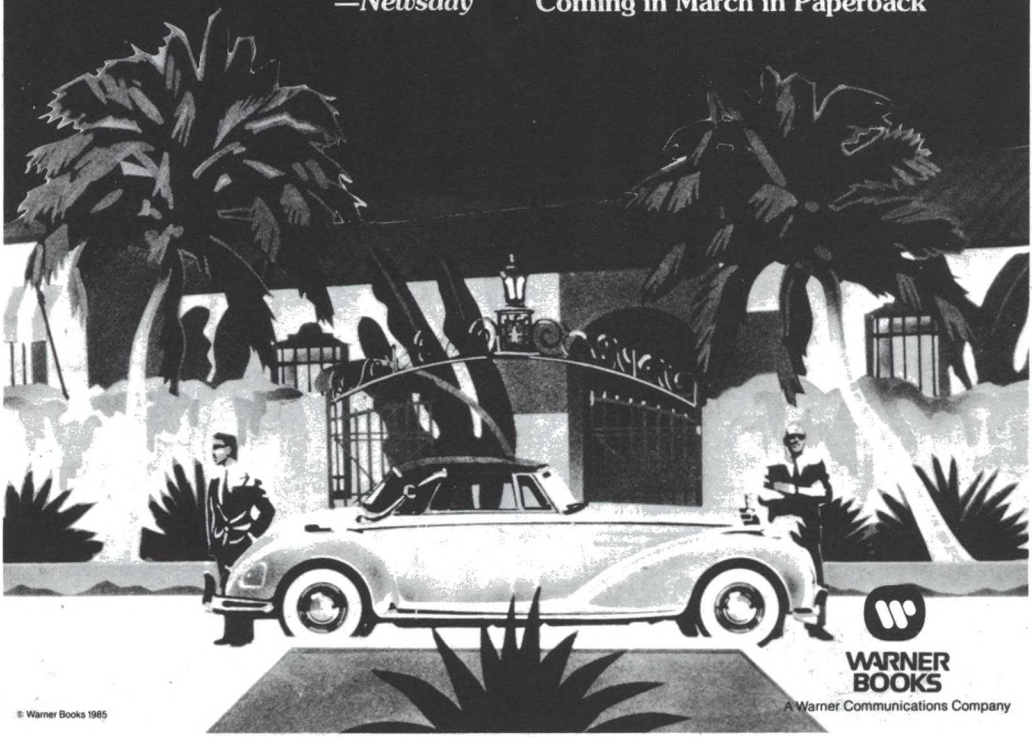

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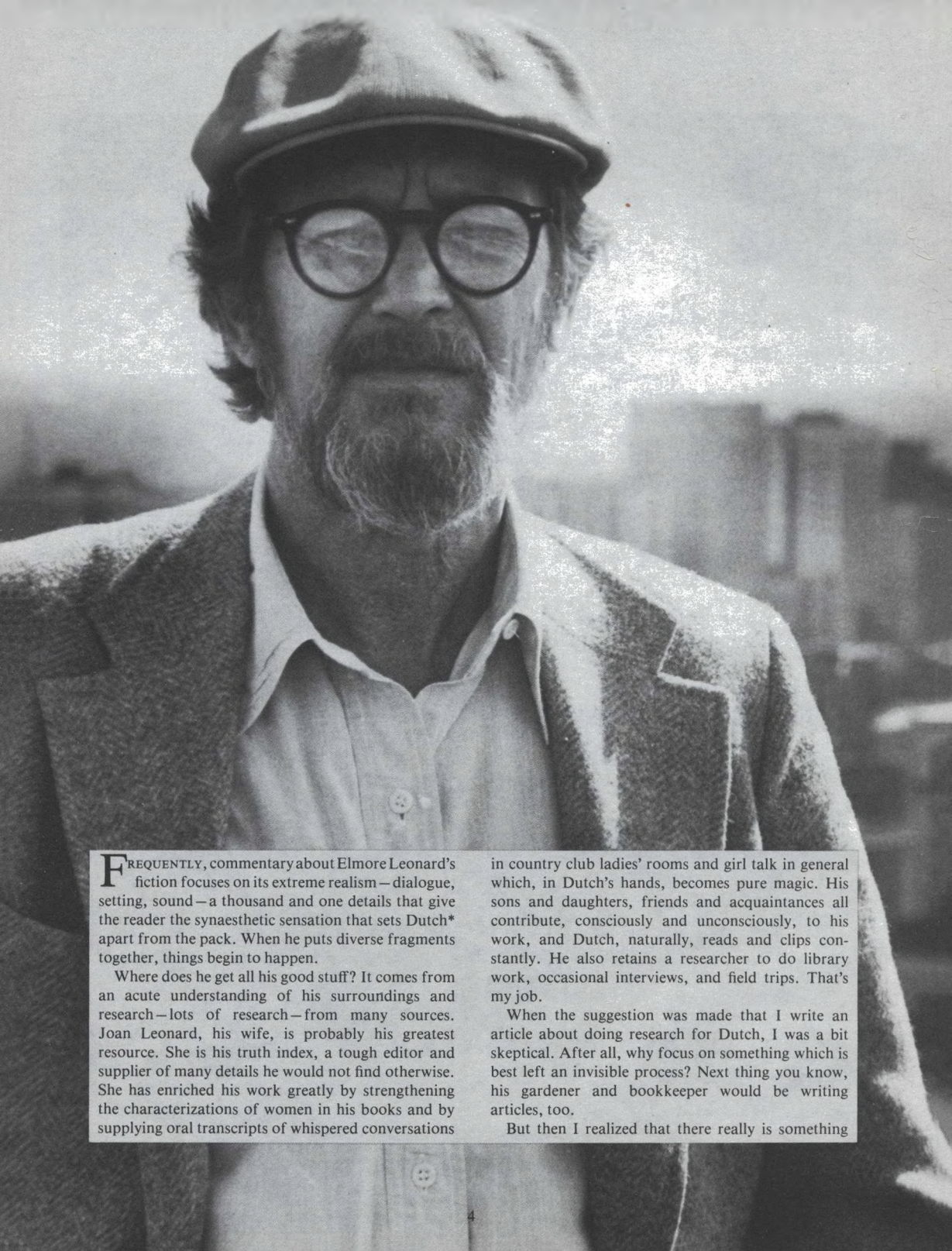


FREQUENTLY, commentary about Elmore Leonard's fiction focuses on its extreme realism—dialogue, setting, sound—a thousand and one details that give the reader the synaesthetic sensation that sets Dutch* apart from the pack. When he puts diverse fragments together, things begin to happen.

Where does he get all his good stuff? It comes from an acute understanding of his surroundings and research—lots of research—from many sources. Joan Leonard, his wife, is probably his greatest resource. She is his truth index, a tough editor and supplier of many details he would not find otherwise. She has enriched his work greatly by strengthening the characterizations of women in his books and by supplying oral transcripts of whispered conversations in country club ladies' rooms and girl talk in general which, in Dutch's hands, becomes pure magic. His sons and daughters, friends and acquaintances all contribute, consciously and unconsciously, to his work, and Dutch, naturally, reads and clips constantly. He also retains a researcher to do library work, occasional interviews, and field trips. That's my job.

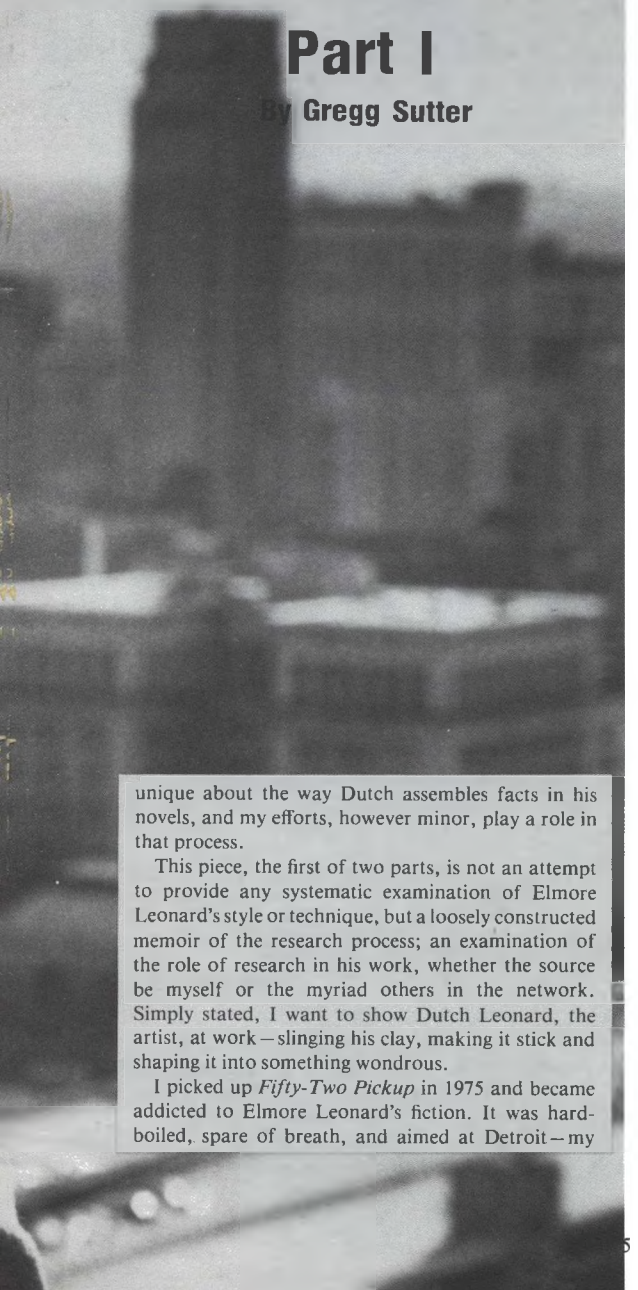
When the suggestion was made that I write an article about doing research for Dutch, I was a bit skeptical. After all, why focus on something which is best left an invisible process? Next thing you know, his gardener and bookkeeper would be writing articles, too.

But then I realized that there really is something

Getting It Right: Researching Elmore Leonard's Novels

Part I

By Gregg Sutter



unique about the way Dutch assembles facts in his novels, and my efforts, however minor, play a role in that process.

This piece, the first of two parts, is not an attempt to provide any systematic examination of Elmore Leonard's style or technique, but a loosely constructed memoir of the research process; an examination of the role of research in his work, whether the source be myself or the myriad others in the network. Simply stated, I want to show Dutch Leonard, the artist, at work – slinging his clay, making it stick and shaping it into something wondrous.

I picked up *Fifty-Two Pickup* in 1975 and became addicted to Elmore Leonard's fiction. It was hard-boiled, spare of breath, and aimed at Detroit – my neck of Hell. He described perfectly the town's indelicate fringes during its violent Murder City days of the early '70s.

But as Dutch tells it, he could have been writing about any town – Detroit was just a convenient background character, and a handy reservoir of material from which to draw. He wouldn't seek it out if it weren't there in front of his eyes. If he were in Buffalo, he would have written about Buffalo. His only concern was laying it out and *getting it right.*

When he made the change from Westerns to contemporary stories, in the late '60s and early '70s, Dutch cannibalized his own past and experience for what he needed. In *Fifty-Two Pickup* (1974), Harry Mitchell's background as owner of Ranco Manufacturing comes directly out of Dutch's own nuts-and-bolts advertising career in Detroit:

> It was a Detroit backyard operation. A speciality house. High-volume production out of a cinder-block building that looked like a hangar. Banks of flourescent lights and power lines, a pair of five-ton overhead cranes, high above bins and racks of metal materials, raw stock or half-finished heat-treated parts that would be fed into the rows of Bridgeport milling machines, grinders and big Warner-Swasey bar-turning units – and come out in an assembly of parts and products that most people, even in Detroit, had never heard of before.

Harry is being blackmailed by three deranged fellows who have shots of him with Cini, a "model" at a Highland Park modeling studio – imagery guaranteed to upset his suburban apple-cart. When this film fails to rouse Harry, the trio show him another film in which Cini is "snuffed" – murdered on screen, starring Mitchell's gun.

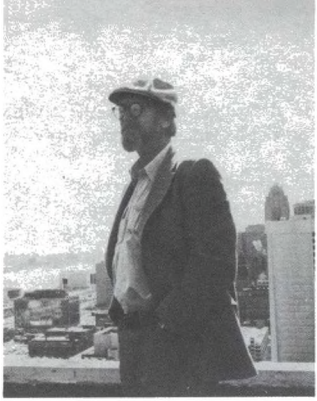
Dutch's journey into the world of Highland Park, Michigan, was composed partly of his childhood memories of this once elegant middle-class community and partly of a newspaper series on the nude "modeling studios" there in the early '70s. This is what Harry Mitchell sees when he hunts for Cini in the now sleazy Highland Park:

> It had been a sporting goods store at one time – Mitchell remembered it because he had stolen a baseball glove from the place when he was in seventh grade and his dad was working at the Ford Highland Park plant. It was on Woodward six miles from downtown in a block of dirty sixty-year-old storefronts. The showcase windows of the sporting goods store were painted black now and whitewash lettering four feet high said NUDE MODELS.

With his next Detroit book, *Swag* (1976), Dutch would start to slowly supplement his own experiences with new ones. He hung around the Frank Murphy

*Hereafter, Elmore Leonard shall be referred to as "Dutch."

Photographs by Gregg Sutter unless otherwise noted



Dutch observing the City Primeval from atop 1300 Lafayette. Police Headquarters is in the background.

Dutch and Joan in the midst of a story conference at home

Hall of Justice and absorbed the scene and the sound. It paid off. Here's the scene of Detective Calvin Brown, the undercover cop, talking to Emory Parks, the fat little black prosecutor, about Stick and Ryan, the gentlemen armed robbers. It was pure osmosis:

"You read up on it yet?"

"I haven't had time, man. I probably won't read it till we're in court."

"You met the guy before, three months ago. Three and a half."

"Refresh my memory."

"Ernest Stickley, Junior, auto theft. Charge dropped at the exam, no positive ID."

"Shit," the little prosecutor said, "you know how many Ernest Stickley, Juniors, there are?"

After *Swag* came out, Dutch got a letter from Benjamin Hellinger, an English professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Hellinger was enthralled with the realism in the book:

The scene between the cop and the assistant D.A. in the restaurant is first class and must have cost you hours of work. You have managed to turn what would simply be vulgar slang in lesser hands into something like eloquence that Emerson and Whitman would have admired.

Dutch wrote Hellinger that the scene took no time at all. Reason: he knew his characters.

By the time he was working on *Unknown Man #89* (1977), Dutch was, out of necessity, doing more research. He talked to a process server who worked out of the Frank Murphy Hall of Justice and asked a *Detroit Free Press* police reporter to get him details about the Homicide division.

Jack Ryan's visit to the morgue was handled by Dutch himself:

He wasn't at all ready for the first body he saw, turning a corner, walking close past a metal table, and realizing, Jesus, it was a woman. There was her thing. An old black woman with white hair. Purple-brown skin that didn't look like skin, peeling, decomposing to tan marble. Attached to her big toe, facing up, was a tag that bore a case number, a name and address, written in blue ink. She was right there, her body, but she didn't seem real.

Dutch continued his literary Detroit travelogue in *The Switch* (1978), wherein a suburban "tennis mom" named Mickie Dawson is kidnapped by a geeky Detroit everyman:

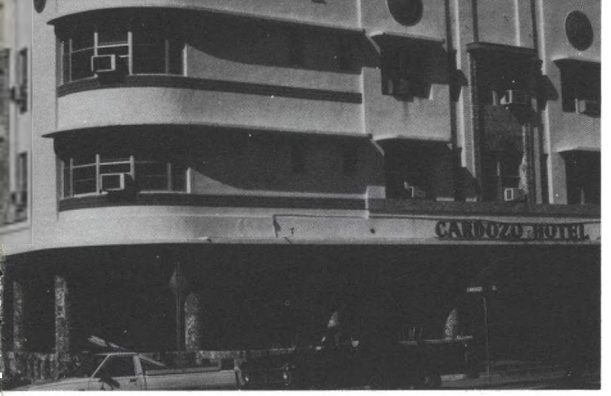
Richard Edgar Monk lived at 1035 State Fair, the street that ran east of Woodward Avenue along the southern edge of the Michigan State Fairgrounds...the house was a frame crackerbox with a pair of dormer windows sticking out of the roof and no style at all until Richard fixed up the front with imitation ledgerrock, a grillwork porch and striped aluminum awnings over the porch and windows. There was a hedge around the little square of grass to keep in the pair of flamingos, a bird-feeder on a pole in the backyard and a statue of the Blessed Virgin standing in a birdbath that Richard's mother had bought. Before she had died, Richard's mother used to go out there by the birdbath and say her rosary for the conversion of Russia. She and Richard had both hated atheistic communism.

The Switch is dedicated to "Another Mickey"—Joan Leonard, the inspiration and model for Mickey Dawson in the book.

Gold Coast (1980) subtly reprises the situation in *Fifty-Two Pickup* where your worst fears come true. Maguire and the Patterson Brothers rob the Deep Run Country Club north of Detroit, a scene Dutch knows well:

The golf club members talking loud, their voices coming from the shower and the rows of lockers, middle-aged men in their underwear and towels, shuffling around in paper slippers...looking up and seeing, Christ, a wildman, a Mau-Mau, twin blunt holes of a Marlin pointing at them, Oh, my God! Sharp little startled sounds, seeing two mean-looking black guys with guns—

At this time, Dutch also wrote *Gunsights* (1979), a Western dealing with a copper war in the Arizona mountains in 1893. He hired his son Chris, who was out in Arizona performing with a mime troupe, to do research. Chris took many location shots of fauna and flora, had them identified by a botanist at the



The Cardoza Hotel on Ocean Drive, where Joe LaBrava would sit on the patio to drink and receive company
Photo: Bill Marshall

University, and sent them along to Dad. That was the extent of the research for *Gunsights.* I assumed that Dutch did massive amounts and made field trips in the Old West to write such offbeat Western stories with conviction and authority. But that wasn't the case. The truth is, he got most of his sound and images out of three books: *The Truth About Geronimo, Adam's Western Words,* and *The Look of the Old West.* The rest he pulled out of stories in the old *Arizona Highways.* All he added was his superior storytelling ability and a fertile imagination. As he explains in an afterward to *Gunsights:*

> The desire to write or read Westerns comes more from a feeling than a visual stimulus. Living in Detroit, as I do, wouldn't seem to be conducive. There sure aren't any buttes or barrancas out the window. But if you squint hard enough – wherever you are – you can see riders coming with Winchesters and Colt Revolvers, and watch them play their epic roles in a time that will never die.

At this juncture, his research efforts were to become more active. In the summer of 1978, he was commissioned by *The Detroit News* to write about Detroit's Homicide Squad. That piece, "Impressions of Murder," in the November 12, 1978 issue of *The Detroit News Sunday Magazine,* transcended its original purpose. It gave Dutch momentum for a new book. He rode with Detroit's Felony Homicide Squad for more that a month and then wrote an excellent profile of this group, including some chilling prose:

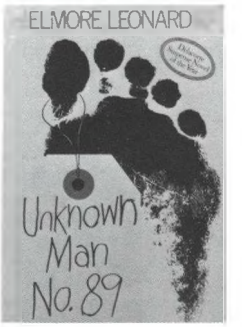
> By 1 P.M., the 17-year-old boy with the braided hair said he wasn't sure why he dragged Michelle into an alley as she walked him to a bus stop, why he clubbed her to the ground with a hunk of wood, returned to the house to find the mother in the basement bedroom and struck her repeatedly with a hammer and set the house afire and took the mother's car and returned to the alley to drive the car over Michelle's body before he dragged her to the vacant house and stuffed her through the glass-fragmented window to lie bleeding on the floor. The boy with the braided hair said a "voice" told him to do it.

For two months after the article was published, Dutch spent almost every day with the Homicide Squad. It reaffirmed what he already knew and felt about the police. It also helped him decide to write *City Primeval,* the novel that emerged from these experiences. But he also added some all-too-real stuff about a sleazy Detroit judge, some half-crazed Albanians, and the mocking murderer, Clement Mansell, the Oklahoma Wildman.

City Primeval did have quite a bit of police business in it – clearly, the closest he came to writing a police procedural. But he went beyond the procedural to create a Detroit Western. Dutch bent the law. Raymond Cruz, the lawman, and Clement Mansell, the outlaw, understood:

> "I knew it," Clement said. "You got no higher motive'n I do, you talk about laying things on the table, see where we stand. You don't set out to uphold the law any more'n I set out to break it. What happens, we get in a situation like this and then me and you start playing a game. You try and catch me and I try and keep from getting caught and still make a living. We're over here in this life playing and we don't even give a shit if anybody's watching us or not or if anybody gets hurt."

In the spring of 1980, I interviewed Dutch for a piece in *Monthly Detroit Magazine,* an unconscious prototype for doing research for him in the future. I



had met him the previous summer with Russell Rein, a fellow devotee of hardboiled culture. We were trying to put together a newsletter called *Noir* and we wanted to feature an Elmore Leonard interview in our first issue. It never got off the ground, but I made the contact of a lifetime.

In the *Monthly Detroit* piece, I wanted to conjure the mood of *City Primeval,* to enter Dutch's fictional Detroit.

So Dutch, Eric Smith, a photographer and friend of mine, and I climbed into Eric's maroon Duster one day and headed down Woodward Avenue. I felt much like one of his characters that day, hearing a jumble of voices and sounds. Before the day was out, we had hit a lot of places: Palmer Park,

Dutch and Gregg Sutter

where the judge's girlfriend was mowed down by Clement Mansell; Caniff and Cardoni Streets, where the Albanians trapped Clement; 1300 Beaubein, Police Headquarters, to meet the Squad Seven detectives and check out this major set from *City*

Joan Leonard is probably his greatest resource, his truth index, and a tough editor.

Primeval; to see the funky interrogation room where Clement was brought. It was precisely as he described it in the book:

> The squad's home was in Room 527 of Police Headquarters, a colorless, high ceilinged office roughly twenty-four-by-twenty that contained an assortment of ageless metal desks and wooden tables butted together, file cabinets, seven telephones, a Norelco coffeemaker, a GE battery charge box for PREP radios, a locked cabinet where squad members sometimes stored their handguns, two banks of flickering flourescent lights, a wall display of 263 mug shots of accused murderers, a coat rack next to the door and sign that read:
>
> Do something —
> either lead, follow
> or get the hell
> out of the way!

From 1300 Beaubein, we walked over to Greektown, where the cops drank, and concluded our field trip with a journey over to 1300 Lafayette—the urban high-rent high-rise where Clement was holed up and had his faceoff with Raymond Cruz. We went up on the roof and surveyed Detroit—the "City Primeval."

The two buildings with "1300" in their addresses formed a splendid couplet: a jailhouse on Beaubein and a mountain lair on Lafayette, within shooting distance of one another. (*City Primeval* was even called *The View from 1300* in the beginning.)

I interviewed Elmore Leonard many more times before the piece was published in October 1980. I wanted to maintain a dialogue even after my article was printed. I got my chance. About two months later, in January of 1981, I received a phone call from Dutch at the *Monthly Detroit* office. He asked me if I wanted to do some research for him on his new book. I said sure.

Split Images

Split Images was a good book to get started on. There was plenty to do. *City Primeval* had a very distinct construction, and Dutch wanted to get away from it. At the same time, he wanted to write a sequel. At our first meeting, Dutch said: "Let's take the Detroit cop down to Palm Beach." If he were going to establish a continuing character, it was not going to be in the context of a police precedural.

Even the idea that the policeman is the main character did not appeal to him because the detective was doing a job, wasn't emotionally involved. Dutch thus decided to steer clear of procedure by taking the cop out of his jurisdiction. His character would establish early on that he is going on furlough to a particular place in Florida, where he meets Angela the journalist, to whom he is attracted. Dutch did not intend to take the story back to Detroit...

But *Split Images* was another example of a phenomenon that occurs often in Dutch's books: story and character take on a life of their own and become very headstrong. Everything pointed at Detroit one last time, and Dutch heeded this call.

Another thing that happens is that minor characters demand a star turn. Look at Walter Kouza, whose background would be my first research assignment. This ex-Detroit cop, exiled in Palm Beach, was originally a bit player, but, when he opened his mouth, Dutch realized his importance: "Kouza forced his way into the story. He talked to the squad car cop and came to life." Walter was irresistible:

> The detective had been a Detroit cop before coming to Palm Beach. Middle-aged stocky guy with short arms that hung away from his body. That shitty-looking thin hair greased back in a shark-fin pompadour the young cop bet would hold for days without recombing. The guy sounded a little bit like Lawrence Welk the way he talked, not so much with an accent, but seemed to say each word distinctly without running words together. He seemed dumb, squinting with the cigarette in his mouth to get a half-assed shrewd look. But the guy did know things.

Walter would make a perfect foil for Robbie Daniels, the thrill-killing millionaire. It was an Elmore Leonard knuckler: "two opposites, talking, planning to do something together—two guys who don't understand each other."

Research was needed to transform the development of Walter from a vaguely defined ex-Detroit cop to a

guy who shot nine people in the line of duty as a member of the Detroit Police's notorious STRESS unit.

Dutch called me in to dig into STRESS that January of 1981. STRESS (Stop the Robberies, Enjoy Safe Streets) was a controversial Detroit police unit of the early '70s that used decoy tactics and deadly force and raised quite a political stink. The STRESS experience fit Walter like a snubnose, and it corroborated the fictional approach Dutch had already worked out. Walter explains STRESS to Robbie:

"...We'd go in teams in a hot street-crime area, inner city. Dress like you live around there. One guy's the decoy, the target. Stroll down the street maybe act like you're drunk or you're a john looking for some quiff. The other guys lay back, see if you attract anything. See, we used teams of four. That would be your decoy, your backup, he'd be like another bum or civilian of some kind, then you'd have two more guys in the car, they covered you. We cut street crime way down, confiscated something like over four hundred guns. We had to shoot some people to do it but, well, it's up to them."

Once Walter took life, he needed a place of birth. Hamtramck was perfect. Surrounded on all sides by Detroit, Hamtramck is a time capsule of values and images that seem out of sync with the rest of the city. The little town appears unchanged in the sixty years since the flood of Eastern European immigrants came over to work at nearby Dodge Main and the other car factories. Walter is very proud of his roots as he relates them to Robbie Daniels:

"As a matter of fact, born and raised in Hamtramck," Walter said. "Twenty-three sixteen Geimer. Went to St. Florian's, Kowalski Sausage right down the street if you know that area you just happen to like kielbasa. Yeah, my old man worked at Dodge Main thirty-two years."

There were other sources of pride for Walter:

"They got, in the barber shop right there on Campau near Holbrook? Heart of Hamtramck, they got a chair Henry Ford sat in once, got his hair cut. I don't mean at the barber college, when the chair was someplace else."

The Geimer Street location came from an inspiration I had driving up and down the narrow streets of Hamtramck one cold spring day. For street after street were these up-and-down houses with ornate grille work and immaculate lawns. Then I saw this three-block abscess, where a neighborhood and a high school had stood. HUD tore everything down in the '60s. Such destruction of his roots would effect Walter, I thought. Dutch agreed. Not long thereafter, he and I made a field trip to Hamtramck to corroborate my impressions. We also stopped off at Lili's Bar.

Down Joseph Campau past Holbrook was Lili's Bar, a hopping new wave joint owned by Lili Karwowski. Art Karwowski, her son, was the lead singer for the Mutants, the best of the smart-ass Hamtramck rockers of the '70s. Art was the day bartender then, and, when you hit the place about 11:00 A.M., he'd be humoring some already half-in-bag Ukrainian ranting about what a bastard Stalin was. Lili's was perfect as Walter's long-lost watering hole—a little neighborhood bar that takes Walter back to his formative drinking days. Dutch agreed again. Here, Walter waxes nostalgic as Detective Bryan Hurd confronts him at Lili's one afternoon:

"Fucking Kessler's still four bits. You believe it?" It gave him an opening. "The only thing in this town hasn't changed. I used to live over on Geimer when I was growing up? The house's gone. Hamtramck High School, where I went? Gone not a trace of it. Dodge Main? Fucking gone. There's a couple of brick walls standing there I think was the boiler room, it's got so much steel in it they can't fucking knock it down. Kowalski's still there. St. Florian's

Detroit Police Headquarters, 1300 Beaubein. It was inside these walls that Dutch took his advanced studies in homicide and police procedure.

Nemo's Hotel is a notorious South Beach hotel which was renamed in *La Brava*. They had 256 calls to the police in one year for robberies, muggings, and shootings, yet it is only a few blocks from a police station. Cundo Rey's home. Photo: Bill Marshall

still there. . . [but] everything's changed. I mean everything. Go over look at the juke box. They got on there The Mutants, the Walkie-Talkies, Adam and the fucking Ants. What else? The Fishsticks. The Plastics. The In*fec*tions, for Christ sake. What's going on?"

Walter overlooked the trappings of a foreign culture he found at the new Lili's because he found serenity there. But if he were to return at night when the suburban punks were swarming all over the place, he'd think that he'd died and gone to hell. I brought this situation to Dutch's attention and he liked it. For the climactic scene with Walter returning to the bar that evening, Dutch asked me to prepare a report of how Lili's would look and feel at night. I created a rock band called "The Pagan Babies," and I had a song I was going to use myself in something but figured Dutch could make better use of it. The song was called "Kinda Catholic," about a girl who skipped Mass and partied on Sunday morning. The chorus went:

She was kinda Catholic,
The kind you know so well,
She was kinda Catholic,
The kind that goes to hell,
STRAIGHT TO HELL, BABY!

I learned something valuable from the Hamtramck research—just how discriminating Dutch can be when handling data. My report was highly detailed—how I would play the scene of Walter returning to Lili's at night and finding himself in the middle of a new wave extravaganza. Dutch extracted an eye-dropper full of information out of the report and achieved a stunning scene of Walter's *danse macabre* from his point of view:

What Dutch is looking for in research is a series of "triggers" that inspire scenes or characters.

They were moving him into the wall-to-wall racket of rock sound filling the bar, people behind him now crowding him into people standing inside, the people moving but moving in place, moving up and down, skinny people with painted hair, pink hair, Kraut hair, moving like puppets attached to the beat, skinny girls wired to it together, thighs shining, sliding together with sex on their faces, mouths moving, speaking, but no sound coming out of them, no room for voice sounds in a room filled with electronic sound.

Dutch wrote the real characters in, like Art and the unforgettable Lili:

Walter raised his face to breathe. He saw Lili, a stripped tiger drinking a white drink. . . .

Lili's voice said, "Walter? Come on—is that Walter Kouza?"

He stared at her, at her tiger dress.

Lili's voice said, "Walter, you sick? Please don't throw up on my customers, Walter, go outside.

Art's voice said, "He doesn't know where he is."

Another voice said, "I'll take care of him."

Walter turned to the voice.

To Robbie Daniels smiling at him. "Come on, Walter, let's go outside."

Walter heard his own voice say, "I'm messing up. . ."

What Dutch is looking for in research is a series of "triggers" that inspire scenes or characters. These triggers were in abundance during *Split Images*. For example, the attempted assassination of both Ronald Reagan and Pope John Paul II made a deep impression on Dutch which is transferred to his characters. My job was to go after the bigger picture, in search of hidden triggers. Dutch would then shop the material very discriminately for a single fact, a gesture, or a backdrop; once he had it he'd be off and running again.

Robbie Daniels would also require some "back story." Dutch toyed with many backgrounds for the man, trying to figure out how he made his money and the exact nature of his business. We looked at different products, revolutionary ones like titanium batteries, Detroit-related items like automotive assemblies, until finally settling on Robbie owning a giant nuts and bolts factory; as an added touch, he was putting the company on the block in a huge machine auction in Detroit. I suggested the auction since I worked once for an industrial auctioneer and had a stack of sale brochures and audio tapes of the big Diamond Reo auction in Lansing, Michigan. One of the brochures was for a nuts and bolts factory. For a refresher, I went to a Chrysler Stamping Plant auction. This is how Dutch saw it:

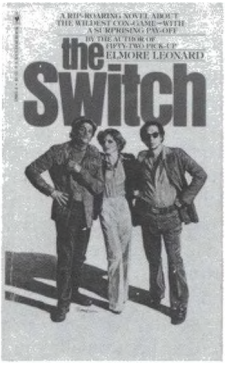
The auction was underway at Daniels Fasteners: buyers and aides in business suits standing around with riggers in hard hats while the dressed-up auctioneer and his podium were moved along on a hand truck by assistants in red blazers. The procession passed beneath tired fluorescent light to a machine that seemed to have no beginning or end and the auctioneer said, "Lot Number 35. We've got here, in excellent condition, a National three-quarter-inch double-stroke, solid-die and open-die, long stroke Universal cold header. Who's going to give me twenty thousand to open?"

Even Robbie is capable of sentiment and decides on a fitting memorial to his company's demise:

"What I'm going to do, sell every machine in the plant except one. I think a Waterbury Farrell Automatic Thread Roller, a big Number 50. Paint it black and stand it out on the front lawn with a plaque that reads: 'It's an ugly fucker, but it sure made us a pile of money'. . . I'd love to do that."

Since Robbie liked to kill people, he needed victims. After the Haitian gardener came victim number two, Curtis Moore, who came more or less directly out of the STRESS research.

The next victim would require a lot of thought. He was the guy who headed Robbie's fanciful dream hit list. At first, the thought was to make a Detroit area Arab leader the target, thus bringing the story deeper into Detroit. But there came the call of the Caribbean. Dutch asked me to see what I could find about Perfiro Rubirosa, the Dominican playboy and confidant of



Dominican Republic dictator Rafael Trujillo. I got Dutch as much as I could find, including fishing out the original *Look* articles from 1965 on the Trujillo regime written in part by Trujillo's daughter. Dutch was very pleased with this material, out of which he created Chichi Fuentes, Robbie's third victim.

Angela Nolan, the journalist who is interviewing Robbie Daniels in the beginning of *Split Images,* fills Bryan Hurd in about Chichi:

"...Chichi's one of Trujillo's illegitimate sons. He married a sugarcane heiress first, then a very rich American woman and then an Italian movie actress. Women adore him...he's rich. He plays polo. He used to drive sports cars. He's held diplomatic posts all over the world...right now he's inspector of embassies for the Dominican Republic..."

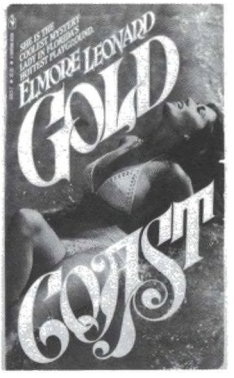
This subplot marked an important new direction. Just as *Gold Coast* took his story to Florida, *Split Images* foreshadowed a move into the Caribbean which would unfold more fully in his next book, *Cat Chaser.* For me, there would be another research assignment first.

Hang Tough

Around the time Dutch was in the thick of writing *Split Images,* United Artists announced it would film *Hang Tough,* the film version of *City Primeval.* Dutch had already written the script and met with co-producers Herb Jaffe and Jerry Bick in Hollywood. In late April of 1981, Jaffe named Sam Peckinpah the director who would shoot from Dutch's screenplay. Much excitement was generated by this announcement in Detroit. Here were a pair of talents who could be explosive together on the screen. A Dutch Leonard Detroit Western shot by the poetically violent Sam Peckinpah.

With Dutch's blessing, I volunteered to help Film Commissioner Bob Scott and talent and location scout Evelyn Orbach in giving Peckinpah the big picture about Detroit. At Dutch's request, after his

first meeting with the producers in Hollywood, I took the screenplay and broke down the various locations to come up with a new set that would keep all the action basically in downtown Detroit. I took slides of these locations and turned them over to Dutch in late March. During a frantic week of location scouting,



Evelyn and I scoured the city, taking pictures and rushing them to Peckinpah. Bob Scott squired Peckinpah around and took just as many pictures, while showing Sam through the inner workings of 1300 Beaubein, Detroit Police Headquarters.

Everything was done with a great sense of urgency, but *Hang Tough* never flew. Peckinpah never made his Detroit *Wild Bunch*. He slipped out of town, wrote a thank-you note, and was never heard from again. Later, it was learned that he had hired a ghost writer and rewritten the script. Needless to say, that script, heavy with his touches, did not pack the wallop of Dutch's original. Then, once MGM acquired United Artists, *Hang Tough* went into "turnaround." There is a ray of hope that *Hang Tough* will one day be produced.

Cat Chaser

After the disappointment of *Hang Tough,* Dutch started assembling data for his next book, *Cat Chaser.*

Split Images marked an end of the Detroit-based story, at least for the time being. Now, just as *Gold Coast* had been an earlier departure to sunny Florida —with key Detroit scenes—*Cat Chaser* could be set totally in South Florida. Of course, the lead character would still hail from Detroit.

After some admittedly cloak-and-dagger plotting at the beginning of the *Cat Chaser* project, Dutch relaxed and wrote as he normally did. He began to tell the story of George Moran, a once wealthy man who now is seemingly satisfied owning a small motel in Pompano Beach, Florida (as does Dutch's mother). Moran is driven by an inner force to go to the Dominican Republic to find the girl who shot at him in 1965 when he was a Marine during the forty-day war there. "Cat Chaser" is Moran's squad name and the name he uses when he places this ad in a Santo Domingo newspaper:

> CAT CHASER
>
> is looking for the girl who once ran over rooftops and tried to kill him. Call the Hotel Embajador. Room 537.

This ad starts a series of chain reactions in the story.

Cat Chaser was born out of the Trujillo research from *Split Images* from which Dutch extracts the real stuff. He brings the archetypal Trujillo henchman to life in the guise of General Andres DeBoya, who, after Trujillo's assassination, ran for his life to Miami. All he brought with him was a lot of money and some photographs which hung in his study:

> Photos in black and white of Andres with Trujillo, with Peron, with Batista, with Anastasio Somoza, with Perez Jiminez of Venezuela. A photo with U.S. Marine officers taken when U.S. Marines maintained tranquility and could be trusted. There was the photo of Andres holding the submachine gun that belonged to Trujillo's brother, Arismendi. They would go out on Trujillo's yacht—Andres and Arismendi who was called Petan—and fire the

Lili's in Hamtramck. This is where Walter Kouza, in *Split Images*, found an afternoon of peace and an evening in Hell.

submachine gun at the sharks off Monte Christi, the sharks gorging on the rotten meat the sailors threw over the side, the two of them having a splendid time blowing the man-eaters to pieces.

To portray Moran, the ex-Marine who wanted to return to the scene of a truly obscure war, Dutch would need some specific research.

I pulled together a package of library materials on the conflict and the country before and after and laid the Texaco map of Santo Domingo out in front of him so he could start blocking out scenes. The rest he did himself, like finding a veteran of the Dominican conflict, Gunnery Sergeant George Coakley, who filled him in on some of the technical details and the sound of a Marine on the line in Santo Domingo. Then Dutch and Joan visited the Dominican Republic in the winter of 1982. He observed Santo Domingo and the countryside for a few days, talking to a government official and a taxi driver, and when he got back began to weave the material together with his usual precision:

They were almost ambushed and got in a firefight at the corner of Carreras and Padre Billini; the Cat Chasers gave chase, in and out of the buildings, and that was when he finally saw her for the first time, running across a rooftop with her carbine.

He saw her from a window across the street, the window a story higher than the roof she was on. He put his M-14 on her and began to track and saw her look back, laughing, yelling at somebody, waving them, Come on!

Cat Chaser produced another Elmore Leonard "beauty," Jiggs Scully, a low-level Mafia enforcer. Background on this character was supplied, in part, by Bill Marshall, a Miami private detective and former classmate of Dutch's from the University of Detroit. Dutch had called him up one day after being out of touch with him for thirty years, while he was writing *Split Images*. He kidded Marshall that he owed him something for all the sociology book reports he wrote for him at U of D. Aside from the factual information, Marshall supplied Dutch with much needed "sound." As a result, Jiggs, the "Irish ex-cop-looking guy," like his cousin Walter Kouza, would develop into a major character, stealing lines from Andres DeBoya, who never quite was able to open his mouth.

For the remaining research for *Cat Chaser,* Dutch called Sergeant Dale Johnston, a gun expert at Detroit Police Headquarters. He needed two things: an exotic gun for Jiggs Scully and a way to blow up Andres DeBoya's dock. Johnston, who has a large cabinet filled with "Saturday Night Specials," suggested the Smith and Wesson Mark 22, Model O Silenced 9mm Parabellum Pistol known as the SEALS "Hush-Puppy" because it was developed for the U.S. Navy during Vietnam primarily to kill enemy watch-dogs. Dutch liked it, and so did Jiggs, who discusses the weapon with Andres DeBoya and Corky as he gets ready to murder them in a bathtub in Boca:

"Got a slide lock here on the side. You fire once it doesn't eject, so you don't hear the slide click open. You don't even hear that poumpf you get with a silencer. You know why? I use a subsonic round, very low muzzle velocity. Take the lock off you hear the slide jack open and close as you fire, but that's all, just that *click-click* . . . You guys ready? Leave your clothes on the floor there."

Dutch explained to Johnston what he wanted to do with the dock and he got the "recipe" for the explosion: One 55 gallon drum, aluminum nitrate plus five

gallons of fuel oil, dynamite, and C-4 explosives to set it off.

It worked well:

The charge took out the wooden surface of the dock, the heavy planks, the steel davits, ripped out a section of the cement retaining wall, sheared off the pilings to leave splintered stubs that barely cleared the surface of the water, and shattered a sliding glass door on the sundeck of the house.

With all these elements in place, *Cat Chaser* came together quickly. It set the tone for the next two novels.

Stick

One day, Dutch called and said: I'm thinking of doing another "Stick" novel. He had checked his calendar, and Stick was due to get out of Jackson State Penitentiary after doing seven years for armed robbery.

In *Swag,* Earnest "Stick" Stickley is an auto thief who teams up with a car salesman, Frank Ryan, to commit armed robbery in a systematic, professional way. Frank Ryan is the author of the Ten Commandments of Armed Robbery, which he writes on cocktail napkins during a Detroit pub crawl with Stick. They are:

1. Always be polite on the job. Say please and thank you.
2. Never say more than is necessary.
3. Never call your partner by name—unless you use a made-up name.
4. Dress well. Never look suspicious or like a bum.
5. Never use your own car. (Details to come)
6. Never count the take in the car.
7. Never flash money in a bar or with women.
8. Never go back to an old bar or hangout once you have moved up.
9. Never tell anybody your business. Never tell a junkie even your name.
10. Never associate with people known to be in crime.

In the opening page of *Swag,* Stick is in the process of stealing a maroon Camaro off the lot of Red Bowers Chevrolet on Telegraph Road in Southfield. While he's doing this, wary Frank Ryan says: "You mind if I ask where you're going?" Stick replies: "I could be going home. I could be going to Florida."

He didn't make it to Florida just then. Instead he and Frank went on a three-month armed-robbery spree culminating in arrest and sentence. Stick knew how to "jail" but Frank didn't and died of cirrhosis of the liver from prison moonshine made out of potato peelings.

Dutch decided to pick up Stick's story as he got out of Jackson, attempting to adjust to freedom, see his daughter, and maybe even stay out of trouble. Dutch's first thought to open *Stick* was having ol' Earnest thinking about stealing a fancy car from in

My first assignment for "Stick" was to find out how to break into a car.

front of a fashionable Miami bistro when a rich guy named Barry Stam comes out and realizes he's locked out of his car. Stick breaks into Barry's car and starts it, making a lasting impression:

He watched Stick hunch over his canvas bag, zip it open and feel around inside. Watched him take out a coat hanger. Watched him feel around again and take out a length of lamp cord, several feet of it with metal clips at each end.

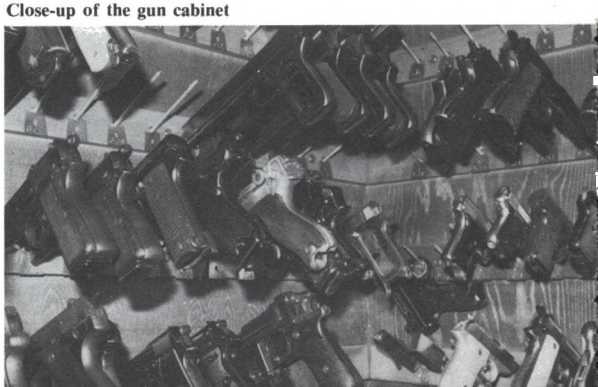
Barry's mouth opened. He said, "What're you, a car thief—you think there's ever a car thief around when you need one? Honest to God, I don't believe it—right before my eyes."

My first research assignment for *Stick* was to find out how to break into a car—at that time, a Corvette.

I checked with a friend of mine, knowledgeable in illegal enterprise, and he told me what he knew about Fenderpullers and Slim Jims and other devices to break into cars. He directed me to *Shotgun News,* where such equipment could be purchased. This publication, subtitled "The Trading Post for Anything that Shoots," was of great interest to Dutch and would end up on Chucky Buck's coffee table.

I went down to 1300 Beaubein to talk with the cops in Grand Theft Auto. They showed me the aforementioned devices and confirmed what I already knew. After this information was gathered, Dutch decided he wanted to use a vehicle that was more exceptional and easier to break into and start than a Corvette, so he changed Barry's car to a Rolls Royce Silver Shadow. The specifics of the break-in and hotwiring came from the editor of *Car and Driver,* David E. Davies, an old friend of Dutch's.

Close-up of the gun cabinet



As Dutch got deeper into the story, he realized the need for more backstory before the car theft scene would work. So Rainy came into being, and Stick ended up starting the book this way:

Stick said he wasn't going if they had to pick up anything. Rainy said no, there wasn't any product in the deal; all they had to do was drop a bag. Stick said, "And the guy's giving you five grand?"

"It makes him feel important," Rainy said. "It's how it's done. Listen, this's the big time, man, I'm taking you uptown."

Rainy isn't long for this world, thanks to the death sentence he is issued by the dope-dealing, mentally disturbed Chucky Gorman at the behest of Nestor Soto, the crazy Cuban. Chucky has messed up, sent Nestor a customer who turned out to be a deep narc. So Chucky has to pay. As Stick observes:

Chucky was giving the Cuban somebody to kill. Part of doing business. Rainy said Chucky owed the Cuban money. Rainy didn't know he owed the Cuban a lot more than that, he owed the Cuban a life, too. Maybe Rainy didn't serve enough time to learn how those things worked. Stick knew.

As usual, for Florida research, Dutch relied on his own field trips, Marshall's insights, and *Town and Country,* which had also proved helpful in *Split Images* and *Cat Chaser.*

Some of the prison stuff came from an encounter with Jason Lovette, Jr., a Detroit writer, who arranged a meeting with a friend of his who was just out of Jackson.

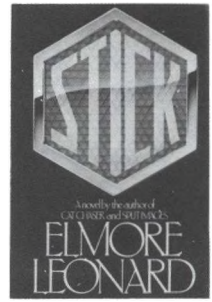
My next assignment came down like this from Dutch: "How does a con artist get greedy people to invest and speculate in something? Some of the money will be shady." He wanted a scam that Stick could pull on Chucky or Barry or both. Corporate fraud was a leading contender. High-tech, solar energy, oil leases, I looked into all these areas.

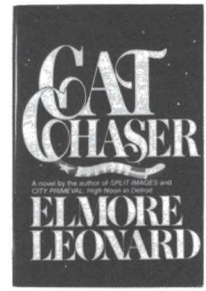
Dutch had already begun to develop the pivotal character in the story, Kyle McLaren, a savvy investment counselor who had both Chucky and Barry as her clients. Stick would develop his own scam watching her operate. I did a lot of research on women in business, women as venture capitalists, and the like. Dutch talked to a guy from E. F. Hutton, and when he was all through he convinced most people that he knew a lot about investments and probably had a considerable portfolio.

Stick and Kyle developed considerable personal chemistry during the course of the book, and Dutch wanted to somehow bring them together, either directly or indirectly, on a sting. He narrowed the possibilities to a phony movie scam.

An old movie prospective I had from a doomed local film provided the "words" Dutch needed to set the scene in which Kyle chews up the scam's first author, film producer Leo Firestone. He condescendingly explains his deal to Kyle:

"We sign a recourse note to a bank payable in five years. So the guys each get to write off two-hundred and fifty thousand. Their hundred grand investment plus their share





of the note, another hundred and fifty grand. But. . . here's the sweet spot of the deal. I give them each a signed memo that states they're not responsible for the bank loan. they've already written it off. And by the time the note comes due, in five years, the statute will have run out and the IRS won't be able to touch them. Now I think that's pretty cute, if I have to say so myself."

"Adorable," Kyle said. "Except the statute of limitations has nothing to do with it. When you forgive them a note that's due in five years—which they've already written off—then five years from now each investor will be a hundred and fifty thousand dollars ahead. Which is the same as income, and they'll have to declare it and pay tax on it. If you don't believe me, ask the IRS."

The Frank Murphy Hall of Justice, from which a car salesman named Frank Ryan sprung a car thief named Stick and formed their felonious partnership in *Swag*.

After Kyle "neuters" Leo Firestone, to use Chucky's term, Stick uses the knowledge he's gained observing Kyle and Barry and hatches a scheme to sting Chucky:

Chucky flipped through pages. "Say the offering's different now?"

"They took the tax fraud out of it. Now it's a straight deal like any other offering. You put in seven-two five and you and the other investors own half the movie. Not twenty percent like before, half. It's all in there. They put the investment money in Florida First National and if they don't make the picture you get it all back with interest."

Stick climaxes with an Elmore Leonard *tour de force* ending, and ol' Stick is on the road again.

La Brava

While Dutch was poking around Miami Beach for a place for Stick to hide out after Rainy's murder, he discovered South Beach. It was Elmore Leonard country. He decided then and there to set part of his next book there. This would be a book with a very definite look and feel to it.

At first, the book which he'd eventually call *LaBrava* was going to be a sequel to *Stick*. This time, Stick would go to work for a private eye who would hire him to keep an eye on a female rock singer who then hires Stick as her bodyguard. Dutch focused on Patti Smith, the eerie punk *chanteuse* of the middle '70s as a model for this singer and named her Moon. But as quickly as the idea was born it was cast aside. Next Stick was going to be a photographer who had taken some award-winning photos of Indians in the Southwest after leaving in haste from Barry's place in *Stick*. His studio is destroyed in a fire, and he goes back and tries to re-create it. For a split second, his studio was even in Hamtramck.

Then, Stick the character got summarily dumped from the story. The book *Stick* had just been sold to Universal and Dutch wanted to avoid the hassle he'd had with *Split Images* where he'd had to change Raymond Cruz's name to Bryan Hurd and lighten his moustache because United Artists had the name Raymond Cruz locked up for five years, making a movie deal difficult if not impossible.

The names weren't right anyway. To Dutch, getting the names of characters right is akin to getting the character right. He had already given the old man character he was toying with the surname of a hitchhiker he picked up in Needles, California, on the road to L.A.—Joe Bravo. Then Dutch changed the old man's name to Maurice Zola and Stick became Joe LaBrava. *Then* things started to happen.

LaBrava was still basically Stick, who is from a long-standing misfit tradition that goes all the way back to *The Big Bounce* and Dutch's first contemporary lead, Jack Ryan (who became a burglar because he couldn't hit a curve ball). Jack, like Stick, showed up in another book, *Unknown Man #89,* as a process server.

Joe LaBrava would require more of a moral or sincere streak than Stick. But, at the same time, Dutch wanted to give LaBrava a background that would afford some capability later on when things got rough. He made Joe an IRS investigator who then joined the Secret Service, which left him with a curious guilt:

He spent fifteen months in Detroit, his hometown, chasing down counterfeiters, going undercover to get next to wholesalers. That part was okay, making buys as a passer. But then he'd have to testify against the poor bastard in federal court, take the stand and watch the guy's face drop —Christ, seeing his new buddy putting the stuff on him.

After that, LaBrava was assigned to the Protective Research Section in Washington, where he read crank letters to the President all day. He also guarded politicians like Teddy Kennedy and listened to their boring speeches. But then he found himself:

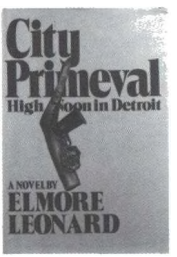
LaBrava said he'd almost quit after guarding Teddy. But he hung on and was reassigned to go after counterfeiters again, now out of the Miami field office, now getting into his work and enjoying it. A new angle. He picked up a Nikon, attached a 200-mm lens, and began using it in surveillance work. Loved it. Snapping undercover agents making deals with wholesalers, passers unloading their funny money. Off duty he continued snapping away; shooting up and down Southwest Eighth Street, the heart of Little Havana; or riding with a couple of Metro cops to document basic Dade County violence.

LaBrava cannot escape his intuition. One day, he sees three guys on an overpass and realizes instantly that something is wrong. Sure enough, two of the guys toss the third one over the freeway bridge. Joe, who always carries a camera, gets the shot and it makes the cover of *Newsweek* and he's a celebrity.

By this time, everything was in place, everybody had the right name tag and the characters were talking to one another. Still, there would be quite a bit of research to do.

Writing a story about a photographer was something that Dutch had always wanted to do. He drew from considerable knowledge of the subject, coupled with plenty of strong opinions. He also knew the foibles of the art and critical crowd. LaBrava tells Jean Shaw what a critic said about his work:

"The review in the paper said, 'the aesthetic sub-text of my work is the systematic exposure of artistic pretension.' I thought I was just taking pictures."



That over-intellectualized statement was taken from a *Village Voice* review of *Split Images*.

For technical knowledge on photography, I put Dutch in touch with photographer Eric Smith, in whose darkroom he got his "words" to convey intimate knowledge of the photo arts.

I pulled a bunch of clips and books on the Secret Service and got him information on the IRS through a "T-Men" contact I had. With this, Joe LaBrava was pretty well set.

Maurice Zola was another story. Dutch was considering making him the main character up until the end of Act One of *LaBrava*. Maurice could really talk, and his sound was pleasing to Dutch's ear. He was one of the true old-timers around Miami and, like LaBrava, was a photographer who made his bones on one shot:

"Some people have to work their ass off for years to get recognition," Maurice said. "Others, they get discovered overnight. September the second, 1935, I happen to be on Islamorada working on the Key West extension, Florida East Coast line, right?"

Evelyn knew every detail, how the '35 hurricane tore into the keys and Maurice got pictures of the worst railroad disaster in Florida history. Two hundred and eighty-six men working on the road killed or missing...and two months later he was shooting pictures for the Farm Security Administration, documenting the face of America during the Depression.

Maurice has many such recollections, culled from the early history of South Florida, from the turn of the century forward. Bill Marshall sent Dutch *Yesterday's Miami* by Nixon Smiley, an important reference book, and the rest of his background came from old *Holiday, Harper's,* and *Life* articles about the facts and foibles of Sunshine State pioneers.

So much material was available that some serious editing was required. And that's difficult when the researcher is not the writer—what do you keep and what do you throw away?

One thing that I didn't throw away was the *Florida East Coast Railroad Directory 1926–1927.* I had a hunch it would fit in somewhere. Dutch used it while unfolding Maurice's character. Maurice recites the stops to impress Joe and Jean:

On his way to naming every stop on the Florida East Coast Line from Jacksonville to Key Largo, reciting the names without a pause, as he had learned them back in the early thirties. This evening Maurice had to get off at Vero Beach to go to the bathroom and LaBrava and Jean Shaw looked at each other.

She said, "Would it make any difference?"

As a dialogue began to open up between Maurice and LaBrava, the woman in the middle changed from a rock singer named Moon to a beautiful retired actress named Jean Shaw. This character would come to establish the mood of the book.

LaBrava remembers Jean Shaw from his youth, and it triggers quite a response:

She had changed .Well, yeah, in twenty-five years people changed, everybody changed. She hadn't changed that much though. The hair maybe, the way it was styled. But she was pale in black and white as she had been on the screen and the eyes—he would never forget her eyes.

Jean Shaw. Upstairs, right now.

The movie star he had fallen in love with the first time he had ever fallen in love in his life, when he was twelve years old.

Jean Shaw was in many films which have come to be called the *film noir.* She made films with titles like *Deadfall, Nightshade,* and *Obituary.* She played the spider lady opposite the good girl—Gloria DeHaven instead of June Allyson, a favorite Elmore Leonard dichotomy. Jean explains her own feelings on the subject to LaBrava:

"In *Deadfall,*" LaBrava said, "I remember I kept thinking if I was Robert Mitchum I still would've gone for you instead of the guy's wife, the widow."

"But I was in on the murder. I lured what's his name out on the bridge. Was it Tom Drake?"

"It might've been. The thing is, your part was always a downer. At least once in a while you should've ended up with the star."

"You can't have it both ways. I played Woman as Destroyer, and they gave me the lines. And I'd rather have the lines any day than end up with the star."

For me, doing research on the *film noir* was as easy as opening my file cabinet. After all, I was a fanatic. I had already collected most everything written on the subject, and just turned it over to Dutch.

One afternoon, I brought my videotape recorder over to his house, and Dutch, Joan, and I watched *Out of the Past,* featuring a quintessentially spidery performance by Jane Greer. Long before then, though, Dutch knew where he was going with Jean.

In *LaBrava,* there are so many good characters with good lines that they battle each other for the top slots.

Richard Nobles, at the beginning, seemed to be the hands-down favorite to win the popularity sweepstakes. He was from a long list of diseased characters like Roland Crowe in *Gold Coast,* Clement Mansell in *City Primeval,* and Chucky Buck in *Stick.*

Richard came out of the Big Scrub country of Northern Florida. Dutch got the idea for Richard's background from a book called *The Other Florida* and a *Harper's* article about Steinhatchee, where the "hardshell Baptists" started running marijuana which they bought off of shrimping boats. Richard thinks marijuana is for "sissies," so he tells the DEA all about the Baptist dope dealers. He also shoots and eats an eagle. Joe Stella, a former employer of Richard's, tells LaBrava what kind of guy he is:

"He shot the eagle he was living up around Ocala, the Big Scrub country. Richard was a canoe guide, he'd take birdwatchers and schoolteachers back in the swamp, show 'em nature and come out somewhere up on the St. John River. He wasn't doing that he'd run supplies for a couple of moonshiners, few hundred pounds of sugar a trip. These two brothers he knew had a still in there. So when he got busted for the eagle he traded off, gave the feds the two brothers and they got two to five in Chillicothe. I asked him, didn't it bother him any to turn in his friends? He says, 'No, it weren't no hill to climb.' "

The Saturday Night Special display in the crime lab at Detroit Police Headquarters

Cundo Rey is another classic Leonard creation. He would not sit still for a minor role and ended up topping Richard Nobles. He meets "Big Scrub" much the same way Stick meets Ryan: Richard, a rent-a-cop, is guarding a car dealership and Cundo is brazenly stealing a car. Then they become a very unlikely duo. Cundo came over on the Cuban boat lift, and when he isn't stealing cars he's a go-go dancer.

Dutch had me do a work-up on the Cuban boat lift and Cundo really caught on after he took a look at some of that material. I called a Cuban relief organization in Miami, and they sent me a map of Cuban prisons, which gave Cundo his pedigree. Cundo remembers that prison while waiting for a fellow inmate, Javier, at the La Playa Hotel:

What a place this was—the tile floor cracked and broken, pieces of it missing. He compared it in his mind to Cambinado del Estes because the people who lived here reminded him of convicts. The difference, Cambinado del Este was cleaner than this place, it was still a new prison.

Cundo winds up too smart for his own good but in the meantime combines good doses of violence and whimsy. He also gave Dutch a chance to use the "wheelchair scene" which he had been carrying around in his head for five years. Originally, a guy is doing surveillance for a private eye by sitting in a wheelchair, pretending to be in the business of taking pictures of tourists. A guy grabs his camera and runs. This is how Dutch plays it after Cundo admires LaBrava's camera and decides to steal it, then has second thoughts:

LaBrava sat in the wheelchair waiting, his curvy-brimmed Panama shading his eyes, the guy fifteen to twenty feet away, staring at him now:

"What's the matter?"

Holding the camera like he was going to take LaBrava's picture.

The guy said, "I have to ask you something."

"Go ahead."

"Can you walk?"

"Yeah I can walk."

"There's nothing wrong with you?"

"You mean, you want to know if you took off could I catch you and beat your head on the pavement? There's no doubt in my mind."

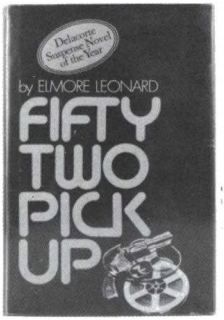
It was this kind of scene that pushed Cundo out ahead of Richard.

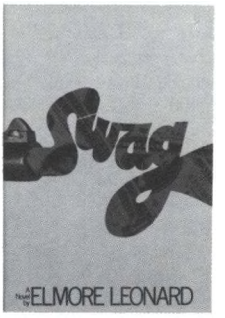
Franny Kaufman also went through her changes. She started out as a potential victim but made it to the end of the book alive and well. She was a painter who sold skin-care products on the side to elderly, weather-beaten ladies.

I looked into the skin-care racket from the franchise level, like Mary Kay, all the way down to the indivi-

dual skin-care consultant. I didn't come back with much, but Dutch didn't need much.

Out of the piles of articles and books and interviews I did for Dutch, his favorite research story is about the Truman House. He says in *LaBrava* that Joe was on the detail that guarded Bess Truman in Independence, Missouri. He wanted to create a scene which would contain references to the inside of the house. After numerous contacts with ex-Secret Service agents and the Treasury Department, he had no more information than when he started. He was given a bureaucratic brush-off. Finally, he asked me to find out what I could about the house. I pulled every Truman book I could find and came up with some good references. Then I called Independence information, got the number of the house and dialed it. I talked to a park ranger for a half-hour, and he





ran through every last detail of the house, thoroughly delighting Dutch. Sometimes the direct approach does work. All that work was for this one scene:

He got hot again through court appearances and was given a cooling-off assignment—are you ready for this?—in Independence, Missouri.

After counterfeiters?

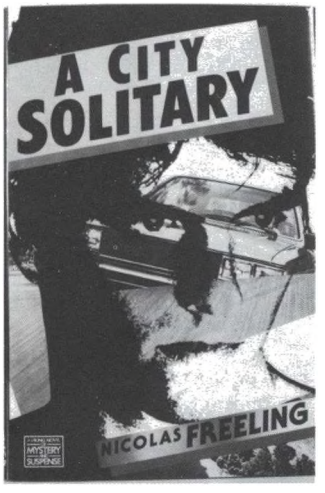
No, to guard Mrs. Truman.

A member of the twelve-man protection detail. To sit in the surveillance house watching monitors or sit eight hours a day in the Truman house itself on North Delaware. Sit sometimes in the living room looking around at presidential memorabilia, a picture of Margaret and her two kids, the grandfather's clock that had been wired and you didn't have to wind—which would have been something to do—listening to faint voices in other rooms. Or sit in the side parlor with Harry's piano, watching movies on TV, waiting for the one interruption of the day. The arrival of the mailman.

With the research for *LaBrava* completed, I had also completed a phase in my development as Elmore Leonard's researcher. Up until this point, the research process was generally benign in nature—lots of library research and an occasional foray somewhere in the Detroit area. Now, at least for the next book, *Glitz,* I would be cast in the role of his advance man as he placed a new literary terrain in his gunsights: Atlantic City. □

Short notes...

The Sound of Wings by Spencer Dunmore (Macmillan, $14.95) is part love story, part supernatural adventure, part mystery novel. In the end, it proves satisfying enough if sufficiently slow-moving to tax my patience. A British commercial airline co-pilot almost loses his job when he seizes control and makes a violent maneuver to avoid collision with a small plane—a small plane which no one else sees and which does not appear on radar. This plane reappears—to him—and his earphones—his only—fill with



Morse code, and he follows the trail to an American aviatrix who disappeared trying to fly the Atlantic in 1927. Curious that this forgotten incident should prove dangerous to a British pilot and an attractive librarian from upstate New York.

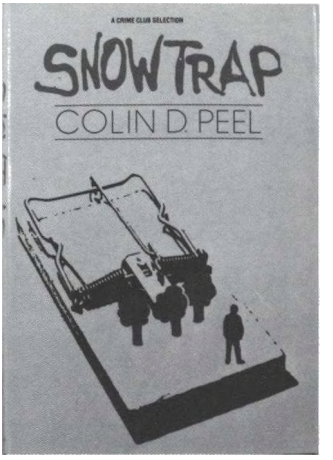
Although Alex Finer's ***Deepwater*** comes our way via Doubleday's Crime Club ($11.95), it's much more an adventure tale. Out in the

Pacific, a high-technology vessel is investigating deep-sea creatures and mineral deposits. Analysis shows rich cobalt nodules on the seabed, so secrecy is clamped on the ship and a monomaniac is sent to direct mining operations—Capt. William Beckett, a spook type who cares nothing for human life or the dangers and horrors of the deep. Acceptable doomsday diversion.

I can't say much about Nicolas Freeling's ***A City Solitary*** (Viking, $14.95): I lasted only a third of the way. Forsaking Henri Castang but not France, Freeling offers us Walter Forestier, whose house is trashed by a brash trio of thieves. I guess later on Forestier sets out for revenge, but the part I read was too introspective and inert to hold my attention.

London, 1891. Sgt. Joseph Bragg and his upper-crust colleague, Constable James Morton, make their second appearance in Ray Harrison's ***Death of an Honorable Member*** (Scribner's, $11.95). Sir Walter Grenville falls down the stairs and is buried in haste. Unseemly haste, suggests an anonymous correspondent, and Bragg is told to take a quiet look. Grenville, a banker-politician, proves not beloved of wife or cronies, nor competent at business. Likely he was assisted down the stairs, and suspects abound. But Bragg and Morton can't seem to view the affair from the proper angle. Harrison tells a good story, though I think his sleuths are less interesting here than in their debut.

If World War II is one of the prime begetters of international intrigue fiction, the secret Normandy invasion in 1944 may be the favorite single peg on which to hang the tale. The latest is Hans Herlin's ***The Last Spring in Paris*** (Doubleday, $15.95). This hasn't the appeal or unbearable tension of, for example, Follett's *Eye of the Needle*, but it agreeably explores similar territory. France is occupied; the Nazis control Paris;



German counterintelligence sends its agents into England. Invasion is expected, but when—and, more importantly, where? The SS has its own agenda in Paris, and the British—how could they make use of all this?

Stuart Kaminsky may never run out of folks to hang his 1940s Toby Peters tales on. In ***Down for the Count*** (St. Martin's, $12.95), the tenth in the series, it's Joe Louis,

found by Peters looming over a fresh corpse on a Santa Monica beach. Said corpse has been beaten to death; Louis, though proclaiming innocence, has blood on his knuckles. And it's not any old corpse: the body is that of the husband of Toby's ex-wife. So it's another trot for Peters down the mean streets, littered with nasty cops and nastier mobsters and somewhere a murderer. Agreeable action and atmosphere.

Tony Kenrick's primary objective in ***Faraday's Flowers*** (Doubleday, $14.95) appears to be self-titillation, so his novel can be allowed to sink without trace. It has to do with the search by a pair of missionaries and a peddler of fluorescent ties for a bail of opium poppies in the Japanese-occupied Shanghai of 1940. Naturally, other folks—like Shanghai's various criminal gangs—would also have an interest in so liquidable a commodity. This might have made a commendable novel—the setting is quite good—were the plot a bit more believable and the author's leer not so far out of control.

Graham Marshall's first murder is little more than a reflex action. Having got over the shock of it, and finding that his life has ground to a halt owing to certain impediments, he applies himself to their removal. And in so doing he discovers within himself both a taste and an aptitude for homicide. Alas, Graham is an unfeeling, wholly unattractive chap, and there's a certain grim inevitability about his story as recounted in ***A Shock to the System*** (Scribner's, $13.95) by Simon Brett, whose Charles Paris mysteries are much more fun.

The merits of ***Sweet Justice*** by Jerry Oster (Harper & Row, $13.95) are obscured by the author's preoccupation with a particular four-letter word. It is sophomorically dense in the text, and I skipped a couple of pages that seemed to consist of little else. But this tale of New York cops has a rough vigor, with interesting character dynamics and suspenseful projection of a slice of urban life. Redfield and Newman, Manhattan's best homicide detectives, are following a trail of corpses. The deceased are folks who will not much be missed, but otherwise what links them? The answer is not all that welcome to New York's finest when it comes.

Doubleday's second import of New Zealand's Colin D. Peel is ***Snowtrap*** ($11.95). A veteran pilot is persuaded by a NATO representative to steal a military jet in Australia and bomb a uranium mine and sink two ships off the Australian coast. Or so he thinks, in all his massive gullibility. After accomplishing his mission, he finds, of course, that he's been a prize chump. Alas, neither our alleged hero, the Australian scheme, nor said hero's efforts to bail himself out in subsequent adventures in Norway have, for me, a hint of believability. ***Full Contact*** (St. Martin's, $13.95)

is the third novel about New York private eye Miles Jacoby by Robert J. Randisi and the first to appear in hard covers. Here Jacoby has two cases, both archetypical of the genre: a friend is arrested for murder and Miles commits to getting him off, and a Detroit businessman hires him to find his missing daughter. Jacoby's friend is a bookie, and the dead man owed him money. The girl came to New York to study martial arts. Jacoby turns over some rocks in dirty corners of the city to find his answers, while receiving the obligatory bashings. A lively read.

William G. Tapply's debut, *Death at Charity's Point,* was a magnificently involving novel. His second, also featuring Boston attorney Brady Coyne, is ***The Dutch Blue Error*** (Scribner's, $12.95). This doesn't achieve the heights of the first but is certainly satisfactory entertainment. One of Coyne's wealthy clients, owner of a stamp incredibly valuable because of its uniqueness, hires him to authenticate and buy a second example of the rarity. Objective: destruction of the second to preserve the value of the first. Authentication proceeds smoothly, but then the dying begins and the proffered stamp disappears. Coyne encounters a foxy lady and, in due course, a killer with further malign intentions.

William Dougal, who debuted in Andrew Taylor's excellent *Caroline Miniscule,* returns in **Waiting for the End of the World** (Dodd, Mead, $14.95). Here Dougal is once again engaged by his enemy James Hanbury, who lures William back to England from the Aegean with promises of money. Dougal brings Malcolm, his muscular and unprincipled insurance policy, but this strategy saves him not from perilous involvement in murder and intrigue. The target seems to be one Dr. Vertag, a charismatic American gent who heads an organization readying itself for surviving the Apocalypse in fine style. While *Waiting* is not quite as fresh and ingenious as its predecessor, it certainly is an amusing adventure among the variously weak and culpable.

The tenth novel by Mignon Warner about the clairvoyant Edwina Charles, ***Speak No Evil*** (Doubleday, $11.95), is well told and intriguingly plotted but in the end is difficult to swallow. A lady private eye, newly embarked on this pursuit after not succeeding as a policewoman, commits suicide. Mrs. Charles is asked to look into it by a doubter and finds all manner of dead man's trails leading back to convicted murderer Rendell Pym. But Pym, who swore vengeance on several people, not including the private eye, died in a nursing home some years before. So what is this all about?

The Fifth Angel by David Wiltse (Macmillan, $14.95) may prove, for those whose tastes run its way, to be quite a satisfactory thriller. I gave up at the 40% mark. Stitzer is the titular angel, converted by a devastating experience in war games into a perfect psychopath, a killing machine in the ultimate physical condition. For reasons I didn't stick around to learn, he thinks he's been ordered to destroy New York City. That's reasonable: psychopaths (at least fictional ones) are as natural to New York as dog poop on the sidewalk.

Ted Wood's policeman Reid Bennett returns for the third time in ***Live Bait*** (Scribner's, $12.95). Although this is a lively and polished affair, it partakes much more of cliche than its predecessors by sending Bennett to a large city to function as a private eye. Bennett and his dog are still the total police force in a small Canadian town, but during vacation doldrums he succumbs to an old acquaintance's request to help out a troubled Toronto security firm. Industrial sabotage and Chinese mafia prove to be prime components of the mix, and Toronto becomes dangerous to both Reid's body and his heart.

—AJH

The Spy in the Dark: A History of Espionage Fiction

By Andy East

Fact Seduces Fiction. This revised equation of popular fiction would conceivably apply to the various genres present today. Apart from the expected demand of escapism from the paperback racks, the reader either consciously or unconsciously seeks some form of character identification. Taking these two elements into account, how else better to explain the popularity of the secret-agent series thriller of the 'sixties?

The suggestion of a continuing spy protagonist of that tumultuous era inevitably recalls the relationship between Ian Fleming and James Bond—which contributed significantly to the conception of uniting the reader and the author's creation. Still, how did the recurring "provocateur" evolve into such a dominant figure during the 'sixties and hence into the present day? By its immediate connotation, the

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Andy East is the author of THE AGATHA CHRISTIE QUIZBOOK *and* THE COLD WAR FILE *as well as numerous articles on spy and mystery fiction.*

archetypal espionage plot relies to some extent on world politics. Fact Seduces Fiction.

The British release of the first James Bond film, *Dr. No,* in 1962 produced this commentary from English critic Ian Johnson in *Films and Filming:*

> Identifying our snob sex, and violent wish-thinking is a good purgative. But make no mistake about it, Bond is as much a thug as his opponents beneath his beguiling charm. The only difference is he is on our side.[1]

Acknowledging the obvious differences between the Bond novels and films, Johnson's observation typifies the climate of the 'sixties, which spawned the amoralistic spy myth of the Cold War epoch.

Without delving extensively into global geopolitics, the spy fiction of the Cold War was dictated by two post war realities:

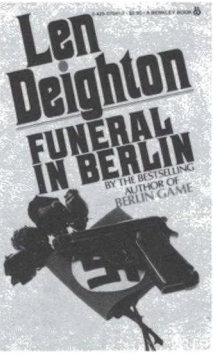
1. The suspicious power triangle of the U.S., U.S.S.R., and Red China, especially in the years from the end of the Korean War to the intensification of the Vietnan conflict.

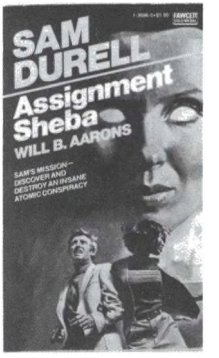
2. The recognition of the atomic threat, arising from Hiroshima as well as the first atomic test near Alamogordo, New Mexico in July 1945.

These staggering postwar effects drastically altered the fictional secret agent in the moral sense, ranging from the hedonistic (Bond) to the cynical (Len Deighton's shadowy anti-hero) to the irrevocably weary (le Carré's George Smiley and Alex Leamas). The patriotism manifested during the two world wars was superceded after 1953 by the disturbing Cold War trappings mentioned above.

1953 signalled the British publication of *Casino Royale,* Ian Fleming's initial James Bond thriller, and it is from this point that the Cold War spy novel, as it came to be defined in the 'sixties, was properly originated.

Not surprisingly, Bond's principal predecessor has been universally accepted as "Sapper's" Bulldog





Drummond. However, looking at the scope of the Bond saga two decades after Fleming's death, with five extant additions by Kingsley Amis and John Gardner, Agent 007 seems more comparable to the late Van Wyck Mason's Colonel Hugh North—of the U.S. Army's G-2.

In a fashion similar to Bond's development from *Casino Royale* to John Gardner's *Role of Honor* (1984), Van Wyck Mason introduced North as a captain in *Seeds of Murder* (1930) and crowned his career in 1968 with the highly technological *The Deadly Orbit Mission.* Achieving the rank of colonel by the early days of the Cold War, North survived the imminent Asian peril of the late 'thirties (*The Singapore Exile Murders,* 1939) to the immediate postwar climate in Europe (*The Dardanelles Derelict,* 1949) to the apocalyptic conception of atomic conquest (*Secret Mission to Bangkok,* 1960). Displaying a smooth narrative manner and a sharply defined sense of plotting and topicality, Mason's classic series of intrigue endured for nearly forty years. Mason consistently transcended North beyond the political concerns "of the moment" without politicizing his books.

In what might be termed the passage effect in spy fiction, Mason richly deserves credit for establishing

the perplexing line between escapism and reality. If Mason hadn't broken new ground with North, the Cold War series thriller would have likely failed to attain the celebrity status associated with the 'sixties.

Thus far, I have attempted to identify the basic elements of Cold War series spy fiction with the objective of outlining the era in which it came to power. This brings us to the James Bond series, specifically the differing reactions in the U.S. and Britain.

The postwar atmosphere in Great Britain was one of desolation, resulting from severe economic and military losses sustained during World War II in Europe and the Pacific. The colonial idealism that had motivated pre-war England was savagely consumed by the haunting ironies of the Cold War, notably Britain's decline in global prestige in the early 'fifties. The exotic world of sophistication and dangerous living Ian Fleming created for James Bond in *Casino Royale* evoked such a passionate response with the British reading audience that they instantly regarded 007 as a symbolic saviour of traditional English values – portrayed from the viewpoint of the Cold War.

Bond's early success in Britain convinced Pan Books of his mass appeal, and, by 1957, *Casino Royale* became the first Fleming thriller to appear in paperback in the U.K., to be quickly followed by *Live and Let Die* (1954), *Moonraker* (1955), and *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956).

Even Fleming himself was not prepared for what 1958 held for him. By this time, Fleming had acquired approximately 1,250,000 readers in England alone, and in a venomous attack on Bond's sixth appearance in *Doctor No* (1958), British critic Paul Johnson in *The New Stateman* protested: "I have just finished what is, without doubt, the nastiest book I have ever read." Persisting in his high-minded assault, Johnson concluded that he was on to "a social phenomenon of some importance."[2] Johnson theorized that the popularity of the Bond books resulted from "our curious postwar society, with its obsessive interest in debutantes, its cult of U and non-U, its working class graduates educated into snobbery by the welfare state...a soft market for Mr. Fleming's poison."[3]

Bond's acceptance in the U.S. was an entirely different proposition, for, despite strong support from the likes of Raymond Chandler and Max Lerner of the *New York Post*, Fleming experienced a difficult time in securing a strong foothold in the American market during the mid- and late-'fifties.

By 1960, Macmillan and Viking Press had enjoyed only moderate hardbound success with Bond, although *From Russia, With Love* (1957) became Fleming's first bestseller, and no fewer than three domestic paperback houses, Popular Library, Perma Books (a subsidiary imprint of Pocket Books during the 'fifties) and the New American Library, had featured Agent 007 in the mass market. Up to this point, all three concerns had failed to repeat Pan Books' success with the Fleming thrillers.[4]

Agent 007's fortunes in the U.S. were destined to change in March 1961 when it was revealed that President John F. Kennedy was a devoted Fleming fan. Three years had passed since New American Library reprinted seven of the first eight Bond books as Signet paperbacks (*Diamonds Are Forever* surfaced under the Signet banner in November 1961), and, curiously, not one of them had entered into a second printing.

Shortly after the Kennedy disclosure, Jay Tower, publicity director for New American Library at the time, said:

> He wasn't doing very well in this country up to then. We couldn't understand it. . . . He had all the ingredients. We thought he should sell very well to American readers of suspense. . . . We decided to really push the books. We had a sales conference and planned new covers. . . . A few weeks later we had fabulous good fortune. President Kennedy said he loved Fleming. . . . Then Fleming made Jackie Kennedy's list of books. . . . Everybody under the sun wanted a Fleming book.[5]

Dr. No premiered in London in October 1962, the same month that the Cuban missile crisis portended

atomic war. The rich Jamaican locales of Sean Connery's first celluloid foray as Agent 007 offered a perilously satisfying proximity to Castro's Cuba. The ideal marriage of escapism and reality revealed itself to a global audience. The Cold War spy series genre was properly launched. Fact Seduces Fiction.

Bond had evolved from a respectable cult figure to such a dynamic phenomenon by 1965 that Ian Fleming's posthumous *The Man with the Golden Gun* (New American Library) sold 100,000 copies in the four months following its publication in August 1965, earning it the distinction of being Fleming's bestselling Bond novel.[6]

There was an inclination in certain publishing circles during the 'sixties to assert that the series spy thriller, apart from those in the le Carrè-Deighton mold, was a stylized reflection of the James Bond format. An examination of several of the early espionage series *inspired* by Ian Fleming, however, will reveal each to be as distinctive in its own right as Bond was in his.

When Fleming made Jackie Kennedy's list of books, everybody under the sun wanted a Fleming book.

As this study will illustrate, the marketing strategies employed by various U.S. publishers determined the direction of Cold War-era spy fiction, much to the dismay of the more high-minded literary critics.

The original hardback-to-paperback reprint efforts, at least initially, formed stronger links with Fleming. Nowhere was this more apparent than with Desmond Cory's Johnny Fedora series, for it actually *preceded* Ian Fleming's James Bond by two years. *Secret Ministry,* Cory's first Fedora adventure, was issued by Frederick Muller, Ltd. in Britain in 1951. Regrettably, no American publisher expressed an interest in Fedora until 007 rocketed into the galaxies of espionage in the early 'sixties. As a result, *Undertow* (1962) was the first Fedora entry to appear in the U.S. sector, published by Walker in 1963.

Characterized by a compelling plot involving the search for a sunken Nazi U-Boat on the Gibraltar Straits, *Undertow* was evaluated by many critics as a slick imitation of Ian Fleming's *Thunderball* (1961). This contention was strengthened when New American Library reissued the book as a Signet mystery in July 1965—in the thick of the 007 explosion and during the production of *Thunderball,* starring Sean Connery as Ian Fleming's lionized "provocateur."

An ironical twist materialized in Cory's favor, however. New American Library featured a defense of the Fedora series on their Signet paperback edition by the late Anthony Boucher, the definitive suspense critic for the *New York Times Book Review* until his death in 1968. Boucher's contempt for James Bond was one of the worst-kept secrets in the annals of cloak-and-dagger fiction.

> Desmond Cory seems to me to accomplish in *Undertow* precisely what Fleming is aiming at. This is a sexy, colorful, glamorous story of intrigue and violence, complete with spectacular setpieces...and even a torture scene. And it is written with finesse, economy, humor and full inventive plotting. For my money, Johnny Fedora, professional killer for British Intelligence, more than deserves to take over James Bond's avid audience.[7]

This major critical recognition proved to be as valuable to Cory as the more highly touted Kennedy publicity had been to Fleming. It was also one of the more vivid demonstrations of the "heir to the James Bond throne syndrome" manifested among suspense reviewers during the period. Later espionage series evaluations would emphasize similar qualities in the works of such authors as James Leasor and Philip McCutchan.

New American Library went on to reissue *Shockwave* (1964—U.S.; published in the U.K. as *Hammerhead* in 1963) and *Johnny Goes South* (1959—Britain; 1964—U.S.) in 1965 and 1966, respectively. In 1968, Universal-Award commenced their distribution project for most of the remaining Cory-Fedora efforts, often under alternate titles. *Intrigue* (1954), for instance, was unmasked as *Trieste* in 1968.

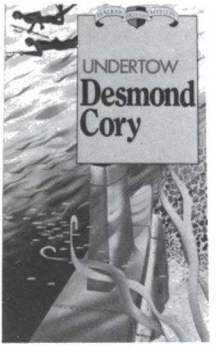
Boucher's support of the Fedora books served to define them as suspenseful tales of intrigue, logically plotted and suitably exotic without Fleming's commercialized trimmings. Throughout the fifteen-book saga, which concluded with *Sunburst* (1971), Cory canvassed a comprehensive geopolitical landscape. In such early Fedora books as *Secret Ministry* (1951), *This Traitor, Death* (1952), and *Johnny Goes North* (1956), Cory concerned himself with the venemous Nazi villian of the dawning post-war world.

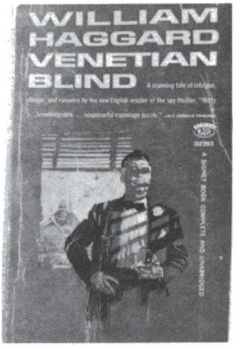
Beginning with *Johnny Goes South* and *Johnny Goes West* (both 1959), Cory explored in considerable depth the deceptions of the Cold War. Cory's Fedora thrillers of the 'sixties, including the aforementioned *Undertow* and *Shockwave*, as well as the more gripping *Feramontov* (1966) and *Timelock* (1967), penetrated the sadistic machinations of Soviet master spy Feramontov in the bloodstained shadows of Franco's Spain.

Undertow and *Timelock* were recently reissued as part of Walker's new British mystery paperback pro-

gram, along with two of Cory's non-Fedora entries, the classic *Deadfall* (1965) and *The Night Hawk* (1969).

William Haggard seemed destined to follow the enigmatic path of Ian Fleming when *Slow Burner* (1958), the first tale in the exploits of Colonel Charles Russell, was published. The British suspense audience rallied enthusiastically around these erudite mysteries concerning the Security Executive, an exclusive military intelligence body situated within





the bastions of Whitehall. Its objective was the global preservation of British interests through diplomatic channels.

Having achieved staggering success with Ian Fleming, New American Library reprinted *Venetian Blind* (1959) in 1963 and would feature five additional Haggard entries by 1967, namely *The High Wire* (1963), *The Antagonists* (1964), *The Powder Barrel* (1965), *The Hard Sell* (1965—U.K.; 1966—U.S.), and the aforementioned *Slow Burner*. Haggard never gained a large following in the U.S., although American critics lavished praise on the author's studied expertise in the intricate ways of Whitehall.

Haggard's unique series concept, depicting Russell as the chief of the Security Executive rather than an intrepid operative, found its basis in John Buchan. Russell was portrayed as worldly, calculating, and immensely knowledgeable in the subtle underworld of diplomacy. The typical Russell plot generally focused on rich, polished industrial and political figures, or often valued scientists—all of whom encountered potentially destructive crises against the authentic background of the Cold War. Relying on this precise narrative manner, Haggard transcended both the realism of le Carré and the action of Fleming. *The High Wire* (1963), however, ventured more into the Bondian school with Alpine settings reminiscent of Ian Fleming's *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963).

Haggard's series has matured with the unsettling political realities of the 'eighties, and Russell has enjoyed much-deserved success in the mass market through several current Walker paperback editions.

James Leasor's Dr. Jason Love thrillers was yet another series of intrigue in the Buchan mold, with the author's emphasis on the most hypnotic locales in the world. The first entry in the series, *Passport to Oblivion* (1964—U.K.; 1965—U.S.), proved to be a decade before its time. Dr. Love is dispatched to Teheran by British Intelligence under the respectable cover of attending a malaria conference—to locate a missing agent. The spy fiction of the Cold War rarely mined the mysteries of the Middle East for plot substance. Here Leasor probed uncharted terrain with a plot encompassing critical oil treaties, the Sheik of Kuwait, and a formidably placed Soviet agent in Teheran. In an ominous way, *Passport to Oblivion* pointed to the more explosive period of détente.

Love's term was a brief one, consisting of six books and a short-story collection. Three of the Love novels never appeared on domestic ground.

The disturbing quality of *Passport to Oblivion* was masterfully amplified when the novel's film version,

retitled *Where the Spies Are* (1966), appeared in the midst of Bond fever, along with the likes of *Thunderball* (1965), *Our Man Flint* (1966), and *The Silencers* (1966). David Niven superbly translated Leasor's recalcitrant spy to the screen in an altered setting that was, to say the least, prophetic—Beirut.

John Gardner's *The Liquidator* (1964) was understandably misinterpreted as a James Bond parody in the form of Brian Ian "Boysie" Oakes, a former British Army sergeant who gains the callous reputation as "L" or "The Liquidator" for British Intelligence's Department of Special Security. Secretly, Oakes contracts his sanctions to an ex-undertaker and is horrified at the secret agent's ultimate luxury-airplane travel. The Oakes thrillers emerged as parodies of the secret agent *myth* in which Gardner cynically penetrated the disciplined expertise of the sophisticated man of action. Although this seems a precarious precedent for the author who would eventually inherit the mantle of Ian Fleming, Gardner endowed Boysie Oakes with an almost indiscernible seriousness that prepared him for the tongue-in-cheek nature of his Bondian assignments.

Rod Taylor was perfectly cast as Gardner's reluctant spy in *The Liquidator* (1966), which honored the style of Gardner's unconventional thesis.

British author Stephen Coulter worked with Ian Fleming in the Kemsley Newspaper Syndicate after World War II, and, perhaps to his discredit, he supposedly provided the research on European gambling houses which Fleming needed to write *Casino Royale*. This experience resulted in one of the best Bond imitations, the Charles Hood series, which Coulter penned under the pseudonym James Mayo. Hood was presented as freelance operative, although his activities were restricted to the Foreign Office, Special Intelligence Security (S.I.S.), and an exclusive British industrial consortium known as "The Circle." Coulter managed to surpass Fleming in some respects with his delineation of Hood as a man of advanced cosmopolitan pursuits, notably in the art world. The Hood series consisted of only five titles, and of them, the initial entry, *Hammerhead* (1964—not to be confused with the 1963 Desmond Cory thriller) progressed Fleming's basic premise with more fully realized refinements of *Casino Royale* and *Thunderball.*[8]

By 1965, the dimensions of the flourishing spy phenomenon exceeded expectations, and the appearance of two new series, both featuring provocative *femmes fatales,* graphically illustrated the Bondian experiments before them.

Peter O'Donnell's Modesty Blaise was introduced as a comic-strip heroine in 1963 and was prominently ushered into the literary world by Doubleday in 1965 with a spy thriller bearing her name. The *Chicago Tribune* lauded Modesty as "Bond's counterpart with cleavage" and O'Donnell established Modesty as the ultimate fantasy woman—worldly, resourceful, and ensconced in mystery as a result of her early years as a refugee in the postwar Middle East.[9] O'Donnell spiced each successive Blaise adventure with an equal measure of action and sex. Despite persistent criticism of Modesty's comic-strip image, the series has endured into the 'eighties, from *Modesty Blaise* (1965) to the recent *The Night of Morningstar* (1983).

The Mysterious Press is currently reissuing the earlier Blaise books in paperback while publishing the later exploits, which previously were confined to British distribution, in hardcover.

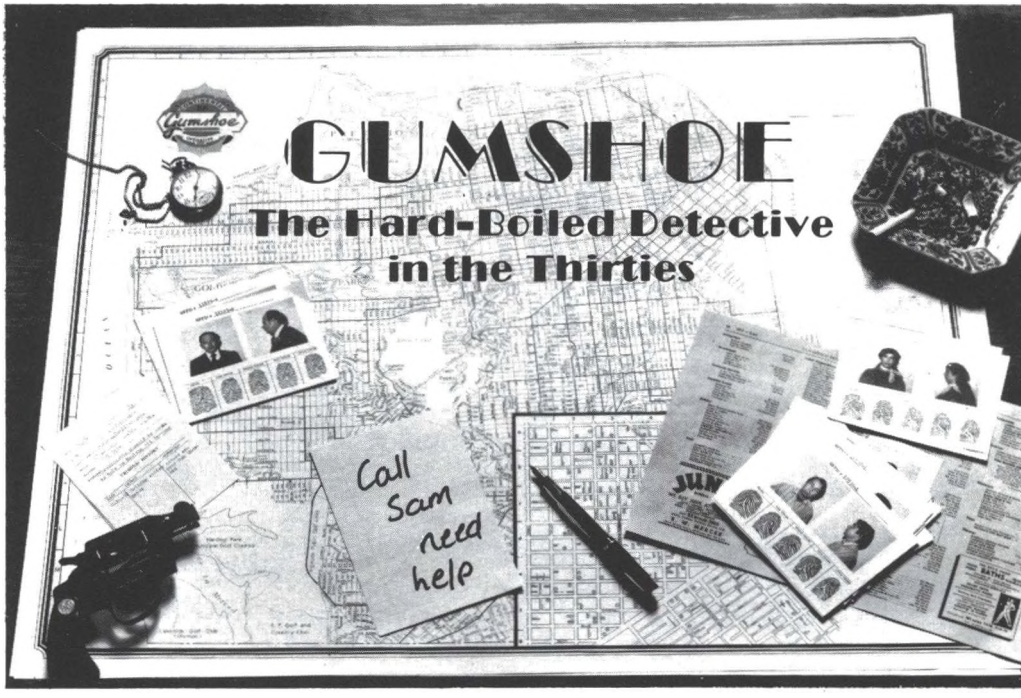
Boucher's contempt for James Bond was one of the worst-kept secrets in the annals of cloak-and-dagger fiction.

By contrast, James Eastwood's brief series chronicling Magyar-American agent Anna Zordan was marked by a taut atmosphere of realism. In her first mission, *The Chinese Visitor* (1965), Anna was persuaded to enlist in a clandestine British Intelligence unit after her parents were savagely murdered by a German assassin. Eastwood christened Anna with a vindictive quality that was conspicuously absent from the Blaise books. During her limited term, Anna averted a nuclear hijack plot in *Little Dragon from Peking* (1967) and in *Diamonds Are Deadly* (1969) infiltrated Britain's violent political sphere of the late 'sixties.[10] It was 1967 before Dell reprinted *The Chinese Visitor,* and, coupled with the myth accorded to Modesty Blaise, the mass saturation of espionage fiction by this time forced Eastwood to forfeit a well-deserved audience.

As early as 1966, the secret-agent genre was evidencing signs of stagnation, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for authors to conceive salable series characters.

Andrew York proved to be an exception, judging from the debut of Jonas Wilde in *The Eliminator* (1966). Combining the notion of Agent 007's license to kill with Johnny Fedora's freelance status, York's Jonas Wilde developed as an extremely amoralistic operative, with the designated code name "The Eliminator." York's pulsating style and gifted sense of topicality elevated the series above its numerous competitors during the late 'sixties. Wilde survived into the mid-seventies with ten representative titles.

An earlier series, Philip McCutchan's Commander Shaw, stands out from the other members of the



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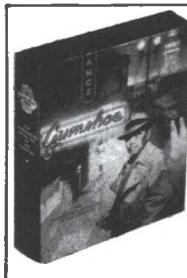

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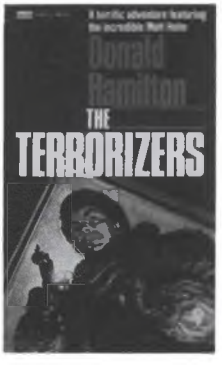
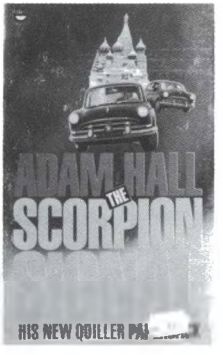
Bondian group, given its emphasis on nuclear sabotage against British interests. Although the first entry, *Gibraltar Road,* was distributed in Britain in 1960, the series wasn't launched in the U.S. until 1965 by way of Berkley-Medallion paperback editions.

Throughout the series, which ended in 1971 with *This Drakotny. . . .* McCutchan maintained a consis-





tent line of credibility with his nuclear-oriented themes. However, in a later book, *Skyprobe* (1966—U.K.; 1967—U.S.), McCutchan examined the excesses of Fleming and le Carré. The plot involves the feared threat to Skyprobe IV, a U.S. spacecraft consigned to test the awesome possibilities of future moon exploration. Amidst the spectacular progression of Skyprobe IV in the narrative, Shaw's loyalty to the Special Services, the department of Naval Intelligence he serves as an agent, it questioned, and McCutchan adroitly blends science fiction fantasy with uncompromising realism—a formidable feat which has yet to be encored.

Several prominent writers who entered the espionage genre managed to enhance their already celebrated positions.

John Creasey was already well known for his numerous mystery series when he created the Dr. Palfrey series under his own name. The series was actually an extension of his earlier Department Z saga, which had earned him enormous popularity during World War II. This sequel series dexterously integrated the elements of espionage and science fiction, such as in *The Terror* (1966), which details the strategic course of a missile armed with an apocalyptic warhead destined for England. In retrospect, the Palfrey series can be credited for legitimizing the alliance of espionage and science fiction in the suspense genre.

Mike Hammer personifies Mickey Spillane's notorious image as a mystery writer, but his Tiger Mann spy thrillers, commencing with *Day of the Guns* (1964), have engraved their own mark as espionage fiction. Comprised of four titles, the series featured a cynically lethal protagonist in the classic Spillane tradition, the placement of the U.N. as an effectively continuous plot device, and of course the author's talent for compelling the reader to turn the page. If any cloak-and-dagger character ever deserved to be "recalled" into the 'eighties, it is Mickey Spillane's tough, grim contribution to the Cold War annals of intrigue and deception.

Before James Bond achieved mass acceptance in the early 'sixties, two spy series tested the notion of an operative assigned to a specific global sphere. A concept of this nature unquestionably required a writer with skillful narrative ability. In this respect, Simon Harvester (pseudonym of the late Henry St. John Clair Rumbold-Gibbs) and Gavin Black (Oswald Wynd) proved their talents beyond anticipated limits.

Unsung Road (1960) signaled the introduction of Simon Harvester's Dorian Silk, and throughout this exceptionally readable series the author offered an incisive view of Afro-Asian politics that often touched upon the uncertainty of the world's most incendiary settings. *Assassins' Road* (1965) concerns Silk's pursuit of an elusive master terrorist, "The Prophet," whose activities in the Middle East threaten to trigger *Jihad* or Holy War. Despite the stock inclusion of "Road" in each entry title, the series continued until 1976, constantly reflecting contemporary and often anticipating future geopolitical themes. Since the author's death in 1975, Walker has reissued several Silk thrillers in their British Mystery paperback project.

Gavin Black's Paul Harris series emanated a higher degree of specialization than Harvester's, given the character's "beat" in Southeast Asia and Malaya as a shipping executive frequently employed by the C.I.A. Beginning with *Suddenly at Singapore...* (1961), the Scottish-born author concentrated on the economic aspects of the Cold War, often emphasizing Red China as a global menace. Black's series persisted beyond the Cold War, one of the more recent thrillers being *Night Run from Java* (1979).[11]

It has taken thirty years for the paperback original to reach a level of respectability in the "literary world," and yet, ironically, the prosperity associated with the spy series fiction of the 'sixties can be linked to this format. The hardback-to-paperback reprint efforts defined the genre with an identifiable form; the paperback original missions explored the possibilities.

The general evolution of the paperback spy thriller

can be analyzed through the espionage fare of Fawcett-Gold Medal Books, the paperback original division of Fawcett Publications (now owned by Ballantine Books). In 1955, Fawcett entered the intrigue market with two series that established the boundaries of the archetypal paperback secret agent.

Displaying a prolific output before it was fashionable, Edward S. Aarons sketched the audacious Cold War operative with his portrayal of C.I.A. operative Sam Durell in *Assignment to Disaster* (1955). Aarons was perhaps the first practitioner of paperback espionage to effectively utilize the notion of the globe-trekking "provocateur," especially in the context of the turbulent locales which challenged his abilities.

In *Assignment: Ankara* (1961), an airplane on which Durell is traveling is sabotaged by the Russians near the Soviet-Turkish frontier. This Durell mission is set during a period of the Cold War when U.S.-Soviet tensions were edging perilously toward the Cuban missile crisis.

As the series progressed, Aarons tested Durell with professional crises, as exemplified in *Assignment: School for Spies* (1966) in which Durell is forced to leave Europe after being accused by the C.I.A. of treason. *Assignment: Moon Girl* (1967) advanced Aarons into the Creasey galaxy of espionage science fiction in a plot focused on a Russian-Chinese girl's foray to the moon.

Many disciplined devotees evaluated the "Assignment" designation on each successive Durell title as an indication of formularization. The series has endured into the present, however, nearly a decade after Aarons's death in 1975. Will B. Aarons has continued the saga since 1977, with *Assignment: Death Ship* (1983) the latest addition to the series.

Stephen Marlowe's Chester Drum was unique among the cloak-and-dagger heroes of the 'sixties in that he was a private detective rather than a secret agent. Drum's Washington-based office altered the complexion of the series, and, during the course of

The Chicago Tribune lauded Modesty Blaise as "Bond's counterpoint with cleavage."

his thirteen-year career, beginning with *The Second Longest Night* (1955), Drum could be found in the most obscure Arab shiekdoms or in the Cold War-ravaged alleys of divided Berlin. Marlowe (mystery writer Milton Lesser) retained the first person ploy indigenous to the P.I. caper, but in this new environment he added a new dimension to the espionage format that would be perfected by later contenders.

Donald Hamilton emerged as *the* definitive master of Marlowe's innovation with his bestselling Matt Helm series, which was initiated in 1960 with *Death of a Citizen* and *The Wrecking Crew*. Narrated in the first person, the Helm books changed the rules for the paperback spy series thriller, for Hamilton gave his readers seasoned expertise in gun and photographic lore, feverish action, and menacingly conceived plots.

In an ominous way, Leasor's "Passport to Oblivion" pointed to the more explosive period of detente.

The Silencers (1962), the fourth book in the series, concerned the elements of an elusive enemy agent known as Cowboy, a critical microfilm, and an underground atomic test near Alamogordo, New Mexico. Still regarded as Hamilton's classic Matt Helm novel, *The Ambushers* (1963) adroitly fused the machinations of an insidious Nazi war criminal based in Northern Mexico with a Soviet missile smuggled out of Cuba. The series' strongest recommendation was the character of Helm himself; the first-person framework permitted Hamilton to inject some Hammett-style cynicism into his creation. Interviewed by Otto Penzler for his *The Great*

Detectives (1978) mystery authors' profile, Hamilton offered this comment on Helm:

> [T]he fundamental conflict that, I feel, makes Matt Helm Matt Helm; a conflict I set up deliberately for one book, that still seems to intrigue people as I now tackle the nineteenth volume in the series. It can be stated very simply: "a)—He's actually a pretty good guy. b)—He kills."[12]

That *one* book, *Death of a Citizen*, provided considerable insight into Helm's shadowy background. During World War II, Helm served in a secretive assassination squad based in Europe, "the wrecking crew," and later became a successful outdoor photographer and Western novelist. After his "official" discharge from the U.S. Army in 1945, he married a New England girl, Beth, taking up residence in Santa Fe, New Mexico, where he pursued his selected postwar profession. By 1960, Helm was a respectable family man with three children. But the unexpected return of his wartime ally, Tina, and the death of a mysterious Spanish woman in the bathroom adjoining his photography studio generate a sequence of lethal events that result in the dissolution of his family and his reinstatement into "the wrecking crew." The organization's chief, known only as Mac, reassigns him the code name by which he was known during the war: Eric.

Helm has never looked back since 1960. Donald Hamilton's twenty-first mission for Matt Helm, *The Infiltrators,* appeared in June 1984.

Dan J. Marlowe's Earl Drake series distinguished itself from even Stephen Marlowe's Chester Drum with the uncompromising depiction of a callous criminal in *The Name of the Game Is Death* (1962), in which Drake was named Chet Arnold. After becoming totally disfigured during a violent car chase across Florida, Arnold received extensive plastic surgery and a new identity—Earl Drake. Seven years would pass before Drake would blaze paperback covers again, which occurred in *One Endless Night* and *Operation Fireball* (both 1969). Beginning with *Flashpoint* (1970—reissued as *Operation Flashpoint* after Marlowe earned the Mystery Writers of America Edgar for best paperback mystery), Drake firmly established himself as a freelance secret agent in a new series of "Operation" books, culminating with *Operation Counterpunch* in 1976. Although marketed as espionage fare, the series frequently featured elements of the avenger genre.

John Creasey can be credited for legitimizing the alliance of espionage and science fiction in the suspense genre.

By 1963, Fawcett had been successfully "playing" the spy market for eight years, and, with the introduction of Philip Atlee's (James Atlee Philips) Joe Gall—"The Nullifier"—in *The Green Wound* (1963), the publisher's espionage series library completed its definition of the format.

Cast in the same grim mold as Donald Hamilton's Matt Helm, Joe Gall arrived on the scene with a more dangerous background than Helm's. Gall's dossier includes a term as an airplane courier in the Far East during World War II, commando duty in pre-Castro Cuba, and a fervent sympathy toward Egypt's Gamal Abdul Nassar. After successfully executing a 1963 assignment in an obscure Southern town, Gall acquires a lethal reputation as a contract killer for a clandestine U.S. intelligence outfit known as "the agency."

The Silken Baroness was issued a year later, and, possessing another phenomenal spy series, Fawcett identified future entries with the dossier stamp of "Contract" (i.e., *The Paper Pistol Contract*). This served to complement the tradition evidenced in earlier Fawcett espionage series, such as Edward S. Aarons's "Assignment" designation and the "Drum Beat" imprint on Stephen Marlowe's last five Chester Drum novels. By 1967, the first two Gall thrillers had been reissued with "Contract" affixed to each title. Fawcett honored Gall's contract until 1976 and a mission appropriately entitled *The Last Domino Contract*.

The early books intensify in savagery as Gall's history unfolds. *The Death Bird Contract* (1966) examines the diplomatic consequences of U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and a mysterious political figure angling for the position of Undersecretary of State to the Far East. *The Star Ruby Contract* (1967) finds Gall in Burma masquerading as the owner of a contract aviation service on a critical assignment to drive Chinese Communist troops out of the region.

The entire Gall series was suddenly withdrawn from print in 1977, after which time Atlee has yet to resurface in the action market.

Fawcett-Gold Medal meticulously outlined the landscape of the paperback secret agent, and their bestselling achievements were invaluable in carving a tangible identity for the burgeoning spy genre. Simple stated, Fawcett contended that the paperback "provocateur" must be: (1) adventurous, (2) sensual, (3) worldly, (4) skilled in certain arts, and (5) patriotic.

It was now 1964— the year of the blockbuster film version of Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger* and NBC's *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* —and the burgeoning intrigue genre was advancing in new directions.

"The fundamental conflict that, I feel, makes Matt Helm Matt Helm; a conflict I set up deliberately for one book, that still seems to intrigue people, can be stated very simply: (a) He's actually a pretty good guy. (b) He kills."

Book packager Lyle Kenyon Engel recognized the possibilities of the spy novel, and, after successfully concluding negotiations with the copyright owners of classic detective Nick Carter, Engel transformed the legendary mystery figure into a secret agent. Engel envisioned Carter as an American James Bond, and, at this point, Nick Carter—Killmaster for N-3—was incarnated in *Run Spy Run* (1964).

The series was initially represented by Universal Publishing & Distribution—Nick Carter launched the firm's new Award imprint—until 1977, when Universal ceased operations. During this thirteen-year period, a variety of authors, ranging from the masterfully prolific Michael Avallone to such "writers-in-training" as Martin Cruz Smith (*Gorky Park*) to virtual unknowns scribed the Universal-Award efforts. By 1977, the series tallied over one hundred titles, with sales exceeding 20,000,000 worldwide.

A year later, Charter Books acquired the series, continuing the basic format devised by Engel. Under the guidance of (then) executive editor Michael Seidman, and associate editors Sybil Pincus, Pat Crain and Nikki Risucci, Charter reissued a number of the Universal-Award titles between 1978 and 1981 (such as *Istanbul* [1965] and *Macao* [1968]) while assigning new entries to both established and fledgling writers. Approaching the two-hundred-title mark, the series has survived the recent takeover by Berkley, although there seems to be a measurable decline in quality from the early Charter days.[13]

In a very real sense, the original Universal-Award Carter series destroyed the myth that a durable series character had to be supported by a flamboyant writer-celebrity. The series has often been attacked on the basis that it lacks a definite style and, more specifically, that its multi-author complexion endows it with an assembly-line quality. The overwhelming success of the series, however, under both the Universal-Award and Charter banners immediately transcends any such criticism.

Collectively, Engel, Universal-Award, and Charter induced a credible atmosphere of topicality throughout the Carter saga. Red China figured dominantly in the early books, noticeably in the person of N-3's murderous Cold War nemesis, Mr. Judas, in *Run Spy Run* (1964), *Danger Key* (1966), and eight other Carter-Judas confrontations, and other non-Judas missions such as *Macao* and *Operation Moon Rocket* (both 1968). Post-Cold War assignments espoused the intrigues of the Soviet Union and their radically-oriented Arab allies. Not surprisingly, aeronautics has played an integral role in the Carter thrillers of the 'eighties, as exemplified by *Solar Menace* (1981).

By 1965, the paperback original series spy novel was a seasoned genre veteran, although a few surprises awaited passionate devotees.

Norman Daniels is, unquestionably, one of the most accomplished paperback writers in the history of American publishing. Working with his wife, gothic novelist Dorothy Daniels, he has penned over two hundred books in the areas of mystery, spy, and war fiction, novelizations, and, more recently, family sagas. Daniels began his career in the pulps and created a series character named Black Bat, which preceded Batman.

Daniels's John Keith series bowed in *Overkill* (1964), which trailed ambitiously on the path blazed by Nick Carter's *Run Spy Run*. Two additional Keith thrillers, *Spy Ghost* and *Operation K*, were prominently displayed on the paperback racks by October 1965. The Keith series emerged as one of the more inventive of the 'sixties. Producing eight titles by 1971, Daniels conceived Keith as an operative for A.P.E. (American Policy Executive), a global intelligence body which *officially* didn't exist.

In 1967, Daniels launched a second series of intrigue, this one featuring wealthy playboy-businessman Bruce Baron, whose Hong Kong-based interest masked his activities as a C.I.A. agent. The series consisted of only two titles, *The Baron of Hong Kong* and *Baron's Mission to Peking* (both 1967). After concluding the Baron dossier, Daniels went on to scribe two novelizations of TV's *The Avengers* in 1968 and 1969.

Bill S. Ballinger was renowned as a top-flight

mystery writer by the time he initiated his Joaquin Hawks series. Commencing with *The Spy in the Jungle* in 1965, Ballinger deployed the Spanish-Indian Hawks in Southeast Asis in this unusually suspenseful series. Besieged by U.S. involvement in the region, the American reading public may have found Ballinger's contribution to Cold War intrigue decidedly too "topical," for it ended in 1966 after only five books.

Generally, the realistic dimension of spy fiction was ignored by the paperback original sector. However, David St. John's Peter Ward series

In 1964, Fawcett Books contended that the paperback "provocateur" must be: (1) adventurous, (2) sensual, (3) worldly, (4) skilled in certain acts, and (5) patriotic.

authentically depicted global C.I.A. operations, derived from the author's twenty-year term as a "Company" man. Between 1965 and 1967, Ward would be dispatched to Europe, India, the Orient, and Southeast Asis, as represented by *On Hazardous Duty* (1965) and *One of Our Agents Is Missing* (1967). New American Library reissued their six titles of the series (after 1967, the series was published in hardcover by Weybright) in 1974 to publicize the identity of "David St. John"—E. Howard Hunt—and his involvement in Watergate.

The majority of the 'sixties paperback spy series reverberated the shockwaves of the Cold War, rarely daring to venture beyond this historical perimeter. An exception to this norm was James Dark's Mark Hood series.

Dark focused on global nuclear proliferation, and to effectively convey this theme he devised Intertrust, a world power consortium comprised of the U.S., Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R. The organization, based in the diplomatic Mecca of Geneva, committed its resources to the aversion of nuclear power-mongering.

The series was not without its Bondian influences, however. Intertrust's top American agent, Mark Hood, was even more specialized in his pursuits than James Bond. Serving as an executive officer on a destroyer during the Korean War, Hood claimed proven expertise as a scuba diver, seasoned practitioner in the martial arts, world-class competition race-car driver, successful freelance magazine writer, and qualified doctor. Hood shared several of his assignments with Intertrust's Richard Hannay-style British agent, Tommy Tremayne, and Murimoto, his Japanese martial arts confederate.

Of the twelve Hood books, no fewer than four were set in the Far East, with locales including Singapore, Hong Kong, Macao, Tokyo, and Lop Nor, Mongolia. Dark frequently focused on Red China as a megalomaniacal global threat and conceived plots that chillingly reflected the nuclear fear of the Cold War. . .and beyond. *Come Die with Me* (1965), the first in the series, centered on a plot to reinstate Nazism through the use of biological warfare. The penetration of a strategically critical missile base provided the crisis in *Assignment Tokyo* (1966), in which Hood displayed his mastery of the martial arts.

The later Hood books touched upon the newly discovered alliance of espionage and science fiction. *Spying Blind* (1968) concerns an aeronautical magnate's calculated hijacking of a Soviet moon probe as it approaches Earth. Participating in the Monaco Grand Prix, Hood is lured into the scheme on the magnate's resplendent yacht.

Taking their cue from Mark Hood, Universal-Award developed the Peter Winston "The Adjusters" series in 1967, using the same author-character concept they had employed for Nick Carter.

Winston commanded an elite spy corps, "The Adjusters," concealed within an impenetrable Georgetown mansion. The series adequately presented nuclear proliferation themes in the fashion of the Mark Hood books, and ended in 1969 after only five entries.

Michael Avallone's Ed Noon materialized as a private detective in *The Tall Dolores* (1953), but fourteen years later the multi-faceted author transformed his splendid creation into "Spy to the President." As the notion suggests, the new Noon plots contained elements of the apocalyptic. The books manifested the classic Avallone wry humor, and in his new incarnation Noon radiated more cynicism than in his pre-intelligence days.

1968 signified a major turning point for the paperback spy series thriller. Its popularity was plummeting toward oblivion. Excessive saturation of espionage fare since 1965, coupled with the changing face of the Cold War, outmoded many secret agent species of the period. To counter this trend, Universal-Award distributed Don Smith's Phil Sherman "Secret Mission" series, issuing four titles alone in 1968: *Secret Mission: Peking, Secret Mission: Morocco, Secret Mission: Prague,* and *Secret Mission: Corsica.*

Smith probed the Cold War in its more complex

"Philip Marlowe and Sam Spade would like this book." —Robert Bloch, Author of Psycho

"Marc Bilgrey's Private Eye Cartoons will make you split your gut."
—Gregory McDonald, author of Fletch

"If Raymond Chandler and The Marx Brothers were cartoonists, this would have been their book."
—Richard Levinson & William Link, creators of Columbo and co-creators of Murder, She Wrote

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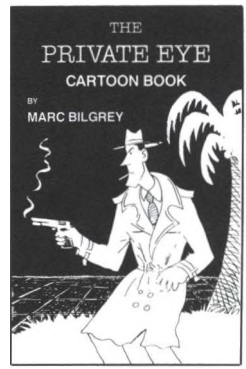
—John D. MacDonald, author of The Lonely Silver Rain



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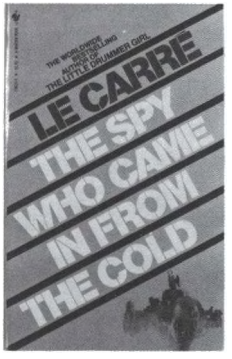
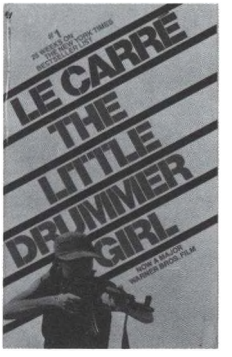
phases, concentrating on the volatile global locales to which C.I.A. agent Sherman was summoned. *Secret Mission: Prague* (1968) proved to be prophetic. Sherman is assigned to confiscate a multi-million-dollar cache of weapons in Prague which are intended for a massive racial conspiracy in the U.S. This entry surfaced in the midst of intense racial strife in America and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Although no longer in print, the Sherman series lasted for eleven years, with twenty-one books.

Otherwise, the waning genre was boosted in 1968 by inventive series that eclipsed the Cold War. Jack Seward's first book in his Curt Stone series, *The Cave of the Chinese Skeletons*, was published in Japan in 1964, but, four years later, Tower reprinted the spy-mystery while offering two new adventures, *The Eurasian Virgins* and *The Frogman Assassination.* Stone was an American P.I. based in Tokyo since the mid-fifties, and he often found himself battling the Chi-Coms in situations stretching from valuable Japanese war treasures to the lucrative sex market in the Orient.

Don Von Elsner's Jake Winkman series actually began in 1963 under the New American Library banner with *How To Succeed at Murder Without Really Trying.* After Universal-Award published *The Ace of Spies* (1966), however, NAL reissued the first book in 1967 as *The Jake of Diamonds,* followed in 1968 by *The Jake of Hearts.* Winkman was a championship bridge player who managed to engage himself in the more subtle aspects of espionage.

Sam Picard's *The Notebooks* (1969), another





Universal-Award property, introduced an anonymous secret agent in the manner of Len Deighton's shadowy operative—replete with first-person narrative but devoid of the latter's technological trappings. Picard deals with an insidious conspiracy in *The Notebooks,* in which a seemingly innocent photograph results in four deaths. The author's gripping style covered themes that confirmed the passing of 007's reign. Picard's elusive operative returned in two 1971 entries from Universal-Award, *Dead Man Running* and *The Man Who Never Was.*

The unprecedented acceptance of Don Pendelton's Mack Bolan in 1969 clearly indicated that the general action market was entering a new era. Although Mack Bolan—"The Executioner"—wasn't initially featured as an espionage agent, Pendelton's accomplishments chartered the course of intrigue for the coming decade.

Alan Caillou's Cabot Cain is an excellent example of the post-Cold War "provocateur." The foundation for Cain was as recognizable as his predecessors; Caillou placed him in Department B-7 of Interpol. Cain was well versed in the Bondian arts, and the action was suitably paced. This series distinguished itself from earlier contenders with Cain's often startling transformation into an instrument of vengeance. Six Cain books appeared between 1969 and 1975, and one of the 1969 entries, *Assault on Ming,* earned Caillou the Mystery Writers of America Special Award.

Caillou is an appropriate author with whom to conclude our history on the paperback original spy series thriller. His later action saga, *The Private Army of Colonel Tobin,* began distribution in 1972 from Pinnacle Books—*the* definitive paperback publisher of espionage fare during the 'seventies and beyond.

If the efforts of, say, James Leasor and James Mayo were influenced by Ian Fleming, then it seems plausible that the realistic works of John le Carré and Len Deighton came about as a contemptuous reaction to James Bond. From this facet of the genre, the anti-hero was conceived.

John le Carré's first two thrillers, *Call for the Dead* (1961—U.K.; 1962—U.S.) and *A Murder of Quality* (1962—U.K.; 1963—U.S.), were published at the inception of the 007 craze and introduced George Smiley, a weary veteran of the British Secret Service who has endured the chaotic changes in the intelligence network since the end of World War II and his own tumultuous marriage. In contrast to Fleming, le Carré depicted Cold War-era Britain as a ravaged victim of World War II and its postwar aftermath—a nation tragically isolated from its vintage pre-war idealism.

Call for the Dead is a bitter, complex novel concerning the suicide of a British government official, Samuel Fennan, whose allegiance to the Communist Party during the 'thirties is leaked to the intelligence sector in an anonymous letter. Smiley is assigned to interview Fennan for security clearance and shortly thereafter Fennan commits suicide. Into this stagger-

ing plot, le Carré infuses the tortured character of Fennan's wife, Elsa, a Jewish survivor of the Nazi concentration camps; the intrigues of Dieter Frey, a German Jew who served as one of Smiley's most resourceful spy students before World War II; the significance of the East German Steel Mission in London; and a shadowy East German agent named Hans Dieter Mundt who figures in the machinations of *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* (1963—Britain; 1964—U.S.).

Le Carré's first two books were well received, but with otherwise scattered mass market attention. *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold,* however, secured the author his global reputation and altered the complexion of the spy novel as it is defined today.

This undisputed espionage classic contains one of the best-known plots in all fiction and a timeless theme—futility. Le Carré's principal character, Alec Leamas, is a seasoned agent for The Circus who secretly loathes his profession. Delineating Leamas as an irretrievable human casualty, le Carré was able to depict an agent's superiors as his most insidious adversaries and his designated enemy in the field, in this case Hans Dieter-Mundt, as an unexpected ally. Not since the early fiction of Eric Ambler has the theme of ambiguity been so defiantly expressed as in le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold.*

Le Carré was the first spy novelist to effectively employ the divided East-West settings of Berlin as the primary locale in an espionage thriller. In this book le Carré masterfully manipulated the city's fragmented state to make a venomous commentary on the deteriorating structures of the social organization, be it the family, the corporation, or the Secret Service.

Smiley was relegated to a supporting role in *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* and *The Looking Glass War* (1965), and, had le Carré not defined George Smiley in *Call for the Dead* and sketched his world of solitude in *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold,* Smiley's resurgence in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974), *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977), and *Smiley's People* (1980) would not have been possible. More recently, le Carré has examined the disturbing realities of the Palestinian issue in *The Little Drummer Girl* (1983), in which Smiley is not featured.

The Spy Who Came In from the Cold was adapted into a classic espionage film in 1965, starring Richard Burton as Alec Leamas and British character actor Rupert Davies as George Smiley, fifteen years before Sir Alec Guiness perfected the role in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1980).

In a *Life* magazine article on the realistic spy novel, critic Conrad Knickerbocker offered this commentary on the genre, after having read le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold,* Len Deighton's *Funeral in Berlin* (1964), and Adam Hall's *The Quiller Memorandum* (1965):

> The key to their popularity rests in the yearnings of their readers. Baffled by Vietnam,... they feel increasingly overwhelmed by the vast forces that now shape events. Along came John le Carré and his colleagues with literate styles to soothe educated consciences. It's comforting to find through Leamas that a spy is just folks, another nebbish from next door caught in the grind. The new spy thrillers reduce the Cold War to a human scale.[14]

Len Deighton's popularity is somewhat surprising, considering his acumen for intricate technological detail. But his place in the history of the Cold War spy thriller speaks for itself. *The Ipcress File* (1962—U.K.; 1963—U.S.) was an instant sales and critical success. Before delving into his works, it might be interesting to look at the impressions of his books.

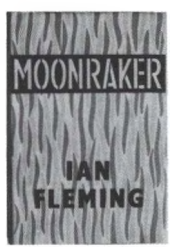
Reading Len Deighton can be linked to examining the facets of a Tiffany diamond. The beauty is obvious from the initial encounter, but, to comprehend its depth, each side must be evaluated separately. In other words, to fully comprehend the substance of a Deighton novel, additional readings may be required.

Where le Carré concentrated on the desolation of The Circus, Deighton accented the cynicism of an

agent who might conceivably approach a perilous mission differently than Bond. In its section devoted to Michael Caine's superb portrayal of Harry Palmer (in *The Ipcress File* [1965], *Funeral in Berlin* [1966], and *Billion Dollar Brain* [1967]), the celluloid counterpart of Deighton's elusive hero, *Whodunit?* (edited by H. R. F. Keating) offered this interpretation of the author's selection of an obscure protagonist: "In the books, cunningly, it is never stated that he is each time the same individual. . . . In this way, he can be stretched over an inordinate length of contemporary history."[15]

In his five series spy thrillers of the Cold War era, *The Ipcress File* (1962—Britain; 1963—U.S.), *Horse Under Water* (1963—Britain; 1968—U.S.), *Funeral in Berlin* (1964—Britain; 1965—U.S.), *The Billion Dollar Brain* (1966), and *An Expensive Place To Die* (1967), Deighton adopted a dossier format which emphasized the political or technological aspects of global intelligence. It is this single characteristic of Deighton's work that motivated later advocates to be more perceptive of the mechanics of the spy trade. *The Ipcress File Funeral in Berlin,* and *The Billion Dollar Brain* featured top-secret appendices, each authentically simulated, which contributed to the plot. Deighton's second thriller, *Horse Under Water,* which involved a currency cache for renegade Nazis hidden on a sunken German tanker off the Portugese Coast, contained a code translation document, a high-level Cabinet letter (dated 1941), and an "Eyes Only" file register. These latter elements were introduced before the first chapter, which indicates the importance Deighton assigned to these devices throughout his books.

Funeral in Berlin has endured as Deighton's most celebrated novel. Deighton's spy is ordered to execute the defection of a valued Russian scientist, and, within the plot, Deighton constructs perhaps the definitive commentary on the East-West tensions of the Cold War, next to le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold.* It is in this pulsating thriller that Deighton's hero first encounters Colonel Stok, a high-ranking K.G.B. strategist, and their interaction symbolizes the rising fever of U.S.-Soviet hegemony following the Berlin Wall crisis. Deighton's integration of elementary chess rules as chapter headings in *Funeral in Berlin* prove to be a master stroke on the author's part—in addition to complementing the East-West allegory throughout the book.



The Billion Dollar Brain is regarded as Deighton's most technologically oriented thriller. Assigned to penetrate a fanatically right-wing organization, Facts for Freedom, Deighton's spy uncovers a megalomaniacal blueprint by its head, Colonel Midwinter, to devise a computerized war strategy against the Warsaw Pact powers. His first objective is to launch an invasion of the Soviet republic of Latvia.

The futility of le Carré is poignantly reflected in *An Expensive Place To Due.* The major Western intelligence networks engage in a paranoid battle of wits over the political value of an American nuclear genius and a Chinese Communist scientist. The battleground for these intrigues is Paris, and, in a bitter narrative style more indigenous to détente than the Cold War, Deighton portrays the City of Lovers with a prophetic sense of desolation. Unquestionably, *An Expensive Place To Die* is Deighton's understated classic of Cold War espionage.

Deighton's shadowy creation resurfaced in *Spy Story* (1974), and, after several contemporary non-series thrillers (*Catch a Falling Spy*—1976) and memorable espionage novels rooted in the dark authenticity of World War II (*XPD*—1981), the renowned author has advanced further into the le Carré sector, as typified by the recent *Berlin Game* (1984).

By its very nature, the realistic spy thriller of the Cold War era possessed limited expansion potential. Indeed, after le Carré and Deighton sculpted their enigmatic landscapes, it was generally accepted that the territory had been appropriately covered. From 1965 to 1967, however, two ambitious authors conceived inventive ploys for the format—Adam Hall and Ross Thomas.

Adam Hall's *The Quiller Memorandum* (1965; published in Britain as *The Berlin Memorandum*) was written in the le Carré vein, but manifesting explicit political overtones. Quiller, a contentious British agent for a cryptic intelligence outfit known as The Bureau, is ordered to continue a terminated operative's mission of unearthing a former Nazi as a prelude to locating a parasitical neo-Nazi coven in Berlin. In his review of this masterful bestseller in the *New York Times Book Review*, Anthony Boucher defined the points which separated Hall from his peers:

> A grand exercise in ambivalence and intricacy, tense and suspenseful at every moment, with fascinatingly complex characters, unusual plausibility in detailing the professional mechanics of espionage and a genuine, uncompromising toughmindedness comparable to le Carré's.[16]

Hall intensified Quiller's callous quality in *The 9th*

Directive (1966) and *The Striker Portfolio* (1968) and has moved his solitary character into the present day in the excellent *The Peking Target* (1982).

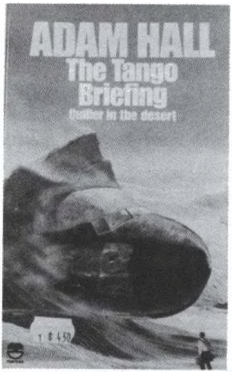
The Quiller Memorandum garnered both the Mystery Writers of America Edgar and the French Gran Prix Littérature Policière in 1965.

Boucher offered an equally incisive evaluation of Ross Thomas's *The Cold War Swap* (1966; issued in Britain in 1967 as *The Spy in the Vodka*), the author's first of three books about Mac McCorkle and Mike Padillo:

> A good, nasty LeCarresque plot of opportunism and betrayal within the intelligence service, a well-observed background of Berlin and Bonn, some violent surprises and a fine individual tone of wry, tough humor in its telling.[17]

The last phrase in the above segment serves to explain the appeal of this brief series. Although Thomas canvassed le Carré-style themes, he presented a pair of tongue-in-cheek protagonists within this seemingly confined framework.

Thomas received the Edgar for *The Cold War Swap*, which involves a contrived "swap" to retrieve two American mathematicians who defect to the Soviet Union. Within this plot, Thomas conceived



McCorkle and Padillo with equal conviction, revealing the experiences during World War II that led to their encounter in the mid-fifties when they established Mac's Place, a German bar frequented by the diplomatic elite of Berlin and Bonn.

Padillo and McCorkle operated together for five years in *Cast a Yellow Shadow* (1967) and *The Back-up Men* (1971). *The Cold War Swap* was reissued by Pocket Books in 1976 and more recently in a Harper–Perennial paperback edition.

The realistic spy novel generated some interesting derivative efforts, influenced for the most part by Len Deighton.

Martin Waddell's *Otley* (1966) introduced us to Gerald Arthur Otley, a manipulative thief working in the antiques market. Completing an assignment to "obtain" a hunchback figurine, Otley soon finds himself caught up in the machinations of a devious network, the I.C.S. Anthony Boucher praised Waddell for his superb delineation of the contemptuous British anti-hero of the late 'sixties and his Hitchcockian gift for invoking uncertainty.[18] The Otley series continued until 1969 with *Otley Pursued* (1967), *Otley Forever* (1968), and *Otley Victorious* (1969).

David St. John's Peter Ward series authentically depicted global C.I.A. operations, derived from his twenty years as a "Company" man.

Otley was adapted into an outlandish 1968 film starring Tom Courtenay as Waddell's mocking operative. That same year, Pocket Books reissued *Otley* and *Otley Pursued* with graphic covers suggestive of the author's unconventional thesis.

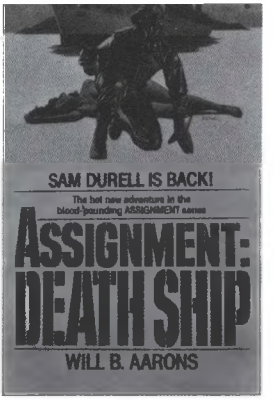
Martin Woodhouse was certainly well qualified to write a spy series, given his term as the first lead writer for *The Avengers* when that popular espionage program aired on British television in 1961.

Woodhouse's Dr. Giles Yeoman was an aeronautical scientist whose aircraft projects often propelled him into the most sensitive areas of military secrecy. Similar in its parody vibrations to Waddell's Otley series, Woodhouse concentrated on Britain's scientific pursuits during the Cold War era, a reflection of the author's accomplished background in aeronautics and computer technology. *Tree Frog* (1966), the first Yeoman thriller, concerned the development of a pilotless reconnaissance plane.

Not since the early fiction of Eric Ambler has the theme of ambiguity been so defiantly expresed as in le Carre's "The Spy Who Came in from the Cold."

Philip McAlpine performed as one of the most lethal agents for Britain's Department 6—despite an insatiable attraction to hashish. Adam Diment conceived McAlpine in *The Dolly, Dolly Spy* (1967), and, following the path previously traveled by Waddell and Woodhouse, this avant-garde British novelist infiltrated his operative into the psychedelic wave of the late 'sixties. McAlpine's mission in *The Dolly, Dolly Spy* was to accompany a sadistic Nazi war criminal from Egypt to the U.S. Heralded as "Ian Fleming's successor" in the *New York Times Book Review*, Diment's bizarre mixture of espionage and the "mod" attributes of the late 'sixties was praised in 1968 as the new direction for the waning spy genre. The series ended in 1971, however, after only four books, and Diment has not appeared in print since that time.[19]

The constant threat of Armageddon, not to mention numerous conflicts and border skirmishes in the Middle East and Central America in recent years, has insured the popularity of the spy series thriller. The secret agent continues both to fascinate and mystify readers, and, with the universality achieved with the works of Ian Fleming and John le Carré,



among others, the spy is one of the few figures in contemporary fiction who has transcended diverse cultures and creeds. It is unfortunate that the passionate reader can go no further than to merely identify with this enigmatic myth—the Spy in the Dark.

Fact Seduces Fiction. Or does it?

Notes

1. James Robert Parrish and Michael R. Pitts, *The Great Spy Pictures* (Scarecrow Press, 1974).
2. Henry A. Zieger, *Ian Fleming: The Spy Who Came In with the Gold* (Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1965).
3. *Ibid.*
4. John Pearson, *The Life of Ian Fleming* (McGraw-Hill, 1966).
5. Zieger.
6. *Variety*, December 22, 1965.
7. Reprinted on the back cover of the 1965 New American Library paperback edition of *Undertow* (Walker, 1963) by Desmond Cory.
8. Donald McCormick, *Who's Who in Spy Fiction* (Taplinger, 1977).
9. Reprinted on the back cover of the 1966 Fawcett-Crest paperback edition of *Modesty Blaise* (Doubleday, 1965) by Peter O'Donnell.
10. *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, September 1984.
11. *The Armchair Detective*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1982.
12. Otto Penzler, ed., *The Great Detectives* (Little, Brown, 1978).
13. *The Armchair Detective*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1982.
14. *Life*, April 30, 1965.
15. H. R. F. Keating, ed., *Whodunit? A Guide to Crime, Suspense and Spy Fiction* (Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982).
16. Reprinted on the inside front page of the 1966 Pyramid paperback edition of *The Quiller Memorandum* (Simon & Schuster, 1965) by Adam Hall.
17. Reprinted on the back cover of the 1976 Pocket Books paperback edition of *The Cold War Swap* (William Morrow, 1966) by Ross Thomas.
18. Reprinted on the back cover of the 1968 Pocket Books paperback edition of *Otley* (Stein & Day, 1966) by Martin Waddell.
19. Reprinted on the back cover of the 1968 Bantam paperback edition of *The Dolly, Dolly Spy* (E. P. Dutton, 1967) by Adam Diment. □

COLLECTING Mystery Fiction

HORACE McCOY

By Otto Penzler

L-R seated: Arthur Barnes, John K. Butler, Todhunter Ballard, Horace McCoy, Norbert Davis. Standing: unknown, Raymond Chandler, Herbert Stinson, Dwight Babcock, Eric Taylor, Dashiell Hammett.

Horace McCoy is the quintessential Hollywood writer of the Depression and post-Depression eras. Horace McCoy is regarded by the French literati as the greatest (along with Ernest Hemingway, James M. Cain, and William Faulkner) of twentieth-century American authors.

Horace McCoy wrote the first and most influential existentialist and nihilist American novels.

Horace McCoy is counted among the most distinguished practitioners of the hardboiled school of crime fiction, being published in *Black Mask* magazine contemporaneously with Dashiell Hammett.

So why is Horace McCoy largely forgotten today, with not a single one of his books in print in America?

Naturally, that is an apparently simple question with a highly complex, multi-part answer.

McCoy wrote only six novels, two of which (*Corruption City* and *Scalpel*) are not very good. While the remaining four have much to recommend them, they are unrelentingly grim. While Cornell Woolrich, for example, wrote many dark novels, they were imbued with a sense of hope, a vision of *wanting* a happy future. In McCoy's fiction, the reader knows from the first chapter that the characters are doomed to agony and despair and, finally, death.

This may be swell for France, the country that gave the world such knee-slapping writers as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, but America is a country founded on hope, an attitude that generally remains prevalent. This is not to suggest a moral superiority for Americans, nor an intellectual one for the French, and it must be remembered that these are very, very broad generalizations.

Nonetheless, McCoy's viewpoint seemed always to be so heavily negative that it is difficult to imagine eagerly awaiting the next book. One cannot help but admire the work, without actually enjoying it.

Strangely, McCoy always identified and described the darkly soiled segment of the American dream while avidly pursuing that same dream. Since Hollywood is the intensely magnified microcosm of that dream, it is not surprising, perhaps, that it was the world of films and movie studios that attracted him. He had three novels published between 1935 and 1938; during his most active days as a screenwriter, following that third book, he published only three more books, the last posthumous, and no more short stories.

Two major films were based on his work. *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* is the best remembered, though it bears little resemblance to McCoy's first novel. Robert, the male protagonist, kills Gloria, the female protagonist. Neither the novel nor the movie is a detective story, or even a suspense or crime story, in the usual sense. Gloria wants to die, and Robert performs the deed for her because she is too cowardly to do it herself. In the movie, Gloria (played by Jane Fonda) is the victim of a scam and wants to die because of the despair she suddenly feels. In the book, she always feels the despair; it is the only thing she feels. There is no glamour in McCoy's novel, just as there is none in his second book to be published in America, *I Should Have Stayed Home*. Also set in Hollywood, it is the story of the rapid disillusionment and abandonment of morality of two young people who have come to California to seek their fortunes. Again, violent death is inevitable, evolving from the characters, and not merely a dramatic plot device.

No Pockets in a Shroud, McCoy's second book, was rejected in America by several publishers as McCoy rewrote it several times. Mainly written in 1935, it was finally published in 1937 in England and, with still further rewriting, in the United States in 1948. McCoy, himself a Communist, made the heroine of this novel a Communist. For its American publication, he changed her to a sexual pervert, which was more palatable to his publisher.

Kiss Tomorrow Good-bye was McCoy's most ambitious work, almost twice as long as any of his previous novels. It is the basis for one of the great gangster movies, starring James Cagney, although the inevitable simplification of character for the transition of book to film requires a reading to fully understand the relationship between the male and female figures.

Scalpel was pretty much a novelization of one of McCoy's screenplays, and *Corruption City* was little more than a fleshed-out treatment for *The Turning Point*, a 1952 movie.

Not too much is known about McCoy's life, though the quick sketch of it which appears on several books reads very much like a fictionalized version of an ideal background for a writer of gritty realism. On the back cover of the first U.S. edition of *No Pockets in a Shroud*, for example, appear the following sentences (bracketed phrases are mine):

"Horace McCoy was born [in Pegram] near Nashville, Tennessee, in 1897, and started work as a newsboy when he was twelve. He

has travelled as a house-to-house salesman in Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, Arkansas, Tennessee and Texas; driven a taxi in New Orleans and Dallas; served eighteen months in France in the U.S. Air Service, was wounded; and worked from 1922 to 1930 as a reporter and sports editor on the *Dallas Journal* [actually *The Dallasite*]. He is one of the founders of the celebrated Dallas Little Theatre.

"The years following 1930 he spent up and down the California Coast, picking vegetables and fruit in the Imperial and San Joaquin Valleys, picketing in strikes, jerking soda, acting as bodyguard to a big-shot politician, doubling for an ill wrestler, acting as bouncer in a marathon dance contest, and, finally, writing for the films and magazines."

He died December 15, 1955, his screen-writing career having spanned the years from 1936 to his death.

Collecting the first editions of Horace McCoy is no less difficult than compiling the complete opera of Cain, Hammett, Chandler or even their less important tough-guy contemporaries. There are only six books, two of which are paperback originals produced in fairly large quantities and the two later hardcover books having enjoyed fairly substantial print runs. As usual, the difficulty is finding fine dust jackets for the earliest books of an author, and these are most difficult indeed.

While nice copies in dust wrappers of *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* occasionally appear on the market, it is a rare day when a fine, fresh, dust jacket becomes available. It seems always to have severe rubbing and chipping, and the book itself is bound in a fragile cloth that is most commonly found in a tired, darkened condition.

By far the most elusive of McCoy's first editions is the English edition of *No Pockets in a Shroud*, which I have never seen in true collector's condition. Of American editions, *I Should Have Stayed Home* is the most difficult book to acquire. Perhaps surprisingly, no comparison is made on the dust wrapper with James M. Cain, though virtually all contemporary criticism referred to McCoy as being "of the Cain school." Since Knopf had published *The Postman Always Rings Twice* in 1934 and *I Should Have Stayed Home* only a few years later, it seems a curious omission from the jacket blurb, somehow.

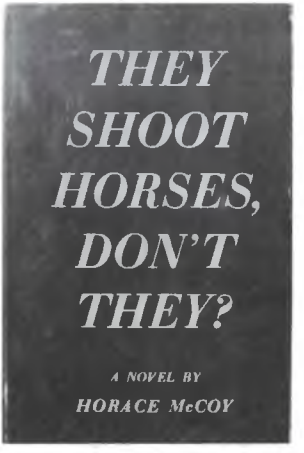
In a frequently quoted letter to his publisher, McCoy complained bitterly about the constant comparisons with Cain. "I do not care for Cain's work," McCoy wrote, "although there may be much he can teach me. I know this though—continued labelling of me as of 'the Cain school' (whatever the hell that is) and I shall slit either his throat or mine."

For a relatively comprehensive listing of McCoy's major short crime fiction, see John S. Whitley's article in *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, John M. Reilly, editor, published by St. Martin's Press. For further information on McCoy and his work, see John Thomas Sturak's unpublished dissertation, *The Life and Writings of Horace McCoy*, University of California, Los Angeles, 1976.

They Shoot Horses, Don't They?

First Edition: New York, Simon and Schuster, 1935. Beige cloth, red and black rules on front cover; red rule and black lettering on spine; rear cover blank. Issued in a maroon and white dust wrapper.

Note: Dedicated to Michael Fessier, author of the highly acclaimed *Fully Dressed and In His Right Mind*, and Harry Clay Withers.



The dust jacket announces McCoy's second book, titled *The Madman Beats a Drum*, which was presumably *No Pockets in a Shroud.*

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 50	$10
Fine	200	25
Very fine	250	35

No Pockets in a Shroud

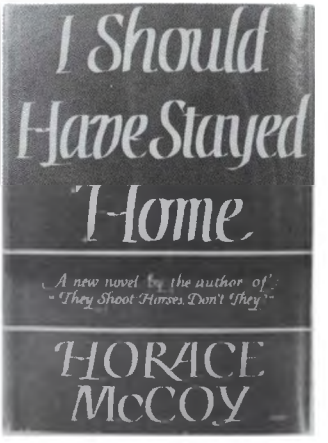
First Edition: London, Barker, 1937. Cloth, issued in dust jacket (not seen).

First American Edition: (New York), Signet/New American Library, (1948). Full color pictorial wrappers.

Note: Number 690 in the series of paperbacks published by the New American Library under the Signet Books imprint. No price is printed on the cover or elsewhere in the book.

The copyright page bears the statement: "First Signet Books Edition, November, 1948."

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
First Edition		
Good	$ 75.00	$15.00
Fine	400.00	30.00
Very fine	550.00	40.00
First American Edition		
Good		$ 5.00
Fine		25.00
Very fine		35.00



I Should Have Stayed Home

First Edition: New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1938. Yellow cloth, front cover blank; spine lettered and printed with an ornamental design in red-brown; rear cover printed in same color with publisher's device. Issued in a brick-red, blue, and white dust wrapper, designed by Salter.

Note: The copyright page bears the words: "First Edition."

The book is dedicated to (among others) Joseph T. Shaw, who had been McCoy's editor at *Black Mask* magazine.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 25.00	$10.00
Fine	150.00	20.00
Very fine	200.00	27.50

Kiss Tomorrow Good-bye

First Edition: New York, Random House, (1948). Grey cloth, a black rectangle printed within a larger white rectangle on front cover,

the author's facsimile signature dropping out of the black; spine printed in black and white; rear cover blank. Issued in a largely red pictorial dust wrapper.

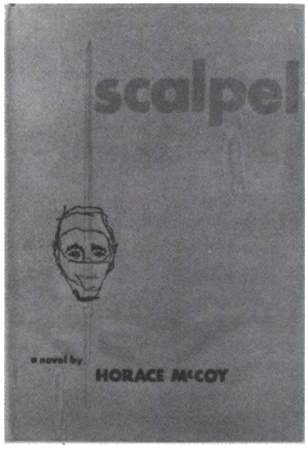
Note: The copyright page bears the words: "First Printing."

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$20.00	$ 7.50
Fine	60.00	15.00
Very fine	75.00	20.00

Scalpel

First Edition: New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, (1952). Grey cloth, author's facsimile signature printed in red on front cover; spine printed with red lettering; rear cover blank. Issued in a grey dust wrapper (actually printed on grey paper stock), printed in red and black.

Note: The numeral "1" must appear in parentheses on the last page (373) of text. The numeral "2" or "3" and so on indicates subsequent printings.



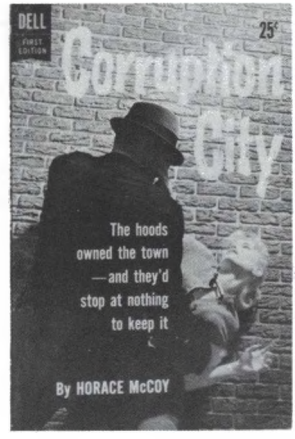
Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$12.50	$ 5.00
Fine	30.00	12.50
Very fine	40.00	17.50

Corruption City

First Edition: New York, Dell, 1959. Full color pictorial wrappers.

Note: The front cover is marked "Dell First Edition" and bears a price of 25¢. The copyright page bears the words: "First printing—August, 1959."

Estimated retail value:	
Good	$ 4.00
Fine	15.00
Very fine	20.00



While proof copies must have been issued (of the four hardcover novels, at any rate), I have never seen one. Signed or inscribed copies of McCoy's major novels turn up from time to time, particularly *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* and *Kiss Tomorrow Good-bye.* They are extremely desirable to collectors, not only of McCoy's works or of hardboiled fiction, but to collectors of film-related books as well. They command fairly high prices: at least double the listed prices for signed copies, and three to five times as much for presentation or interesting inscribed copies.

Screenplays are beyond the scope of this column, but the serious collector or specialist in McCoy will face a monumental task here. While McCoy's name appears on thirty-seven films, it is estimated that he worked on and contributed to at least a hundred. Since these are invariably issued in small quantities and in ephemeral format, attempting to complete a collection of McCoy screenplays approaches the impossible. Of more recent vintage and more permanent format is McCoy's own screenplay for *I Should Have Stayed Home,* edited by Bruce S. Kupelnick, published by Garland, New York, 1978. □

The Mystery Writer as a Mystery:

The Life and Work of "SPENCER BAYNE"

By Robert E. Skinner

In the past twenty-odd years during which crime fiction has come under the scrutiny of scholars, more and more work has been devoted to the lives of crime writers. It has probably come to no one as a surprise that many of these people were nothing like their fictional creations. With the exception of Hammett, many of these writers were as far removed from the world of their writings as can be imagined. One member of this group, however, rivals even Hammett in the style of his actual life. It can be said that the force of his personality completely overshadowed his work as a crime writer and forced it into an undeserved obscurity. This writer has, until recently, been known only as Spencer Bayne.

The author is a professional bibliographer and historian on the faculty of Louisiana State University Medical Center in New Orleans. He has written about Raymond Chandler and violence in crime fiction and is the author of THE HARD-BOILED EXPLICATOR: A GUIDE TO THE STUDY OF DASHIELL HAMMETT, RAYMOND CHANDLER, AND ROSS MACDONALD, *due out in 1985 from Scarecrow Press.*

The story of Spencer Bayne begins with the birth of Floyd Albert Spencer on October 23, 1899 in the town of Bedford, Iowa. His parents, Orrin and Mary Etta Spencer, were simple farmers, devoted to the land and to their religion. To their surprise, young Floyd showed an early and unusual appetite for learning and intellectual pursuits. The parents were elated and planned for their son a career in the ministry of their church.

Accordingly, in 1915, young Spencer went to the University of Colorado at Boulder and immediately began a study of ancient Greek, a subject that was essential for divinity students. Unexpectedly, however, Spencer developed a passion for Greek and the Greeks that never left him. He decided not to enter the ministry and opted for the study of ancient civilizations and languages. His parents were appalled at this turn of events and endeavored to change the boy's mind, but to no avail. Spencer was determined to become a scholar. This turn of events had the unfortunate effect of dividing the family completely. As far as is known, Spencer never again spoke to or saw his family after the quarrel.

Young Spencer was a brilliant student at Colorado, where he excelled in languages, among them Latin, Greek, German, French, and Italian. When the United States entered World War I, however, Spencer interrupted his studies to enter the military. In July of 1918, he enlisted in the Army and was assigned to a military police unit at Vancouver, Washington. His fluency in German quickly singled him out as a person of rare resource, and the Army transferred him to a counterintelligence unit, the 12th Spruce Squadron at Camp Funston, Kansas. One can only wonder at his work with Army Intelligence. Probably it wasn't very exciting, because the war ended in November, and, on December 24, 1918, Spencer was honorably discharged.

He lost no time in returning to school, and, by taking special examinations, he was able to graduate in the summer of 1919. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Greek, *magna cum laude*. He served for a short time as a cub reporter on the Denver *Times* until he was able to obtain a research and teaching fellowship at the University of Chicago in 1921.

During the next three years, he immersed himself in the classics and in the study of Greek and Roman civilizations. His studies culminated in a dissertation entitled "The Influence of Isocrates in Antiquity." In 1923, he was awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree *summa cum laude*. The records show that he was only the seventh student to earn this honor in the history of the University of Chicago. At the same time, as could be expected, he was also elected to membership in Phi Beta Kappa.

With so brilliant a record behind him, it was a foregone conclusion that the young scholar would embark on an academic career. His first academic appointment after graduation was at Ohio Wesleyan University. He showed his superiority very quickly, rising from assistant professor of Greek to acting chairman of the classics department. In spite of this meteoric rise, he decided to leave Wesleyan in 1927 and travel to Greece.

Apparently, Spencer had two missions in mind during this trip. The first concerned his desire to research the life of St. Paul. The second was to learn to speak Greek like a native. To that end, he followed in Paul's footsteps and, in so doing, covered the greatest part of the Middle East. In Macedonia, he went, by foot and mule, all the way from Saloniki to Yannene. The trip through all the towns and villages in this remote sector gained for the young scholar a true mastery of spoken Greek and, at the same time, an understanding of the hospitality and dignity of the Greek people.[1]

He returned to the United States later in 1927 and took up his duties as a member of the faculty of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. This proved to be one of the major turning points in his life, because it was here that he met and fell in love with one of his students, Paula Teresa Bayne.

Paula, the daughter of a dentist and his wife, was born in Peru, Illinois in 1907. Like Spencer, she evidenced an avid early interest in scholarship and the arts. Intensely interested in English language and literature, she write poetry and studied ballet while working toward a degree in French at Illinois. She was studying Greek under Spencer when they met. Apparently, they were immediately attracted to each other. After what can only be described as a whirlwind courtship, they were married in April of 1928.

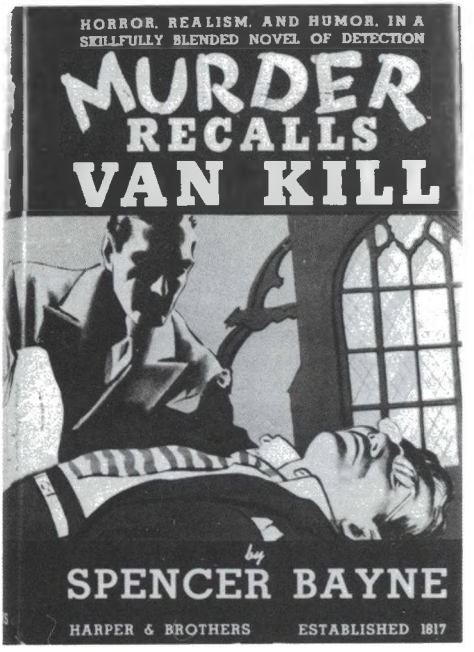
Following Paula's graduation, the pair enjoyed a belated wedding trip to Greece, where Paula learned to share her husband's passion for things Greek. Upon their return to the United States, they moved to Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia. Here they lived the typical life of any faculty couple as Floyd took up his duties as associate professor and chairman of the classics department and as a professor of historical sociology.

In 1930, an event occurred which would lead them into their most productive periods and, at the same time, would result in the birth of "Spencer Bayne." Floyd was offered an appointment as assistant professor of classics and historical sociology at the Washington Square College of New York University. This was a golden opportunity for the young couple, as it placed them, for the first time, in an atmosphere that could stimulate their natural creativity. They were also able to gain a sense of stability here and began a family. It was during these years that their son, Philip, was born.

Floyd became very busy, with the combined load of teaching several sections of Latin and Greek each semester and the pursuit of his research interests. The head of his department, Professor Casper Kraemer, became the editor of *Classical Weekly* and drew the members of his department, Spencer included, into its production.[2]

Spencer's major project in his early years at NYU was his book about St. Paul, the research on which he had begun back in the mid-1920s. In 1934, the work, entitled *Beyond Damascus: A Biography of Paul the Tarsian* was published by Harper and Brothers. The book was widely reviewed and was well received critically. The distinguished theologian Reinhold Niebuhr wrote of the book that "this most recent work by Professor Spencer is distinguished by a rich and varied scholarship, the fruits of which are presented in a lively and piquant style." The scholar Scholem Asche called it "the greatest book on the first century since Renan's *Life of Christ*." Such praise resulted in a fair amount of success for the book, so much so that a revised edition was brought out in Great Britain the next year.

Sometime during the mid-1930s, Paula suggested that the two of them ought to turn their research and writing talents to the production of some kind of popular fiction. Paula had been involved in scholarly writing herself, having produced the index to *Beyond Damascus* and having acted as a contributor to Kunitz and Haycraft's *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century*. As such, she could sensibly point out that, while scholarship was rewarding in some ways, it was not particularly remunerative. They hit upon the idea of writing a murder mystery, but, with two such minds at work, it was clear from the outset that it would not be a run-of-the-mill piece of work.



Somehow, they managed to get themselves appointed as unpaid consultants to the New York City Police Homicide Squad. It would be interesting to know how this feat was accomplished, but Philip Spencer can remember only that it was. Their aim was not so much to help the police but to find out how police investigations were actually conducted. Apparently, however, they were able to visit the scenes of several murders during this period. At this writing, the New York Police have been unable to supply any details of the association, but it is significant that the first novel in the Spencer trilogy is dedicated "for Captain E.M. and the boys—whether they know it or not."

As was typical for intellectuals and college professors writing popular fiction in those days, the Spencers disguised their identities by creating a pen name out of their respective surnames—Spencer Bayne. Their first novel, entitled *Murder Recalls Van Kill* appeared in 1939 and introduced Professor Hendrik Pieter Minuit Van Kill, known to his intimates as Hal.

Philip Spencer suggests that Hal Van Kill was an idealized version of Floyd Spencer himself. Be that as it may, Van Kill is an unusual and accomplished figure in mystery fiction for the primary fact that he is a genuine intellectual. Intellectual detectives had existed in fiction before this, but their intellectuality had lacked believability. Jacques Futrelle's Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen was probably the first such detective, but he is colorless and without personality. Philo Vance, possibly the best known, was the most insufferable. His endless lectures on abstruse subjects serve only to render him boorish to the reader. Ellery Queen, in both of his incarnations, always presented his brilliance in a watered-down version, probably so as not to bore or chase away the reader.

The Spencers managed not to fall into any of these traps with their creation. Van Kill has charm and personality, is able to convey his broad and eclectic knowledge with phrases rather than lectures and footnotes, and clearly is intended to be a thinking man's (or woman's) detective. It is pretty clear from the first book that the Spencers were not afraid to write a book that was obviously *not* for the masses. References to Greek and Latin language, figures, and history abound. The Rockwell Kent-illustrated version of *Candide* is a clue. A character's mental aberration is described as "parthenopselaphesis." These are not easy books to read. The reader is kept on his toes at all times, making the Van Kill books as much a mental exercise as entertainment.

Two other characters also help to enliven the Van Kill saga. The first, and by far the more important, is Edward Cameron, a prepubescent child prodigy who is introduced in the first book as a student whom Van Kill is hired to tutor. Edward effectively steals every scene in which he appears, largely because he manages to be both a child prodigy and a small boy. An excellent example of this appears in the first book when Edward and Van Kill meet for the first time. Edward and his rather large-framed pet cat have just awoken Van Kill from sleep:

"I hope you had a good nap. Thank you for changing the fish. Father would like to see you before dinner. That's why Eo and I came in."

"Eo—oh yes." Hal turned and put out his hand. . . . "Short for Eohippus, I suppose," he observed getting out of bed.

The boy's expression indicated a point scored. Almost confidingly he answered, "You're the first person except

Professor Weber of the Geology Department that I haven't had to explain it to. And he wouldn't see the joke because Dawn Horse is in no way related to the cat family and Eo *is* a cat. Can't scholars have any imagination? . . . I'm circumcised, too."

Another important person in the Van Kill ménage is a native Greek named Yanni Mavromichali. Yanni grows considerably in the course of the three novels, and his importance to Van Kill lies mainly in his courage and resource. When he appears in the first story, he is driving a taxi cab in a small, upstate New York college town. His English is only fair, but he is devoted to Van Kill for stopping a bullet meant for him in Greece before the action in the first book occurs. In succeeding books, his English improves markedly, and he is shown to be a remarkably adept knife fighter, a fingerprint expert, and a skilled photographer.

Murder Recalls Van Kill received mixed reviews which essentially showed that the book was not for everyone, as the authors intended. Will Cuppy wrote in the New York *Herald Tribune* that "unless this department has become confused in the excitement, here is a volume of real weight in its field and probably just what the public wants at the moment." On the other hand, Marian Wiggin in the Boston *Evening Transcript* felt that "it's a fine yarn if you have the time to mull it over."

The book opens with Hal Van Kill on a train bound for Brampton University in upstate New York. We learn that he is going there to tutor the son of the school president. An important scene occurs in the first chapter, when we see the young university professor is not all that he seems to be. Forced to share his breakfast table with what at first seems to be an English gentleman on holiday, Hal quickly exposes him as a small-time crook who has undergone plastic surgery. Their conversation offers some tantalizing bits of information about Van Kill's past association with the police, but the conversation ends before we learn much more.

Once Hal gets to Brampton and moves into Professor Cameron's house, he discovers a very peculiar situation going on. The widowed professor is offering room and board to four young female students, none of whom like each other very much. One is pregnant, another is a thief, and one is somewhat sexually precocious. Professor Cameron, a distinguished scholar who seems to be devoutly and conservatively religious, turns out to be emotionally unbalanced and in the habit of forcing his young boarders into strange religious sexual rites. In short order, two of the girls are murdered, Professor Cameron is attacked and nearly killed, one hundred thousand dollars' worth of radium is stolen from the professor's safe, and Hal is hit over the head while investigating the crime.

In the course of dealing with a truly unusual and entertaining cast of supporting characters, Hal reveals how he seems to know so much about the investigation of a crime. It seems that his father, also a scholar, led a life of great adventure by turning his scholarly expertise first to military intelligence and then to crime-solving. He passed along a great deal of this experience to his son. After his father was murdered by escaped criminals whom he had sent to the penitentiary, Hal went to work with the police and avenged him. Thereafter, Hal remained with the police continuing to solve such untold crimes as the "Medici Archive Murders" until he became known as "The Savant Sleuth." Eventually, he tired of crime detection and left the country to study and to participate in archeological expeditions, returning only to take this supposedly quiet tutoring job in the country.

In the mid-1940s, Spencer was ordered to Greece to undertake a covert mission that involved spying on Greek Communist guerrillas and Bulgarian agents near the Greek-Bulgarian border.

This bit of melodrama is the only thing of its kind in the Van Kill series. The rest of *Murder Recalls Van Kill* and the other two books steer remarkably clear of this flaw. The second book, *The Turning Sword* (1941), takes place several years after the earlier book's adventure. Edward, who is now Van Kill's ward, is safely ensconced in an exclusive private school and, at the age of twelve, is more precocious than ever. Van Kill is now a professor at "International University" in New York City and has a profitable sideline as an "examiner of questioned documents." Yanni, who showed a marked affinity for the culinary arts in *Murder Recalls Van Kill,* now

is the owner of a profitable and stylish restaurant. The three of them share fairly luxurious quarters in an exclusive apartment hotel where they are neighbors to Lady Diana Brown, a famous mystery novelist.

Lady Diana, a sweet, grandmotherly lady who serves a distinctly motherly function to Edward, has her own mysterious past, as we discover later in the book. She was once a defendant in a notorious Edinburgh murder case, a former expert in Swahili and German for the code and cipher branch of British Intelligence, and "ranee of a two-elephant principality near Benares at one time." She has become so much a member of the family that they have installed an interconnecting door between their two suites.

As much as the first book is distinctly rural in nature, *The Turning Sword* is just as distinctly urban. All of the action takes place in New York City and centers on the investigation of a pro-Nazi group called the Christian Cavaliers by the Pough Publishing Company, a successful magazine chain. Hal is drawn into the case when a female staff member of Pough, with whom he is in love, is murdered during the investigation. Despite an interesting and unusual problem, *The Turning Sword* is the least successful of the three Van Kill books. There are simply too many characters, and, in the words of Will Cuppy, the "style is excessively wordy, not to say windy."

This is not to say that the book is not of interest or that it lacks its own unique personality. For one thing, the supporting cast is as Runyonesque a group as has ever graced the pages of a murder mystery. For example, there is Maureen Carty, a tactophobic former acrobatic dancer who now devotes herself exclusively to the rescue of stray cats. Another is Poynton Darcy, a hack writer of *True Detective*-type sensationalist crime stories who is derisively referred to by all as "the crimescribe." Rounding out the cast are numerous magazine employees, restaurant workers, bigoted schoolteachers, and Jewish intellectuals.

An especially interesting facet of *The Turning Sword* is its sympathetic depiction of police detectives. Van Kill and the police have a good working relationship, and the Spencers' time with the police force is shown to have made an impression. There are no dull-witted or aggressively hostile police detectives of the sort so often seen in the works of S. S. Van Dine and Rex Stout. Each is shown to be human and, in his own way, clever in the performance of his work.

The last book in the Van Kill trilogy is also undoubtedly the best of the lot. Entitled *Agent Extraordinary* (1942), the book excited almost universal admiration among the critics. As was the case previously, *Agent Extraordinary* is a completely different type of book from the previous two. It opens with Van Kill aboard an RAF bomber flying over Greece on his way to Damascus, where Yanni Mavromichali awaits his clandestine arrival.

We discover that Van Kill has been working for the U.S. Department of Justice in his capacity as a documents examiner. The war is on in Europe, and Lady Diana is in Bermuda, attached to the British Imperial Censorship. Edward is staying with her while Van Kill and Yanni are on their most important mission. British Intelligence has persuaded Van Kill to go to Damascus to impersonate a British archeologist named Robert B. King. King, it seems, was working for the British as a secret agent and has mysteriously disappeared. Van Kill, who bears a striking resemblance to King, grows a beard and utilizes, perhaps for the first time in crime fiction, tinted contact lenses to change the color of his eyes, in order to investigate the disappearance and the reasons behind it.

Spencer was greatly upset about the onset of the war, particularly the fall of Greece. After the invasion, he spent a lot of his time writing and lecturing about Greece to interested groups and is known to have authored an unpublished three-act play about Greek partisans entitled *Glory Walks Alone.*[3] It is clear that a lot of emotional energy went

into the creation of this espionage story. The Germans, predictably, are depicted as barbarians, and, in a confrontation with a Nazi agent, Spencer is obviously getting something off his chest when he has Van Kill say, "You Vandal...the people who built this tomb were writing great literature when yours were running around in skins eating each other."

This is by far the most exciting of all the Van Kill adventures. There are innumerable close calls, gun battles, car chases, and dramatic clashes of wits between Van Kill's group and the Nazi secret agents. This is not to say that *Agent Extraordinary* does not contain some of the usual Spencer touches. Spencer's background in ancient civilizations and his knowledge of the Middle East provide a striking background as Van Kill and Yanni race against time to discover the reason for the missing King's disappearance and to prevent a Gestapo-backed take-over of Damascus. Key scenes take place in such places as the Convent of the Whirling Dervishes and the Mountain of Mohammed. Wry humor is expressed in the discoveries that the Arabic word for irrigation also means to relieve one's self and that the word for cherish can also mean to "grind to a pulp."

Sadly, this book was the last Van Kill adventure to see print. When the United States entered the war, Spencer immediately volunteered his services to the military. The U.S. Army was quick to see his value, and between 1942 and 1943 Spencer was sent to the Military Police School at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, the Military Censorship School at Fort Washington, Maryland, and the School of Military Government located at Charlottesville, Virginia. For the rest of the war, Spencer served in numerous intelligence and criminal investigation capacities in the United States and in the Mediterranean Theater. It is unfortunate that many of his missions remain cloaked in secrecy, effectively preventing us from knowing what his adventures during this period may have been.

Paula Spencer, meanwhile, remained behind to care for their son Philip. Apparently, she continued to write, producing feature articles for the King Features Syndicate under the pseudonym of Polly Spencer.

Late in 1945, Spencer was transferred to Egypt to serve as an intelligence officer in Cairo. Shortly after his arrival, he was appointed military attaché, a post which he held for two years. During his stay, the Egyptian government invited him to appear as a guest lecturer at the American University in Cairo. Paula and Philip later joined him in Cairo and remained with him until his tour in Egypt ended.

One of the few intelligence missions Spencer had about which we know any details happened during the latter part of his stay in Egypt. He was ordered to Greece to undertake a covert mission that involved spying on Greek Communist guerrillas and Bulgarian agents near the Greek–Bulgarian border. Spencer was the ideal choice for this mission. A brawny, black-haired six-footer with a slightly thickened nose acquired as the result of a bayonet-drill injury, he looked every inch the Greek peasant he was impersonating. His knowledge of colloquial Greek and of the area in which he worked made it possible for him to evade detection and successfully complete the mission. Apparently, he was in some danger from black-marketeers who would have misunderstood his appearance in the vicinity had he been discovered, as well as the danger he faced in dealing with Communist agents.

Late in 1947, the Spencers returned to the United States, and shortly thereafter Spencer was promoted to lieutenant colonel. For the next four years, he served in public information, war plans, security review, and as an instructor at the Provost Marshall General School at Camp Gordon, Georgia. His rise in the Army had been quite spectacular, so the disappointment was all the more acute when, in 1951, he was relieved from active duty. Apparently, he had hoped to make the military his second career, but the end of the war signaled a cutback in military personnel and he was caught in it.

Spencer was not ready to retire, however. He returned to academic life as professor and chairman of the Department of Sociology at Queens College in Charlotte, North Carolina. He also was named as consultant on international affairs to the Library of Congress. In 1952, he prepared a study for the Library's European Affairs Division entitled *War and Postwar Greece: An Analysis Based on Greek Writings.* If all this were not enough, Spencer also found time to provide news commentary over WBT-TV in Charlotte.

Spencer, like many brilliant men, was a man of strong personality and was prone to disdain faculty politics. According to his son, this trait tended to work against him in academic circles. Accordingly, in 1954, he left Queens College and moved to Reistertown, Maryland, where he became consulting sociologist and executive vice president to the Executives' Association of Baltimore.

By 1959, he and Paula were in full retirement in Glen Burnie, Maryland. He devoted himself to the study of Russian and Chinese until his death in 1978. Paula, slightly invalided, remains in their home there, where she busies herself with her books and pet cats.

In retrospect, one must feel that the untimely end of the Van Kill series was a loss to detective fiction. That the Spencers had not reached their full potential as crime writers is beyond doubt. Each of the three novels had its own unique character, and the back-

ground research that went into each book made it an intellectual exercise as well as an absorbing crime drama. If the series had been able to grow, the characters of Van Kill, Yanni, and Edward Cameron would undoubtedly have grown and would have taken a more noticeable place in the world of famous detective creations. The Spencers themselves led full, adventurous lives, however, and one must suppose that it is amazing that they found the time to create the Van Kill stories at all.

THE WORKS OF "SPENCER BAYNE"

Murder Recalls Van Kill. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939.

The Turning Sword. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941.

Agent Extraordinary. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1942.

La Venganza de King, Novela. Translated by Juan Rosenfeld. Buenos Aires: Editorial Ayacucho, 1945 (a Spanish translation of *Agent Extraordinary*).

SELECTED WRITINGS OF FLOYD A. SPENCER

"The Influence of Isocrates in Antiquity." Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1923.

Beyond Damascus: A Biography of Paul the Tarsian. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1934.

Beyond Damascus: A Biography of Paul the Tarsian. London: Frederick Muller, 1935 (corrected and expanded edition).

"The New New Testament." *Harper's Magazine* 168: 540–51, April 1934.

War and Postwar Greece: An Analysis Based on Greek Writings. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Library of Congress, European Affairs Division, 1952.

Notes

1. "A Middlewesterner in the Middle East." *The National Herald* 29:1, November 7, 1943.
2. Letter, Thomas J. Frusciano, New York University Archives, to E. E. Skinner, August 3, 1983.
3. *The National Herald.*

The author wishes to express his appreciation to a number of people who aided him in uncovering the mystery of Spencer Bayne. Thanks go out to Thomas J. Frusciano, University Archivist at NYU, and to Lt. Col. Stephen C. Engelking, Director of Personnel Services for the U.S. Army Reserve Components Personnel and Administration Center. Mr. Philip G. Spencer, the son of Floyd and Paula Spencer, gave invaluable assistance in letters to and telephone conversations with the author. Ms. Clara M. Lovett, Chief of the European Division of the Library of Congress, provided helpful information, as did Ms. Roberta Koscielski of the La Salle, Illinois Public Library. Ms. Jeanne Weiss of A Collector's Bookshop in New Orleans, Louisiana miraculously found one of the very rare copies of *Murder Recalls Van Kill* for the author to read. Finally, deep appreciation goes to Patricia A. Friedmann for her invaluable advice on editorial matters. □

The title gives this one away. Clearly, it is a parody of one of the bestselling mysteries of all time, Fergus Hume's *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*.

First published in Australia in 1887, Hume's cornerstone work was brought out in London in 1888 and went through dozens of printings in that year and subsequent ones.

What is remarkable about this parody is that it was published in London's *Time* magazine as the Christmas number of 1888—the same year as the appearance of the book. Surely this must

Classic Corner: Rare Tales from the Archives

The Mystery of the

Chapter I

On the morning of the 14th of July, Gerald Annesley was lounging in an easy chair in his luxurious chamber at Melbourne, carelessly scanning the daily papers (all of which he edited), while he awaited with impatience the hour when he might repair for a morning greeting to the girl who had last taken violent possession of his heart.

The only surviving scion of a fine old Irish stock, Gerald Annesley had started in life with a very ancestral castle now crumbling to decay, a family banshee, which had sunk to being let out for the shooting season by Whitely, and a letter of introduction to Mr. Ralph Nettleby, the millionaire of Melbourne. Following the impulse of his impetuous Irish blood, Gerald Annesley, proud and impoverished as the ill-fated race from which he was believed to have sprung, left his banshee behind him in Ireland and emigrated to Australia

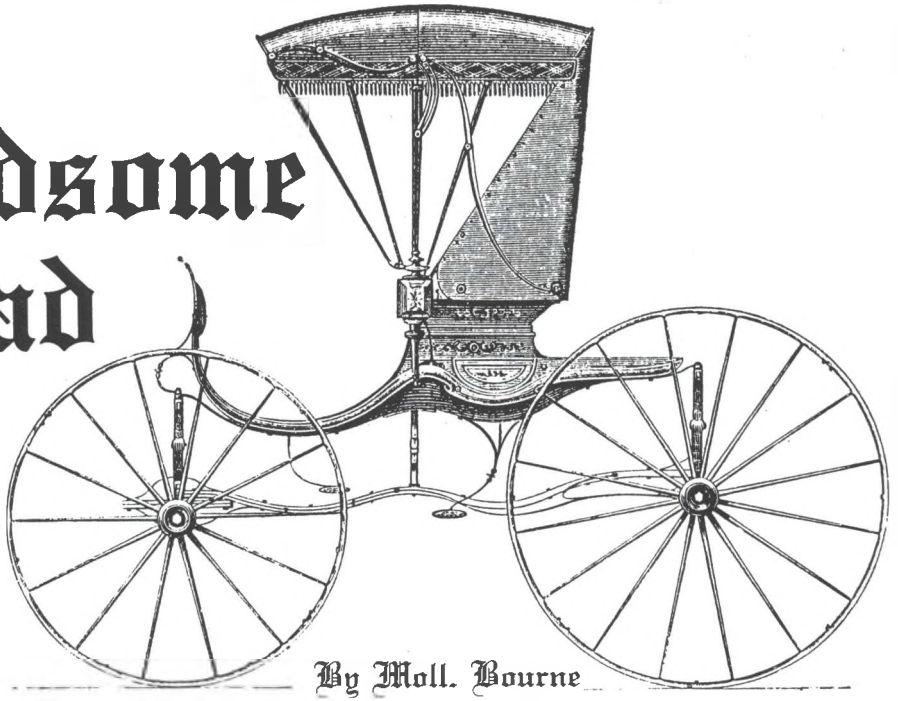
rank as one of the fastest compliments in publishing history—a parody published in the same year as the book which is being parodied!

The Christmas issue of *Time* carried its own title: *Up the Ladder; or, A House of Thirteen Storeys.* It seems to be loosely based on the theme of the *Arabian Nights' Entertainment,* with thirteen short stories having a thin connecting thread.

Nothing is known of the author, and I'm unaware of this tale ever having been reprinted.

—Otto Penzler

Handsome Cad



By Moll. Bourne

with his letter of introduction. In a few weeks, by dint of that hereditary perseverance which bids the Milesian neither beg nor borrow, he found he had accumulated a large independence, and straightway resolved to return to his castle, and restore the shattered fortunes of his race.

But Cupid had laid his snares for this high-spirited young Irishman, and he fell over head and ears in love, captive to the blue eyes (like pools of love wherein a man might drown himself), and fair, girlish grace of May Nettleby, the devoted and only daughter of the millionaire who had begun life with a rusty nail and closed it with a rusty temper. Many were the suitors who had been enslaved by her maiden charms, but they had hitherto wooed, from the pedantic rules of an etiquette-book, in vain, and May, as the last departed, laughed to think all men double, and vowed to remain single for ever, till this impetuous Irish lover appeared on the scene, and besieged her heart without Warne's etiquette-book.

Yielding to the impulses of his hot Irish blood, one moonlight night Gerald whispered his secret in the ear of his charmer, and she—well, history repeats itself! After trifling with him for a while, with womanly coquettishness, May confessed one day, with blushes mantling her cheeks, and a stormy smile in her frank blue eyes—that she loved him!

"Then you are mine, darling!" cried Gerald, impetuously, as he clasped his loved one proudly in his arms. "And you will never leave me?"

"Never, dearest," exclaimed May, as she raised her fashionably mauve eyes to his, with a trusting smile. And Gerald bent his golden head to meet her own, and—well, some heads are harder than others, and lovers are the same all over the world ever.

* * * * *

So this tall, handsome, well-built man, with his yet dark curling locks and truthful azure orbs, took up the morning paper and read as follows: —

"A dastardly crime has been committed in our midst, more horrible than anything described by De Quincey.

"A man, wearing a handkerchief marked X.Y.Z., has been daringly murdered in cold blood in the streets of Melbourne. This blood-curdling incident reminds us strongly of a French novel, in which we have read of a murder committed in an omnibus, and indeed, were this fiction instead of fact, we should feel inclined to accuse the author of plagiarism; but we very much doubt whether any writer of this century could be ingenious enough to devise the extraordinary incidents which it is now our dismal duty to relate."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Gerald, passing his hand through his rich chestnut curls, as he poured out a tumbler of brandy (Hennessey's) and drained it feverishly. "My darling must not hear of this, it will kill her!"

At this moment a knock was heard at the door, and a solicitor's clerk entered, who had greatly distinguished himself at a recent trial, where he had acted as leading counsel for the defendant.

Gerald Annesley, who had studied human nature, and possessed a daring ingenuity that savoured of Machiavelli, bethought him of offering his visitor a glass of wine, for it is a fact known to the Jesuits, and some men of equally diabolical cunning, that the influence of grape juice, especially when it hails from a neighbouring grocer, tends to render human beings more communicative and friendly. The astute lawyer fell easily into the snare thus laid for him, and addressing Gerald asked —

"You are aware that a murder has been committed on the person of an unknown individual, bearing the initials X.Y.Z.?" Gerald grew pale and livid, his ashen hue contrasting strangely with the darkness of his raven hair. "Heavens!" he cried, as a knock sounded at the door, and his landlady entered with a letter. "Great Sc——" he exclaimed, "this cannot be! this is a letter from Jane Smith, whose mother is dying, and summons me at once to her bedside, to hear her dying confession!"

So saying, he reeled lifeless to the ground.

Chapter II

It was late before Gerald Annesley could escape from the bedside of the expiring woman, to pay his morning greeting to his darling, who sat beside her father's arm-chair, playfully caressing him, and reading aloud from the morning paper.

As Gerald gazed on her fair hair and girlish face, with its sweet blue eyes and stormy smile, he thought he had never beheld so charming a picture.

"For shame, errant knight!" she exclaimed, laughing lightly; "how comes it that you are so late in paying homage at the shrine." (This is, be it observed, the newest colonial style in our courtly antipodes.) As Gerald was about playfully to answer this gay badinage the door opened, and three constables entered, bearing handcuffs.

"Gerald Annesley," said the foremost of them, "I arrest you for the murder of X.Y.Z."

"Heavens! what does this mean?" cried May, in frightened accents.

"It means," said Gerald proudly, "that I am about to leave you."

"Heavens! this must not be!" exclaimed May. "Release him instantly—I forbid you to arrest him!"

"May," replied her lover, "do not detain these men in the performance of their duty."

"Oh heavens! it is a mistake. You are innocent—I declare he is innocent! Do you still refuse to release him? Oh, my darling, my darling, this must not be!" So saying, May fell sobbing on the neck of her lover, and then tottered fainting to the ground, which the reader will observe has by this time borne a deal of tumbling.

Chapter III

IMMEDIATELY on hearing the news of Gerald Annesley's arrest, Mr. Johnson, the clerk so distinguished for his eloquent pleading, repaired to Mr. Nettleby's for a confirmation of the report.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed May, as he entered the apartment, "where is my darling? Take me to him, I must go to him!"

"I fear, Miss May, that at this juncture your help would be unavailing," replied the lawyer, as he gazed with unconcealed admiration at this noble girl.

May Nettleby paused for a moment in reflection; then, drawing herself up to her full height, said, in a cool determined voice, "He must be saved"—proudly raising her head—"and I will save him!"

In a moment she had developed from an innocent and unheeding girl into a self-reliant reader of "The Leavenworth Case."

The transformation was instantaneous. In the hour that followed she grew four inches across the chest, and the skirts of her dresses had all to be lengthened. "I am going to save my darling's life!" she exclaimed, as she waved the lawyer to the step of the carriage.

The lawyer was speechless.

He had known May Nettleby from a babe, and always admired her plucky independence, but this revelation of the force of her character fairly appalled him.

"Oh, it is too horrible, it must not be!" cried May, passionately, as she entered the court, and beheld her lover standing proud and impetuous in the dock. Numerous were the comments among the spectators on his fair golden hair and noble bearing. Both were said to be assumed, by the tongue of slander, but even slander was silent in the haunts of Themis. Gerald looked coldly down upon the rabble; his haughty spirit was not curbed by this misfortune, though his hot Irish blood rebelled against the indignity of his position.

Gerald Annesley, being duly sworn, deposed:—

"I am Gerald Annesley, a native of Ireland. I came to Melbourne six weeks ago with a letter of introduction to Mr. Nettleby. I have a family banshee and blue eyes. My hair occasionally changes colour, but my spirit is always fiery and impetuous."

On hearing these disclosures May Nettleby grew waxy white, and would have swooned

had not Fred Addlepate, who was sitting beside her, supported her drooping form, and murmured tenderly, "One can overdo this kind of thing, you know."

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, "this must not be!" She feared that if the strain were long maintained her nerves would give way, and that without the support of her undaunted courage, Gerald, as well as her limited vocabulary, would utterly collapse under his trouble.

The jury retired to consider their verdict.

"Good heavens!" suddenly exclaimed May Nettleby, clasping her hands to her heart, as a woman advanced towards her and informed her that the grandmother of Jane Smith was at the point of death, and wished to make her last confession. "Will these families never cease deceasing? I may, perhaps, gain the information that will save my darling's life!" she exclaimed, as she rushed to the bedside of the dying woman.

Half an hour—an hour—had elapsed, and still May Nettleby did not return. At last the jury jumped to a conclusion and into the court, while the verdict "Not guilty!" echoed in ringing accents through the building. As Gerald stepped down from the dock, and marched proudly from the building, his golden hair glinting in the sunlight, a lovely woman forced her way through the crowd, ejaculating, as she flung herself sobbing into his arms, "It must be so, I tell you! My darling—thank God, my darling is saved!" Then she tottered backwards and fell fainting to the unhappy ground.

Chapter IV

THREE MONTHS had elapsed since the infamous murder of X.Y.Z., and the perpetrator of the crime had not been brought to justice. May Nettleby and her father had retired to the country, where they were entertaining a party of brilliant guests. Mr. Nettleby possessed the rare art of making his visitors enjoy themselves at his expense, for he was extremely wealthy, and, as the witty Talleyrand has observed: "People who have money generally lead easier lives than those who have none"—a cold and cynical remark, if you please, but one, nevertheless, that is singularly typical of the peculiar spirit of his age and generation.

One afternoon, as May and her friends sat under the trees in the garden, the tall handsome figure of Gerald Annesley was seen advancing up the path, his dark clustering curls blowing in the breeze beneath a purple deer-stalker's cap.

"How hot it is to-day," archly observed the facetious Fred Addlepate, flinging himself on the grass.

"On the contrary, I am quite cool," bantered May, airily.

Addlepate hesitated a moment at this ready retort, while he searched what he was pleased to term his mind for a cutting reply.

"Then we must agree to differ," he exclaimed, as May rose to greet her beloved one; and the company fell into convulsions of laughter over this joke, to whose age and meaning respect were far more due. As soon as their merriment had somewhat abated, Gerald drew his darling aside, and, lover-like, was about to engage in a few moments of whispered nothings, when a servant announced to May that two gentlemen were waiting in the hall to make their dying confessions at her earliest convenience.

"Good heavens!" cried May, "it cannot be, it is too horrible! Darling, will you come with me?"

"Dearest, can you doubt me?" murmured Gerald, bending tenderly over her, as they quitted the garden together.

How proud and fond was May of her high-spirited Irish lover at that instant. As she gazed at his purple eyes, the deer-stalker to match, and the now golden hair, she felt that nothing should ever separate her from him.

"Darling," murmured Gerald, fondly, "are you prepared for the trial that awaits you? Can you bear these revelations with your usual good-natured composure?"

At that instant a figure dashed violently past them, waving in his hand a scroll of paper. It was Mr. Nettleby, flourishing his dying confession.

In an instant May realised all! She caught sight of the words "Jane Smith," "clandestine marriage." Jane Smith must be *his* daughter by a former union, and it was to avert this disclosure that he had compassed the murder of X.Y.Z.

"Oh, heavens, it cannot be!" cried May, with a wild scream.

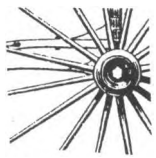
"Great Barnes, what have I done!" cried her father, falling heavily to the ground.

"Oh, my darling, my darling, save me!" cried May, as she tottered fainting on to the lifeless corpse.

Gerald reeled and staggered for several instants, while his hair and eyes changed colour with chameleon-like iridescence; then exclaiming: "Oh, my darling is fainting—save her!" he fell insensible over the second-floor body of his loved one.

The assassin of X.Y.Z. had been found at last.

Chapter 11



For six weeks May Nettleby lay at the point of death; indeed, she made (like so many heroines) a point of it. Jane Smith, on hearing the tidings, succumbed to the hereditary brain fever of her class, and meanwhile Gerald Annesley tossed (for five-pound notes) on his pillow in a raving delirium. When May was sufficiently recovered to learn how stricken he had been, she exclaimed, "Good heavens! I *must* go to my darling! He *shall* not die!" then fell back senseless on the pillows, comparatively unaccustomed to this sort of thing. The strain on her nerves had been too great, the sensitively organised frame gave way at last. The finely-tempered blade had worn out the scabbard; the acorn in the porcelain jar had worked its familiar ruin. But Gerald did not die, for he was neither a Smith by descent nor a professed confessioner. Even May, at length, recovered from her couch of suffering, which by this period required mending, and with her loving care and tender woman's screams hovered round his bedside. The crisis of the fever, which had baffled the most eminent dentists, at length was over, and the fond lovers were re-united at last.

Jane Smith became a reformed character, changed her name to Jones, and devoted her life to good works, founding a hospital to facilitate the confessions of Smiths and dying murderers.

Fred Addlepate became a Member of Parliament, and was soon appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Johnson, the lawyer's clerk, married the *quondam* Jane Smith, and blossomed into Lord Chief Justice of the Fiji Islands. Often, when his little children were gambolling around his knee, he told them, in the flickering firelight, the story of the handsome cad, who had laid the foundation of his future fortunes.

Soon afterwards May and Gerald were married.

"And are you indeed mine?" cried Gerald, impetuously, as he bent his, this time truly, golden head towards his darling. They stood on the deck of the steamer that bore them away from the scene of all their troubles, and she could no longer doubt who was his hairdresser.

"It must be for ever," murmured his young bride, as, with her peculiarly stormy smile, she gazed up lovingly and trustingly into his violet eyes.

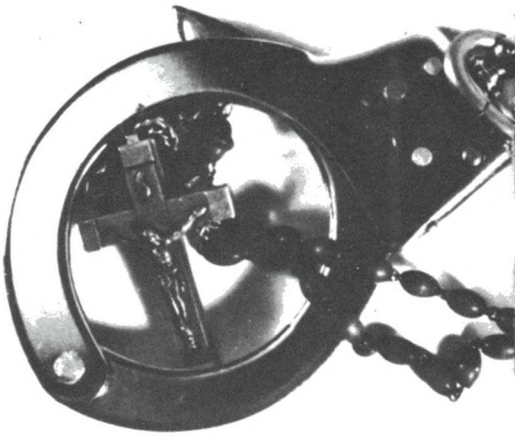
"And you love me?"

Her answer was (in the language of the billiard room)—a kiss. □

From the still glassy lake that sleeps
Beneath Arica's trees –
Those trees in whose dim shadow
The ghastly priest doth reign,
The priest who slew the slayer,
And shall himself be slain.
– Macaulay, *Lays of Ancient Rome*
"The Battle of the Lake Regullus" X

Many great men – it is notorious – read detective stories, though often behind locked doors, or under false jackets. They are afraid of their high-brow friends; for detective stories still do not rank as literature. . . . But we read them, for all that. . . . These facts being notorious, let us not consider it a waste of time to discuss the detective story. It is. . . a highly specialized art form, and deserves, as such, its own [critical] literature.
– Ronald A. Knox, "Detective Stories"

If a book is a book to be lived in, it should be (like a house to be lived in) a little untidy. . . . My own taste in novel reading is one which I am prepared. . . not only to declare, but to defend. My taste is for the sensational novel, the detective story, the story about death, robbery and secret societies; a taste which I share in common with the bulk at least of the. . . population of this world. There was a time in my own melodramatic boyhood when I became quite fastidious in this respect. I would look at the first chapter of any new novel as a final test of its merits. If there was no murdered man under the sofa in the first chapter, I dismissed the story as tea-table twaddle. . . . But we all lose a little of that fine edge of austerity and idealism which sharpened our spiritual standard in our youth. I have come to compromise. . . . As long as a corpse or two turns up in the second, the third, nay even the fourth or fifth chapter, I make allowance for human weakness, and I ask no more. But a novel without any death in it is still to me a novel without any life in it.
– G. K. Chesterton, "Fiction as Food II"



The Divine in the Guilty

We owe the serious study of mystery stories first and foremost to two theologians, Father Ronald A. Knox and G. K. Chesterton, both of whom practiced as well as defended the art of writing them. Both were classically educated and widely respected as scholars and literary critics. Both were also converts to Catholicism, Knox in 1917 and Chesterton in 1922. And since in criminal matters there are no coincidences – as Nero Wolfe is so fond of declaiming – this too is surely no coincidence. There must be some intrinsic connection, then, between theologians and whodunit writers, between theology and crime fiction.

If anyone should deny that there is a theological dimension to narratives of crime detection, that same person could not deny that there is from the very beginning a crime detection dimension to theological narratives. One need only consider the Old Testament book of Genesis, in which Jehovah's two most striking initial interventions in human actions involve crimes and their punishments. I am thinking of the original sin of Adam and Eve and the murder of Abel by Cain. In both cases, the stages of the narrative are the same: (1) the commission of a crime (disobedience of the law, in one case, and murder, in the other); (2) the confrontation and interrogation of the suspect; (3) the revelation of the guilt; (4) the punishment. In other words, these two Biblical accounts are very compressed detective stories (unaccountably missing from Dorothy L. Sayers's first [1929] *Omnibus of Crime*), the first a model of ratiocinative detection (Jehovah deducing from Adam's awareness of his nakedness his commission of the crime of having eaten the forbidden fruit and then Him eliciting the confession) and the second a model

Detective Vicarage

By Robert Zaslavsky

of psychic/intuitive detection (Jehovah hearing the blood of Abel cry out to Him from the earth and Him imposing the appropriate punishment). Divinity and detection, then, are siblings, and it is not merely fanciful to see a relationship between the all-seeing eye and the private eye, as Allan Pinkerton well knew. And to show that it is not merely fanciful, we must consider the mystery story itself.

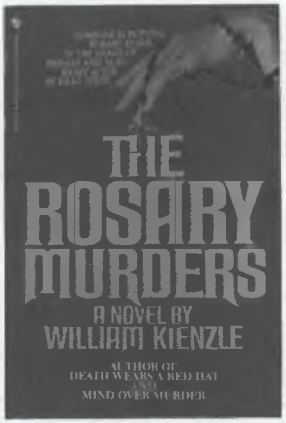
The mystery story—of whatever type—has three fundamental components: character, detection, and action. Insofar as it delineates character, it concerns itself with goodness and badness, virtue and vice, decency and corruption, morality and immorality, good and evil. Insofar as it presents detection, it concerns itself with the truth of a crime, the pursuit of knowledge, guilt and innocence, lawfulness and lawlessness, truth and falsity. Insofar as it studies action, it concerns itself with motive, means, opportunity, desire, act and potency, self-interest and selflessness. In short, the mystery story can contain all the themes which one would find in a theological treatise. That is, it can function as a dramatically rendered gloss on a theological treatise, simultaneously ethical, metaphysical, and practical/psychological. While G. K. Chesterton once asked, "Why is a work of modern theology less [i.e., why does it have to be less] to the soul, than a work of silly police fiction?"[1] he set out in his mystery stories to demonstrate that silly police fiction can be a work of modern theology without being any the less a work of police fiction.

The theological dimension of detective fiction is nowhere more clearly elaborated than in Chesterton's essays (scattered throughout) and in W. H. Auden's seminal essay, "The Guilty Vicarage,"[2] the two of which together lend this essay its title. Chesterton, in "Fiction as Food,"[3] complains that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries have lost the sense possessed by all preceding ages (as seen, for example, in the ancient Greek drama, the medieval morality play, the writings of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Protestants, and the works of the writers of the Enlightenment)—the sense that a moral story had to be a sensational and/or melodramatic story, that "a moral story almost always meant a murderous story...full of madness and slaying... the dancing of the devil and the open jaws of hell... parricide...shocking calamities." He claimed that, as a result, we moderns look down upon the most moral works of our own fiction, works which present life as a fight rather than as a conversation, works

This essay is a somewhat modified version of the first chapter of a work in progress in which I try to explore the theological foundations of modern crime fiction through a consideration of the genre's most pointed incarnations of those foundations, namely the priest-detective (which also includes the nun-, minister- and rabbi-detective). I have appended to this essay a checklist of all the works which I am examining in the larger study. To the best of my knowledge, that checklist exhaustively lists the literature of priestly detection to date. My criterion, however, is strict: the detector must be a clergyperson; a clerical setting alone is not grounds for inclusion.

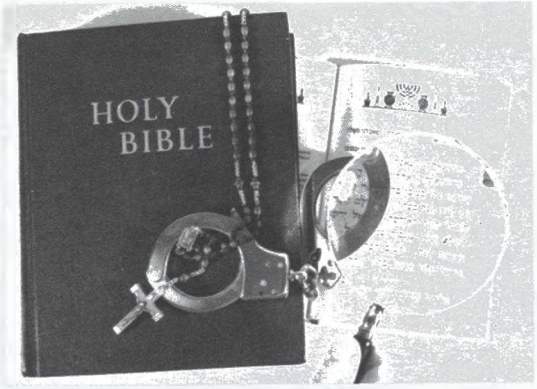
Here I would thank the many bookstores which have suffered my presence over so many years during my quest for clergy-detective material. I would also thank especially Mary W. Gilmore (of Malvern, Pa.), who reads mysteries voraciously and then generously passes them on to me in a flow up with which I cannot keep. (To the mystery addict, as to the used Cadillac buyer, the term "pre-owned" replaced the term "used.") Finally, I would mention that this essay is dedicated, as is the book of which it will become a part: first, to my fourteen-year-old daughter, Cordelia, who recently said to me, "You know, I think that I'm ready to start reading some of your mysteries"; second, to G.A.L.P., because she has re-energized in me the quest for self-detection which my love of detective fiction adumbrates.

with plot rather than plotless meanderings. Yet despite the stated preference of our times, the demand for the murder/crime story increased, even if it did so only as a sub-current, even if the literature was regarded as sub-cultural, popular, escapist (this despite the fact that its practitioners were by and large the hard-headed cultural elite). Of course, a work of high culture or art, say a Greek play, could be built on the notion that although many men have dreamed of killing their fathers and bedding their mothers but have not enacted the dream, let us see what it could mean and reveal for someone to enact it. But modern progressivism, the worship of the curative powers of technology, the industrial revolution, and urbanization banished such things into a darkness for which modern depth psychology is only a small light, and hence—to follow Chesterton—what had been center stage in earlier moral art was relegated to the wings, went underground, and has not yet fully returned to its proper central place. And this may be why readers of mysteries speak of their devotion to the form as an addiction. (I mean, one is said to love Shakespeare, but one may be addicted only to detective fiction.) And this, as Father Knox asserted,[4] may also be why the moral point in Chesterton's stories, for example, is so often missed even by those who read them assiduously: they leave



their high consciousness at the door of the low impulse to read silly police fiction.

Chesterton gives an important clue to that moral point in "The Divine Detective."[5] He contends there that we have in modern Christendom two detective agencies. The first is the official detective, the state, "a machinery of punishment"; the second is the private detective, the church, "a machinery of pardon." "The Church is the only thing," he says, "that ever attempted by system to pursue and discover crimes, not in order to avenge, but in order to forgive them. [It is] the unrelenting sleuthhound who seeks to save and not slay." This is analogous to Father Knox's analysis of *Oedipus Tyrannos*,[6] in which he sees Oedipus as the official police (the Scotland Yard of Thebes), Tiresias the blind priest as the private detective, and Creon as the Dr. Watson. And, while the goal of the official detective is the physical safety of the members of society, the goal of the priest-detective is the spiritual cleansing of society. The task of cleansing society is passed on, in modern times, to the de-frocked private detective, although as society becomes more technologized and



In Genesis, Jehovah's two most striking interventions in human actions involve crimes and their punishments.

industrialized, as its foundational underworld (the mean streets) becomes wider and deeper, this becomes a more difficult task than the cleansing of the Augean stables. And the detective story, according to Chesterton, is the poetry of the mean urban streets which are the hidden essence of modern society. (Ed McBain's "87th Precinct" novels are perhaps the finest example of this.) And it is a poetry which performs the useful social function of perpetually reminding us "that we live in an armed camp, making war with a chaotic world, and that the criminals, the children of chaos, are nothing but the traitors within our gates [and that it is] the detective in a police romance. . . the agent of social justice who is the original and poetic figure. . . that the whole

noiseless and unnoticeable police management by which we are ruled and protected is *only* a successful knight-errantry."[7] The "only" (which I have emphasized) is significant, because however successful the knight-errant may be, he is successful only partially, only here and there, only now and again, but not completely always and everywhere.

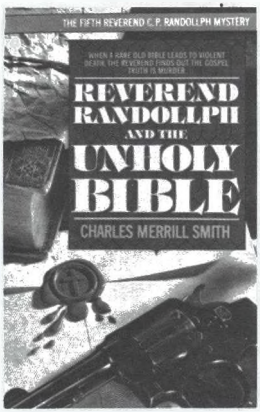
Chesterton further implies that the evil which the knight-errant battles is somehow an evil within himself, that the fundamental human problem—a concern for which is never absent from the best specimens of the *roman policier*—is the problem of evil, that the worst things in humans are uniquely human (and not bestial, demonic, or divine). In other words, the fundamental human problem is the problem of original sin,[8] of the fallenness of humans.

The case that this is also the fundamental problem of detective stories is made by W. H. Auden in "The Guilty Vicarage," his incisive analysis of the classic British whodunit, which he regards in what he labels a purely personal judgment as a work of magic rather than of art (a designation which he reserves for the American hardboiled school as exemplified by Chandler). He begins the essay fittingly with a prefatory quotation from Paul's Epistle to the Romans, ch. 7 ("I had not known sin, but by the law") and a confession of his own addiction to the form, an addiction which he later traces to his suffering from a sense of sin. Then he defines a detective story as a whodunit the central thematic concern of which is "the dialectic of innocence and guilt" and the formal structure of which follows Aristotle's description of the formal structure of tragedy, including—as a rule—the unities of time and place.[9]

In order to show why murder is central to the detective story, Auden divides crimes into three types: (1) crimes against one's neighbor(s); (2) crimes against society; (3) crimes simply against God. (Of course, both the first and second are also crimes against God, and all crimes are crimes against oneself.) In the first case, restitution (e.g., in robbery) or forgiveness (e.g., in assault) can in theory at least eradicate the crime, and, in the third case (e.g., suicide) the disposition is presumably strictly between the sinner and his God. But the second case is murder and murder alone, and, inasmuch as the injured party is no longer existent, society must take his place: "[M]urder. . . is the one crime in which society has a direct interest." Murder, then, is the one crime which is a crime against society as such, and it requires the severest public scrutiny.

Auden proceeds to list and discuss what he calls the five elements of the detective story: "the milieu, the victim, the murderer, the suspects, the detective."

He divides milieu (setting) into the human (or societal) and the natural. The human setting must be a closed and closely related society, a society governed by an elaborate ritual, so as to insure that the murderer comes from within, that the society therefore is not totally innocent, and that every



member is at least potentially a suspect. (He explicitly excludes the thriller.) This condition may be met by a group circumstantially brought together in time and place (e.g., a gathering of relatives or a traveling party) or by a group which is a small geographical unit (e.g., a village) or by a group which works together (e.g., a theater troupe). In addition, the group must constitute an apparently innocent society, a "society in a state of grace," a society composed of interesting and apparently good

members, a society in which the law is invisible because it is unnecessary, until the murder occurs, at which point the society enters a state of crisis because one of its members has fallen from grace by using the society's own ritual to violate it. Then the law becomes oppressively visible until the guilt of the fallen individual is discovered, a discovery which allows the law to fade away again and the society to regain its lost innocence. The natural setting should reflect the human, i.e., it should be as much a Garden of Eden as possible. (I would add that this at least partially explains the frequency with which detective stories revolve around a murder in the garden, a motif which may become all-pervasive, as it does in S. S. Van Dine's *Garden Murder Case,* for example, extending there beyond the place of the murder even to the name of the central figures in the story.) This paradise is what Auden calls "the Great Good Place," a setting in which the perversity of the murder can shine forth most clearly. He opposes this to Chandler's writings, which occur in "the Great Wrong Place" and which therefore are not the works of magical escapism which (according to Auden) the authentic detective story is but rather are works of art

The victim must be bad enough that anyone might *want to kill him but good enough that no one* would *want to kill him.*

concerned with the serious exploration of a criminal milieu. (I think that Auden is mistaken here, but that in no way detracts from the usefulness of his analysis, generally speaking.)

The victim must be a deliberately contradictory figure, in that he must be good and bad at the same time. He must be bad enough that anyone *might* want to kill him but good enough that no one *would* want to kill him. Here Auden is again too monolithic, and he would have profited from reading Chesterton's comment (in his review of *The Skeleton Key* by Bernard Capes): "A detective story [is] in a special sense a spiritual story, since it is a story in which even the moral sympathies may be in doubt. A police romance is almost the only romance in which the hero may turn out a villain, or the villain to be the hero."[10] It is this fluidity of moral distinctions which is at the heart of all detective fiction, the ratiocinative as well as the hardboiled.

Auden believes that the murderer is some sort of Miltonic Satan, a rebel, a being of satanic pride, but that he is a prideful rebel traveling—thanks to the skill of the author—incognito, as it were. "To surprise the reader when the identity of the murderer is revealed, yet at the same time to convince him that everything he has previously been told about the murderer is consistent with his being a murderer, is the test of a good detective story." This is a principle with which most readers of detective fiction would agree, even if they would not agree that the murderer is Satan incarnate. One might argue less extremely than Auden does, however, that crime (especially murder) and criminals represent the ineradicable depravity of human nature, i.e., that they are ever-present empirical demonstrations[11] of the truth of the doctrine of original sin (a view which is not unconsonant with the view that they are despiritualized Newtonian bodies in motion). The only fitting end for a murderer—in a detective story, although not in real life, Auden is quick to point out, implicitly thereby re-emphasizing his view that the detective story is escapist (presumably because—although he does not say so—reasonable doubt is banished in it)—the only fitting end for a murderer is execution, because since suicide means that he fails to repent, and going crazy means that he cannot repent, only execution is an act of atonement by the murderer and an act of forgiveness by his society. Here again Auden would seem to be less on the side of Poirot, as he declares that he is, and more on the side of Mike Hammer, whom he would certainly claim to abhor. More to the point, he seems plain wrong. For, from the practical theological point of view, from the point of view of—among others—Fathers Brown and Dowling and The Reverend Doctor C. P. Randollph, suicide (which may be a genuine result of repentance, however impious the act itself might be) and craziness (which would graphically exhibit the consequences of failing to repent) are far more fitting than execution. And in some cases, whether because the murder is a unique and justifiable act by an essential non-murderer or because the crime is less than murder, no external punishment is appropriate at all. And this is the kind of decision which can only rarely be made by the official police, although it is well within the province of the priest-detective or the detective as priest.

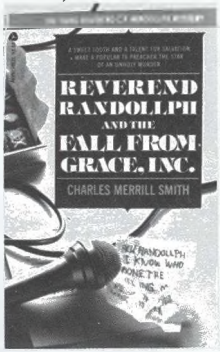
The suspects in the society of the detective story must be all apparently innocent until the murder is committed. The act of murder causes the entire

society to lose its apparent innocence in the face of the necessary intrusion of the law. For at bottom they are all guilty of something, even if it is not the something which is at issue. They may either have contemplated murdering the victim themselves (without having carried it out), or have committed other crimes or misdeeds which they wish to conceal, or wish to take the law into their own hands, or wish to protect another person. As such, they all have something to hide, as Poirot emphasizes time and again. As Hegel says—and G. K. Chesterton agrees with him—only the beast is innocent, which means a doctrine of original sin. In his discussion of the suspects, Auden sticks too much to the mechanics of the story, but he suggests the moral problem by indirection, even against his own grain, against his own studied refusal even to use the phrase "original sin."

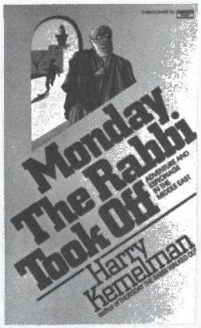
The detective, Auden suggests, must be an outsider in some significant sense, whose job is "to restore the state of grace." His outsider status guarantees his neutrality, although it hampers his investigations. He "must be either the official representative of the ethical or the exceptional individual who is himself in a state of grace." The perfect example of the exceptional individual in a state of grace Auden finds in Sherlock Holmes and of the unexceptional official representative of the ethical in Inspector French. Father Brown, on the other hand, is a fusion of the two, the unexceptional individual in a state of grace, the man who can "help the murderer as an example, i.e., as a man who is also tempted to murder, but is able by faith to resist temptation." And Auden considers these three—and this in an essay written well after the end of World War II!—the only perfectly satisfactory fictional detectives. Yet, however much one may disagree with each individual assessment, the composite picture which arises from his discussion, the picture of the detective as an exceptional individual possessed by the heroic passions of curiosity and desire for rightness and compassion for the lost members of society, of the detective as a secular redeemer attempting to preserve as many islands of purity as possible in a hopelessly fallen world—that picture is apt and suggestive.

Auden claims that those readers to whom the detective story most appeals simultaneously suffer from a profound sense of sin or feeling of guilt.

Finally, Auden discusses the reader of the detective story, namely himself (but also all others for whom he could be construed as the typical representative). He claims that those readers to whom the



detective story most appeals are those who are least likely to be drawn to other types of "daydream literature," the well-educated and well-read professionals. And these are persons, he claims, who simultaneously suffer from a profound sense of sin or feeling of guilt and assume that this sense or feeling remains unchanged no matter how great is their external goodness or progressively increasing goodness. And for these readers, the detective story represents the unfulfillable dream of regaining paradise, of restoring lost innocence. In other words, for them, the detective story is the nostalgia of original sin for its pre-fallen beginnings, the nostalgia of guilt for the lost garden. In short, the detective story represents a theological utopianism of the highest order.



Thus, although Chesterton and Auden may disagree on specifics, they agree that detective stories are works of theology and that the priest-detective is somehow the essential detective. And although this may not be perfectly correct, it is correct enough as a starting-point, and it does strike a note which is heard in many, if not all, detective stories.[12] It would be fruitful, then, to follow the career of the priest-detective from Father Brown to the present in the

faith that this will contribute to the understanding of the detective story in general. In addition, for those who – like myself – have long since ceased entering nonfictional houses of worship, it may provide a foundation for a more congenial and capacious arena of theological discussion.

CHECKLIST

N.B.: (1) D = detective protagonist(s). (2) All dates are dates of original publication.

Arlington, Cyril Argentine[13]
D = Archdeacons The Ven. John Craggs of Thorp and The Ven. James Castleton of Garminster
Archdeacons Afloat (1946)
Archdeacons Ashore (1947)
Blackmail in Blankshire (1949)
Gold and Gaiters (1950)

Boucher, Anthony
(originally under the pseud. H. H. Holmes)
D = Sister Ursula
Nine Times Nine (1940)
Rocket to the Morgue (1942)
"Coffin Corner" (1943, in *The Female of the Species* ed. Ellery Queen)
"The Stripper" (1945, in *Twentieth Century Detective Stories* ed. Ellery Queen)
"Vacancy with a Corpse" (1946, *Mystery Book Magazine*)[13]

Catalan, Henri[13]
D = Soeur Angèle
Le cas de Soeur Angèle (1952) [tr.: *Soeur Angèle and the Embarrassed Ladies*]
Soeur Angèle et les fantômes de Chambord (1953) [tr.: *Soeur Angele and the Ghosts of Chambord*]
Soeur Angèle et ceux de la mouise (1953) [untranslated]
Soeur Angèle et les seigneurs du jour (1953) [untranslated]
Soeur Angèle et les roses de Noel (1954) [untranslated]
Soeur Angèle et l'angelus du soir (1954) [tr.: *Soeur Angèle and the Bell Ringer's Niece*]
Soeur Angèle et les croix de glace (1955) [untranslated]
Le secret de Soeur Angèle (1956) [with Leo Joannon] [untranslated]
Soeur Angèle et l'étrangère (1957) [untranslated][14]
Soeur Angèle et le redresseur de torts (1959) [untranslated][14]

Chesterton, G. K.
D = Father Brown
Innocence of Father Brown (1911)
Wisdom of Father Brown (1914)
Incredulity of Father Brown (1926)
Secret of Father Brown (1927)
Scandal of Father Brown (1935)
"Vampire of the Village" (1947)[15]

Eco, Umberto
D = Brother William of Baskerville[16]
The Name of the Rose (1980)

Fraser, Antonia
D = Sister Agnes
Quiet as a Nun (1977)

Fuller, John[13]
D = [Brother] Vane
Flying to Nowhere (1983)

Gilman, Dorothy
D = Sister John and Sister Hyacinth
Nun in the Closet/Cupboard (1975)

Greeley, Andrew M.[13]
D = Father Blackie Ryan
Virgin and Martyr (1985)

Holland, Isabelle[13]
D = The Reverend Claire Aldington
A Death at St. Anselm's (1984)

Holton, Leonard
D = Father Joseph Bredder
Saint Maker (1959)
Pact with Satan (1960)
Secret of the Doubting Saint (1961)
Deliver Us from Wolves (1963)
Flowers by Request (1964)
Out of the Depths (1966)
A Touch of Jonah (1968)
Problem in Angels (1970)
Mirror of Hell (1972)
Devil To Play (1974)
Corner of Paradise (1977)

Hubbard, Margaret Ann[13]
Murder Takes the Veil (1950)
D = Mother Theodore
Sister Simon's Murder Case (1959)
D = Sister Simon

Kemelman, Harry[17]
D = Rabbi David Small
Friday the Rabbi Slept Late (1964)
Saturday the Rabbi Went Hungry (1966)

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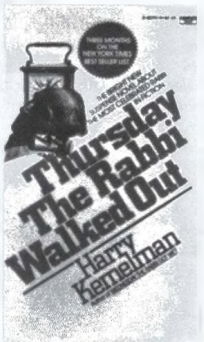
Monday the Rabbi Took Off (1972)
Tuesday the Rabbi Saw Red (1974)
Wednesday the Rabbi Got Wet (1976)
Thursday the Rabbi Walked Out (1978)
Conversations with Rabbi Small (1981)[13]
Someday the Rabbi Will Leave (1985)[13]

Kienzle, William X.[13]
D = Father Bob Koesler
Rosary Murders (1979)
Death Wears a Red Hat (1980)
Mind Over Murder (1981)
Assault with Intent (1982)
Shadow of Death (1983)
Kill and Tell (1984)
Sudden Death (1985)

McConnell, Frank[13]
D = Sister Bridget, *ret.*
Murder Among Friends (1983)

McInerny, Ralph[13]
D = Father Roger Dowling
(also writes as Monica Quill: see below)
Her Death of Cold (1977)
Seventh Station (1977)
Bishop as Pawn (1978)
Lying Three (1979)
Second Vespers (1980)
Thicker Than Water (1981)
Loss of Patients (1982)
Grass Widow (1983)
Getting a Way with Murder (1984)



McMahon, Thomas Patrick[13]
D = Bishop Purcell
The Issue of the Bishop's Blood (1972)

O'Marie, Sister Carol Anne[13]
D = Sister Mary Helen
A Novena for Murder (1984)

Peters, Ellis
D = Brother Cadfael
A Morbid Taste for Bones: A Mediaeval Whodunit (1977)
One Corpse Too Many (1979)
Monk's Hood (1980)[13]
Saint Peter's Fair (1981)[13]
The Leper of Saint Giles (1981)[11]
Virgin in Ice (1983)[13]

Sanctuary Sparrow (1983)[13]
Devil's Novice (1984)[13]

Post, Melville Davisson
D = Uncle Abner[18]
Uncle Abner, Master of Mysteries (1913–18)

Quill, Monica[13]
(pseudonym[19] of Ralph McInerny)
D = Sister Mary Teresa Dempsey
Not a Blessed Thing (1981)
Let Us Prey (1982)
And Then There Was Nun (1984)
Nun of the Above (1985)

Reach, Alice Scanlan[13]
D = Father Francis Xavier Crumlish
"In the Confessional" (1962, *EQMM*)
"Ordeal of Father Crumlish" (1963, *EQMM*)
"Gentle Touch" (1963, *EQMM*)
"The Heart of Father Crumlish" (1964, *EQMM*)
"Father Crumlish and the Cherub Vase" (1965, *EQMM*)
"Father Crumlish and God's Will" ["In Many Sorrows"] (1966, *EQMM*)
"Father Crumlish and the Wolf in Sheep's Clothing" (1966, *EQMM*)
"Father Crumlish and His People" (1967, *EQMM*)
"Father Crumlish Remembers His Poe" (1969, *EQMM*)
"Father Crumlish's Long Hot Summer" (1969, *EQMM*)

Reed, Ishmael
D = Papa LaBas[20]
Mumbo Jumbo (1972)
Last Days of Louisiana Red (1974)

Sayers, Dorothy L.
D = Montague Egg[21]
Hangman's Holiday (1933)
"The Poisoned Dow '08"
"Sleuths on the Scent"
"Murder in the Morning"
"One Too Many"
"Murder at Pentecost"
"Maher-Shalal-Hashbaz"
In the Teeth of the Evidence (1940)
"A Shot at Goal"
"Dirt Cheap"
"Bitter Almonds"
"False Weight"
"The Professor's Manuscript"

Scherf, Margaret
D = The Reverend Martin Buell

Always Murder a Friend (1948)
Gilbert's Last Toothache [= *For the Love of Murder*] (1949)
The Curious Custard Pie [= *Divine and Deadly*] (1950)
The Elk and the Evidence (1952)
Cautious Overshoes (1956)
Never Turn Your Back (1959)
The Corpse in the Flannel Nightgown (1965)

Smith, Charles Merrill[13]
D = The Reverend Doctor Cesare Paul "Con" Randollph
Reverend Randollph and the Wages of Sin (1974)
Reverend Randollph and the Avenging Angel (1977)
Reverend Randollph and The Fall from Grace, Inc. (1978)
Reverend Randollph and the Holy Terror (1980)
Reverend Randollph and the Unholy Bible (1983)

Spike, Paul[13]
D = Father Fernando O'Neal
Last Rites (1981)

Webb, Jack
D = Father Joseph Shanley
The Big Sin (1952)
The Naked Angel [= *Such Women Are Dangerous*] (1953)
The Damned Lovely (1954)
The Broken Doll (1955)
The Bad Blonde (1956)
The Brass Halo (1957)
The Deadly Sex (1959)
The Delicate Darling (1959)
The Guilded Witch (1963)

Wright, June[13]
D = Mother Paul
Make-Up for Murder (1966)[22]

Notes

1. G. K. Chesterton, "Reading the Riddle," in *The Common Man* (New York/London, 1950), p. 61.
2. W. H. Auden, "The Guilty Vicarage," in *The Dyer's Hand and Other Essays* (New York, 1962), pp. 146–58. The essay has been reprinted in *Detective Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays* ed. Robin W. Winks (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1980).
3. "Fiction as Food II," reprinted in *The Spice of Life* (Beaconsfield, England, 1964); originally appeared under the title "Novel-Reading" in *T. P.'s Weekly*, April 7, 1911.

4. Cf. Ronald A. Knox, "G. K. Chesterton," in *Literary Distractions* (New York, 1958), p. 167.
5. In *A Miscellany of Men* (New York, 1912), pp. 277–83.
6. Cf. Knox, "Detective Stories," *Literary Distractions*, pp. 186–87.
7. Chesterton, "Defence of Detective Stories," in *The Defendant* (London, 1941), pp. 118–23.
8. Chesterton, "On Original Sin," in *Come To Think of It...* (New York, 1931), pp. 174–77.
9. This had been worked out by Dorothy L. Sayers in her 1935 lecture "Aristotle on Detective Fiction," reprinted in *Unpopular Opinions* (London, 1946), pp. 178–90. Cf. my "Kant on Detective Fiction," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, Vol. 17, 1983, p. 54.
10. Chesterton, "Bernard Capes," in *G.K.C. as M.C.* (*c.*1929, repr. Freeport, N.Y., 1967), p. 126.
11. Cf. Chesterton, "The Maniac," in *Orthodoxy* (New York, 1909), p. 24: "Original sin is the only part of Christian theology which can really be proved." Also cf. Charles Merrill Smith, *Reverend Randollph and the Avenging Angel* (New York, 1982, *c.*1977), ch. 19, p. 174: "Original sin is manifested in every conceivable variety of behavior. . . . G. K. Chesterton said that original sin is the only empirically demonstrable Christian doctrine."

Father Brown

12. Cf. "Kant on Detective Fiction," pp. 63–64 n. 25,: "The divine holiness of the detective finds explicit expression in much of detective fiction. There is much more in common than would appear at first glance between the Simon Templar who frequently refers to criminals as the ungodly and the Mike Hammer who takes upon himself the role of Jehovah-like judge, jury, and executioner of divine vengeance. In this category would also belong—among others—the soiled Galahad Philip Marlowe, the knight-errant beach bum Travis McGee, and the divinest detective of all, Nero Wolfe who with his Archi-angel Goodwin purifies the world with as little departure as possible from the house on West 35th Street which contains his perfect circular and immobile godhead."
13. If this superscript appears after the name of an author, it signifies that the author is not included in *Twentieth-Century Crime and Mystery Writers* ed. John M. Reilly (New York, 1980), the major bibliography of crime fiction, an invaluable (even if flawed) reference work. If the superscript appears after the title of a particular work, it signifies that the work is not listed in the author's bibliography in *Twentieth-Century Crime and Mystery Writers*. In fairness to the editor—although this clearly does not account for all the exclusions indicated—it must be taken into consideration that works published in 1978 and 1979 may not have reached him in time for inclusion and that works published since 1979 could not have been included. Let me add that this excellent collection of brief critical bibliographies should make some changes in the next edition, particularly in the bizarre practice of including foreign-born writers who write virtually exclusively in English (e.g., Janwillem van de Wetering and Robert van Gulik) in the foreign-language writers section and listing only the publication date of the English translation of a foreign work rather than its original publication date. Other criticisms of this useful and valuable book could be made, but this is not the place for them.
14. I have so far been unable to obtain copies of the French text of these three novels. Here I would thank Anne Denlinger of Bryn Mawr College, who graciously consented, because her French is so much more fluent than mine, to read and summarize the French texts which I did have, leaving me free to struggle through only those passages which she indicated were germane to my study.
15. This story is currently most easily available in the Penguin edition of *The Complete Father Brown*. It seems to me unconscionable on the part of Penguin, however, which also published the five collections, not to have included this story at least as an addendum to the last collection, because this puts any purchaser of the five separate volumes one story short of owning them all.
16. Brother William of Baskerville, whose name clearly refers to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, is modeled in looks and habits on Sherlock Holmes (cf. 1983 tr., Prologue, pp. 8–9). As a theologized Holmes, he provides insight into the way in which Holmes is a secularized theologian. In addition, William's chronicler, the fictive Adso of Melk or (cf. p. xiii) Dom *Adson* de Melk is clearly a version of Dr. Watson, as one can see if one takes the name "Adson," substitutes one dental for another (i.e., "t" for "d") and adds the sound of the lost initial digamma (i.e., the "w" sound), in order to retrieve the original "Watson."
17. I have included *Conversations* on this list, even though it is not a detective novel, because it continues the rabbi-detective protagonist of the novels and provides additional socio-religious background for those novels.
18. I include Uncle Abner because he is presented as being in the service of God, as being a judge-investigator in the image of Daniel.
19. I cannot resist pointing out that McInerny—quite deliberately, I am certain—has selected the perfect pen (= quill) name (= moniker/*var.* monica).
20. I include Papa LaBas because he is a priest of a sort, namely a practitioner of voodoo invested with special powers by forces and deities whose minister he is.
21. I include Montague Egg because he is a mercantile Uncle Abner. He is a traveler in spirits (pun intended), he represents the firm of Plummet and Rose (which suggests fall and ascent, death and resurrection), and he is guided by the book, i.e., by *The Salesman's Handbook*, which is treated in the stories very much as a secularized scripture. In addition, his name is very suggestive, for "Montague" means "sharp hill," i.e., Calvary, while "Egg" is a symbol of the world and the mystery of life and, in its association with Easter, of the passion of Christ.
22. It is with some reluctance that I admit that I have been simply unable to find a copy of *Make-Up for Murder*. But it is mentioned and briefly discussed in Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan, *The Lady Investigates: Women Detectives and Spies in Fiction* (New York, 1981), p. 238. It is also listed in the *British Museum Catalogue*, 1966–70 Supplement, Vol. 26, Column 711. Clearly, then, it was published in England, fell into quick obscurity—whether justifiably so or not I am in no position to judge—and was never published in the United States, for I find no reference to it in *Books in Print*, the *National Union Catalogue*, the *Book Review Digest*, the *Book Review Index*, or the OCLC computer data bank. □

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By Thomas Godfrey

TAD at the MOVIES

★★½ **Fletch** (1985) Chevy Chase, Tim Matheson, Joe Don Baker (D: Michael Ritchie)

Gregory Mcdonald's 1974 Edgar-winning *Fletch* was ripe for the screen from the start. Its hip, insolent style was right in line with the stuff people were tuning into on Saturday nights. Its hero was an investigative reporter, the everyman-hero of the post-Watergate years. Mcdonald's writing was dialog-rich, description shy, just the sort of material to spur the imagination of a young filmmaker on the prowl for a hot property.

Well, it has made it – ten years later – and I can't stop wondering why it took so long. Irwin Fletcher the smart-mouthed reporter has found ideal incarnation in Chevy Chase, the pratfallen campus cut-up of *Saturday Night Live*. The breezy, irreverent quality of his investigations are faithfully preserved. But the spirit that guided Mcdonald's inspiration has thickened in the middle, like its star, and the result is not as fresh as it might have been a decade ago.

Chase as *Fletch*: Perfectly cast, but too late?

Andrew Bergman ("Hollywood and LeVine"), the screenwriter, has kept to the same basic plot elements, though he has tampered with them, changing the resolutions without improving on the original. He has dropped several characters, which is standard screen-adaptation procedure and usually wise, and he's arbitrarily changed names and small details, which is also standard procedure and usually mere ego-gratification. He's also done a few things that are frankly detrimental, such as making the characters more bland and inoffensive. Mcdonald's Fletch was more caustic and abrasive, his newspaper colleagues more contentious and colorful. (His society editor was the best-drawn character in the book.) The women were usually treacherous and lively. Bergman has made them sweeter and less flavorsome, which compromises the drama, for now, when Fletch dallies, the pace of the film slips into neutral, since there is nothing else at work to move things along. That might be all right for a drama like *Camille*, but it's not much good for a comedy, and it's hell on a mystery-suspense plot.

The book was already overweighted in favor of the comedy elements. Mcdonald was not above sacrificing his plot points to get a good laugh, but Bergman has gone even further, adding extended comedy routines at the expense of the mystery, which has been trimmed down to bare bones. No doubt this was done with Chase's participation in mind. And he doesn't disappoint, often dressing up in a funny disguise to interrogate a suspect or badger someone whose car he has just commandeered. It's usually funny, but it doesn't add up to a whole three-dimensional character.

The plot, for those who care to notice, concerns Fletch's undercover investigation of drug-dealing at a Southern California beach community. While there, posing as an addict, he is approached by a young aviation tycoon who tries to hire him to murder him in his Beverly Hills home one night, claiming that he's dying of bone cancer and wants to be put out of his misery without compromising the hefty insurance settlement that will be coming his wife's way. Fletch accepts and spends his time investigating both intrigues, which are later tied together.

Chase, as has been said, is good in the part, if without that last ounce of manic disaffection that the part requires. The best of the film is what survives from Mcdonald's original humor and intricate suspense plot. Ritchie's direction contributes to the overall cotton-candy quality of the film. His previous work has been in mild suburban comedy *(Smile, The Bad News Bears)* or contemporary dramas such as *Downhill Racer* or *Semi-Tough*. This material demands an edge he seems unable to supply. Car chases, shootings, and burglaries are tossed off in episodic TV fashion. You can already see where the commercials will go when it reaches network television.

The style and Chase's participation would seem to warrant a sequel. Let's hope it can be done without pasteurizing or homogenizing the life out of the material. Mcdonald's *Fletch* seemed to call for an anchovy pizza with the works. What we got here was cold pasta salad.

★½ **Stick** (1985) Burt Reynolds, Candice Bergen, Charles Durning (D: Burt Reynolds)

An unfortunate realization of Elmore Leonard's breakthrough book. The production was plagued with problems from the start. The star was ill during much of the shooting, and some of the scenes had to be redone almost a year later. Reynolds was unhappy with Leonard's own screenplay and had much of it rewritten. The horrid mismatch which emerges does credit to neither man. The plot meanders from mawkish sentimentality through cliched knuckle-scraping into downright incomprehensibility.

Reynolds's appearance varies drastically from scene to scene. His weight yo-yo's up and down by about twenty pounds. His cheeks fill in and out with tidal variation. In some of his close-ups, he looks as though he had been spray-painted with fake suntan make-up. In many scenes, he sounds hoarse and breathy. You often must strain to hear some of his lines. The camera keeps catching him looking tired or listless.

Occasionally we get a suggestion of the scintillating life-of-the-cocktail party personality he's been marketing on television for years, but mostly there is just the impression that not enough was reshot to salvage the job.

The plot is a sketchily drawn thing about an ex-con just out of jail for armed robbery getting double-crossed in a drug deal in the Florida Everglades and seeking revenge. Along the way he encounters a raunchy *nouveau riche* with a fascination for underworld figures (George Segal doing a heated-up Ivy League Edward G. Robinson), a financial-advisor love interest (Bergen, purely ornamental), and a Latino godfather (Castulo Guerra) who seems to be a graduate of the Ming the Merciless School of Dramatics. That Charles Durning, looking like a bulbous, bloated Arthur Godfrey, is unable to shine as the most grotesque of the double-dealers is an indication of the seriousness of the problems here.

Reynolds's contributions behind the camera are just as lame and unimaginative. A few of the scenes look like they were being set up as they were photographed.

A miserable experience.

★½ **The Hit** (1985) John Hurt, Terrence Stamp, Fernando Rey (D: Stephen Frears)

There have been some admiring noises made about this tale of a British thug (Stamp) who has testified against his former associates, been relocated to Spain, and is now being hunted by hit man Hurt and his cartilaginous accomplice Tim Roth ten years later. Don't believe them.

Those who have spoken of its originality must have stopped going to mystery-suspense films about the days of *The Great Train Robbery*. Those who have praised its quirky humor fail to notice that it sits on the other elements of the film like an oil slick. When *The Hit* tries for "meaningfulness," it becomes more successfully humorous. Stamp starts spouting some post-encounter-group twaddle about John Lennon to indicate that he's found the Meaning of Life in the face of death and you're sure someone is putting you on. And then a Carmenesque gypsy girl gets dropped into the proceedings about mid-movie, in the form of Laura del Sol (the Carmen of the recent danced Flamenco *Carmen*), and she proceeds to deliver a ludicrous Latin spitfire performance, all flashing teeth and fingernails which half the audience seems to take seriously. What are we to think?

Stamp surprisingly survives all this, maintaining a modicum of dignity throughout all this pretentious heavy breathing. Hurt, however, is not so lucky. He looks absolutely diseased behind his Foster Grants. (It's easy to spot the bad guys—they all wear sunglasses.) And his acting never wavers from studied indifference, no matter what is going on around him. Rey, the big cheese of *The French Connection*, is wasted as the detective far behind on the trail. Sometimes, he seems so far behind that I wondered if he were really part of the picture. Maybe the camera crew just happened to catch him vacationing in the area?

Frears's *(Gumshoe)* pacing is maddening: moments of forced punchy humor, minutes of bloody violence, and hours of ungodly dull talking and driving. Paco de Lucia's flamenco score does not always match the visuals. Did he see the film before he wrote it? The guitar twangs up a storm and everyone's just sitting around in the car looking constipated.

I suppose we might read some years from now how this was all intended, but how could we possibly have known that all this feigned incompetence, which comes so close to the real thing, was art after all?

★ **A View to a Kill** (1985) Roger Moore, Grace Jones, Christopher Walken (D: John Glen)

Rock bottom. At least until the next Bond film is made. Moore's 007 no longer puts one in mind of simple retirement. Euthanasia springs to consciousness.

Ian Fleming is the lucky one here. He didn't live to see his hero reduced to a series of promos for a film that shouldn't have been made in the first place. Maybe next time it won't.

★★½ **Into the Night** (1985) Jeff Goldblum, Michelle Pfeiffer, Richard Farnsworth (D: John Landis)

Ambitious, glitzy suspenser about Yuppie insomniac Goldblum getting mixed up with fugitive Pfeiffer and an international smuggling plot at LAX airport about 3 A.M. and spending the next 24 hours on the lam to all the high and low spots of Lotusland.

Landis has a good sense of Los Angeles punkishness and the 1980s version of middle-class foolishness. I sense he was genuinely trying to make a different film someone else might want to see after it was made. But, as before, he seems to lack patience with the nuts-and-bolts of putting a story line across,

Goldblum and Pfeiffer in *Night*

either rushing through scenes that explicate the plot or weighting them down with film-school-extra-credit touches until they lose all perspective. He makes references to older films, but they don't add to the story. He fills his cast with some great veteran actors (Farnsworth, Vera Miles, Irene Pappas) but gives them nothing to do. He even parades in a dozen of Hollywood's better-known directors in acting cameos as a further distraction.

He's given himself a juicy bit as one of a quartet of now-funny, now-lethal Iranian terrorists, suffering a bloody death in a barrage of bullets in front of a newsstand full of *Playboy* magazines. Another "in" reference?

Pfeiffer is a genuine find as the damsel in distress of her own making. She combines the best qualities of Goldie Hawn and Constance Bennett of an older generation, cute but sophisticated. Goldblum, unfortunately, is poor in the lead, more stoned than sleepy, tediously underplaying everywhere.

It's a shame to have to report that this film, with more interesting scenes in it than most of the mystery-suspense films of the past two years put together, is only an interesting failure. If Landis could only develop a more disciplined overview, he might be making the films future film-schoolers would make reference to. Still, *Into the Night* does get close to something fresh and different in the genre, and it is gratefully observed for that.

The frailty of this year's cinematic offerings was thrown into perspective by a contrasting evening I spent at the New Mayfair Theatre in Santa Monica, where *Sherlock's Last Case* was concluding a long and honorable run.

Charles Marowitz's comedy-pastiche had been one of the highlights of the successful 1984 Olympic Arts Festival in Los Angeles. And it was sheer genius that led some enterprising impresario to move it to this music hall-style theatre, which had only recently given up its quaint British musical revues for a stab at legitimate fare.

This entertainment, which might also have been called Watson's Last Case, starts with a woman claiming to be Moriarty's daughter turning up at 221a to interest the bored and over-indulged consulting detective in a case that might actually stimulate his deductive powers again.

David Fox-Benton, who was in the original company, made a theatrical, misanthropic Holmes. Benjamin Stewart, a solid, put-upon Watson. Toni Lamond's Mrs. Hudson turned out to be more of a tippling Cockney bawd than we are traditionally led to expect.

Ultimately, it was Marowitz's scholarship and invention with this very familiar subject which made the evening such a superb diversion. The setting helped, too. One expected to see Hitchcock's Mr. Memory pop out at the interval to take questions about the 39 Steps.

Good Show! □

TAD ON TV

By Richard Meyers

If there's one thing I've noticed, reading my last few columns, it is the grousing I've done about this magazine's lead time. Splicing all my gripes together, it comes out roughly translated like this: my stupid opinions stay the same while the shows improve. I watch any series's pilot and maybe one or two episodes before I pass on my educated comments; then you read it six months later, when either the show has been shaken down or drop-kicked off the airwaves. Either way, I get to look like the rough equivalent of Jeane Dixon on a bad day.

So saying, I'm devoting this column to a review of all the programs presently in the TV detective genre. Two things enable me to do this. One, it's July of 1985, the official end of the 1984-85 television season; and two, it's July of 1985 and absolutely nothing is on. The networks are preparing one of their most genre-laden seasons for September, but now, two months prior, it's vacuum-ville.

In case you missed it the last two times, it's July of 1985, and the official Nielsen ratings for the year have been released. I'll start from the bottom and work my way up.

No. 73: **Hawaiian Heat.** How embarrassing. Not just the show but the fact that I have nothing to grouse about here. I hit the nail on the head when I reviewed this way back when. I said it should be deep-sixed, and it was—months before you read that I said it should be deep-sixed. Thank you for not watching so I could be right.

No. 70: A tie! **Partners in Crime** and **Jessie.** Yes, they were a tie. Although one starred Lindsay Wagner as an earnest police psychiatrist and the other starred Loni Anderson and Lynda Carter as novice private eyes with lots to get off their chests and nothing on their minds (I'm sorry, I'm sorry...I couldn't resist), both were equal in absurdity. Well, maybe not equal. *Jessie* was mostly uninteresting and unbelievable. *Partners* was embarrassing.

No. 67: **Hunter.** A surprise; many thought this Stephen J. Cannell rip-off—I mean production—starring Fred Dryer as a poor man's Dirty Harry—I mean laconic, fascist cop—would be a hit. To insure said hope, Stepfanie Kramer was added as an extraordinarily beautiful policeperson. I was surprised at first sight that I liked this derivative tripe, but the effort has not grown on me, nor have the scripts improved. In fact, the spit, White-Out, and rubber cement is showing in every scene. Let's get cute about this: *Hunter* doesn't work for me. Make my day, NBC—cancel the thing.

No. 63: **Detective in the House.** One great thing about working in Los Angeles is getting on the sets and hearing the inside poop. The inside poop on this was: "troubled show." *Laverne and Shirley* was a "troubled show." Get it? Just a rumor, mind you, but that's what I heard. Unfounded allegations aside, nothing worked on the program except the concept—a middle-aged man with a family shucking all to become a private eye.

No. 61: **Codename Foxfire.** Gee, wouldn't it be great to combine *The A Team* with *Charlie's Angels?* Not like this, it wouldn't.

No. 59: **Matt Houston.** It's as if the producers of this show got together and said, "Look, we're up against *Falcon Crest* and *Miami Vice*...we don't stand a chance...so let's go berserk." And that's just what they did. The first few episodes of the season were like fever dreams, with wild plot twists coming every few scenes. Only the first five and last five minutes of the program were pap, as if the self-same producers figured the only time network execs tuned in were at those times.

No. 55: **Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer.** This half-homage/half-satire still tickles me with its cartoon violence and cartoon cleavage. Although it's not burning up the Nielsen boxes and star Stacy Keach had a white powder problem, I hope to see more Spandex and slugs soon.

No. 52: **Moonlighting.** A great show, made all the more great because of the lousy ratings. Now it gets better in my mind because I'm fighting for it. It was cleverly written, produced, directed, and acted, especially by Bruce Willis as a rough-edged, wisecracking P.I. I could really get behind. Come on, inundate your local ABC station with letters! Let's make believe we're science-fiction fans to get *Moonlighting* back on.

No. 50: **Cover Up.** I watched a few shows to review it, I watched a few more after Jon Erik Hexum died and Bob Shayne started producing, but ennui ultimately set in.

No. 46: **Street Hawk.** The worst. This is the kind of thing that gives TV a bad name.

No. 43: **T.J. Hooker.** Beautiful cops in skin-tight, tailor-made uniforms having the same shoot-outs and getting in the same car chases as last year, and the year before that, and the year before that. Not a single second is believable...especially if they have a Bill Cosby commercial.

No. 40: **Miami Vice.** This isn't a TV detective show. It is a war show, it's a science-fiction show, it's a fashion show. It's a great show which I love. The episode which featured the two supporting cops selling a truck to a vice king ranks as one of the greatest things I've ever seen on the tube.

No. 36: **MacGruder and Loud.** I dislike this show enormously, in spite of its personable stars. If it survives, I may watch it once more for any sign of improvement in its utterly predictable scripts and mediocre direction.

No. 32: **Hardcastle and McCormick.** Now we're talking. As I've always maintained, for the most part, good shows succeed and bad shows fail. This program is not marvelous, but it is consistently entertaining and it has heart. Producer Patrick Hasburgh knew what his show was about: two men working out a father-son relationship. Then he had his writers play that up and hired two great actors to really make it work. And after seeing *The Yakuza, The McKensie Break,* and *The Wind and the Lion,* I'll watch Brian Keith in anything.

No. 28: **Hill Street Blues.** This is why I'm doing this column. Remember? When this program premiered, my review was mixed. More fool I. No matter if one thinks it has improved or worsened, no matter if it has become soap-operish and was always unrealistic. It is a great show, done very, very well.

No. 26: **Cagney and Lacey.** The most improved show on. I disliked it when it premiered . . . I like it enormously now. It is a show to be watched.

No. 23: **Remington Steele.** The only thing I regret is my rather tacky aside at last year's Edgar Awards while reading the TV series' nominations (I reminded the audience that this show was then No. 40 in the ratings). Otherwise, I still have great trouble watching this every time I try. Pierce Brosnan just mugs too much! Every line, every word, every "take"...the guy shakes as if his cuff links were wired. And I still find the chemistry between stars about as kinetic as uncooked tofu.

No. 15: **Magnum, P.I.** When it's good, it's

just as good as its premiere. When it's bad, it's just as bad as some of the first season's "softer" shows. A testament to its consistent popularity is that while the top-ranked *Cosby Show* airs opposite, it still remains in the top twenty.

No. 14: **Riptide.** Travis McGee meets Starsky and Hutch meets *Revenge of the Nerds*. What kind of show is it when one of the highest compliments I can give is "this easily could have been an embarrassment"? Well, it isn't an embarrassment and thanks to its stars and the professionalism of the Stephen Cannell organization, it actually rates its high standing. Sure, it is not better than *Magnum* or *Hill Street*, but it does deliver interesting plots, engaging characters, and decent action.

No. 10: **Crazy Like a Fox.** I don't know the producers of this show, so I don't know how responsible they are for its success. But I do know the work of star Jack Warden, which I unreservedly cheer. The man's a pro, and it shows. And, as always, it's nice to see a private eye who isn't a callow pretty boy.

No. 9: **Murder, She Wrote.** Slick as the dickens and very entertaining – more entertaining than the previous series, which is aired following it on Sunday nights. I *do* know the producers on this one, as well as the co-creators and star. Just for getting classic murder mysteries on every week, Peter Fischer, Richard Levinson, William Link, and Angela Lansbury get a standing ovation. A good job by all, being rewarded by the public.

And now No. 7, the top-rated genre series of last year: **Simon and Simon.** Hey, why be objective? I haven't been so far. This was created by Philip DeGuere, who is presently heading up the new version of *The Twilight Zone* (which should be on by now). What can I say? The man has great taste. □

This Pen for Hire

By Raymond Obstfeld

MAN OF LETTERS

To: SAUL BELLOW

Dear Solly,

You maniac, you. Don't you get tired of those practical jokes? Thanks for the Jockey shorts you sent for my birthday. I wish you'd have mentioned the itching powder you'd sprinkled in them first.

So you're having a little trouble with your writing again. Come on, Solly. How many times have I heard that before from you? Pop a few Vitamin E's and you'll be hammering away at the ole Olivetti before you can say Nobel Prize.

But if that doesn't work, sure, I don't mind if you send along the manuscript for me to look over. Got my red pencil sharpened and ready. Remember when you sent me that novel of yours years ago? You called it *Henderson the Grain King*. One slash of my trusty red pencil and we set that title straight, eh Solly?

About that book you asked me about, **Miami Blues** by Charles Willeford (Ballantine). Yeah, I read it and enjoyed it quite a bit. Some bizarre tone, though. The opening line says it all: "Frederick J. Freger, Jr., a blithe psychopath from California, asked the flight attendant in first class for another glass of champagne and some writing materials." What a wonderful line!

Ole Freddy goes on to break some phony Krishna guy's finger at the airport and proceeds to get involved in a series of crimes that are at turns violent and wry. There is an underlying humor rather than outright yuks. More like an undercurrent. The reader senses it in the tone though it never feels forced (except for one instance; read on, McDuff). The style is lean and laid-back, almost tropically lazy at times. But never dull.

Still, I agree with you about Freddy's hooking up with the dead guy's sister. The coincidence bothers me too much. I felt the author grinning over my shoulder because of that. It distracted me throughout the remainder of the novel because, if the author would be so bold as to create such a glaring coincidence, he might do anything. I don't want the reality of the events *that* undisciplined, the physics cancelled with a sneer (nod to Karl Shapiro).

Now get back to work, you zane. No more of those whiny letters about writer's block. Try prunes. Works for me. And send that copy of *Miami Blues* to Tommy Pynchon. He doesn't get out much anymore.

Your pal,
Raymond

To: JOHN UPDIKE

Dear Upchuck,

Ho, ho. Loved the hilarious poem you sent about your triathlon training. But some of those rhymes. Whew! Such language, buddy. Thought you saved those juicy tidbits for your private collection of filthy limericks.

Patty told me to warn you against overtraining. What are you now, fifty-two, fifty-three? Sure, I know you can do it, but a little caution can't hurt, okay? The running and the swimming you'll do just fine at, but we're a little concerned about the biking part. A hundred miles! Remember the time you and I were biking down that Pennsylvania road and you ran over a toad. Yeech! You were no good for the rest of the day. I had to ride you home on my handlebars. 'Nuff said, eh?

Thanks for the book you sent. You know how much I like William Goldman and how cheap I am about buying hardcover books (except yours, of course). But **Heat** (Warner Books) is strange, even for him. The style is pure Goldman – witty, energetic, fast-paced – and for that I was grateful. The main character, one Nick Escalante, is so interesting that I would love to see future novels with this character. He had just the right balance of deadly ability and self-destructive vulnerability that I find so intriguing. He's a one-time weapons expert and unofficial private eye who gets involved in a couple unusual cases.

That's where the book has some problems. Plot. There ain't any. Not really. Oh, yeah, I know people have said the same thing about you sometimes, so don't get overly defensive here on Goldman's behalf. You know the story ambles along on a free-floating plot as hard to climb aboard as a greased watermelon. I wouldn't have minded that so much

because Nick Escalante is so wonderfully drawn I'm willing to shrug off weak plotting. But Billy done us wrong, Upchuck. He threw in those first two chapters, which are nothing more than sly writing exercises or cheap writer's tricks, depending on how charitable you're feeling. I expect better from him.

Would I recommend this book? Absolutely. Despite those few hesitations, I thoroughly enjoyed the novel and immediately went out and bought his *The Color of Light*, which I am now reading. More on that later.

So. Get back to your training. Don't overdo. And watch out for fat toads in the road. I won't be there to ride you home on my handlebars.

Good luck, Upchuck,
Raymond

To: Ann Beattie

Dear Raggedy Ann,

How's things in ole Virginy? Lot different from Chelsea, I bet. Thanks for the copy of your new novel, *Love Always*. But as usual, you were too late. I went to the store and bought a copy. Paid for it with hard cash, earned with great difficulty and sweaty labor. Speaking of sweat, we still have the T-shirt and shorts you borrowed from Patty for that jazzercise class you both attended. The guacamole you spilled on your lap when you were chomping nachos after class still hasn't washed clean. Next time you come out for a visit, Patty insists you sign those stains so people won't think she made them.

The last book you sent me I read and passed on to Upchuck. We both liked it. But this one, Thomas Perry's **Big Fish** (Scribner's), I don't know. This is the same guy who wrote *The Butcher's Boy* and *Metzger's Dog*. Both novels showed skill and promise, despite some flaws. Unfortunately, *Big Fish* has more flaws than promise. There's a plot somewhere in here about a couple of sophisticated, witty gunrunners whose dialogue and style reminds one of Nick and Nora Charles. But that's part of the problem. There's so much effort spent trying to be witty, the dialogue doesn't so much snap as flail. The humor is forced, unrelentingly so. Annie, you know from your own work how hard it is to get a smile out of the reader. But you can't keep stinging them in the face with a wet towel. Humor should arise from character and situation. Not here, it doesn't.

Except for their quips, Altmeyer and Rachel are too reserved in terms of characterization. They never breathe, live, or really laugh. Perry has an agile style that is fast reading. But he needs some substance to go with the glib style, something to make the reader care. Nothing sticks to the ribs here.

I'll send this one back to you, kid. Maybe you can pass it along to Normy Mailer. He'll read anything.

Fondness in the extreme,
Raymond

P.S. Loved *Love Always*. Next time, don't make me buy it. I've got to save my money for Pac-Man.

To: Philip Roth

Dear Flip,

No, of course I don't mind if you use that line from my last letter in your new novel. It wouldn't be the first time, eh, chum?

Now, as to our little chess game. PKB4! Go ahead, start cursing. I see a checkmate in three if you don't look to your knight. Don't despair now, Flip, you'll win one of these days. Maybe as soon as you quit opening with your rook's pawn. Send me your move as soon as possible. I'm anxious to notch another win in my board.

Speaking of chess, thanks for the copy of **Chessplayer** by William Pearson (Pinnacle). I agree, nifty cover. And all those wonderful quotes all over the place. I started right into the book with almost as much gusto as I read your Zuckerman trilogy.

This one has a lot of double-dealing and supposed plot twists about who is and who is not a double agent. Belknap is our hero, poor misunderstood agent forced out of the spy biz due to the usual underhanded methods. Called back into service by his ex-boss, a brilliant but fussy chap, Belknap is supposed to find out who stole and returned a super-secret document. A lot of sound and fury in this book, but not much really happens. There are endless pages of Belknap explaining his past, yet even so he never is a fully realized, sympathetic character. Ironically, it's the minor characters that really sparkle in this novel. They come on stage, strut and fret and steal the show, then disappear and the novel dims slightly with their departure (remember some people saying that about Monkey in *Portnoy's Complaint?*).

There's much good writing and lively dialogue in here. If only some editing had been done and Belknap had been spiced up a bit in the beginning, this might have worked much better. Instead it relies too much on the plot twists to keep interest. Unfortunately, most readers are way ahead of the game.

By the way, how did that salve work? I still think you're worrying about nothing. A lot of guys have eyebrows that grow together. My friend who gave me the salve says if that stuff doesn't work, better go back to plucking them.

And don't worry about that money you borrowed. A few lines here, a few bucks there. Hey, what are friends for?

Best to the family,
Raymond

CURRENT REVIEWS

A Local Matter: A Murder Case from the Notes of George Howard, Secretary to Lord Alfred Tigraines by J. M. Bennett. New York: Walker, 1984. $13.95

The setting of *A Local Matter* is the small English village of Marley, and the time is just before the outbreak of World War I. Narrated by George Howard, a young American hired as a secretary by Lord Alfred Tigraines (who was "the greatest of all Englishmen and may have been the greatest man in the world"), the plot treats of the death of Sir James Hart, the eminent archaeologist and author of *The Triumph of Nimrod* and *The Descent of Ishtar*. Hart has purchased Redland, a local estate, and has scandalized the neighbors with his vicious dogs and screaming fights with an unknown woman. When he is found poisoned by arsenic in a wine bottle by Susan Quint, a young woman who comes in to clean and cook for him, Hart is presumed to be a murder victim, although later the local constabulary and Scotland Yard representatives come over to the idea of suicide. There are, nevertheless, suspects galore: a local bookseller; the vicar; Susan's father; Timothy Loft, a young actor; and relatives and enemies from Hart's colorful and wide-ranging past in the Mideast and South America. Hart, it appears, has twice been captured by brigands and has narrowly escaped death by drowning, only to meet his end in a placid English village.

Howard, who runs to earth the leads devised by his armchair detective employer, finds many motives for Hart's demise. Few who knew him liked him. Some found him mad, and others merely pedantic: "Sir James, though a respectable scholar and certainly a leading man in his field, always struck me as a very dull writer. His sentences are often longer than Gibbon's, but without the dazzle of that Erasmian mind. I consider the man's work important, but only in the sense that a footnote can be important to a page." In solving the puzzle of Hart's death, Howard and Lord Tigraines go head to head with Inspector Bland, whose professional reputation is on the line and who has not the best opinion of amateur detective Tigraines: "His lordship is of course more than an amateur. He is one of the most eminent men in the kingdom, and has often been described as our country's premier dilettante. But when it comes to a case of this kind, whether it proves to have been a suicide or a murder, it is always best to leave things in the trained

hands of professionals."

Full of period detail, *A Local Matter* works very hard to re-create period style in detective fiction, and there it becomes a bit tedious, much in the same way that John Fowles's Victorian-inspired *The French Lieutenant's Woman* pales beside actual Victorian novels. Still, there are howlers which make up for pages of "proper English conversation," such as Howard's homage to Lord Tigraines's sister and brother-in-law: "Their wedding was remembered in Marley as one of the century's greatest events, and Lord Tigraines always respected Sir Michael. It was his lordship who had given Michael the small yacht that he had learned to sail with one arm." The other arm "had been blown from his side during the siege of Kimberley. It was thought he would die from loss of blood and infection, but he survived to come back to England, receive a knighthood, and marry his nurse."

Moreover, there is croquet on the lawn, brandy in the smoking room, Cabinet members in for houseparties, and no dearth of willing butlers and gardeners. Bennett becomes a type of literary archaeologist who digs in a buried English past which quite possibly never existed in precisely the way he thinks it did, but his excavations make a tidy parallel to the diggings of Hart and Tigraines, who, amateur archaeologist as well as armchair detective, is busy uncovering a temple to Mithras which he has discovered on the grounds of his country estate. *A Local Matter* is, as a result, so consciously crafted that it becomes humorous in ways that Bennett probably did not intend. It should nevertheless appeal to readers of period mysteries as well as Anglophiles.

—Susan L. Clark

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Life Penalty by Joy Fielding. New York: Doubleday, 1984. $15.95

Joy Fielding's *Life Penalty* places its narrative focus on Gail Walton, a Livingstone, New Jersey housewife whose youngest daughter—and only child from her second marriage—is brutally raped and strangled while playing in a neighborhood park. Gail, who has spent her afternoon lunching with a friend and shopping for clothes, returns home to experience the beginning of a nightmare from which she will not awaken for over a year. Nothing helps: not the love of her husband Jack, a veterinarian ("Nothing fancy about him and perhaps a little rough around the edges. . . .a giving and honest man"), nor the concern of her oldest daughter Jennifer nor the support of her friend Laura. And in fact, in the aftershock that follows Cindy's death, the entire family dynamics alter, so that Gail becomes more and more withdrawn, Jennifer more adolescently rebellious, and Jack more confused at his wife's inexplicable behavior. Gail, moreover, turns against what few friends and other contacts she has.

Gail becomes driven with the thought of finding her child's killer herself, since she feels that the police are doing nothing constructive. Because she works in the home, she is able to slip out by day into downtown Newark and East Orange and set up a double life in those cities' rundown roominghouses and cafés, where she can be ever on the lookout for the slim youth in a yellow windbreaker who was reported running from the park in which Cindy was slain. Gail dons her rattiest clothes, hitchhikes when necessary, frequents parks where vagrants stalk victims, and continually rails against an unjust society in which the victim—and not the perpetrator of the crime—suffers unaccountably: "Don't put the blame where it belongs; put it where it's easiest to disregard. Blame it on the women! If a man rapes his five-year-old daughter, blame his frigid wife. Blame his 'sexy' child. God forbid we place the blame on the man responsible!" Gail's point is well taken, but Fielding belabors it so and allows Gail to come to it through the most superficial of reasoning processes that the didacticism of her "new conservativism" stance becomes a distraction in the plot.

In fact, Fielding treats both Gail and the reader as if they were both a bit "slow" and have to be told things over and over and in the most simple terms. Accordingly, Gail educates herself, Fielding implies, with the only tools available to the average New Jersey housewife, by reading "the latest editions of *Time* and *Newsweek*" and learning about "words like necrophilia, coprophilia, and pedophilia." As the novel progresses, she buys a gun, claiming, "You don't have any rights until you kill somebody," signs petitions to restore the death penalty, phones in anonymous tips to the police, and routinely lies to her family and friends about her vigilante activities. She only consents to see a psychiatrist after she is mugged late one night (she can't stay away from the park where Cindy was killed) and finally admits that her husband is correct in assuming that she is "a woman who repeatedly puts her life in jeopardy, who moves from one seedy room to another, from one dangerous situation to the next, waiting to be found out, *begging* to be found out. I'm talking about the fact that you are not looking for a killer. Goddamn it, Gail! You're looking to get *yourself* killed!" Gail, in effect, has developed a full-blown victim mentality.

That it takes Gail exactly 253 pages to admit that Jack is right speaks to one of the major failings of *Life Penalty*. That the book grinds on 333 pages to its denouement—where the real criminal doesn't resemble in the least the suspect Gail tracks through the slums—is inexcusable. The experienced reader of detective fiction feels, as a result, as if he is "doing time" for most of the novel, for the pace is so slow and the insights are so simplistic that even reading *Time* or *Newsweek* would be a relief. Initially, it would seem that better editing could have pared *Life Penalty* down to something more verbally economical and more suspenseful, but at Doubleday the argument against that recourse must have been twofold: first, the theme is too slim to survive in a more tightly written version; and second, the target market for this book must have been assumed to be types like its protagonist, types who are actually gullible enough to think that they can act like one of Charlie's Angels turned loose in the Newark ghetto. That's a mistake that the average New Jersey housewife—for whom Gail is supposed to speak—would never, ever make.

—Susan L. Clark

The Dick and Jane by Abby Robinson. New York: Delacorte. $14.95

Jane Meyers is a 27-year-old freelance photographer who lives above a topless bar in New York City's SoHo district. She receives critical acclaim for her arty shots of body parts (hands, legs, feet), but she puts the beans on the table and pays her rent by working for Domenic Palladino, a private investigator who specializes in sleazy cases involving divorce, drug deals, and theft, and who allows Jane to do her thing with telephoto lenses, terrible lighting, and contact prints. When Nick first calls Jane ("You Jane?" "Yeah. You Tarzan?"), she goes into a tailspin because her pleasure reading has run to the likes of mystery writers Raymond Chandler and Robert B. Parker. Her hopes of teaming up with Philip Marlowe or Spenser are dashed when she comes face to face with Nick: "What you see is what you get, and I wasn't lamping any Philip Marlowe or Sam Spade. Nor for that matter Nick Charles, Lew Archer, Travis McGee, Mike Hammer, the Continental Op, Philo Vance,

Ellery Queen, Hercule Poirot, Lord Peter Wimsey, Sherlock Holmes, Nero Wolfe or even Charlie Chan. Domenic Palladino was a dead ringer for Ratso Rizzo, the sleezo character in *Midnight Cowboy*. Ratso in real life had the decency to turn into Dustin Hoffman. Nick had no out. We were both stuck."

The partnership of Nick, "the dick," and Jane turns profitable, though, when her camera nets the shots needed for finalizing divorce proceedings, getting felons off the hook, and reducing certain stiff court sentences. Through her skill with the lens, she becomes a true "private eye" into matters for which her photographic subjects would either blush or kill her. She nearly gets creamed in a Harlem supermarket and mutilated by a mugger who stalks an artist subject she's protecting and documenting (he's vowed, by way of an artistic statement, to enter no enclosure, and that means showers and toilets as well—Jane follows him, in part, by smell). There are stake-outs in which the staked-out, normally so co-operative, refuse to play their parts.

But Jane's biggest puzzle—and it becomes Nick's, too—is the mysterious behavior of her semi-live-in lover Hank Gallagher, a hunk in her book but unstable. Hank can't understand her cravings for mystery novels and excitement, and she, in turn, can make no sense of his equally consuming passion for the writings of William Blake and his growing interest in a rural Ohio commune dedicated to Blake's thought. It's called Golgonooza (Blake's "City of Art"), and motor-mouth Jane keeps renaming it Gorgonzola, after the cheese. When Jane and Jack decide to take separate vacations (Jane to Club Med and Jack to "Club Meditation"), and when each connects with new love interests, it's a question of whether their relationship can survive.

Jane does on-site investigation of the Blake commune in rural Sparta, Ohio, where, in that "land of white bread, she came out pumpernickel." Compared to the streets of New York City, the Sparta landscape "was a killer. There were nasty ledges for rapid ankle-twisting. Poison ivy ready to torment. Ticks and fleas eager to draw blood. At night the peril multiplied: there were no sodium vapors or neon to deter disaster." In Golgonooza, she garners the opportunity to contrast Life and Art. Is Life the County or the Big City? Is Art the artificial canyons and human-inspired dangers of the city-wise criminal, or is it a community deliberately established to Flee the Dangers of the Dreaded City? Where is, in fact, the Jungle? Blake fans—or even those who encountered the "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience" in college sophomore survey English courses—will howl at Jane's city-savvy interpretation of Jack's infatuation and his love for rural pleasures.

The real mystery is not just which influence will prevail in Jack's life (Jane with her red hair, acid tongue, and "dragon-red nails" or Winny, a stoned, '60s-style, back-to-the-land type who favors low boots and calico) but also which influence can control a mind, be it Jack's or Jane's. The surface plot, which has Jane fighting Winny and her magic mushrooms for control of Jack, runs a parallel course with the warring factions flirting with Jane's mind: is it to be life or art for her? But which *is* life or art? Since Nick Palladino entered the picture, Jane's normally sane life has gone wild and has begun to imitate art.

The Dick and Jane is chaotic, unpredictable, and thoroughly hilarious, both for the off-the-wall nature of its individual plot incidents and for the narrative style of its protagonist. Jane talks like a parody of a hardboiled detective: "I was so wired from a night's worth of caffeine I was afraid I'd get slapped with a speeding ticket on the sidewalk. I braked at the diner, barreled into the eatery's shiny green interior and parked my keister next to Nick's. The shamus was working away on cluck and grunts. Red-eyed, blue-jawed, and tightlipped, he looked anything but sunny. I asked the Greek behind the counter for two poached, no toast, no fries. Girth control. I'd see carbs galore in the Buckeye State. The Blake bunch probably chewed down whole paddies of brown rice. Coffee I needed the way Newcastle needed coal, but I ordered jamoke anyway. It'd put hair on my chest and more spin in my tailing." Whether Jane is in Sparta choking down "soy shamburgers" or in "Baghdad-on-Hudson" pouring "more vino down the hatch," she's an uncommonly entertaining female sleuth. And author Robinson, who's contributed to Dilys Winn's *Murder Ink* compendium, has come up with a first novel that made *this* reviewer, who is a fairly jaded and experienced detective fiction addict, involuntarily laugh out loud on multiple occasions. Robinson knows her mysteries, as does her protagonist, who admits: "I lifted most of my lines from Sam Spade's windup with Brigit O'Shaughnessy. Hammett's dialogue got me over the rocky spots." True hardboiled detection is a singularly humorless business, admitting at best only a sardonic, cynical type of wit, and Robinson's foray into parody—art imitating art—lightens up the original while doing homage to it.

—Susan L. Clark

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It Can't Be My Grave by S. F. X. Dean. New York: Walker, 1984. $12.95

Professor Neil Kelly is in London to flog his latest book, a biography of John Donne which has captured the American public's enthusiasm (as witnessed by book club contracts and sales, TV and film offers—in short, the whole media blitz) and can, with properly restrained British hype, lay low the U.K. market as well. Kelly is committed to one party staged by his publisher, Dunham's: "The first thing to know about publishing parties is that they are a ritual form, not a functional one. They don't sell books. What they do is reassure the people who write and sell books that they are not all insane for doing it." And he has been urged by his actor friends, Hugh James and Sheila Edwards, to meet one Gordon Fairly, whose consuming obsession is with an obscure forebear named Lucy Goodwin, whom he believes to have written *Arden of Favesham* and whom he believes was murdered by none other than William Shakespeare.

Since Gordon is "the richest man in the U.K. who isn't an Arab," since the Fairly interests have acquired Dunham's, and since Kelly is an undisputed authority on literary London in the century shared by Goodwin, Shakespeare, and Donne, the stage is set for Kelly to have opinions on Fairly's pet project. The problem arises when Fairly is murdered in his limousine while opening a letter bomb, the morning after he enthusiastically details his plans to build a theatre for Goodwin productions which would rival the Royal Shakespeare Company's offerings, and after he attempts to recruit Kelly to research the alleged homicide. Within hours, Kelly is both a suspect and an amateur detective.

It would be an understatement to say that few people liked Fairly. His money commanded notice, but he was resented by his wife Sylvia, his daughter Ashley (who feigns a homosexual relationship so as to grate on her father's extreme homophobia), his agent, the staff at Dunham's who resent being taken over by a huge conglomerate, and even television personality William Wisdom. Kelly, with the aid of policeman Thomas Bowie, uncovers a tangle of motives: former marriages, private scandals, past wrongdoings during the Hitler years, and personal as well as professional jealousies. Throughout, S. F. X. Dean has a good ear for dialogue, a deft touch with humor, and an accurate measure of human nature. *It Can't*

Be My Grave is an excellent entry in the ongoing "literary murder" sweepstakes, and readers who enjoy the likes of Amanda Cross, Michael Innes, and other practitioners of that style will find Dean's latest Neil Kelly adventure much to their liking.

—Susan L. Clark

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Stately Homicide by S. T. Haymon. New York: St. Martin's, 1984. $11.95

The setting of *Stately Homicide* is Bullen Hall, located in Norwich, East Anglia, in the fen country so lyrically celebrated in Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Nine Tailors*. Built by Anne Boleyn's brother, Bullen Hall has been maintained by the descendents of John Bullen, the Appleyards, and now serves as a home for the matriarch of the clan, Elena, and her nephew Steve (son of Lazlo Appleyard, the famous hero of the 1956 Hungarian uprising), as well as a workplace for a colorful group of local craftspersons who ply their trades both for a living and for the enjoyment of the tourists who include Bullen Hall on their circuit of England's "stately homes."

Bullen Hall in the 1980s is in a period of transition, with one curator (Francis Coryton) retiring and a new man (Chad Sheldon), with new ideas and orientations (among them, sexual), coming on board. Haymon's series detective, Detective-Inspector Ben Jurnet, becomes involved with Bullen Hall before the murder of Sheldon when he stops by the jewelry shop of Anna March to pick up earrings for his live-in girlfriend, Miriam, and garners an invitation to the farewell party for Coryton. Since Miriam is on holiday in Greece and Jurnet is at loose ends, he accepts the invitation. At the party, he meets the people he will later interrogate as suspects in Sheldon's murder, and an interesting and varied lot they are: Charles Winter and Mike Butley, a homosexual couple; Coryton's wife, Jane, who nurses a hopeless passion for Winter; Coryton himself, who has just uncovered a cache of love letters from Anne Boleyn to her brother; Ferenc Szanto and his friend Jeno Matyas, both Hungarian refugees and figures in the seemingly faultless past of Lazlo Appleyard; Anna herself, whose distinctive earrings are found at the scene of the crime; Elena, who admits to finding Sheldon, his neck broken, pitched from the roof of the castle; Steve and his girlfriend Jessica, who react violently when Sheldon's corpse, crawling with eels, is pulled from the moat; and even Percy Toller, the thief-turned-museum docent and Open University student, who later, because of what he knows—and not because of what he has taken, as was the case in his criminal past, with which Jurnet is so familiar—becomes a victim himself.

In fact, the puzzle in *Stately Homicide* hinges around the past and around the love that Boleyn is reported to have had for her attractive brother. Like Martha Grimes and P. D. James—and her more distant antecedents, such as Sayers—S. T. Haymon is occupied with the past's legacy in the present, and it is the idea of history, as reflected in different cultures, which informs this novel. Seen through the eyes of the outsider Ferenc, English history is contrasted to that of the Hungarians: "For Hungarians, nothing is ever simple. Some people—like the English, I think—have learned to control their own history, to canalise it, build locks and weirs which regulate its flows. For Hungarians, history is a devouring flood which sweeps everything before it, good and bad alike. The most an individual can hope to do is find a convenient rooftop to straddle, or a piece of wreckage to cling to, while the waters rage past."

Typically English, to Ferenc, are "the old bricks, the little turrets, the lawns and trees, the lake with waterfowl. And how typically English the worm in the apple, the violence which lies concealed within the so peaceful exterior!" As a result, in *Stately Homicide*, history as a cultural myth has been channeled, much like the waters of the flat fen country, into acceptable channels, and it is in the deep waters of the untold story, for example, of Lazlo Appleyard that much of the reason for the present death lies, as well as in the untold stories of many of the suspects. Moreover, the clue to the murder of Sheldon hides, worm-like, in the apple that is the *Apple*yards' past, and clues to it can be found not only in Lazlo's past (which turns out to be blemished, with respect to his political and sexual dealings) but also within the Biblical incest story of Adam and Eve from which *Stately Homicide* takes its plot complications. History—and personal and collective pasts merge here with myth—is the motivation for the crimes in *Stately Homicide*, for pasts catch up to certain people and serve as goads for other people. The relativistic course of history can be read, according to Haymon, in one human's love for another: "Murders are about love. . . . If you were a cynic you might even say that they are the purest expression of it. Love—for a man or a woman, for money, revenge, religion, or even for love of oneself. One way or another, all murders are crimes of passion." As Jurnet works to uncover the murderer of Sheldon, he increasingly comes up against loving (and unloving) relationships in the present—including his own complex and unresolved relationship with Miriam—and relationships' equally significant roots in the past.

In the last analysis, *Stately Homicide* stands as a first-rate novel in its own right, just as P. D. James's *Innocent Blood* and Dorothy L. Sayers's *The Nine Tailors* did at the time of their publication and continue to do. More in the James tradition, in that it deals with a "contemporary" topic, Haymon's new novel investigates a theme—incest—that has been much sensationalized elsewhere. Here, as in keeping with the restrained English tradition that contemporary mystery novelists routinely use as a sounding board, even if they do not adhere to it, Haymon writes perceptively and penetratingly. Throughout, she emphasizes the continuing aspects of the human condition, across time, sex, and culture, so that Anne Boleyn and John Bullen are seen to have descendents in the twentieth century, and so that Bullen Hall is not only a monument to those who have lived there but also those who continue to live there. As Elena Appleyard wearily remonstrates: "Time. . . . Do you really believe that the past arranges itself for our convenience into those paltry little squares they print on calendars?" What enables the murderer to kill in *Stately Homicide* is a fluid concept of time, which of necessity avenges a past injustice with a present one.

Haymon writes easily, with the sureness of touch that characterizes the best of the Golden Age authors—among whom the plotting was excellent but good writing was not as prevalent as it is today—and which marks the premier mystery writers of today. She has a sure feel for a culture, an ear for dialogue (and readers will hear Alleyn and Fox in the exchanges Jurnet and his subordinates have), and, most importantly, a sense for the moral complexities that underlie the reasons individuals want others to die.

—Susan L. Clark

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Proof by Dick Francis. Putnam, 1985. $16.95

One of the pleasures of following a regular writer through the years is the thrill of seeing him grow as a writer, watching him play with his craft, risk new types of characters, more dangerous villains, different lines of work for his protagonists.

Such a writer is Dick Francis, grown bolder and more sure of himself with each book he

writes. Readers faithful to Francis know that they can always expect from him that best of pleasures, a good read. Francis's plots are always complex enough to tantalize, mystify, and satisfy; his pacing has always been exceptional, his books the hardest to put down. His protagonists are always resourceful and intelligent enough to tackle the problems that complicate their lives, yet they are very human and so both likable and credible.

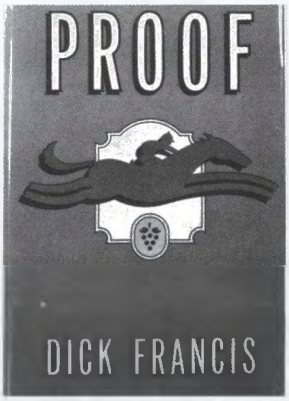
Readers who have avoided Francis's books because he writes about horses and horse-racing no longer have an excuse to pass by his books. In *Proof,* as in his last few novels, the horses are very much kept in the wings. On center stage in *Proof* are wines and liquors, particularly fine Scotches, in the person of Tony Beach, a wine-shop owner recently widowed who still has not adjusted to the emptiness of his home and his life. In a rather convoluted way, he is taken on both by the police and by a private detective agency to act as an expert taster in a case involving a bizarre but common, these days, sort of counterfeiting: substituting cheaper wines or liquors for brands of far better quality.

Once again, Francis has done his homework admirably well: as Beach helps lead Detective Sergeant Ridger and Gerard McGregor closer to the person behind it all, we learn in a pleasantly unobtrusive way a great deal about wine and whiskey manufacturing and tasting. Francis has a deft way of scattering bits of knowledge into his characters' conversations without seeming to quote verbatim from whatever sources he's used. Such a talent is a rare gift that makes his books even more fun to read, as well as more believable. His characters know what they're talking about.

Part of what makes Francis's books so good are the changes that take place in his main characters: his protagonists grow, they are changed by what happens to them and by what, in the course of the novel, they choose to do. Because he is capable of such growth, Tony Beach, like Francis's other protagonists, is an interesting, living-and-breathing character who because he is so carefully and fully developed has earned our concern and our affection. By the novel's end, Beach has begun to reconcile himself to his empty house. His life is no longer so empty; no romance here, but he has made new friends, firm friends. He has also found in himself a quality he has thought was lacking—courage in the face of grave danger.

And a horrifying danger it is, for "Paul Young," the man created by Francis to threaten all that is good in *Proof,* is a particularly evil and callous man who has so little feeling for other human beings as to make him almost subhuman. Beach meets Young early in *Proof* but is not able to connect the face with the man's real name, and so have all come clear, until the very end.

Francis's protagonists are always, at that end, threatened physically by the people they try to bring to some form of justice. Most suffer some kind of terrible beating, or a bad fall from a horse; we've read of an occasional



kidnapping, or a shooting, or perhaps a knife in the back. But in *Proof,* Francis employs one of the least violent forms of aggression against his main character, which, of them all, is also the most horrifying—a particularly gruesome and horrible form of suffocation. Whether or not Francis has realized that horror bred from imagination and anticipation (what the poor devil must have suffered, dying so; and how will someone we care for, the protagonist or his friends, avoid the same fate?) is infinitely more effective than any number of torturings with iron pokers or beatings with chains and fists—whether or not he has realized this, the method works, and works well. Paul Young's techniques are the stuff of nightmares.

Francis has always done well by his minor characters, individuals interesting in their own right who fill in his backdrops without getting lost in the scenery. A few quick strokes, a few choice words, and a living, breathing human being serves a purpose and then quietly retires.

In *Proof,* one such character fascinated me—a young retarded man named Brian who works in Tony Beach's wine shop, lugging cartons, moving stock, helping deliver orders. Brian enjoys his job—if he is not paid, he damn well should be—and he has "learned a lot in the three or so months" he has been working. Brian does not read but recognizes bottles and labels once taught their names, and he knows "all the regular items by sight." He knows where things belong in the stockroom, which Beach has kept methodically organized since hiring him.

Not all retarded adults are, like Brian, mouth breathers, not all live in a "permanent state of anxiety"—but certainly some are and some do. Certainly retarded adults of Brian's intelligence (some have more) could all hold jobs like his, suited to their capabilities and limitations. Beach, in fact, wonders "how much one could teach him if one tried."

My first impulse, on meeting Brian, was to track down, via my sources and contacts, a suitable program for teaching Brian exactly as much as he is capable of learning, possibly far more than Beach or Dick Francis realize. But Brian, I recalled, is in a novel, so I paid heed to my second impulse and, as the sister of a similarly handicapped young man, thank Dick Francis for including Brian in his cast of characters, particularly because Brian's presence is treated so matter-of-factly and because he is portrayed as a retarded man—able to learn, though slower to learn, and not mentally ill—and as an individual who, given the right employer, can hold a job in private industry and do the job very well. Tony Beach and Dick Francis deserve a special commendation for employing—in more than one sense—Brian.

One minor complaint, on Tony Beach's behalf: if some kind soul had been good enough to point out to him early on in *Proof* that rescuing dozens of people from the aftermath of a terrible traffic accident requires a great deal of courage, Beach might have come to terms with himself—and with his courageous father and grandfather—sooner. In one respect, this flaw adds to the fun of the book: Tony, we say, you're a fool, you're wonderfully brave. In any case, it would take many more flaws than this to spoil such a rare vintage as *Proof.*

—Mary Frances Grace

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Nameless Coffin by Gwendoline Butler. Walker, 1985. $2.95

Coming about halfway through the Coffin

series (first published in 1966), *Nameless Coffin* is a solid mystery which links a South London murder in an abandoned block slated for demolition with crimes in Murrienhead and allows Butler to present a cast of very nicely crafted characters in both locations. Coffin is concerned not only about the murder but also about a series of alarming petty crimes—someone is slashing shoppers' purses and clothing with a very sharp knife, sometimes stealing the bags into the bargain. To John Coffin, this behavior presages more serious crime. In Murrienhead, Giles Almond, recently returned to his family's homeplace, is setting up as a young attorney, considering a romance, and taking note of various neighborhood scandals, quarrels, and alliances.

Both men are vividly depicted, as are a number of other characters: James and Joseph Louden, father and son; Lizzie Hamilton; Lal Jennings and Winnie Martin, elderly women, longtime friends and rivals; Sergeant Santonelli, who works on the Murrienhead connection; and Rina Louden, about whom many comment and about whom few know the real facts. All these folk and more have great impact on one another's lives, both intentionally and unintentionally, and crimes (petty and deadly) are often the means of their interrelationships. Butler enhances this motif of crimes within crimes (crimes for love, crimes for hate) with sharply drawn settings and with the question which poses her theme: when does a case—or a crime—begin? When does it end—or does it, in fact, end?

Highly episodic but fully integrated, this plot moves quickly yet thoughtfully to a climax which may not wholly surprise readers but which will satisfy them. *Nameless Coffin* is a good book.

—Jane S. Bakerman

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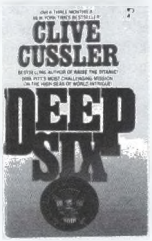
Deep Six by Clive Cussler. Pocket Books, 1985. 470 pp. $4.95

The gifted mastery Clive Cussler has exhibited with past Dirk Pitt forays is irrefutably at its finest in *Deep Six*, Cussler's sixth excursion for the indomitable Pitt, which is currently on view as a Pocket Books paperback. *Deep Six*, incidentally, is the first



Pitt thriller to bear the Pocket Books imprint, the earlier entries being presently available in Bantam paperbound editions. As in the previous Pitt events, Cussler deftly balances hi-tech sea fare, the mysteries of the deep, superbly drawn characters, and a credibly haunting plot set against a future aquatic background.

On a Potomac trek aboard his yacht, the President vanishes without a trace, against which Cussler has authentically depicted Washington in a siege of closed-door paranoia. Complementing this principal plot, Cussler integrates the intrigues of an impenetrable Asian shipping dynasty, a venomous substance plaguing the outer limits of the sea, a sailing craft in the Pacific from which all the passengers have disappeared, a bizarre accident involving a luxury Soviet liner in Cuban waters, and the seemingly elusive connection between a 23-year-old robbery case and a missing ship.

With *Deep Six*, Cussler has crafted a thriller that has penetrated every possible perimeter in the marine mystery to the extent that the genre is exclusively his own, in much the same fashion that the secret agent saga displays the distinctive talent of Ian Fleming. It is one of the few contemporary escapist offerings which will remain with the reader long after he has probed its spine-numbing pages.

—Andy East

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Crime on the Coast and No Flowers by Request by various hands. Victor Gollancz, 1984. 120 pp. £6.95

These two stories were originally serials in British national newspapers, and this is their first appearance in book form. *Crime on the Coast* by John Dickson Carr, Valerie White, Laurence Meynell, Joan Fleming, Michael Cronin, and Elizabeth Ferrars was published in the *News Chronicle* in August 1954; *No Flowers by Request* by Dorothy L. Sayers, E. C. R. Lorac, Gladys Mitchell, Anthony Gilbert, and Christianna Brand appeared in the *Daily Sketch* during November 1953.

Both stories are co-operative, round-robin efforts; each author took what his or her predecessor(s) furnished and developed the story in whatever direction seemed promising. The book's dust cover provides a positive evaluation: "The results are striking, and immensely entertaining. One doesn't know which to admire and enjoy more: the sheer professionalism of the contributors, in solving problems set by their predecessors as well as providing further puzzles of their own devising; or the way in which the stories cohere, build up tension, and continue to mystify the reader."

My own reaction is less enthusiastic. *Crime on the Coast* degenerates from Carr's competent opening into a simple-minded thriller—complete with a master scientist kidnapped by a Communist spy ring—that zig-zags hither and yon as successive authors change their minds about what is going on.

No Flowers by Request holds together better, but it too displays the rough edges characteristic of collaborative ventures pieced together without much, if any, apparent co-operation or consultation and features its own first-rate cliché: the murderer turns out to be the least likely character.

The chief claim of *No Flowers by Request*, indeed of the whole volume, is definitely its two chapters by Dorothy L. Sayers, the first detective fiction she had published since *Busman's Honeymoon* (1937) and quite possibly the last she wrote before her death in 1957.

Sayers contributed her chapters as a duty owed to the Detection Club (which had commissioned *No Flowers* as a way of filling its perennially depleted treasury), writing them in whatever time she could spare from translating Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Nonetheless, her fourteen pages are the best in either novel, combining witty dialogue, sharp characterization, and polished writing ("Hallering Old Rectory was the kind of house which you might call an off-white elephant") with the beginnings of a plot that makes one wish she had not had to hand it over to the other contributors.

People hooked on collaborative writing and/or devoted to reading every word that Carr or Sayers penned shouldn't miss this volume; others will find more entertainment in *The Floating Admiral* (1931) or the two plays discussed in the following review.

—William Reynolds

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Carnival of Crime: The Best Mystery Stories of Fredric Brown edited by Francis M. Nevins, Jr. and Martin H. Greenberg. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985. $22.95

Mickey Spillane called him "my favorite writer of all times...who wrote the greatest opening lines ever written in a story!" Ayn Rand praised his work as "unusually ingenious." During his quarter-century-long career as a writer, Fredric Brown produced 22 novels and two collections of short stories of mystery/detective fiction, as well as numerous pieces of science fiction. Newton Baird, in his four-part study "Paradox and Plot: The Fiction of Fredric Brown" (TAD 9:4-10:3), lamented the fact that at the time of his study "only three titles are in print." Now, almost a decade later, in America that number has been reduced to two: Brown's first and most popular novel, *The Fabulous Clipjoint* (1947), and his masterpiece of psychological detection, *The Deep End* (1952). With the welcome appearance of the third volume in Southern Illinois University Press's Mystery Makers series, *The Carnival of Crime*, the reader now has an easily accessible selection of stories that is representative of the broad spectrum of Brown's work.

This collection contains 23 stories written between 1940 (his "perfect" story "Town Wanted") and 1963 ("Mistake"). Many of the stories were collected in his two short-story volumes *Mostly Murder* (1953) and *Nightmares and Geezenstacks* (1961), but also included are some published in such hard-to-find magazines as *Shadow Mystery, Street and Smith Mystery,* and *New Detective.* They range in length from a vignette, "Mistake," to a novella, "The Case of the Dancing Sandwiches."

Mystery novelist and editor Bill Pronzini's introduction, "Dreamer in Paradox," offers the reader an excellent overview of Brown's career and art. He examines Brown's paradoxical vision of the world, in which opposites are often combined, and shows how this vision is reflected in his stories' plots and characters. Francis M. Nevins's "Checklist," while not as detailed as Newton Baird's (TAD 10:4-11:1), offers a complete, concise list of the primary works.

Although Brown's characterization is always sharp and in-depth, the real power behind these stories is in the plot. His story lines are so skillfully crafted that the tension they create is often unbearable; the reader is constantly tempted to look ahead to the end of the story to break this tension. Often, Brown carries the plot one step further than its logical ending, thus creating a paradoxical twist reminiscent of O. Henry, but without the predictability of O. Henry's endings, which become so obvious once the reader is familiar with his stories. In many of his tales, Brown adds even a second twist which compounds the effect of the ending.

The variety presented in this volume is impressive. Some of the stories, such as "The Laughing Butcher," verge on the grotesque; others, like the first-person "Cry Silence," are reminiscent of Ring Lardner's work; the traditional detective story is represented in "The Case of the Dancing Sandwiches"; "Cain" is a psychological thriller. Unlike most other short story collections, there is not a weak story included. This book would serve as an excellent text for a short-story course, and an ideal one in a college creative writing class for studying well-crafted models of fiction.

—Gary Phillips

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Presumption of Guilt by Jeffrey Ashford. Walker, 1985. $13.95

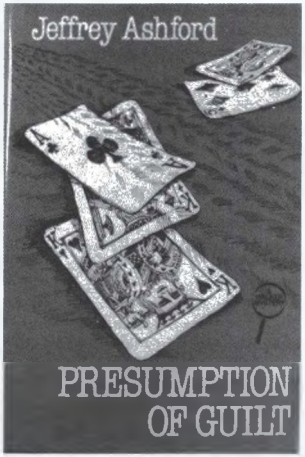
I was about to conclude that my interest in the mystery story was fading, or maybe vanished for good. Recently, it seemed preferable to try to forget a series of books that were chores to get through rather than the pleasures one hoped for when turning to the first page. It was a fine treat when along came this novel, which opened well with a cinematic (and dramatic) pre-credits prologue and quickly developed into a superbly clever entertainment. *Presumption of Guilt* is a delight all the way through to its delicate romantic touch in the last sentence, so there is no reason to find fault with an old-fashioned contrivance now and then, or the inclusion of some familiar conventions.

One factor in being so unsatisfied with many books lately was a sense which emerged again and again that the writer assumed the reader shared some weird values and odd points of view. It is possible that a certain number of readers did perceive things the same way as the author, but others are left with a feeling similar to that of being at a supper table where everybody except you voted for the awful candidate who eventually won the election. That unwelcome situation does not arise here, and this is a comfortable mystery clearly made for the enjoyment of all.

The hero is Angus Sterne, a nice fellow who receives bad luck and considerable punishment throughout much of the story. It is good to discover how well he can handle a trawler yacht when the danger he faces is at its greatest, and he needs this skill in order to survive.

Angus is introduced in the prologue as a too-honest gambler, a British citizen in a foreign country, losing all his money in a poker game. For a generous fee, he agrees to smuggle a car into England in order to avoid import taxes, viewing his action not as joining in criminal behavior but simply a natural way to protest a silly law.

Events in the next few chapters soon come together to place Angus in a situation far worse than being broke from gambling. He is arrested, charged with taking drugs into the country, and then has to jump bail to leave England and try to find the woman he met while driving from Spain, to help prove his innocence.



While Angus seems to be burdened with bad luck that creates so many troubles, he also has certain qualities which serve to bring him several valuable friendships. Coupling the support from others with his own resources, Angus faces the challenges and provides a sterling example of standing up, meeting the foe, and achieving goals through personal action. His friends may also have helped make a difference in the outcome, but Angus can still keep a large part of the credit for himself.

Altogether, this book features an interesting relationship among two brothers, Angus and Ralph, and a finely drawn woman named Angela. She is the loving spouse for one, while also being the affectionate, concerned sister-in-law to the other. In addition, there is the romance previously mentioned, plus many thrills and several good puzzles. A foundation has been laid that could likely support another novel about the same principals.

—Martin Fass

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The Grub-and-Stakers Quilt a Bee by Alisa Craig. Doubleday, 1985. $11.95

Once again, Charlotte MacLeod, writing as Alisa Craig, takes us back to Canada and into the hectic adventures of the Grub-and-Stake Gardening and Roving Club. This time out, pretty heroine Dittany Henbit Monk (yes, reader, she married him) and her sister clubbers have inherited a house, soon to become a museum recording the history of Lobelia Falls, Ontario. That's always

supposing they can raise the money to renovate the house and procure the necessary artifacts for the exhibits. Anyone who read *The Grub-and-Stakers Move a Mountain* knows full well than nothing is beyond these ladies. What they love (next to their organization, archery, and a good gossip) is a challenge—and perhaps a spot of murder. Murder is what they get when the newly hired curator of the hatchling museum is found dead outside the building.

Dittany is plenty busy in this book, lavishing affection upon her new husband, riding herd upon Osbert's aunt (the intrepid if nutty Arethusa), organizing the various fund drives and cleanups the new museum needs, eating (and eating and eating), and—with the help of Osbert and the stalwart Sergeant MacVicar—solving the mystery. MacLeod/Craig has plenty of fun with this book—Osbert's career writing Westerns (as Lex Laramie) and Arethusa's career as the author of Romances embellish the thinking and the vocabularies of both; these touches, plus a few Canadianisms, yield plenty of wordplay, eh? All the characters are types; all are droll; all work nicely in a plot that is meant to provide laughs rather than chills. Despite the abundance of stereotype here, one naughty but romantic leopard seems to be changing his spots, but the other, deadly, one remains not only fulsomely spotted to the end but also easy to spot by any reader paying attention. This fact in no way diminishes one's enjoyment of the book; the pleasure is the company of the Grub-and-Stakers.

—Jane S. Bakerman

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Murder in the Family by David Delman. Doubleday Crime Club, 1985. $11.95

Jacob Horowitz's son was killed two years ago in Lisbon. On this, his third trip back, Horowitz is still hunting for the killer after everyone else has admitted defeat. Paralleling that story, ex-football star Ray Stickney is in search of his father. They have been estranged most of Ray's life, but he is trying to deliver a letter as requested in his mother's will. The paths of the two men cross as they fight intrigue and evil in sunny Portugal. It is quickly apparent that loyalties are suspect and anyone may be hiding an identity or two.

Delman blends his study of fathers and sons into his mystery very well. The psychological aspects are never intrusive or overbearing. The contrasts are merely there

to be appreciated or ignored as the reader chooses. Unfortunately, there is little vividness of imagination. Once or twice, a flash of humanity sparkles, but often people are drawn as black or white. It is particularly difficult to believe in the total villainy of 'Eric, the Red' Halliday, who is virtually the center of the book and the drawing force of both Horowitz and Stickney.

It is an interesting adventure, especially for those quick-witted enough to fill in the gaps (as is necessary in many modern spy novels). Enjoyable for a fast read.

—Fred Dueren

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The Hound of the Baskervilles edited by Simon Goodenough. Based on the story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Little, Brown, 1985

Sherlock Holmes continues to transcend the output of his creator. For decades, parodists have lampooned his methods of deduction and satirized his personal traits. Some authors sensationalize the relationship of Holmes with Irene Adler. Others claim that his older brother Mycroft was more capable, the real brains of the family. Still others attempt to prove that Holmes and Watson had a clandestine homosexual liaison. Is there nothing sacred?

Surprisingly, and happily, editor Simon Goodenough has recently managed to track down the whereabouts of a rusty tin box which contains the true stories of *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

A Study in Scarlet was published in 1983 by Quill/Morrow in the form of a portfolio. The story of an American visitor who is found mysteriously murdered in a London house was supplemented with handwritten notations by Dr. Watson, photographs of the culprit and victim, police statements, telegrams, newspaper clippings of the 1880s, and actual physical clues—a wedding ring, a silk hat label, and pills from the murderer's box.

The Hound of the Baskervilles is also published as an authentic dossier. The story begins with the death of Sir Charles Baskerville of Dartmoor. There are no apparent signs of violence, but the victim's face is distorted with extreme terror. Sherlock Holmes is enlisted to protect Sir Henry Baskerville, the young heir to the estate, and Dr. Watson goes to the moor to keep an eye on Sir Henry. Among the suspects are the household servants, who behave suspiciously, some of the neighbors, and an escaped convict. The chilling climax pits Holmes against the legendary hound.

Simon Goodenough's edition contains notes and comments by Dr. Watson, a monograph by Sherlock Holmes on how to date a manuscript, newspaper articles dated 1888, a map of the Dartmoor swamps, pictures, and cables. There is also a sealed section at the end, concealing the identity of the criminal and an account of Holmes's deductions. It is an effective challenge to readers who want to match their reasoning powers against the great detective.

—Amnon Kabatchnik

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Murder Ink by Dilys Winn. Workman, 1984. 398 pp. $9.95

Once upon a time, back when a man named Jimmy Carter had just been elected President of the United States, there was a book titled *Murder Ink* with a butler on the front cover that every true mystery fan in North America gobbled up ravenously. This was followed a few years later by a sequel (every good mystery *must* have a sequel) on the distaff side—namely *Murderess Ink*. Now, just when you thought it was safe to go back in the parlor, comes a new and revised volume with forty varied (and somewhat sinister) contributors. The first puzzle to be solved is whether this is an entirely new opus or whether it is a revised duplicate of the original. The answer turns out to be neither. Diligently, I decided to research the problem, first by tracking down the 1977 volume and removing it from its treasured position on the bookshelf. Hmm, at first glance, the situation appears to be a revision and duplication, but this could be a red herring to throw us off guard. The lead article, "From Poe to the Present" by author Dilys Winn, seems to be substantially the same. And there are other items such as those contributed by John Gardner, Peter Dickinson, and Ian Carmichael (TV's Lord Peter Wimsey) which were present in the first outing. But wait a minute! Where did all this *new* material come from? About fifty fresh-as-spilled-blood articles and a genuine mystery to solve—"The Tainted Tea Tragedy." This certainly bears further investigation.

The size of the new book is about half of the old—just right for slipping into a pocket when you have to leave the Orient Express in a hurry. The cover has been changed, and that suspicious-looking butler now has a

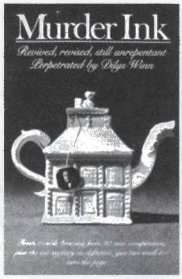
name—Roudebush—a suspect if there ever was one.

There is an analysis of how to ransack the Louvre, not to mention a map of Buckingham Palace so that you may sneak in to sit at the bedside of the Queen. We have material on the similarities between crossword puzzle addicts and mystery aficianados.

Film critic Judith Crist has a contribution on "Unfinished Masterpieces," while Amanda Spivak has a witty piece on the Six Basic Plots. There is a listing of all the various sports which have been featured in murder mysteries. Surprisingly, golf does not head the list as one would expect (a driver makes such a good weapon) but sailing seems most popular. We have pieces on such staples of British thrillers as the train journey and the garden, not to mention the pub. One little oddity which has never been tried as yet is the murder of an astronaut either in orbit or on the way to the moon (perhaps would-be authors have been waiting for the advent of the shuttle, so as to have more suspects).

A certain Miss Margaret Truman, whose father was some obscure American political figure, comes into a chapter all her own, as she is rapidly becoming the U.S. Agatha Christie. Actually, this chapter deals with the other mystery lovers who also occupied the White House, including Poe fan Abraham Lincoln.

Baird Searles will endear himself to science-fiction readers, as he has a piece on science-fiction mysteries (regrettably, he uses the term sci-fi which those in the know regard as a pejorative). Peter Lovesey explores the fascination of the past as a setting for peculiar goings-on.



Of course, no book on mysteries would be complete without reference to the spy genre, the hardboiled private eye, the locked room, and the police procedural. There are articles on brewing the perfect cup of tea, the assassin's arsenal, press passes, the getaway car, Travis McGee, doctor and vicar detectives, Nero Wolfe, radio quizzes, James Bond, show-biz mysteries, and what Miss Marple would look like if she had money. In short, there is such a variety of material that I am hard put to describe it all in a brief review. Will Harriss has a fascinating section on how various papers are classified Top Secret. And we must not forget the king of them all—Sherlock Holmes: there is a listing of every important Holmes book in the past century. As well, if you prefer reading mysteries at Christmas time (as many do), you have a complete listing of cases which have a Christmas theme.

Dilys Winn has been diabolically clever in fashioning a book that every mystery fan will want to have. If ever any title deserved the appellation "entertaining and informative," this one does, I would have liked to see all new material, but the items carried over from the earlier book are so worthwhile that you don't mind reading them again. In summation, this is one book you cannot miss if you love mystery and intrique. Just as the cat swallowed the cheese and waited at the mousehole with baited breath, we will be waiting for the next one.

—W. Ritchie Benedict

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The Spy Who Got His Feet Wet by Marc Lovell. Doubleday Crime Club, 1985. 185 pp. $11.95

Those of the cloak-and-dagger persuasion who have not yet become acquainted with Marc Lovell's (Mark McShane) Appleton Porter should seize the opportunity with the appearance of his eighth caper, *The Spy Who Got His Feet Wet*.

Porter stands six-foot-seven and is known as "Apple" to his colleagues. He is a linguist for a clandestine department of the British Secret Service known simply as Upstairs, but he derives more satisfaction from reading espionage fiction. His size and fluency in Russian convince his control, Angus Watkins, that he is the ideal candidate for Upstairs's latest and most critical initiative.

Three Russian basketball players are known to have fathers in high-level positions in the Soviet government, and Upstairs suspects that one of them desires to establish contact with Whitehall through his visiting son. Posing as a reserve player at an international basketball conference in Dublin, Porter is assigned to discreetly isolate the heir-apparent to the Soviet traitor for the "touch."

Lovell displays a gifted talent for creating an intricate maze out of a seemingly uncomplicated situation. Porter's alliance with a statuesque Soviet masseuse, his obvious early failure to successfully complete his mission, and the deceptive motives of several players distinguish *The Spy Who Got His Feet Wet* as a thriller adroitly blended with electrifying suspense and wry parody. Although Lovell has endowed Porter with the proper attributes of a contemporary fictional spy, at least on the serious side, Porter briefly recalls John Gardner's Boysie Oakes, James Leasor's Dr. Jason Love, and Sol Weinstein's Israel Bond Agent Oy Oy 7.

An earlier Porter entry, *Apple Spy in the Sky* (1983), recently completed filming for HBO release, under the tentative title of *The Trouble with Spies*, starring Donald Sutherland as Appleton Porter.

—Andy East

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The Shadow of the Moth: A Novel of Espionage with Virginia Woolf by Ellen Hawkes and Peter Manso. Penguin, 1984

The title of *The Shadow of the Moth* refers to a passage in Virginia Woolf's famous *A Room of One's Own*, wherein the female writer finally sits down to write *her*story, rather than *his*tory, and that is the spirit of detection in this lively fictionalization of Virginia Woolf's involvement in 1917 with Scotland Yard, the Belgian resistance, illicit art dealings, code books, representatives of London's journalistic corps (including a perky young American girl), and, of course, Bloomsbury. Authors Hawkes and Manso know their period well, and they weave Woolf's literary career and personal background with international intrigue, but the final result is Virginia's own story of what happened between the time she read of a Belgian woman's suicide in the Serpentine to the time that she exposed a massive conspiracy of "eminent men of every nation, businessmen, economists and financiers committed heart and soul to a new order." "You see," says Virginia at the end of the story, "it's really *my* story to tell."

And what a story it is. In many ways, the twists and turns of this espionage mystery match the trust-me/don't-trust-me premise on which the spy business is based. But, in a more fundamental way, Woolf as detective is the same Woolf as novelist that has delighted and perplexed critics with her enthusiastic divings into what people might be like (hence her fascination in this fictionalized mystery with a dead refugee she never knew), with her diversionary tactics even while being

straightforward (she feigns madness to show sanity, even as her literary heroines in, for example, *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs. Dalloway* use presence to demonstrate absence), and with her feminism. This last characteristic informs Woolf's fiction on a sub-surface level, but it is at the forefront in *The Shadow of the Moth,* in which Woolf rails against a male capitalism that fosters war and then manipulates its victims, exposes a criminal justice system that covers up murders of female immigrants, and at times views men as "so many bars, the bars of a cage. . . . No more, she told herself. This was a chance to prise open the locked room."

The Shadow of the Moth can be viewed in the final analysis as a "locked-room" mystery, but only if the reader can be aware of recent Woolf criticism and the tradition of English detective fiction. Opening the door of that locked room—which is clearly not "a room of one's own"—lets in Woolf the actual writer, lets out Woolf the fictionalized heroine, and lets go a fascinating "What if?" tale of 1917 intrigue, with a cast that includes Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Virginia's sister Vanessa, Lady Ottoline Morrell, Lytton Strachey, Maynard Keynes, Clive Bell, and even Lloyd George. The dialogue is derived-Woolf and Bloomsbury, the nicknames accurate, and the craziness of World War I neatly compared to Woolf's own fears of bouts of insanity. Hawkes and Manso know their subject well, but, more than that, they use the traits of their detective to mirror a world around her which gravely needs to be understood. Much of what Woolf the novelist does with reality is what the authors here do with history and what the reader is asked to do with the bewildering sets of characters and motives. Historical mystery readers and literary critics—of which there are an inordinate number who love mysteries—will enjoy *The Shadow of the Moth.*

—Susan Clark

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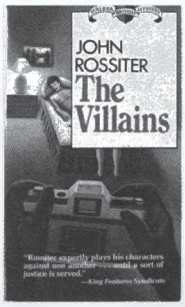
The Villains by John Rossiter. Walker, 1985

British Detective Inspector Robert Hansen "recalled the dedication to enthusiasm of his earlier service. He had really believed that he was working for a society that cared; that the detection of criminality was an end of which he could be proud; that justice was a commodity without a price ticket and available to all." Yet "he had seen the sort of flabby, misguided justice that put the brutal killer of a child on probation, that sentenced a man to a ludicrous profitable three years imprisonment for a ten-million pound company fraud, while sending a helpless old woman to gaol for refusing to apologize to a judge." And Hansen, too, has seen his fellow policeman, Detective Sergeant William Gault, now hospitalized and drugged, mutilated almost beyond belief (jaw wired shut, medically castrated as the result of injuries to his groin, and bereft of an eye as well) in a savage attack by a petty but powerful criminal, Toffler, who was aided in court by the corrupt solicitor/barrister team of Weizsack and Sinter. Hansen cannot stand back and let Toffler's acquittal pass without notice. To his mind, Gault has been framed, if the compromising photos produced in court can be explained (although "Weizsack was a criminal lawyer in both senses of the term" and all who dealt with him knew it) and if Hansen can get beyond the bewildering complex authority of the British criminal justice system to prove it.

Gault's wife, Ann, a former policewoman, enlists Hansen's aid, for she is as convinced as Hansen is that justice has not been served, and what ensues is a journey into the intricacies and fundamental patterns of human emotions, couched in terms of sex and companionship, as torturous and yet as predictable as the expedition through the virtually Dickensian courts that author Rossiter describes, where flunkies with names like Trimbrill and Quibble arbitrate legal precedent. While Hansen runs down prostitutes known to have been seen with Toffler, Ann dresses as a tart and entices Toffler, and the interconnections that suddenly come into relief (Hansen's wife has been Toffler's and Gault's lover, and Ann is raped by Toffler, even as Hansen has fallen in love with her) are as messy as the criminal justice mop-up.

The Villains provides fast-paced reading, of the depressing nature that comes not only when there is literally no humor except gallows humor in the narrative, but also when the writer is as committed as Rossiter is to baring injustice in its various forms. "Who has taken whom?" is the underlying question, sexually, criminally, and ultimately, and the conclusion proves as gripping as the previous narrative will lead the reader to expect. It is not light reading, *The Victims,* but it is not a book to leave unfinished, either.

—Susan Clark



A File on Death by Kenneth Giles. Walker, 1973. $2.95

This cynically humorous tale of a missing government file is a very good example of Giles's work. The file contains scandalous documents about vague sexual indiscretions of English politicians in France. Someone wants to publish the papers and discredit the current British government. Poor Chief Inspector Harry James and his albatross/aide Sergeant Honeybody seem to be the only people in the small town of Waddington Parva who do not know the location of the papers. James is called in allegedly to investigate the death of Justin Title, but more importantly to find the file. Several other deaths occur among the bizarre and colorful characters before the sudden, unexpected twist ending rolls around.

James would be competent in a standard investigation. Here he is pitted against intrigue and skullduggery of political factions and ends up more of a pawn than anything else.

—Fred Dueren

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Uneasy Lies the Head by Robert Tine. Pinnacle, 1985. $3.50

Originally published by Viking in 1982 and now available in paperback, Robert Tine's *Uneasy Lies the Head* capitalizes on the tried and true: the shade of Jack the Ripper, the older police officer slated to coast into retirement, and the discontented younger cop, drinking too much and dissatisfied with his entire lot in life—and especially, perhaps, his sex life—are all familiar figures. Tine brings them together when a killer begins re-enacting the Ripper crimes in contemporary London.

Smudge Huddleston, "determined to show his superiors and the youngsters in the CID that there was life in Huddleston yet" and Tony Pidgeon, whose life style is symbolized by his dreary flat (retained because he hopes its address will be "thought of as 'smart' Chelsea but that was probably part of 'up-and-coming' Pimlico"), both uneasy about their pairing, are assigned to the case. Both men are eager to solve the puzzle quickly, and neither, of course, is adverse to the kind of official attention, even praise, that a prompt solution would merit—but, to give them credit, both also recognize the viciousness of this killer and are at least as anxious to get him off the streets as they are to enhance their own reputations. Huddleston must reaffirm his professional dignity; Pidgeon must prove he has some professional dignity in order to ensure his future. But that's as profound as the characterization goes, and there is little to surprise any reader in either protagonist.

Nor are the other characters—who range from Huddleston's vague, passive, but loving wife to the King himself (this is only a semi-realistic modern London)—very individualized. There is the usual assortment of thick superior officers, upper-class snobs, and dreary streetwalkers. The investigation takes Huddleston and Pidgeon into very high places, some of which prove to be very low spots in the public façade; again, no surprises here. But Tine bundles all these usual features neatly into a fairly brisk plot, and the book is a workmanlike effort. *Uneasy Lies the Head* might be just the ticket for an evening when experienced fans want easy entertainment or distraction rather than intense puzzle or challenge. It won't make you think, but it will probably keep you reading.

—Jane S. Bakerman

The President on Baker Street

By Louis Phillips

Although movie buffs are well aware that Franklin Delano Roosevelt is the one and only President of the United States to receive film credit for supplying the story to a mystery film—*The President's Mystery Story*—it is less well known that FDR, from 1942 until the time of his death, was a member of the Baker Street Irregulars, that inner circle limited to serious devotees of the works of the Master.

While he was a member of the Baker Street Irregulars, Roosevelt wrote five letters about Sherlock Holmes, letters which were collected in 1945 and published as a Baker Street Folio by the Pamphlet House of Summit, New Jersey.

The first letter (written to Edgar Smith on August 5, 1942) brings out a bit of trivia about the use of the name "Baker Street": "Now that I belong to the B.S.I., I cannot restrain the impulse to tell you that since I have had to give up cruising on the Potomac I sometimes go off the record on Sundays to an undisturbed retreat. In that spot the group of little cabins which shelter the Secret Service men is known as Baker Street."

Two others are letters of courtesy, letters acknowledging gifts of books from members of the B.S.I., but the two remaining letters reveal the President's sense of humor and his close reading of the Holmes canon. The letter of August 26, 1942 is addressed to Belden Wigglesworth of Boston, Massachusetts:

Dear Mr. Wigglesworth:

I am distressed to learn that such a serious tempest is sweeping through the ranks of the Baker Street Irregulars. In my search through Dr. Watson's papers some years ago I found several pages proving that the good Doctor spent many sleepless nights trying to devise a Coat of Arms for Sherlock. These notes also proved conclusively that Sherlock had no Coat of Arms. Being a foundling, his one great failure was his inability, after long search, to find his parents. Perhaps this will contribute to the calming of the tempest among the Baker Street Irregulars.

Very sincerely yours,
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

A letter written on December 18, 1944 is of even greater interest to Sherlock Holmes fans because, in that letter, President Roosevelt advances a theory about Holmes's origins. FDR attempts to claim Holmes for America. The letter is addressed to Edgar Smith, but the correspondence between the President and the Baker Street Irregulars had advanced so greatly and warmly that the President salutes Smith by his nickname "Buttons":

Dear "Buttons":

Please tell the Baker Street Irregulars how much I wish I could be with them on January Fifth. Select indeed will be this assembly of the forty "aficionados" and it would give me a real thrill to be of the number.

Gladly do I embrace this opportunity, in absentia, to send hearty greetings to the Irregulars in whose membership I am honored to be included.

On further study I am inclined to revise my former estimate that Holmes was a foundling. Actually he was born an American and was brought up by his father or a foster father in the underground world, thus learning all the tricks of the trade in the highly developed American art of crime.

At an early age he felt the urge to do something for mankind. He was too well known in top circles in this country and, therefore, chose to operate in England. His attributes were primarily American; not English. I feel that further study of this postulant will bring good results to history.

Very sincerely yours,
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

With the death of America's 32nd President, the Baker Street Irregulars lost a very dear and kind friend. □

The Adventures of SHERLOCK HOLMES in Minnesota

By William A. S. Sarjeant

Did Sherlock Holmes ever travel to Minnesota, then? Well, the canonical accounts of his adventures, i.e., those set down by his principal chronicler A. C. Doyle, record no such visit (though doubtless, somewhere among the mounting pile of Holmesian apocrypha, some such visit has been or will be hypothesized!). Certainly, however, many Sherlockians gathered there last September to study, and to speculate upon, the character and labors of the greatest consulting detective of all time, the meeting being sponsored by Minnesota's own Sherlockian group, the Norwegian Explorers, and run with high competence by the University of Minnesota's Department of Conferences.

It was a particular pleasure that, on the first day, the eminent English Sherlockian scholar Michael Harrison, author of *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes* and other notable studies, was present to give a keynote address on "The Victorian England of Sherlock Holmes." This was rambling, discursive—and entirely fascinating.

Harrison characterized the decades between 1861, when Sherlock was seven years old, to 1911, when his principal cases were behind him, as the most formative period in history. It brought the invention of the incandescent (electric) lamp by Sir Joseph Swan in 1861, his partnership with Edison being crucial in its development; the improvement and wide marketing of the sewing maching, invented in 1847 by Isaac Singer, a self-publicist who, Harrison noted, went round Paris in a scarlet suit; the invention of the electric trolley-car and the automobile; the launching of a steam submarine in Liverpool Bay in 1879 by the Rev. Mr. William Garrett (it went for twelve miles); and the discovery of radioactivity by Becquerel in 1896.

As Harrison pointed out, Christopher Sholes's (1868) invention of the typewriter and its development by Remington's gun company enabled respectable young women, for the first time, to earn money freely and to live truly independent lives. Since hotels, pothouses, and chophouses remained taboo to them, these semi-liberated women patronized instead the Aerated Bread Co. restaurants and, later, Lyon's Corner Houses.

In particular, this period brought an immense

acceleration in communication. The mail service was so fast that a man could post, in the morning, an invitation to dinner that same night and expect to receive a reply before the meal! The development of the telegraph and laying down of transatlantic cables, with President Buchanan tapping out his message of good will to Queen Victoria, forever eliminated such embarrassments as when, for example, the Battle of New Orleans was fought after a war had ended. There was the invention of the telephone by Johann Philipp Reiss in 1861 and its transformation into a practical proposition concurrently, in 1876, by Elisha Gray and Alexander Graham Bell; the early telephone girls of London, who recorded each call, lived in special residences, in the charge of a matron. There was the development of sound radio by Reginald Fessenden in 1906. Harrison recalled having seen, in a Kent garage, the original aluminum gasoline engine used by the Wright Brothers in their first flight—he has written a book about that flight—and seeing, near Rochester, the original monorail coach. Also he remembered meeting in 1915, while out walking with his father, Dr. R. Austin Freeman, creator of Dr. John Evelyn Thorndyke, the medical detective who epitomized the enquiring and creative activity of that period.

Michael Harrison, about to autograph his book *A Study in Surmise: The Making of Sherlock Holmes* for the author

The population of England increased enormously during this time, tripling from around ten million in 1795 to around thirty million in 1879. There was much poverty, but this was ameliorated by the fact that food was "incredibly cheap." Oysters were a staple; they were brought in small barrels, 240 for £1. Two potatoes, cooked in their jackets, cost only one penny. Harrison remembers a rhyme repeated by his clerical father (I hope I have it right):

> Dearly beloved brethren, is it not a sin
> When we peel potatoes, to throw away the skin?
> For the skin feeds pigs and the pigs feed us.
> Is it not a sin, to waste good food thus?

His father said also to Michael: "Thank God, I saw the end of the old (pre-1914) world. You won't know its splendor, its energy, its luxury..." That was Sherlock Holmes's world.

The next speaker, Martin Roth, was less sympathetic. Speaking of "the mythic resonance of Sherlock Holmes," he saw the chronicles as "tales told by a hero-worshipper and devoted to worship," as texts "consisting of nothing but doting and praise." Fortunately, Jack Key's solid account of "Do. Doyle's Patients in Fact and Fiction" restored our equipoise!

Derek Longhurst discussed the contemporary factual and literary context of the chronicles in a society the mores of which were always obvious and universally subscribed to, at least in philosophical terms, and the class system of which was stable. He noted that crime was heavily featured in Victorian newspapers and a strong element in *Silas Marner* and such Dickens novels as *Oliver Twist* (a devasting critique of the Victorian poor laws), *Our Mutual Friend,* and *Bleak House.* The Holmes stories, he considered, although written in the realist mode, were dramas of violent crime looking backward to the Gothic novels of earlier times, with Dr. Watson serving as link between their bizarre elements and the everyday world.

At this point there was a pleasant interruption, while we went outside to witness three distinguished Sherlockians—Michael Harrison, E. W. McDiarmid of the Norwegian Explorers, and the great collector of Sherlockian literature and memorabilia John Bennett Shaw—implanting their feet into wet concrete, so that their footsteps might be displayed when the Sherlock Holmes Center is opened in Minneapolis. The Shaw Collection will be its principal feature.

Jack Key

Back, then, to the meeting room to hear John Bennett Shaw talk about "Sherlock Holmes: The Face Behind the Words." Using color transparencies illustrating dust jackets, wrappers, and plates from

editions and translations of the chronicles from all over the world, he showed how that face changed from the quintessential Englishness of the Paget portraits, through the Slavic cast of Russian depictions, to a disconcertingly Oriental aspect in Indian, Japanese, Singhalese, and Tagalog works.

Another aspect of Sherlockian illustration was evoked by Robert Steele's account of the life of his father, the artist Frederic Dorr Steele, whose clean-cut drawings condition most North Americans' image of the Master. Steele, it seems, delighted in work games and in chess, on the board or by post; he was an enthusiastic actor and an excellent pool player, but he never, never read detective stories!

After Andrew Malec's account of the display of Steele's drawings and paintings in the Wilson Library and Dorothy Rowe Shaw's description of the Mini-Tongas and their work in reconstructing Holmes's London quarters, we moved over to the Wilson Library to examine the examples of Steele's and Mrs. Shaw's art. Dinner with the Norwegian Explorers followed, at a restaurant the appalling acoustics and execrable sound system of which rendered all speeches inaudible; nor did the food redeem it. Then I was beguiled by my other love and slipped away to a coffee house to enjoy folk singers Gordon Bok and Dave Goulder, missing without regret two evening

John Bennett Shaw speaking at the Sherlockian banquet; Mrs. Dorothy Shaw (left) and Mrs. Edna Shore in foreground

discourses on chronicler Doyle's spiritualism and its background.

Day Two began with a review by Randolph Cox of the developments in Victorian fiction that paved the way for Doyle's chronicles. He showed how the transition occurred from Gothic novels such as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), by way of such intermediate writings as Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), the Newgate Calendars, the "bloods" like *Varney the Vampire* and *Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street,* and the earliest memoirs by police officers (some essentially factual such as *The Memoirs of Eugene Vidocq* [four volumes, 1829] and others essentially fictional like *Richmond; or, Scenes in the Life of a Bow Street Officer* [1827]), ultimately to the detective fiction of Poe. Cox did not, however, contrive to bridge the gap between Poe and Doyle—not just a small step, but a giant leap.

Dr. Carolyn Heilbrun, who writes as Amanda Cross, discussed interestingly the changing roles of women in detective fiction. On both sides of the Atlantic, they provided the "love interest" that was

The artistic Frederic Dorr Steele, whose clean-cut drawings condition most North Americans' image of The Master, never, never read detective stories!

thought essential to attract women readers. In other respects, however, she saw profound differences between British and American writers in this genre, English detectives being "tender" and U.S. private eyes "tough."

The British writers provided, from the outset, an array of unstereotypical women, associated with essentially gentlemanly detectives. Sherlock Holmes's female clients were often dependent and competent persons, while he admitted to being outwitted by the ingenious and percipient Irene Adler. What W. H. Auden called the "murder in the vicarage" stories allowed for the development of female character—in particular, of spinster detectives, turning their solitude into power and their isolation into independence. Dorothy Sayers's Miss Climpson, supported and employed by Lord Peter Wimsey, headed a whole bureau of such spinsters. Her creation preceded that of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple—in Dr. Heilbrun's view, a less constant character and even a little sinister! Also to be remembered was Miss Maude Silver, constantly knitting in pink or blue and, at the same time, serving as advisor to the Scotland Yard detective who had once been her pupil. (A development from this tradition is P. D. James's Cordelia Gray, who runs her own detective

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agency.) Nevertheless, the majority of British women authors have, until recently, chosen males as their central characters—males who are usually strikingly handsome and always gentlemanly; though, as Dr. Heinbrun noted, they need not be manly—Hercule Poirot was *never* manly!

Once the brief age of S. S. Van Dine was over, U.S. detective fiction diverged sharply onto its own, very different path. The British female characters simply could not stand alongside U.S. detective heroes, operating in novels which stressed gore and set in communities where murder was a normal part of life. In that "macho" tradition, women were either

Don Shelby, J. Randolph Cox, and Nils Nordberg examining copies of *Police News*

young or aging sex objects—if aging, inevitably bitches!—or else venerable and motherly characters. There were essentially just two roles—Snow White or the Fairy Godmother (benign or malign); angel or monster. Few women served as central characters; Rex Stout's Dol Bonner, who said, "I dislike all men anyway," was given only one novel to herself. Moreover, the women who appeared as secondary characters showed little character development. Was this, Dr. Heinbrun wondered, because U.S. writers were more afraid than British ones for their own masculinity?

Recently, of course, matters have changed. Susan Isaacs, Sarah Paretsky, Sue Grafton and Shannon OCork are all using women detectives as central characters. Before that, there had been only Nancy Drew to serve as a marvellous, indeed unique, role model for women readers.

The next speaker, Alfred Cohoe, quoted at the outset Sherlock Holmes's asseveration (in *The Illustrious Client*) that "Women's heart and mind are insoluble puzzles to the male." He pointed out at length that males are, in fact, disadvantaged from birth (or, more exactly, from conception) in a whole series of ways, from likelihood of death during pregnancy through miscarriage, suffering more from such liabilities as hyperactivity, through hemophilia, baldness, being more prone to mental instability and suicide to (for those and other reasons!) having a markedly shorter average life span. It was intriguing to learn that men are eighty-five times more likely to be killed by lightning than women!

Turning to Holmes himself, Dr. Cohoe noted that all possible psychological labels had been applied to his personality at different times. Guy Warwick had said that "Holmes was clearly schizophrenic," but this was untrue. Yes, he had a dual personality, but that is not synonymous with schizophrenia. Indeed, Dr. Cohoe felt that Holmes exhibited no psychological disorder (except, perhaps, from being slightly narcissistic!). Instead, he had all the attributes of a successful man. He was not highly emotional, being thus more able to assess others, to perceive. He had a deep commitment to his task, which he viewed as a duty; he was problem-centered, dedicated, living to work, *not* working to live. Intellectual detachment and a need for privacy, the ability to establish close relationships only with one or two friends—all these are characteristics of successful people—and of Holmes.

The "Sherlock Holmes and Women" (non-)reactor panel: Carolyn Heilbrun ("Amanda Cross"), Doris Skalstad, and P. J. Doyle, with moderator Cyndy Brucato

A panel discussion on "Sherlock Holmes and Women" followed. It was not a success, since not even the most energetic efforts and most provocative questions of moderator Cyndy Brucato succeeded in generating any lively controversy. Carolyn Heilbrun, P. J. Doyle, and Doris Skalstad concurred placidly that Holmes had very liberal ideas for his time and that, for the period, an unusually high proportion of interesting and "liberated" women were encountered in his cases. Only two quotes were memorable

enough to be repeated here: Carolyn Heilbrun characterizing the association of Holmes and Watson as "the only happy marriage in the Victorian era" and John Bennett Shaw reporting, in the discussion, that "Sherlock" was the trade-name of a type of chastity belt.

The farthest-traveled participant in the Minnesota gathering was Nils Nordberg from Oslo, Norway. He reminded us that, in the days of The Master's principal cases, there *was* a king of Scandinavia, since Norway and Sweden were combined under King Oscar II's rule. In *The Noble Bachelor,* it was noted that the King had been Holmes's last client (in the years 1886–88). Presumably the detective performed with his customary skill and success, for, in *The Final Problem,* Holmes had again been of assistance to "The Royal Family of Scandinavia" (probably in 1890). Later, Holmes and Watson visited Scandinavia together, for at the end of *Black Peter* their address was stated to be "somewhere in Norway."

A more puzzling reference is found in *A Scandal in Bohemia,* in which the "incognito" King of that realm was reportedly engaged to be married to the second daughter of the King of Scandinavia. King Oscar had

Bill Sarjeant and Jack Key vainly endeavor to tie down conjurer Terry Roses.

no daughters, however, and, moreover, the princess was given a German family name, whereas that of King Oscar was French (Bernadotte). Clearly, this story draws a veil over the true names of the eminent persons involved; and it is likely enough that Holmes's client was the future King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales.

Nordberg delved into more profound questions when he speculated as to why Holmes, after the episode at the Reichenbach Falls, selected the name of "Sigerson" while traveling in Tibet. Was this because his choice was inspired by the explorations of Nansen, who had crossed Greenland on skis in 1888 and had received the Royal Geographic Society medal in 1891? Or, more likely, was it allegorical? "Sigurdsen" is a familiar Norwegian family name, "the son of Sigurd"—and Sigurd = Siegfried the dragon-slayer. Was this an oblique reference to Holmes's own slaying of the dragon of crime, Moriarty? Since "Holm," "Holme," and "Holmsen" are all common names in Scandinavia, could it be that Holmes had Scandinavian connections in his own family? If so, his choice of a traveling name would become more explicable. To maintain that assumed identity convincingly, he might need to be able to speak Norwegian; well, perhaps he could!

John Bennett Shaw reported that "Sherlock" was the trade-name of a type of chastity belt.

E. W. McDiarmid and Don Shelby, in a joint presentation, advocated the idea that John H. Watson had been sadly underrated, suggesting that it was he, and not Holmes, who was the master detective. Shelby speculated that Watson's degree in surgery might have been supplemented by a specialization in psychology. Undoubtedly, he made Holmes the particular subject of his study, losing his other patients in the process but ultimately achieving the success of weaning Holmes off drugs. Watson allowed himself to be the brunt of Holmes's gibes and praised him sedulously, in order to keep him pleased and happy. Holmes came to recognize Watson's contribution to his well-being: "I feel as if I shall need your company and your moral support today."

During the "missing year," between November 1895 and October 1896, from which no cases are reported, Watson's treatment of Holmes may have been brought to a climax. Dr. John B. Watson of North Carolina, the world's foremost behavioral psychologist of his day, was possibly a cousin of Dr. John H. Watson and may well have been consulted. This might account for Holmes's knowledge of, and enthusiasm for, the United States. Shelby noted that the famous Watson dispatch-box contained "the record of the curious problems which Mr. Sherlock Holmes had." Was this a record, not of his cases but of the psychological problems from which he suffered?

McDiarmid noted that The Master was not immune from error. In *The Valley of Fear,* he failed to remove a sticking plaster from the dead man's face, thus missing crucial evidence. In *Shoscombe Old Place,* he failed to recognize the possibilities of

suicide or of death from natural causes. In *The Bruce-Partington Plans,* he admits: "You had me there, Watson!"

Did Watson, in fact, disguise his own successes in order to bolster Holmes's vulnerable ego? Certainly, his involvement in the cases was close, perhaps crucial. His independent investigations in *The Hound of the Baskervilles,* though denigrated by Holmes, were crucial to the elucidation of that spectacular case. In *The Bruce-Partington Plans,* Holmes refers to "our joint researches," and in *Lady Frances Carfax* to "your researches, Watson." In *The Priory School,* Holmes speaks of "my colleague, Dr. Watson," and *The Three Garridebs* is only one among a number of other cases in which Watson's contribution is acknowledged or evident. The affair of *The Missing Three-Quarter* is explicitly described as "not one of your cases, Watson." Perhaps it was, in consequence, truly exceptional?

Determined not to miss the opportunities afforded by Minneapolis's used-book stores, I slipped away for the remainder of Saturday afternoon and was amply rewarded for that decision. I missed two addresses; Yi-Fu Tuan on "The Sense of Place in Victorian England" and architect Derham Groves on "The Feng Shui of 221B." Both evoked extreme responses. Some auditors thought Yi-Fu Tuan's address "pretentious and tedious," while John Bennett Shaw thought so highly of it that he is striving to have it published. Groves's talk was characterized by some as "fascinating and novel," by others as merely "peculiar."

The evening brought a Sherlockian banquet, oddly handled in that the toasts were proposed hastily at the outset, before many tables had even been served with wine in which to pledge them; I was one of the many who had reluctantly to pledge in water! The Victorian entertainment that followed was furnished by Terry Roses, conjurer and disciple of Houdini, whose feats of escapology he reproduced faithfully.

Lastly, we went to the Aragon Ballroom to hear producer/playwright John Fenn and actors George Muschamp and Charters Anderson talk about "Portraying Holmes and Watson—An Actor's Response." This was clogged with the slightly nauseating mutual tributes that actors seemingly feel obliged to offer to each other. Fortunately, it was enlivened by the acting of a couple of scenes, in which some Sherlockians emerged from the audience and came close to out-acting the actors. After that, the formal proceedings were over and we retired to hotel rooms, where our continuing ponderings over the Sherlockian canon and its problems were lubricated (and, a few instances, eventually drowned!) by satisfactorily copious applications of alcohol.

If The Master has *not* visited Minnesota, he has missed a delightful experience! □

RETRO REVIEWS

The Substitute Millionaire by Hulbert Footner. New York: George R. Doran, 1919.

Today, Hulbert Footner is remembered only as the creator of Madame Storey, yet for some three decades he turned out dozens of mystery-adventure novels. This one was claimed by Christopher Morley to have "a perfect plot" for a movie, and indeed the plot is complex without being confusing. Of perhaps equal importance, the narrative is engaging, being rapid of pace withal lighthearted.

The story opens with the random assassination of Silas Gyde, a reclusive and eccentric millionaire, by an avowed anarchist (remember, this is 1919). Gyde's will surprisingly leaves his entire fortune to an unknown Wall Street clerk, son of the only woman he has ever loved. This is one Jack Norman, young, likable, and briskly alert, who promptly discovers a secret apartment where he reads a series of letters, unknown to the world, an overall moving diary of a blighted life but latterly a record of attempted extortion.

The assassination was no haphazard slaying, Norman learns, but part of a plot in which millionaires are forced to pay heavily for so-called protection, anarchism being merely a cover. Gyde has been murdered because he refused to pay. Norman realizes that the next target will be himself, as the widely publicized legatee of Gyde. Only his name is known to the public, however, not his face, so he engages Bobo Harmsworth, an indigent and somewhat dense young actor, to play the role of Jack Norman. He himself becomes John Robinson, secretary to Norman, an identity that leaves him free to trail and eventually trap the extortionists.

But this is only the beginning. Norman soon assumes two more characterizations, these complete with false moustache, clothes, padding, and other accouterments incidental to disguise. He impresses his sweetheart into the swirl of action while Bobo promotes his own unsteady romance with the slinky brunette sent to spy on him. What with chases and identity switches, no lag in motion or in plot development is allowed. Most of the action is in New York (particularly the Hotel Madagascar, Footner's pseudo of the old Waldorf), although a side trip is made to Footner's adopted turf, Baltimore.

Like other novels of the period, it observes the unwritten mores: the extortionist mastermind is unmasked in the last chapter and the story closes with lovers blissfully united and criminals duly punished. Still, when the verdict is in, this insouciant tour-de-force of plotting and action remains after over three score years an exciting couple of hours. Morley was right – too bad Hitchcock never made the movie.

– Alvin Lybeck

Landscape with Dead Dons by Robert Robinson. London: Victor Gollancz, 1956. New York: Penguin, 1963 (reprinted 1983).

The list of suspects in Robert Robinson's *Landscape with Dead Dons* reads like Michael Innes gone wild: Archangel, Clapp, Christelow, Diamantis, Dogg, Egg, Fairlight, Flower, Falal, McCann, Rankine, Lord Pinner, Tantalum, Shipton, and Undigo. And those are just the ones on Inspector Autumn's official list. Floating round the periphery are Balboa Tomlin (a female undergraduate, a "hot-bottomed little mare" in the words of one of her rejected swains), a forger-pornography king named Immanuel Kant, a tabloid reporter called Bum, and a military-minded landlady named Mrs. Spectre.

The murders in question are those of Manchip, Master of Warlock College, Oxford, and fellow don Bow-Parley, both of whom are to cast deciding votes in the appointment of the new holder of the Rockinge Chair. As is the convention in academic murders, modeled often deadly accurately after life in the university, scholars' squabbles and pettiness provide motivation for and complication to the puzzle at hand: why Manchip has been stabbed and set on the College roof, among the statues, and why Bow-Parley has been bludgeoned to death in his room, just after he called to tell Autumn that he had something to show him "which will assist the enquahry materially." Manchip "was a man to whom singularity, minority, cussedness, and opposition were the breath of life," and Bow-Parley, the Chaplain, had eyes "behind rimless spectacles" that "distributed nothing more specific than Anglican goodwill." Autumn's task is to determine what the two had in common that necessitated their deaths – in short, what they had figured out that made them, while living, dangerous.

Autumn, who is not university educated and who is a bit ill at ease investigating an academic scene of the crime, nevertheless comes to read his suspects as if they were texts and he were reading for examinations, which is a nice touch because two volumes figure heavily in the mystery: Manchip's diary and the newly discovered *Book of the Lion*, reputed to be authored by none other than Geoffrey Chaucer. And these two volumes are but a drop in the sea of books that is the Bodleian Library, where some of the mystery's action occurs.

Landscape with Dead Dons is erudite, malicious, and truly one of the funniest academic mysteries written. Robinson's only failing is a side-stepping of the "fair play" rule; had the reader seen the Middle English text that finally fingers the murderer, the criminal's signature mistake would have easily been revealed more quickly than it takes for Autumn, no Chaucerian he, to piece it out. Nevertheless, *Landscape with Dead Dons* is not only about an academic wrangle, it is also about personality types and quirks of human nature that make some folk professors and others detectives. And Robinson's mystery is as fresh in the mid-1980s as it was when it was written thirty years earlier, perhaps because some things never change in academe: the search for truth, the eccentricity, and the curiously yoked burden of the scholar to be inventive while adhering to sources.

– Susan Clark

* * * * *

The Lives of Harry Lime by Orson Welles and Others. London: Pocket Book Edition [B77], Published and Distributed by News of the World, 1952. 183 pp. **Jemima Shore Investigates** introduced by Antonia Fraser. London: Thames Methuen, 1983. 220 pp.

It is common in both England and America to publish book versions of episodes from popular television and radio shows. On this side of the Atlantic, the pattern is to take a single script, pad it unmercifully, and send it forth to the world as a novel. The British, on the other hand, more frequently publish collections of short stories or novelettes which retain greater fidelity to the original broadcasts. Among such volumes are Swinson's *Sergeant Cork's Casebook* and *Sergeant Cork's Second Casebook*, Knox's *The View from Daniel Pike*, Edward's *Dixon of Dock Green* and Fletcher's *Raffles*. Perhaps the best of this style is *The Lives of Harry Lime* "by Orson Welles and Others," a British Pocket Book published in 1952. This unaccountably obscure collection contains fifteen short stories based on the scripts for a 1950 BBC radio series which starred Welles. This series, in turn, was loosely derived from Graham Greene's movie and short novel, *The Third Man*. In Greene's version, Lime is a

shadowy figure who appears only briefly before he is killed at the conclusion. The most memorable scene in the movie occurs when Lime, played by Orson Welles, is glimpsed in a doorway in post-war Vienna.

Even though Lime was, to put it mildly, an odious person who ran the black market in penicillin, Welles's portrayal "haunted the public as insidiously as the zither man's theme," and Lime came back to life for the radio. Almost fifty episodes of *The Lives of Harry Lime* survive on tape, and they indicate that Lime's character was softened, though not much. He remains basically a rotter who deals in anything that will produce money, including opium and heroin. Unlike the *film noir* effect of *The Third Man,* however, *The Lives of Harry Lime* has an urbane tone. This is especially obvious in Welles's narration of the radio version, and it remains noticeable in the book, as Lime concocts his schemes in exotic locales – Tangier, Arabia, Budapest, Istanbul, Paris, and so on. Seldom do things work out as Lime plans, and several of the tales end with the biter being bit.

The three stories in the book which are credited to Welles are all good, and one is first-rate: "It's In the Bag," in which Lime receives a medal from the People's Democratic Government of Yugoslavia rather than the banknotes he seeks. Other noteworthy tales are Robert Cenedella's "Every Frame Has a Silver Lining," with a marvelous triple cross; Sigmund Miller's "Love Affair," in which Lime tries to negotiate an oil lease for two enemies; and Carl Jampel's "Five Thousand Pengoes and a Kiss," in which Lime plans to betray a beautiful Hungarian refugee but finds that he must help her to save himself. In short, *The Lives of Harry Lime* is a fascinating

book, one which deserves an American edition, though I suspect that obtaining rights to the stories would be difficult.

Just as interesting – and far easier to obtain – is *Jemima Shore Investigates,* a collection of seven stories based on the 1983 Thames Television series. Since 1977, Lady Antonia Fraser has taken breaks from writing historical biographies in order to produce an elegant series of detective novels about Jemima Shore, investigative reporter for "Megalith Television." I believe that it was Leslie Charteris who, when questioned about why he licensed the Saint for a television series, said something like: "Every man has his price, and I certainly got mine." Whatever price Fraser received for allowing others to use her characters, Thames did an excellent job, hiring such writers as Simon Brett to bring Jemima Shore to television. Indeed, though perhaps I shouldn't say this too loudly, the stories in *Jemima Shore Investigates* seem to me better than Fraser's own shorts about her detective. "The Case of the Dancing Duchess" by Frances Heasman (storyline by Brett) has an ironic surprise ending. Just as good are John Burke's "Death a la Carte" (storyline by Tim Aspinall), Burke's "A Model Murder" (storyline by Dave Humphries), and Frances Heasman's "Promising Death" (from a story by Brett). Fraser herself contributes an entertaining nine-page biography, "Investigating Jemima."

PBS's *Mystery!* has already aired an adaptation of Fraser's *Quiet as a Nun.* When PBS gets around to broadcasting *Jemima Shore Investigates,* I hope we will see the publication of an American edition of the book.

– Douglas G. Greene

THE SWOPE-HYDE CASE

CRIME HUNT

Real Life Cases

By T. M. McDade

The Swope case had the traditional *situs* of a classic murder case – a large stone mansion on a fourteen-acre site in Independence, Missouri. The house, a three-storied affair built of dark stone, stood at the end of a long drive amid trees and plantings. The first floor, entered by a large hall, contained a music room, dining room, drawing room, library, and two spare bedrooms. The second floor had five bedrooms and a sitting room, and the third floor had three more bedrooms and a ballroom. The mansion also had a tower-like room and, inside, lots of dark woodwork with some colored-glass windows.

The house had been built by Logan Swope for his growing family. Logan had come to Kansas City after his brother, Colonel Thomas Swope, had made himself the major real estate operator in the area and a millionaire. This had come about when the railroads selected the area for the major crossing of the Mississippi River and Thomas controlled the best sites. When Logan Swope died in 1900, there were seven children living in the house – two boys and five girls.

Upon the death of her husband, Mrs. Margaret Swope invited brother-in-law Colonel Thomas to join the family, which he did, occupying a large bedroom on the second floor. Thomas Swope had spent all his life making deals which had made him one of Kansas City's richest citizens. He was a tough-minded, hard-drinking individual who had never married. He soon adapted himself to the family group.

At the same time, Mrs. Swope also asked a cousin of her deceased husband, Moss Hunton, to join the family. Hunton, bearded like an Old Testament patriarch, was a quiet, studious man who did not intrude on the others. He kept to a small bedroom on the first floor.

By 1909, the family was little changed. One daughter, Frances, had married Dr. Bennett Clark Hyde despite her mother's objections. Hyde's relations with women had been questionable, but Frances had refused to give him up and they now lived in a house in Kansas City given to the couple by old Colonel Swope, who did not have the same objections to the doctor as had Mrs. Swope. Young Tom Swope, the youngest of Margaret's two sons, had married and lived on a farm not far distant. Mrs. Swope herself, now a large-bosomed, 54-year-old, double-chinned dowager, presided over this mixed household, all of whom seemed to get along with one another. Now that she was reconciled to her daughter's marriage to Dr. Hyde, that couple frequently visited the family mansion.

Though over eighty, Colonel Swope (the title was honorary) managed his many business interests and made frequent trips to Kansas City, fifteen miles away. On September 9, 1909, however, he had a fall which injured his shoulder and briefly confined him to his room. A nurse, Pearl Kellar, was obtained to tend him. Dr. Hyde, although practicing in Kansas City, did not act as the family physician. The nurse, an outgoing, optimistic person, brought the old Colonel around so well that in a couple of weeks he was talking of going into the city again on business.

Meals at the big house seem to have been casual affairs. On October 1, 1909, old Moss Hunton, looking much older than his sixty years, was eating in the first-floor dining room with Nurse Kellar, Mrs. Swope, and her daughter Margaret. Hunton suddenly felt faint and said that he had lost control of his right side. The nurse got him to a couch, and, when the family doctor, George T. Twyman, arrived, Hunton was carried into the bedroom. Shortly, Dr. Hyde arrived and joined the council. The doctors agreed that

Hunton had had an apoplectic stroke, and, when Dr. Hyde suggested that he be bled to relieve pressure on the brain, Twyman agreed. There is a dispute as to what was said during the blood-letting. Twyman suggested enough had been drawn and wanted it stopped; Hyde felt more need be taken. When Hyde's wife suggested he follow Dr. Twyman's advice, he closed the opening. When the blood which had been taken was measured, it was found to be two quarts. When the nurse returned to the room after disposing of the blood, Hunton was dead.

Later, Hyde would ask Nurse Kellar to suggest to Colonel Swope that Hyde be named to replace Hunton in Swope's will as executor, but she refused. Old Swope was sad on learning of Hunton's death, as he and his cousin had been quite close.

The next day, Dr. Hyde went with the nurse to see Swope. During the visit, the doctor gave the nurse a capsule "for Mr. Swope's digestion." The old man would not take it immediately but did a little later, and within twenty minutes the nurse found Swope staring, his eyes dilated, hands and teeth clenched, his whole body quivering. When Hyde saw him, he declared it an attack of apoplexy. At the doctor's direction, the nurse gave Swope a 1/60 grain of strychnine. After much retching and vomiting, the old man became conscious and voiced regret at having taken the medicine.

More injections of strychnine were given to Swope during the day, Nurse Kellar staying with him. When she left briefly for dinner, she returned to find Hyde and his wife there, and she was greeted by Mrs. Hyde's statement that "Uncle Thomas has just gone." There were now two corpses in the house.

Hunton was buried on October 4 and Colonel Swope on October 6, 1909. The latter lay in state in Kansas City, where 10,000 reviewed the body. As one of the principal benefactors of the city, having given them over 1,300 acres for a city park, great honors were shown him in death.

Early in December, the house was again shaken by illness. First, Margaret Swope fell ill, then 22-year-old Chrisman, her eldest son. When Hyde visited the house, he diagnosed Margaret's illness as typhoid. Hyde had complained about the Swopes' water and kept his own supply of drinking water at the house. When Margaret's houseguest, Belle Dickson, was stricken, three more nurses were brought from the nursing service to care for them. Though Dr. Twyman was in charge, Hyde continued to enter into the cases. Shortly after Hyde had given Chrisman a capsule, Chrisman's body became rigid and the nurse could not get a pulse. Hyde tried a number of treatments on Chrisman, but the patient died without coming out of his convulsion. He was buried on December 8, and two days later his six-year-old sister Sarah was stricken with typhoid. Soon there were four cases of typhoid in the house.

The oldest daughter, Lucy Lee, was in Paris during these episodes and returned at her mother's request. Hyde went to New York to accompany her home, and while he was gone all the patients improved. A half-hour after Margaret took a capsule from Hyde, however, she had a seizure which the nurses recognized as similar to Chrisman's. Dr. Twyman happened to enter the house at this moment and was able to bring Margaret around with his injections.

At this time, the nurses, in a body, refused to stay on the cases under Hyde. One left immediately, and the others agreed to stay only if Dr. Twyman handled the cases. At this point, the Hydes left the house. There was another curious incident that evening, when young Tom Swope saw Hyde drop something on the street pavement and grind it under his foot. Tom retrieved it later, and it proved to be part of a capsule. It was sent to a laboratory for an analysis.

All these events had created a vast amount of talk, and rumors were spreading. On December 30, 1909, Chrisman's body was exhumed and his organs sent to Chicago for analysis. On January 12, an autopsy was also performed on Colonel Swope's body. The Kansas City *Journal* began a lead article with the question: Was the late Thomas H. Swope, whose benefactions to Kansas City amounted to more than a million and a half dollars, the victim of a scientific plot which had for its aim the elimination of the entire Swope family, by inoculating with typhoid germs, looking to ultimate control of the three million dollar estate?"

When the doctors in Chicago announced that Swope had died of strychnine poisoning, the police authorities took over the case. On March 6, 1910, Dr. Hyde was indicted for the murders of Colonel Swope and Chrisman, for the manslaughter of Moss Hunton, and for the poisoning of seven members of the household. His wife announced her faith in her husband, and they retained Frank P. Walsh, a 46-year-old radical lawyer, to defend the doctor. A rift developed between Mrs. Swope and Frances Hyde, who refused to see her mother as long as Margaret would not express confidence in Dr. Hyde. The trial was announced for April 1910.

Hyde's trial began in a bleak courtroom hardly likely to reflect the majesty of the sovereign State of Missouri. The chief prosecutor was James A. Reed, a leader of the state bar and its leading politician. It was an open secret that Mrs. Swope had retained him to strengthen the staff prosecutor; in fact, she paid the expenses of many of the special investigators and other specialists asked to prepare the case. Walsh, Hyde's attorney, had succeeded in having the court rule that the present trial would cover only the death of Colonel Swope. He also sought to limit the evidence to that relating to the Colonel's death only. The court ruled, however, that other deaths and alleged poisonings were tied to Hyde's plan to increase his wife's share in the Swope estate and that this provided a motive. One major development favored Hyde: the week before

the trial, Dr. Twyman had been operated on for a burst appendix and died thereafter. The state had lost the one witness best qualified to describe the symptoms of all three dead members of the family.

For background, witnesses reported the value of the estate to be almost $3,500,000, of which $1,500,000 was in the residuary estate to be divided among the surviving nephews and nieces. The next couple of weeks were filled by the testimony of the nurses regarding the treatment of the children. Cumulatively, this evidence was bound to be damaging, for each patient that Hyde visited had gotten worse following his ministrations. Even more damaging than the nurse's tales was the evidence of Hyde's traffic in poisons. Hugo Brecklein, a druggist with whom Dr. Hyde had an account, testified to Hyde's orders for culture media and potassium cyanide capsules. The latter poison Hyde had said he wanted for killing dogs. The druggist had insisted that Hyde call in person at his shop to receive the poison and cautioned him of the danger of having it in capsule form. Everyone was impressed with the druggist's statement that in 23 years of business he had never put cyanide in capsule form.

A Dr. Stewart, a bacteriologist, testified that Hyde had purchased cultures of diseases from him. These included diphtheria, typhoid, and other infectious bacteria. Stewart had visited Hyde's office in his absence and found that most of the typhoid culture had disappeared. He also related that he had made an inspection of the grounds of the Swope house but had found no evidence of typhoid. The day was a disastrous one for Hyde, and it concluded with the judge revoking his bail and committing him to the custody of the sheriff.

Dr. Hektoen from Michigan told a grisly tale of the autopsy of Colonel Swope. The body had been frozen solid, and heat had had to be applied to make it accessible. The brain, solid ice, was sawed into slices, and the examiners saw no evidence of a cerebral hemorrhage. The autopsy of Chrisman revealed no natural cause of death. Dr. Hektoen's opinion as to the cause of both deaths: some convulsing or paralyzing poison. Hektoen was an impressive witness, and Walsh made a long and searching cross-examination with no visible results. A Dr. Haines testified to his own toxicological examination of the organs of Chrisman and Colonel Swope. Chrisman's liver and stomach revealed strychnine. Cyanide was present in Swope's liver. Cyanide had also been found in the pieces of the capsule which Tom Swope had gathered from the sidewalk.

It was now May 1910, and the State rested. It was now the turn of the defense. The first witnesses were doctors who had different views on the causes of death. These local medicos seemed provincial after the State's doctors. As usual, the battle of the experts served more to confuse than enlighten. There was much testimony about whether convulsions occurred in typhoid cases, and statistical evidence did not prove conclusive.

After the doctors came Frances, Hyde's wife, a witness who provided a layman's view of the events. None of her evidence was impressive; her testimony chiefly concerned comments and remarks made by the nurses. Dr. Hyde followed his wife to the stand, and Walsh skillfully led him through a day's testimony. On the second day, Walsh had him explain his use of cyanide: "I had used cyanide for a number of years. This time I had used it for a different purpose, to remove nitrate of silver stains from my fingers." Hyde said he ordered it in capsules to preserve its strength. His cross-examination was by Virgil Conkling, the County Prosecutor. On the subject of cyanide, though claiming he had had it for years, Hyde was unable to name a single source in all that time. Conkling harassed the doctor to the point of making it plain that he had no explanation for his so-called years of using it. Hyde claimed that he never gave any member of the family a capsule: in this he had been directly contradicted by the nurses. When cross-examination ended, Walsh made no effort at redirect. It was apparent that Hyde had no explanation to offer for his interest in cyanide. The State recalled witnesses who testified to Hyde's giving them capsules. The case was winding down, each side having exhausted its supply of witnesses.

Each side was given ten hours for closing speeches. Prosecutor Reed painted a deadly picture by correlating the dates of the patients' attacks and Hyde's visits to the druggist for the cyanide. Walsh spent six and a half hours roving over the whole case, showing a good grasp of all the salient facts. The following day, Reed concluded with a fine summary of all the case for the prosecution, and the jury was sent off to consider the case.

All the next day, the jury debated the case, while rumors persisted that the jury stood eight to four for conviction. But a verdict did not come in, and the jury was sent away for the weekend. By this time, both sides expected a split jury and began looking ahead to another trial. When the court met on Monday morning, everyone was surprised to hear that the jury had reached a verdict. The foreman rose to announce that they found the defendant guilty of murder and set his punishment at life imprisonment. Hyde dropped into his seat, and Frances, sobbing, threw her arms around him. The press, questioning the jury, found that on the first count the jury had indeed stood eight to four for acquittal. The next day, that ratio had changed as the discussion went on until they were ten to two for guilty. On Sunday, the last two were brought over, and one stated the reason for the verdict: "Hyde was his own worst enemy. His own testimony convicted him."

Walsh encouraged his client with thoughts of the appeal, but Hyde stayed in jail. Here Mrs. Hyde's money proved most useful. The trial record of 4,200 pages—1,500,000 words—had to be transcribed and printed. Not until February 1911 did the attorneys go to Jefferson City to argue the appeal before the Missouri Supreme Court. The prosecution appeal brief was 479 pages long, and the defendant's hardly less prolix. Despite the sizeable record, the Court made its decision in two months.

The Court reversed the conviction due to errors in the admission of evidence and ordered a new trial. First, it found error in the evidence of Hunton's death in that Hyde did not know of the provision for Hunton in Colonel Swope's will and therefore had no motive for killing Hunton. It also concluded that there was not sufficient evidence that Hunton's death was due to the bleeding by Hyde. The justices ruled as well that the evidence did not establish that Chrisman was in fact poisoned and that it was error for the jury to have considered his case at all. Nor should the evidence of the two girls' illnesses due to typhoid be admitted, as there was no evidence that Hyde had used germs to make them ill.

The opinion seemed to limit the prosecution to the death of Colonel Swope, permitting only limited or no evidence about the other cases. In the defense camp there was rejoicing, and Mrs. Hyde drove to the jail in her electric brougham and after a visit with her husband went off to buy a new hat. Almost a year before, Frances had said, "I'll wear this hat until Clark's case is reversed, no matter how bad it gets." Now a shoddy thing of nondescript color and faded flowers, she had worn it everywhere. She emerged from a town shop with a bright blue one, with a big blue wing thrust out from it.

A new Judge, E. E. Porterfield, was named to handle the new trial. The Hydes, fresh from a trip to Colorado, were confident and relaxed, still supported by Walsh and his staff.

The retrial of a murder case is not unlike a second honeymoon. Not only has all the surprise been eliminated from the event, but the air of expectation, the possibility of the unknown occurrence, the mystery of what is to come is so reduced that the event has an entirely different character. There were few talesmen who had not read or formed an opinion about the case, and selecting a jury was prolonged.

It was November 21, 1911, a month after they began, that chief prosecutor Reed rose to make the opening address. (Since the first trial, he had been elected to the United States Senate, but he would not take his seat until the following March.) The case was now confined to the death of Colonel Swope, but there were endless arguments about what evidence was admissible, and the case moved at a snail's pace. When it was clear that Hyde did not intend to take the stand in view of his poor performance at the first trial, the prosecution decided to read into evidence all of his previous testimony.

Six weeks after it had begun, the trial had a real crisis. Harry Waldron, one of the jurymen, disappeared from his room at the hotel where the jury was sequestered. While police hunted for him, everyone marked

time. Three days later, he returned home, and his wife notified the court. Though he returned to the court, he was in no condition to sit on the jury, and, as there was no provision in those days for an alternate, the judge could only order a mistrial. Six weeks of the court's time had been wasted, but Walsh was delighted. A new trial was set for May 1912.

May came and went. The cast of characters had changed, and no one was anxious to bring the case to court. Floyd Jacobs had succeeded Virgil Conkling as county prosecutor. Hyde, out on bond, had returned to his medical practice; though he may have lacked patients, he had an office. Frances was still not reconciled with her mother and did not visit the Independence house. Walsh still steered the defense, and, in January 1913, the trial opened in the same ugly courtroom where twelve days were needed for the examination of prospective jurymen. Reed was back, a prestigious Senator, to open for the prosecution. Again the case was in crisis when a juryman named Higgins became ill in his hotel room with a fever of 102°. Visions of the Waldron episode occurred to all. Higgins was a special problem; he was a Christian Scientist, and there was the delicate problem of advising medical assistance. Higgins himself had confidence in the absent treatment, which he said his father was reputedly furnishing from some distant point. He did not improve, however, and he was finally dismissed. All parties agreed to accept a substitute, so another talesman was selected to join those who had already served three weeks.

There were new medical witnesses, chiefly for the defense, who never seemed to run out of doctors to call. But, all in all, the case was pretty much as previously heard. On the last day, the crowd was entertained by the presence of Frank James, brother of the notorious Jesse, and who had himself been tried for murder in Missouri thirty years before and had been acquitted.

The jury retired with the case on a Thursday. When Sunday arrived with no decision, a deadlock seemed apparent. When the jury reported a deadlock with a vote of nine to three for acquittal, the judge declared another mistrial. Hyde, while expressing disappointment at not being acquitted, declared himself ready to keep fighting until he was. Mrs. Hyde had already spent $150,000, of which sum Walsh was said to have received one third. Rumor had prosecutor Reed receiving $25,000 from Mrs. Swope.

Thereafter, the suit seems to have drifted, with no one anxious to push it. Months passed. The spring of 1915 came, and the prosecution put the case over till the fall. That year, Frances Hyde gave birth to a son, James Logan Hyde. By December 1916, another new prosecutor had inherited the case and appeared to want nothing to do with it. The court warned the parties that the case must go to trial or be dismissed. On April 9, 1917, three days after Congress had declared war on Germany, Judge Porterfield dismissed the indictment against Hyde and the case was over.

It had been seven years, lacking two days, since the first trial began. Hyde expressed regret with the dismissal; he would not have the vindication he sought. He was happy, however, at being a father again, this time of a daughter. The other participants in the case did not fade from public view. Reed served three terms in the United States Senate and achieved national prominence in his battle with President Wilson over the League of Nations. Frank Walsh became active in the Mooney-Billings case, serving for years as an unpaid volunteer counsel to the men who finally won their freedom from prison in California.

The Hydes had domestic difficulties, and Frances sued for divorce in October 1920, obtaining custody of the children. Hyde gave up his medical practice, and in 1934, still a vigorous man of 64, was stricken with cerebral hemorrhage and died while reading a newspaper. □

J'Accuse

By William L. DeAndrea

How expensive is your ego?

Mine cost me eighty bucks recently, plus tax, when I could not resist buying a copy of the second edition of *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers* edited by John M. Reilly and published in this country by St. Martin's Press, because I am in it. It's hard to get your money's worth when you spend that kind of dough. Setting my ego aside, though (I know, but we can move it if we all get out and push), TCCMW2 comes close.

For one thing, it's a valuable reference book. There are undoubtedly more mistakes than I noticed – Michael Z. Lewin's middle initial changing to A., for instance – but in a book this size (about eleven hundred pages) mistakes are going to happen. As a fan of many talented but obscure writers, especially British ones, I was glad to have some additional knowledge of them. It was also nice to learn that Frank Parrish and Ivor Drummond are the same guy, and things like that.

TCCMW2 is a book to read as well as a book to look things up in. Every author gets at least a paragraph, most get more, of intelligent appraisal. Except for Raymond Chandler. Instead of a critical appraisal of Chandler's work, we get Robert B. Parker kindly explaining to us how Chandler's work paved the way for the greatness that is Robert B. Parker. In all fairness, Parker also does a very good one about Dashiell Hammett, not mentioning himself at all, and actually offering real honest-to-God insights. Other essayists contributing to the book include Bill Pronzini, Max Allan Collins, Francis M. Nevins, Jr., H.R.F. Keating, Marvin Lachman, Allen Hubin, and an all-star cast of thousands, a lot of them contributors to TAD. Jon L. Breen did the entry on me, and very kind he was, too. Would I have spent eighty dollars on the book if he said I stank? No.

But the most interesting part of the book is the one in which they give the authors an uncensored and un-space-restricted chance to say whatever they want. Of course, the dead authors had to pass the opportunity up, but a lot of living people (including Robert B. Parker) apparently left that part of the questionnaire blank. It's a shame, because among the essays of the people who did respond, there's some marvelous stuff. Some words and phrases keep popping up – "entertainment," "craftsman," "teller of tales." Some writers just duplicate the information in the reference portion of the entry. But when professional writers let their hair down, it can be marvelous.

Gavin Black is petulant: "I can't do the bang bang action stuff which makes for the really big sales. Can't read the products of the boys who do it so successfully. I like characters who at least vaguely resemble human beings." A writer who is not a millionaire, who has never shared Black's feelings at one time or another, doesn't vaguely resemble a human being, either.

Alan Caillou is irked: "One even finds oneself submitting *outlines* – and I am quite sure that this is not a healthy trend. I do not believe Victor Hugo ever asked his public (represented by the Sales Department and the Distributors), 'Should I kill off Jean Valjean around chapter 27? Or should I let him live happily ever after?' But that's the kind of thing we are headed for, if we don't fight it."

Michael Gilbert unloads on academic-style critics: "So I am an entertainer? A fact that [critic's name] in his review of one of my recent books found 'disappointing'. In fact, he went on to say he found this book less disappointing, in this respect, than earlier

ones. I find the whole thing puzzling. What is a writer to do if he is not allowed to entertain?"

So does Patricia Moyes: "I do not feel that what Noel Coward called 'a talent to amuse' is something to be despised. Frankly, I would sooner divert people than put their souls through an emotional meatgrinder, and I have long ago stopped apologizing for not being a 'serious' writer."

John Buxton Hilton is schizo: "I believe that the distinction between suspense fiction and the 'literary' novel is an unreal one *and my effort is to bridge the gap.*" I added the italics, not to point out the contradiction in Hilton's sentence so much as to emphasize how common a feeling it is among genre writers: "My stuff is better than ninety-five percent of that mainstream crap—oh, God, please let them think of me as a mainstream writer!"

Helen McCloy holds the banner of genre aloft: "In the 19th century someone said that a picture should never tell a story. In the 20th century, a great many writers seem to believe that a story should never tell a story, so the readers turn to the painful prestige of non-fiction, or to the detective story."

Mike Nevins is modest: "My concept of the ideal mystery novel is one that combines Erle Stanley Gardner's crackling pace and legal ingenuity, Ellery Queen's labyrinthine plot structure and deductive fair play, and Cornell Woolrich's feel for suspense and the anguish of living and compelling visual style. If I ever come close to writing that ideal book, most of the credit will go to those three masters." Well. What the guy is talking about here is the prospect of the greatest mystery novel of all time. If *I* ever write one with those elements, I'm not only going to hog all the credit for myself, I'm going to make a serious suggestion to the MWA that they change the name of their award to "The Edgar and Willie." Actually, I hope Mike puts the book together someday, so I can read it. I like his un-ideal stuff already.

And Donald E. Westlake is funny and enlightening in two sentences: "My subject (unless I am wrong about this) seems to be Bewilderment. Or don't you agree?"

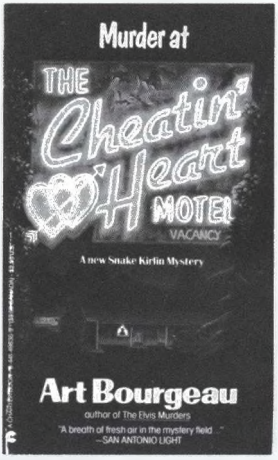
This is just a sampling. There's lot's more.

There are some odd omissions in the book, though. Franklin Bandy, for instance, Edgar winner in 1979, is not here. Neither is Martha Grimes, which is really amazing. I mean, I'm not that crazy about her work, but that's just me. She gets talked about and written about, and she wins awards, and people like her stuff. Furthermore, the way Little, Brown has been blitzing her around with an expensive ad campaign, I don't see how anyone could have forgotten her if they wanted to. I bet Frank and Martha aren't going to cough up any eighty bucks.

This is the new column, the third different one I've done for TAD, which must be some kind of a record. The title is supposed to be for fun—it *doesn't* mean I'm going to use this space every issue to find fault, although there is plenty of fault to be found. The idea is to look at trends and events, and works in various media (my God, can he mean books and movies and TV shows?) and tell you what I think about them, and you write letters to tell me what a jerk I am, and I rebut, and everybody has a lot of fun.

Mike Seidman is not to be blamed for this, by the way. I will not say that he had drunk too much of Warner Books' liquor at the Mysterious Press–Warner's party at the Edgars, celebrating their new joint venture when he gave the okay. No, really, I won't. I'll just say that the law wouldn't hold him to a promise he made that night, but I am meaner than the law.

That party, by the way, is symbolic of the nicest trend I've noticed since our return to the States—mysteries are *hot!* Not just to the people who read this magazine, and not even to the larger population of people who read the genre for fun, but to *publishers.* My first book was published in March of 1978, the week of the Second International Congress of Crime Writers, held at the now defunct Biltmore Hotel in New York. Not only did I see my book in a store for the first time (and saw somebody actually *buying* it) but I got to meet people who had been my idols for years. I mean, Fred Dannay invited me to his house. There were panel discussions and speeches. Editors came, and publishers and marketing people. And what was the message?



The mystery was dead.

A hell of a time to start a career, I thought.

Oh, they'd go on publishing them, but nobody was going to make any money doing it. It was just a sentimental thing. Writers were advised to keep the day job; the readership for mystery stories just wasn't there.

Things did not improve. It turned out that the readership was there, all right, but the publishers (a lot of them, anyway) filled the gap more economically by reprinting the works of dead or foreign authors, much more economical for a dying genre, since an author tends to look upon money earned in a foreign country as found money, and the family of a dead man (or woman) is disinclined to say no to any money offered for work an ancestor did in 1937 or whatever. Encouraging signs were not easy to come by, especially when one of the genre's most prominent fans announced at a Bouchercon that enough mysteries had already been published to keep him busy for the rest of his life, so he didn't care if anybody ever wrote any more. I let him live.

And little by little it inched back. I made a living. I got married to another mystery writer. We went to live for a time in England.

In Britain in 1984, as it had been in the United States six years earlier, the mystery was dead.

I told colleagues there not to worry, this had happened in the States, publishers are trendier than Madonna fans, it's come back in the States, it'll come back here. Then we came home and saw just how *far* it had come back here. If the American mystery story died in 1978, in 1985 it went to heaven. Everybody I've spoken to is working, selling, publishing. There are genre mysteries on bestseller lists, mystery writers on the covers of important magazines. But there's better news than that. Publishers are going out and *asking* people to do books. This is a far cry from the days when you'd submit your manuscript with an apology for making them read it.

There are new lines, new imprints. Paperback houses (Bantam, Avon, Pinnacle, Tor) are into, or getting into, hardcover. This is an exciting possibility, since it means a writer might actually be able to get critical attention without signing away half of the money he's likely to make from the only source out of which there's really money to be made.

I've decided that it's *better* to start a career when a genre's in the pits. If you can stick it out, it makes the good times seem even better.

Finally, something the *New York Times* would put in the "Follow Up on the News" column. I call it "Nice to Make Predictions That Come True."

Back when I first wrote for TAD, doing "Paper Crimes" in between Fred Dueren and Ray Obstfeld, I reviewed *The Most Likely Suspects,* a first novel by Art Bourgeau. I praised the writing, came down pretty hard on the plot. I said the potential was there for when Bourgeau put it all together. He has, and more, in *Murder at the Cheatin' Heart Motel* (Charter, $2.95). The book is another story of Southern rowdies Snake Kirlin and F.T. Zevich, and it's just as funny and just as well written as the previous ones. But this time, the plot is there. It's not *The Moonstone* or anything, but it doesn't have to be. What it is is a well-thought-out and well-executed story that grows out of the setting and the characters. And there's something else, a sensitivity that used to be buried in laughs. *Cheatin' Heart Motel* is Art Bourgeau's first fully realized book. It was always worthwhile to seek out Bourgeau's books and read them. Now it's imperative. □

MINOR OFFENSES

By Edward D. Hoch

Starting off with magazines for a change, I was especially impressed by Ruth Rendell's "The Convolvulus Clock" in the August issue of *EQMM*. It's a powerful tale of an aging woman who becomes a murderer almost without realizing what she's doing, propelled by circumstances toward a truly tragic ending. I don't know of another writer active today who brings such skill to the writing of psychological suspense. I yield to no one in my admiration for the formal detective story, with its clues and red herrings and locked rooms, but there is room in our field for a writer of Rendell's skill, whatever she attempts. A fine group of her earlier short stories has been collected as *The New Girl Friend and Other Stories*, taking its title from her controversial 1983 Edgar winner. It was published in London in October of '85, and I imagine Pantheon will be bringing it out in America at just about the time you're reading these words.

At this writing, *Espionage* is still going strong, having published its fourth issue and preparing for the fifth one. Its schedule seems to be more of a quarterly than a bimonthly, but we hope it continues. Though the quality of the stories and articles varies, a number of good writers, not often seen in the other mystery magazines, have appeared there.

I'd hoped to review the first issue of *The New Black Mask Quarterly* in this column, but, as of this writing in late June, copies are impossible to come by. A few were distributed at the booksellers' convention at the end of May, but the publication is impossible to find anywhere in New York City, including the mystery bookshops. Even a call to the Harcourt Brace office did no good. Let's hope distribution improves with future issues.

The best anthology to appear in the first half of 1985 is without doubt *The Ethnic Detectives* edited by Bill Pronzini and Martin H. Greenberg (Dodd, Mead, $16.95). The seventeen stories represent just about every ethnic group imaginable, and as the title indicates these are detective stories, by many of the best writers in the business. Robert van Gulik, Eric Ambler, H.R.F. Keating, Georges Simenon, John Ball, and Ed McBain are all represented, and there are even three new stories never before published in America. One of these, "The Witch, Yazzie, and the Nine of Clubs" by Tony Hillerman, was the third-prize winner in the 1981 contest sponsored by the International Congress of Crime Writers. Another new story, "The Sanchez Sacraments" by Marcia Muller, is the best of many good stories I've seen from this writer, a tale of crime in the past that seems to evoke a sense of religion and mystery reminiscent of Chesterton. I found it a special delight because it's so different from any of Muller's previous stories.

While we're speaking of Dodd, Mead, I want to commend this publisher on its unusual willingness to bring out collections of mystery short stories as well as anthologies. I know of no other general trade publisher with three new collections of mystery short stories on its 1985 list. One of these, admittedly, is Agatha Christie's sure seller, *Miss Marple: The Collected Short Stories*. The other two, however, are *Murder Round the Clock*, a collection of thirteen Pierre Chambrun stories from *EQMM*, and *The House on Plymouth Street and Other Stories* by the late Ursula Curtiss, again mainly from *EQMM*. Both are valuable additions to the mystery genre, and it's good to have the stories collected between hard covers. (The Curtiss volume, by the way, has an introduction by the author's sister, mystery writer Mary McMullen.)

Another notable collection of short stories is Patricia Highsmith's *Slowly, Slowly in the Wind* (Penzler Books, $14.95), published in England in 1979 but making its first appearance here. Half of the twelve stories are from *EQMM*, but most of the others are new to the U.S. Not all are crime tales, though they contain the ingredients of danger and guilt that have made Highsmith's works long-time favorites with discriminating readers.

No Harm Undone, edited by Cathleen Jordan (Davis, $3.50 paper), is a new anthology of thirty stories from *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, all first published there between 1958 and 1978. The generous selection includes familiar names, along with some that are not so familiar, and editor Jordan is to be congratulated for rescuing a number of good stories from undeserved oblivion. □

What About Murder?

By Jon L. Breen

• Albert, Walter. **Detective and Mystery Fiction: An International Bibliography of Secondary Sources.** Madison, Ind.: Brownstone, 1985. xii + 781 pp. Index.

Though covering roughly the same ground as earlier efforts by David and Ann Skene Melvin (*Crime, Detective, Espionage, Mystery, and Thriller Fiction and Film: A Comprehensive Bibliography of Critical Writings Through 1979*, Greenwood, 1980) and Timothy and Julia Johnson (*Crime Fiction Criticism: An Annotated Bibliography*, Garland, 1981), this volume is the first truly successful comprehensive secondary bibliography in the crime and mystery fiction field, an extraordinary achievement that puts all previous attempts in the shade. Entries total more than 5,000, compared with the Johnsons' 1,810 and the Skene Melvins' 1,628. Entries are divided into four sections: Bibliographies, Dictionaries, etc. (182 entries), General Reference (451 books and 886 articles), Dime Novels, Juveniles, and Pulps (503), and Authors (by far the largest section with 3,167 items). Excluded, as usual in general sources, is the already well-covered Sherlock Holmes material. Albert also excludes material specifically on films, TV, radio, and stage adaptations.

The full range of possible sources has been consulted, from books to pamphlets to popular magazines to scholarly journals to fanzines to dealer catalogs. Entries on individual authors cite representation in other biographical and bibliographic references,

including *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection, A Catalogue of Crime,* the Hubin bibliographies, and the *Author Biographies Master Index,* among others. Names of authors and characters, titles, and subjects are cited in the index, with reference to entry number rather than page for easy locating.

All entries are annotated, some extensively. Many are signed by a distinguished group of contributors, including such familiar names as Robert E. Briney, Robert C.S. Adey, Greg Goode, Kathleen L. Maio, Everett F. Bleiler, J. Randolph Cox, Will Murray, John Nieminski, Robert Sampson, John L. Apostolou, Iwan Hedman, Jiro Kimura, and Steven A. Stilwell. Annotations are occasionally critical, usually descriptive.

The book is particularly commendable for its extensive coverage of non-English-language material. Annotations originally written in French, Italian, and Japanese are translated into English. The section on Edogawa Rampo made me wish that at least a selection from his several volumes of criticism were available in English. Another most valuable feature is the strong coverage of juvenile and dime novel fiction, often ignored in general studies.

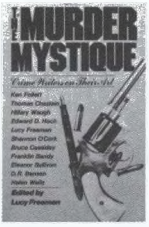
Though errors are inevitable in a work of this magnitude, the editor's meticulousness has kept the number down. Some titles are duplicated in different entries (for example, entries A128 and D401 are the same item). Hugh Wiley is miscalled John at one point. There are undoubtedly others, but quite likely fewer than in any of the handful of mystery references of similar comprehensiveness.

• Benson, Raymond. **The James Bond Bedside Companion.** New York: Dodd, Mead, 1984. xiii + 256 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index.

This thorough, oversized volume occupies approximately the same place among the mountain of Ian Fleming sources as Sanders and Lovallo's *Agatha Christie Companion* among the overwealth of words on their subject: a consolidation of mostly familiar information available in other sources but hitherto not in one place. Sections include a chronological overview of "The James Bond Phenomenon," a biographical remembrance of Fleming, a portrait of the character of Bond, a critical survey of the novels and short story collections about Bond (including the pastiches of Kingsley Amis and John Gardner), and a critical survey of the Bond films (through the 1983 productions of *Octopussy* and *Never Say Never Again*). Novel entries include a plot summary plus glosses of style and themes, characters, and "Highlights and Other Ingredients." Film entries include detailed summaries of production, screenplay, direction, actors and characters, and other aspects. In viewing both the novels and the films, Benson proves a refreshingly hard-to-please critic. His facts and opinions are equally interesting and worthy of the fan's attention, and the whole book has a meticulous and authoritative feel to it. Benson includes a one-page glossary of Bondian terms, acronyms, and initialisms. Appendices list other secondary sources on Fleming and Bond and book-by-book lists of Bond's weapons and injuries.

•Breen, Jon L. **Novel Verdicts: A Guide to Courtroom Fiction.** Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1984. xiii + 266 pp. Bibliography, index.

The main section consists of 421 annotated entries of novels and short story collections that include significant courtroom action. Coverage is limited to American and British courts and other courts in English-speaking jurisdictions. Though mainstream books have been included, the majority of the titles are from the crime-mystery genre, including



complete coverage of the courtroom novels of Erle Stanley Gardner and nearly complete coverage of Sara Woods, Roderic Jeffries/Jeffrey Ashford, Henry Cecil, Arthur Train, Michael Underwood, and other specialists. Annotations include both plot summary and critical comment, with a symbol identifying the proportion of the book devoted to trial scenes. An unannotated supplementary list identifies more than 200 additional titles. Included are a general index (authors, titles, and names of actual persons mentioned in the annotations), a cause-of-action index, and a jurisdiction index (by state or country). In the kind of error he so gleefully pounces on in other writers' works, Breen mistitles Henry Wade's *The Verdict of You All* as *The Evidence of You All.*

• Brogan, John. **The Official Travis McGee Quiz Book.** Introduction by John D. MacDonald. New York: Fawcett Gold Medal, 1984. 114 pp.

There are thirty quizzes, all multiple choice, divided into three categories: "Apprentice Detective," "Super Sleuth," and "Salvage Expert." The degree of difficulty increases appropriately. There is fun to be had here for the devoted McGee fan, but neither the quizzes nor the subject's good-natured introduction have any real reference or scholarly value.

• Burack, Sylvia K. **Writing Mystery and Crime Fiction.** Boston: The Writer, 1985. 208 pp. Bibliography.

A well-known group of contemporary practitioners offer tips on writing as well as insights into their own works in this collection of 26 essays, most reprinted from recent issues of *The Writer* magazine. Similar in title to earlier *Writer* collections edited by the late A.S. Burack (see WAM #87, *Writing Detective and Mystery Fiction,* and #88, *Writing Suspense and Mystery Fiction*), this is an all-new collection, eschewing any historical reprints in its emphasis on the current market. The final two chapters, "A Layman's Guide to Law and the Courts" and "Glossary of Legal Terms," are dedicated to helping the writer get the details of jurisprudence right. A two-page bibliography includes both reference sources on mystery fiction and treatises on police history, techniques, and procedures.

Some of the essays reveal a strong strain of iconoclasm. Loren D. Estleman opens a sound and helpful article with a gratuitous slam at Ellery Queen. (If he really believes the '30s novels of Queen and other Golden Age greats are easily solvable by present-day mystery readers, he's a much better armchair sleuth than I am. I suspect he's really thinking of Charlie Chan movies from the same era.) Max Byrd, also impatient with the traditional mystery plot, takes a somewhat milder swipe at Agatha Christie. Most shocking of all, Stanley Ellin is left cold by Conan Doyle ("A pox, I say, on the posturing Holmes and the goggle-eyed Watson"), believing that Doyle lacked the saving grace of irony. Other contributors are Catherine Aird, Jean L. Backus, Cecilia Bartholomew, Rex Burns, Rosemary Gatenby, Sue Grafton, Bill Granger, William Hallahan, Paul Henissart, Clark Howard, P.D. James, Peter Lovesey, Dan J. Marlowe, Patricia Moyes, Marcia Muller, Al Nussbaum, Lillian O'Donnell, Gerald Petievich, Richard Martin Stern, Mary Stewart, Dorothy Uhnak, Michael Underwood, and Phyllis A. Whitney.

• Christopher, Joe R. **Queen's Books Investigated; or, Queen Is In the Accounting House.** Stephenville, Texas: Carolingian Press, 1983. 35 pp.

Christopher, an English professor, reviewer, and frequent fanzine contributor, gathers his Queenian essays in a small pamphlet limited to thirty numbered and signed copies. It is surely destined to be one of the rarest collectors' items in the field of mystery scholarship, as well as a highly entertaining gathering. Most of the short pieces have been previously published, three in *The Armchair Detective,* five in the *Queen Canon Bibliophile* (including a revision of one of the *TAD* articles), and one in *Jabberwocky: The Journal of the Lewis Carroll Society.* Several of these pieces are newly revised. Not previously published is a short parody, "The Persian Fez Mystery," which represents one of the best attempts to imitate the Queen prose style for comic effect.

• Freeman, Lucy, ed. **The Murder Mystique: Crime Writers and Their Art.** New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982. 139 pp.

Here is a good collection of essays on mystery writing, ostensibly intended for the reader rather than the prospective writer of

crime fiction. The book is divided into two sections: "On the Genre" and "On Technique."

Bruce Cassiday leads off section one with an interesting account of mystery fiction's recent re-merging with the "mainstream," whence it came in the works of such nineteenth-century novelists as Dickens and Collins. Thomas Chastain, in one of the weaker pieces, writes of private eyes, presenting a scenario for a Spade–Marlowe collaboration I hope nobody ever tries to write. Hillary Waugh is excellent on police procedurals, a form he still seems to like so much one wonders why he quit writing them. Editor Freeman discusses Freudian psychology in the mystery, and Helen Wells offers a very welcome survey of juvenile mystery fiction.

In section two, Ken Follett shows amazing honesty in an article on characterization, candidly describing the tricks he uses and pointing out some of the drawbacks in the plots of his bestsellers. Though *The Eye of the Needle* is as sure a bet for classic status as any thriller of the '70s, Follett insists it would have been a better book if the second half were done differently. D.R. Bensen writes entertainingly of hackery. Franklin Bandy, in a discussion of hardcover-vs.-softcover, relates the story of his Edgar-winning paperback, *Deceit and Deadly Lies*. Edward D. Hoch is interesting on film adaptations of mysteries, and Eleanor Sullivan quotes from some of her interviews (and other people's) with various mystery writers. In the most unusual entry in the book, Shannon OCork presents a little-magazine short story disguised as an article on fictional technique —or is it the other way around?

• Geherin, David. **John D. MacDonald.** New York: Frederick Ungar, 1982. ix+202 pp. Bibliography, index.

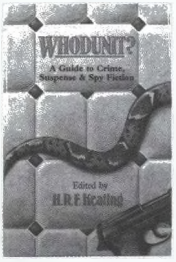
This is the first book-length critical study of MacDonald. Following a brief biographical chapter, Geherin devotes a mere 31 pages to his subject's pulp apprenticeship and non-series novels. Chapters three through seven, the major portion of the book, are devoted to a title-by-title discussion of the Travis McGee series and a discussion of McGee's character. Whether this emphasis on McGee is justified is arguable, but the volume does an excellent job of presenting MacDonald's strengths and weaknesses as a novelist and pinpointing his place in contemporary American literature. Geherin chooses exemplary quotes with particular effectiveness. As is so often the case with critical volumes in the genre, the use of plot summary sometimes seems a bit excessive.

• Keating, H.R.F., ed. **Whodunit: A Guide to Crime, Suspense and Spy Fiction.** New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1982. 320 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index.

This reference volume is one of the best, including some of the most beautifully written and most penetrating (albeit brief) essays on mystery fiction. Keating has chosen his collaborators well, and his quality-control is usually impeccable. In his introduction, the editor discusses the differences between crime fiction and mainstream fiction. A section called "Crime Fiction and Its Categories" follows, including essays by Reginald Hill (on pre-history, concentrating on DeFoe and William Godwin), Keating (crediting Conan Doyle with establishing crime fiction as a separate category), Robert Barnard (on the classical British novel, especially on Christie, Sayers, Allingham, and Marsh), Julian Symons (on the American hardboiled school), Hillary Waugh (on the American police procedural), Michael Gilbert (on its British counterpart), Eleanor Sullivan (on the short story), Jessica Mann (on the suspense novel), Jerry Palmer (on the thriller), Michele Slung (on the Gothic, mostly the original rather than contemporary type), John Gardner (an excellent and controversial piece on the espionage novel, rating American Charles McCarry higher than John Le Carre and claiming that only James Bond will live on among crime fiction characters since Sherlock Holmes). These authors are obviously well-qualified and do an excellent job in a short space to capture the essence of their subjects.

The next section is called "How I Write My Books." Answering the question are Stanley Ellin, P.D. James, Desmond Bagley, Dorothy Eden, Patricia Highsmith, Gregory Mcdonald, Lionel Davidson, Len Deighton, Eric Ambler, and editor Keating. For all but Bagley (who used a word processor) and Davidson, actual samples of working copy are included. All these essays are interesting reading, Bagley's most of all.

Next comes "Writers and Their Books: A Consumer's Guide," a section based in part



on material in *Novels and Novelists: A Guide to the World of Fiction* (St. Martin's, 1980) edited by Martin Seymour Smith. Over 140 pages, a team composed of Keating, Hill, Dorothy B. Hughes, and Melvyn Barnes comment on some 500 crime fiction writers. Each entry includes a short biographical–critical paragraph followed by a listing of (usually) two or three major works. The works are rated with between one and ten stars in four areas: characterization, plot, readability, and tension. The ratings present two problems: the groups of stars are difficult to count in such profusion (seven, eight, and nine are hard to tell apart easily) and would better have been represented by a numeral. And the ratings, especially when one writer is compared with another, give some odd messages. Sara Woods, for example, is rated more highly than her page-mate Cornell Woolrich. Michael Avallone is given the nod over George Bagby (though not over the same author writing as Hampton Stone or Aaron Marc Stein). Ross Macdonald rates higher on readability (and in other areas, too) than John D. MacDonald, whom many believe to be at least his equal. Adding insult to injury, both Philip MacDonald and Gregory Mcdonald also rate higher than JDM! Robert B. Parker's *Promised Land,* an Edgar-winning novel with almost no plot at all, gets nine stars in that category. In an example of the courtesy toward contributors often seen in references of this type, John Gardner's James Bond pastiche *License Renewed* is rated much more highly here than in most reviews I have seen. Despite its idiosyncrasies and lapses, though, this consumer's guide is a useful one. Portraits of some of the authors are included.

Keating is credited as sole author of the next section, "The People of Crime Fiction," an illustrated biographical section on 90 major characters in crime fiction, mostly covered two to a page. Here, Keating's ability to summarize the appeal of a book, writer, or character in a few witty sentences is seen at its best. The illustrations are drawn from movie and TV stills, magazine and book illustrations, postage stamps, and (in some cases) original portraits. (Hillary Waugh in his depiction of Chief of Police Fred Fellows reveals a professional-caliber cartooning talent.) Finally, psychiatrist Philip Graham takes up the age-old question: "Why People Read Crime Fiction."

Though the various illustrations add much to the interest and attractiveness in this volume, they are also responsible for some absurdities, such as a comic strip chart rating tough detectives on their hardboiledness quotient from one to ten. The author believes Archie Goodwin (a five) is more hardboiled than Mike Shayne (a four). True, Archie writes a good tough prose and is a handy man to have around in an emergency, but he

prefers milk to cognac and rarely gets into a fight with fists or gun. Shayne, bracketed with insurance investigator Dave Brandstetter in the boiling contest, has been sadly misjudged.

Given Keating's profound knowledge of the crime fiction field and his strong editorial abilities, it is surprising so many factual howlers found their way into this book. Symons claims *Red Harvest* was the only Continental Op novel. What about *The Dain Curse*? The editor himself inaccurately states that Ellery Queen was the *narrator* of most of the books in which he appeared. Chester Himes is said to have begun writing when almost fifty—that may have been when he started on detective fiction, but he was a well-established mainstream novelist for many years before that. Jerry Palmer is allowed to say that Chandler and Hammett "decided to put murder back where it belonged" in the mid-'30s, by which time Hammett's creative life was virtually over.

• Meyers, Richard. **TV Detectives.** San Diego: Barnes, 1981. xii + 276 pp. Illustrations, index.

Meyers offers a year-by-year history, generously illustrated, of television detective series. Individual specials, movies, miniseries, and anthology entries are generally excluded. The author writes entertainingly with much lively critical comment. He admits his selection criteria are not always consistently applied, and one distinct bias is toward comedy. He offers an evocative tribute to *Car 54, Where Are You?* a great show about cops but surely not a mystery or detective program. *Get Smart* and *Barney Miller* also get extended treatment. Oddly, though, *Batman*, more nearly a detective show than any of these, is discussed only glancingly. Few will share all Meyers's opinions as to shows' relative quality. For me, he seems over-kind to the William Conrad *Nero Wolfe* series.

Meyers sometimes fails to identify the literary source of a TV series character. Lawrence G. Blochman is not credited with the creation of Dr. Coffee, nor is the G.G. Fickling team credited with Honey West. Some of the implications he draws reveal a sketchy knowledge of some corners of printed detective fiction: Inspector Duff, a character in Earl Derr Biggers's Charlie Chan novels of the '20s and '30s, could hardly have been named in honor of actor Howard Duff. Meyers seems to believe that Dashiell Hammett wrote about the Continental Op and Sam Spade *after* he created Nick and Nora Charles in *The Thin Man* (see page 41). And for a purely television-oriented gaffe, it is surely mistaken to imply that Peter Falk's Columbo was virtually the same character he earlier played in *The Trials of O'Brien*.

Nitpicks aside, a most enjoyable book on a hitherto little explored subject.

• Nevins, Francis M., Jr., and Stanich, Ray. **The Sound of Detection: Ellery Queen's Adventures in Radio.** Madison, Ind.: Brownstone, 1983. vii + 109 pp. Illustrations.

Nevins presents a narrative history of the Ellery Queen radio show, followed by an episode-by-episode chronological listing of the series prepared in collaboration with Stanich. Though ostensibly of greatest interest to radio buffs, this entertaining book should be read by all Queen fans, since it includes considerable biographical information about Frederic Dannay and Manfred B. Lee that was not available to Nevins at the time he wrote his definitive Queenian study, *Royal Bloodline* (WAM #201).

Among the book's most interesting revelations is the involvement of Anthony Boucher in writing many of the later Queen radio scripts in collaboration with Lee when Dannay was too busy with other projects. It is appropriate that Boucher, as directly influenced by Queen as any detective novelist of his time, at least for a time *was* Ellery Queen.

• Panek, LeRoy L. **The Special Branch: The British Spy Novel, 1890–1980.** Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981. 288 pp.

In his *Watteau's Shepherds* (see WAM #80), Panek wrote one of the best books extant on the classical British detective novel. Here he does nearly as good a job on spy fiction. He offers individual chapters on seventeen writers, some pioneers (William LeQueux, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Erskine Childers), some acknowledged masters (John Buchan, Graham Greene, Eric Ambler, Geoffrey Household), some relatively neglected (at least by critics) (Francis Beeding, Manning Coles, Adam Hall), some figures of controversy (Sydney Horler, Sapper, Peter Cheyney, Ian Fleming), some contemporary bestsellers (Len Deighton, John Le Carré, Frederick Forsyth). Panek puts Fleming in perspective as a minor writer in every way except popular appeal, a commodity the creator of James Bond presumably would have settled for. He points out that Le Carré, unlike most of his fellow espionage practitioners, is more a detective story than an adventure writer.

Though this is an excellent book, there are some things to complain about. The lack of both an index and a bibliography is unfortunate. And an appalling number of careless mistakes have been allowed by Panek and his editors to creep into print. Two James Bond heroines are miscalled Honeychild Rider and Tiffany Chase. There are references to authors Carroll J. Dailey (Carroll John Daly) and Richard Osborne (Usborne). A Nazi figure is misspelled Martin Borman. Most incredibly and embarrassingly of all, Panek devotes a whole chapter to a writer (Horler), misspelling his first name throughout as Sidney!

• Peterson, Audrey. **Victorian Masters of Mystery.** New York: Ungar, 1984. vii + 235 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index.

A Professor of English at California State University–Long Beach, Peterson presents a readable and unexceptionable summary of the lives and works of several nineteenth-century writers of detective fiction. Most of her material has been covered in depth in earlier works, particularly the chapters on Collins, Dickens, and Conan Doyle. Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu is also the subject of an individual chapter, while "Some Minor Voices" includes shorter accounts of Mary Elizabeth Braddon, James Payn (freshest subject treated in the book), and Anna Katharine Green, the only American discussed. The Dickens chapter is most notable for a summary of the various theories of how *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* would have been completed. Though a good introduction for someone new to the field, the book has little to offer the experienced reader.

• Pronzini, Bill. **Gun in Cheek.** Introduction by Ed McBain. New York: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1982. 264 pp. Bibliography, index.

This volume is unique among books on the genre. Pronzini believes that the good writers of mystery, detective, and espionage fiction have received more than their share of attention in past studies and that it is time to give some credit to the bad writers. Thus he spends many pages quoting choice bits of wonderfully horrible writing, summarizing elaborately implausible plots, and otherwise celebrating crime fiction's "alternative classics." With the wrong touch, this kind of book could degenerate into rock-throwing and coffin-kicking, but Pronzini's approach is good-humored, even loving. He really enjoys these awful writers, in a way that possibly only another totally-immersed popular fiction buff can understand. There is no bile in his descriptions, except perhaps when he confronts the pernicious racism of a writer such as Sydney Horler or the frightening social attitudes of Mickey Spillane. The tone for the volume is set by Ed McBain's introduction. McBain (a.k.a. Evan Hunter) spends nearly all his space quoting embarrassing passages from his own (mostly early) work, and he expresses mock resentment at their not being included in the text. (One example: "...her voice sounded deep and throaty even when she spoke.") In his own preface, Pronzini cites a line from his first novel, *The Stalker* ("When would this phantasmagoria that was all too real reality end? he asked himself"), and claims the author of such a bit of prose must be uniquely qualified to write an appreciation of bad writing.

Inevitably, some of the writers Pronzini implicitly labels bad are ones others think are good: Gaston Leroux, Richard S. Prather, Gladys Mitchell, Ross H. Spencer (whose one-sentence-to-a-line-and-no-internal-punctuation style Pronzini parodies tellingly), even Carter Brown (the staggeringly prolific Australian who got consistently good reviews from Anthony Boucher). One of the supposed "alternate classics," Gwen Bristow and Bruce Manning's *The Invisible Host* (1930), the novel that anticipated by several years the plot structure of Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None*, is regarded as a *real* classic by some readers. And at least a few of the writers discussed (Robert Leslie Bellem, Michael Avallone, and Harry Stephen Keeler) are so unique and so entertaining in their outrageous excesses as to be beyond any judgment of good and bad.

Among the books Pronzini discusses at

Writing is like Prostitution.

First you do it for the love of it,
Then you do it for a few friends,
And finally you do it for money.

-Moliere

Whether you're writing for the love of it, writing for a few friends, or writing for a living, WRITER'S DIGEST is right for you.

Writer's Digest Reveals The Tricks Of The Trade

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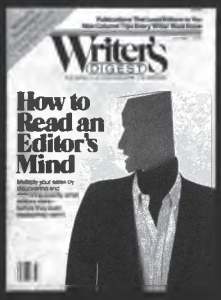

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greatest length: Milton M. Raison's *Murder in a Lighter Vein* (1947), a mystery with a radio background in which the victim, comedian Artie Aragon (not the boxer), wants to insert his familiar tagline, "Wanna woo-woo?" into the script of a production of *Cyrano de Bergerac;* Eric Heath's *Murder of a Mystery Writer* (1955), of which Pronzini recommends two or three readings for full appreciation; Cortland Fitzsimmons' *70,000 Witnesses* (1931); A. E. Apple's *Mr. Chang's Crime Ray* (1928); Tom Roan's *The Dragon Strikes Back* (1936); and the book that may be awfulest of all, Michael Morgan's *Decoy* (1953), the collaborative effort of Hollywood publicity men C.E. "Teet" Carle ("poet laureate of the absurd") and Dean M. Dorn. (The story of this novel and its authors' reaction to Pronzini's celebration has been well documented in past issues of *TAD.*)

Other writers to receive substantial attention: Nick Carter (of the spy novels, not the dime novels), G. G. Fickling, William LeQueux, Carolyn Wells, Thomas W. Hanshew, Joseph Rosenberger, R.A.J. Walling (who "elevated dullness to a fine art"), and John B. West. An entire chapter is devoted to Phoenix Press, a rental-library publishing firm of the '40s that paid rock-bottom rates to such memorable writers as Sidney E. Porcelain, Amelia Reynolds Long, Robert Portner Koehler, and James O'Hanlon.

The best way to capture the flavor of the enterprise may be to quote a few of its examples. Avallone: "She. . . unearthed one of her fantastic breasts from the folds of her sheath skirt." Bellem: "Welch gasped like a leaky flue, hugged his punctured tripes, and slowly doubled over, fell flat on his smeller." O'Hanlon: "The moon, from which some heavenly force had taken a huge bite, and to which a faraway coyote was paying wailing tribute, hung over Horsethief."

To sum up, this is one of the funniest books ever written about mystery fiction. □

LETTERS

From Karen Kim Maresca:

In Allen J. Hubin's review of Joseph Hansen's *Nightwork* ["AJH Reviews," TAD 18:1], the concluding sentence included the phrase ". . . revolting homosexual bits are kept minimal." Was he referring to specific 'homosexual bits' that he considers 'revolting', or does he categorize all homosexual scenes, references and characterizations as 'revolting'? I have read every Brandstetter and found no such 'revolting homosexual bits'.

Hubin's reviews would be more credible if he could refrain from gratuitous sermonizing. Should he be unable to control himself, he should try for clarity in his allusions.

My guess is that Hubin finds homosexuality, at best, unpleasant, in which case his generally favorable review of *Nightwork* speaks well for his integrity as a reviewer.

* * * * *

From Robert A. W. Lowndes:

No doubt, numerous TAD readers noticed the error in Robert A. Baker & Michael T. Nietzel's otherwise excellent article "The Science Fiction Detective Story: Tomorrow's Private Eyes" (TAD 18:2).

We read on p. 140: "One of the SF pioneers, Hugo Gernsback, published a pulp magazine, *The Scientific Detective Monthly* in 1933." The title of the magazine was *Scientific Detective Monthly* (no "The") and all issues were dated 1930, not 1933. I suppose it is vain to hope that that correction can be made in the authors' book, since you note it was due to be published early in 1985.

It was good to see the bibliography for Melville Davidson Post. Heretofore, on seeing material about him, I'd remember that I'd read two stories by him back in 1929—but I was sure that they were not about Uncle Abner or Randolph Mason. Colonel Braxton is the man whose name I've been trying to remember.

Even more fascinating is the article on Bibliomysteries. I eagerly await the continuation of the list. The descriptions are excellent: just enough to jog the memory or whet the appetite without telling too much!

In the otherwise excellent presentation of the final installment of my series of Hugo Gernsback's mystery magazine, we find the date of the last issue of *Amazing Detective Tales,* as published by Gernsback, to be October 1953. Dear me, mystery-fan magazines seem to have as much trouble with dates as science-fiction fanzines. Once again: the date is 1930!

* * * * *

From Jerry Kennealy:

As an ex-policeman, I want to say that I really enjoyed Michael Seidman's "The Uneasy Chair" in TAD 18:2. It's nice to see the good guys get a pat on the back rather than a kick in a more vulnerable spot.

As a working private investigator, I must say that there seems to be something creeping into the departments that might be added to your list of unflattering descriptions which cops receive on TV, in the movies, and in print. Indifference.

I know the new generation of policeman is supposedly better educated and better trained, but they seem to be sadly lacking in the qualities that really make good cops: common sense and street smarts.

I'm increasingly amazed at some of the younger officers' lack of knowledge and carefree attitude about outright embarrassing mistakes in their reports. One recent example. A rape incident turned into a civil case when the victim sued the hotel in which she was staying at the time of the attack. The officer's report had the suspect penetrating the victim's "virginia." At first I thought it was a typo, but it was repeated on the report three times.

Other mistakes re measurements, directions, etc., are becoming almost commonplace. Maybe I shouldn't complain. I'm getting a lot of ideas for story outlines from all this.

* * * * *

From Katharine Beardsley:

A suggested Editor's Note for your Martha Grimes piece in TAD 18:3: line 9 of paragraph one, for *three* read *six,* and add *The Dirty Duck* (1984), *Jerusalem Inn* (1984), and *Help the Poor Struggler* (1985).

We enjoyed the article. . .

* * * * *

From Mattie Gustafson:

One of the things that bothered me in Richard Meyer's column "TAD on TV" was his assertion that *Murder, She Wrote* suffered because it was unbelievable that a little old woman from Maine could be mixed up in so many murders. But isn't this the device that undergirds most detective fiction involving an amateur detective?

Lord Peter Wimsey solved murders as a "hobby" and to keep his mind and body active. Ellery Queen had plots to garner and a father to assist. (Who could expect the NYPD to solve the kind of crimes EQ did? A murder scene in which the killer turned everything backward—including the victim's clothes? A murderer who strangled his victims with a cord of pink or blue India silk? Really!)

Miss Marple (another little old woman) believed that murder (or the will to murder) was, after all, quite common and could be found in St. Mary Mead or anywhere. All of these "reasons" for being mixed up in so many murders are not entirely realistic, and all require the reader's suspension of disbelief. Why should Jessica Fletcher be held accountable for something she has in common with most fictional amateur detectives?

I enjoy *Murder, She Wrote*. Obviously, a one-hour TV show does not allow for the character and plot development of a novel, but the show is certainly worthwhile Sunday evening entertainment.

The two-part article by J. Ballinger, "Collecting Bibliomysteries," is wonderful. It has given me the inspiration to start my own collection of theme-related detective fiction (not bibliomysteries), and I have used his bibliography in the library where I work to recommend books to people in search of a good read. (I have also recommended TAD to several of my mystery compatriots!)

By the way—is Spenser really coming to TV? The attempt to translate good detective fiction into good TV always makes me nervous. I hope the powers that be don't make the same mistake with Spenser that they did with Nero Wolfe and Archie. What is vital is that the "flavor" and "guts" of a character be captured on screen.

One of the problems with the Wolfe/Archie attempt was that you never really got inside Archie's head, and that's where all the biting humor and gentle sarcasm was (buried, seemingly, in the series).

TAD is wonderful and seems to be getting better (I started subscribing 1981). Its arrival always makes my day. Keep up the good work.

* * * * *

From James C. Dance:

I heartily concur with your comments about Elmore Leonard in "The Uneasy Chair" in TAD 18:3. During the thirty years during which I worked for the Detroit Public Library (Leonard lives in a suburb of Detroit), he proved himself a good friend to libraries, participating on our radio and TV programs and making personal appearances at library functions. We were proud that we "discovered" him long before he made the cover of *Newsweek*.

May I tell you an anecdote about one of his visits to the library? The year after his *Unknown Man No. 89* was published, it was chosen as one of ninety "best books" of the year for the library's "Detroit's Choice" booklist, and Leonard agreed to give a talk at a program kicking off the issuance of the booklist. Following the program, at an informal reception, I introduced the author to the library's new deputy director, Arthur Curley, by saying, "Arthur, do you know Dutch?" and was somewhat surprised at the expression of apprehension that flickered over Arthur's face. Only later did he confide to me that he thought he was being asked to converse with someone in the language of the Netherlands.

TAD 18:3 really hit the bullseye with me, containing pieces on some of my favorite writers: Mary Higgins Clark, whom I interviewed twice for the library's *Meet the Author* radio program and introduced once at a Book and Author Luncheon co-sponsored by the Detroit *News*, Ellis Peters, and Martha Grimes. But I wish you would ask John Ballinger to look again at Leslie Ford's *By the Watchman's Clock*, because in my paperback copy the philanthropist's body is found in the library of his mansion, not the college library; and the watchman's job was to monitor the gates of the estate, not the college.

* * * * *

From K. E. Carson:

I consider your magazine outstanding, and, as a collector of mystery fiction, I particularly look forward to the "Collecting Mystery Fiction" articles by Otto Penzler.

I am curious, however, as to why he has not covered Christie, Doyle, and Sayers (which are probably the most desirable authors collected). I realize that Christie's work would require coverage in two or three issues of TAD, but it would be welcomed by many readers. As a general comment, I question the great disparity in prices of dust jackets—particularly when the first editions were printed in such limited quantities.

A case in point is Chesterton's *The Innocence of Father Brown*, with a first edition printing of 5,000 copies. The price for a fine copy with dust jacket is $2,000, while the same quality book without dust jacket is only $200, or one-tenth the value. When you consider the book was printed in 1911, normal attrition, including World War II paper drives, etc., have probably reduced the total surviving copies to 10% or less, in all grades (from poor to fine). It is understandable that very few dust jackets have survived this long period, but paying $1,800 for a dust jacket appears somewhat ludicrous to me.

I would also like to see some background on two contemporary authors, Jack S. Scott and Colin Dexter, who seem to be relatively unknown in the U.S.

Thank you again for an excellent publication.

✓ Many thanks for your kind words about the "Collecting Mystery Fiction" column. Christie, Sayers, and Doyle are indeed highly collectable authors and I'd like to do a column about each of them someday, but it will be a long time in the future. The column is based on my own collection, and, if I do not have all the books of an author, I am reluctant to write the column. I try to use photographs of all books, generally with dust jackets, and this would be a Herculean task for all three of the authors in which you are particularly interested. Contrary to your statement, these are not necessarily the most collected authors. Doyle probably is, but neither Christie nor Sayers are as actively collected as Chandler, Hammett, Robert B. Parker, Dick Francis, and possibly Ellery Queen and S.S. Van Dine, with John Dickson Carr/Carter Dickson moving forward very quickly.

As for your questioning the great disparity in prices between books with dust jackets and those without: I fear your questioning it is invalid. I neither condemn it nor endorse it; I merely report it. The fact of the matter is that the dust jacket does make all the difference. If my bookshop had for sale a fine copy of, say, THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT STYLES, *I would have to look hard for a customer for it at $1,200. If I had one in a fine dust jacket, I could choose between a half-dozen eager buyers at $5,000. A copy of* THE ROMAN HAT MYSTERY *could be had easily for under $500; in dust jacket it would fetch upwards of $3,000. You may object to this, but I object to paying $45 for a theatre ticket, and I think $108,000 for the bottom-of-the-line Rolls-Royce is silly. The objection has no influence, however, on the price of the ticket, the auto, or the dust jacket.*

—Otto Penzler

* * * * *

From Douglas G. Greene:

I was very glad to see the reprint of Austin's *Peter Rugg: The Missing Man*, in TAD 18:2, though classifying it as a "rare tale from the archives" is a bit misleading. It was once a favorite of anthologists, and the story is still in print in a separate edition. Incidentally, Otto, you say that "the first edition of *Peter Rugg: The Missing Man* is extremely rare, its presence being unknown to the virtually infallible Hubin." Would you print some bibliographical information on the first edition? At least publisher, place and date? I know of no 1824 book edition. It was originally published in *New England Galaxy*, September 10, 1824. Was there a separate pamphlet printing? The sketchy foreword to the 1948 Comet Press edition, which Otto cites, seems to have been based on the more detailed introduction by Austin's son, James Walker Austin, published in *Literary Papers of William Austin* (Little, Brown, 1890).

Hawthorne, as Otto says, was certainly influenced by *Peter Rugg*. Like many of Hawthorne's tales, it occupies the borderland between the natural and the supernatural, and Hawthorne's "A Virtuoso's Collection" (in *Mosses from an Old Manse*) has Rugg as a character; he is doorman to the Wandering Jew. I was, however, taken aback by Otto's comment that "in the long history of detective fiction there have been scores...of books

that have been on the bestseller list. *Peter Rugg: The Missing Man* is often regarded as the first to occupy that position." As *Peter Rugg* is not a detective story, it was merciful of Otto not to name the persons who regard it as the first detective fiction bestseller. The Comet edition calls it "probably America's first *mystery* 'best-seller.'" (My emphasis.) But was it? Once again, Comet may have based its information on James Walker Austin's biographical sketch, which quotes the editor of *New England Galaxy:* "This article was reprinted in other papers and books, and read more than any newspaper communication that has fallen within my knowledge." Otherwise, I know of nothing to justify the bestseller assertion.

I have the impression that Otto has been making controversial statements in an attempt to get some action in TAD's letter column. In TAD 17:1 (the issue which has the Donald Westlake "I am ignorant but that doesn't stop me" article), Otto remarked that Hammett and Chandler are "the two titans of this century's detective fiction writers, but it will require another generation to place their names in the front rank of American novelists without blushing." In the next paragraph, he explained that "most of the serious and intelligent collectors of modern literature. . . now seek the works of Chandler, Hammett, James M. Cain, and Ross Macdonald as parts of their collections." Despite the fact that he described Hammett and Chandler as *the* two titans rather than two *of the* titans, no one responded. So Otto upped the ante in 17:3. He described the Knopf company as "certainly the greatest American publisher of mysteries, being the original publisher of probably the four greatest of all American mystery writers: Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald." This should have been enough to remove the collective breath of many TADians, but there was still no response. So Otto tried again; someone, he seems to have thought, must object to such sweeping generalizations. In 17:4, he said that "at the same time [as Ellery Queen and S. S. Van Dine], however, Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, and only slightly later, Raymond Chandler were creating the modern detective story."

Well, now! The clinker in Otto's lists is, of course, James M. Cain, who certainly did not create the modern detective story, since he didn't create detective stories at all. Indeed, including him among the four greatest American mystery writers stretches the word "mystery" pretty far. Cain wrote crime stories with no detection and little mystery. The problem comes down to the importance of definitions. I think they should mean something. Otto wants the phrases "detective fiction" and "detective story" to be stretched to include writers like Austin and Cain whose tales have no detection. On the other hand, in talking about "the modern detective story," he seems to narrow the definition to hardboiled private eyes. I hope that I am misreading him—though again I think he's only trying to get our dander up—but in calling Hammett and Chandler *the* two titans (of, I assume, *American* detective story writers), he ignores many authors. Putting aside Cain, as we must do if definitions mean anything, we are left with Otto's judgment that Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald are the three "greatest of all American mystery writers." Certainly, they ought to belong in anyone's list, but the only way they can be classified as greater than, say, Stout, Post, Carr, Queen, and others is by putting all one's eggs in the hardboiled basket. (No, I don't think much of that metaphor either.)

So, there, Otto; you have your response!

✒ *Gee, I really wasn't trying to make statements merely to be controversial. You see, I really mean it. But, as you correctly imply, my definitions are sloppy. When I use the term "mystery fiction," it is used as a shorthand to cover the more encompassing genre of mystery, crime, suspense, espionage, and detective fiction. The Mystery Writers of America are this country's equivalent of the Crime Writers (of Great Britain). By mysteries, I simply mean all books in which a crime, or the threat of a crime, are integral to the plot. That is pretty broad, I readily concede, but I'd rather have a flabby definition than be forced to eliminate, say, Cain or Elmore Leonard or Horace McCoy from the field I love so much.*

Having made that concession, I will pick up the tattered banner and repeat that Hammett, Cain, Chandler and Macdonald are the four greatest mystery writers of the twentieth century. Queen, Carr, and Van Dine couldn't WRITE *to save their skins. I love Carr, and maybe my favorite author of all is Rex Stout, but they couldn't be said to compare with the big four in terms of enduring literary quality, or influence on future generations of authors, or even in giving new, more expansive directions for the mystery genre. I defy you to read Van Dine without gritting your teeth. Like Christie, he and Queen and Carr were often brilliant puzzle-makers. But writers? No. Post is more complicated for my brain to sort out because, while most of his work was written and published in the twentieth century, I think of him (incorrectly, in the strict technical sense) as a nineteenth-century author. In style, and form, he was a brilliant executioner of an existing, somewhat narrow, genre. But he cannot be claimed, even by his greatest admirers, to have been a powerful innovator and shaper of the future. But there we are. Thanks for your intelligent and thoughtful letter. It is always a pleasure to hear from someone less didactic or strident than myself.*
—Otto Penzler

* * * * *

From Walter and Jean Shine:

"Collecting Bibliomysteries" by John Ballinger (TAD 18:2) was indeed a fine article. Of particular interest to us was the mention of an early ambition to have *all* printings of each title (so as to see the entire publishing history of each, complete with errors, cover changes, etc.) which they were forced to abandon when they realized what sheer bulk this would create. Fortunately for us, we collect John D. MacDonald titles almost exclusively. We do not have every one of the more than 900 such printings (and more appear almost monthly!), but it is our ambition some day to do so. Nonetheless, we have examined very nearly every such printing, and correspond with several other collectors who supplement our information. As a result, we will at the end of this year (or early next) be publishing a comprehensive work titled *A Potpourri of Printings: The Work of John D. MacDonald,* which will detail methods of identifying such printings, some of which we believe we have invented, as well as a host of miscellaneous information about the books, the cover artists, errata, bestseller lists, etc. We believe collectors everywhere will profit thereby. We'll advise you of our publication date. □

* * * * *

A CATALOGUE OF CRIME

By Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor

S287 Bayer, William
Switch
S & S 1984

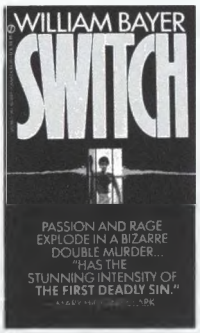
At the outset, the reader may be put off by the crime, which is the killing of two young women and the switching of their heads. This *donnée* suggests sensation for its own sake as well as improbability, since the corpses are miles apart and the logistical risk correspondingly great. But soon we virtually forget these aspects of the murders because of the mental workings and inner life of the city detective, Janek. Besides, there is the suicide of an old friend of his, still unexplained and in fact not in character. The complication of a love affair with an unusual woman photographer adds rather than detracts from the suspense of these well-packed 350 pages. It would spoil the pleasure to say more than "Read it and see."

S288 Caudwell, Sarah
The Shortest Way to Hades
Scrib 1985

Her first, *Thus Was Adonis Murdered*, was a triumph of ingenuity and humor, based on the double feature of a group of London barristers whose talents mesh and of one character among them, Julia the Careless. In this new tale, the consortium is still working at the top of its powers, on a legal problem to begin with, then on a dubious death that takes another priceless member of the team, Selena the Sailor, to the Greek Islands, where the action really gets devilish. Miss Caudwell is a new writer to watch and treasure. Her capacity for plotting and character equals her humor, and what is very important is that her humor in no way dilutes her seriousness. Here is no "Murder, what fun!" pursued by bright young things, but the genre displayed in its highest form.

S289 Deacon, Richard
A History of the British Secret Service
F. Muller 1969

Taken all in all, this compact work of 450 pages is the best survey of its subject. It begins with the founders of English espionage under the first Elizabeth and ends with the famous spy-defectors of the '50s, Philby, Burgess, and MacLean. Despite occasionally strange uses of vocabulary, the author is lucid and shrewd. He gives excellent portraits of leading secret-service figures – Walsingham, Defoe, Matthew Prior, Sir Richard Burton, Sidney Reilly, Zaharoff, and especially Sir



Basil Thomson, who is also our familiar crime-fiction author. The effect of spying on the outcome of battles and campaigns, its role in history and commerce, the stubborn refusal of statesmen to heed warnings, and the miserable lives of the best and worst spies, male and female, are as well depicted as the inevitable hostility between the several branches of a country's secret service: the MI-5s are always at sixes and sevens.

S290 Drabble, J. F.
Death's Second Self
Sidgwick and Jackson 1971

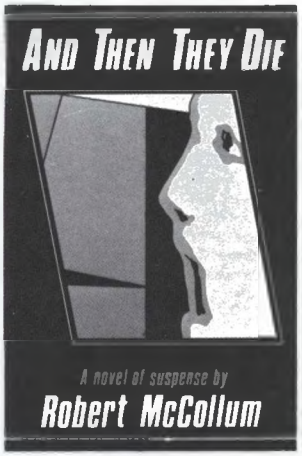
The author is a county judge who writes in a plain, uncompromising way about the tawdry lives of two little girls of ten and twelve, their parents, and other connections in an English village. Among them is a futile parson and his wife and a couple of policemen of no particular talent. The parson seemingly commits suicide by poison, and the girls' father has left home to live with a barmaid. With this unpromising material, the author makes a quietly moving story of police procedure and small-town life.

S291 Kenney, Susan
Graves in Academe
Viking 1985

For a third effort, this longish story fails to show the improving skill one has a right to expect. The New England college campus and its denizens are not done with charm or plausibility: they are not interesting eccentrics but simply *outre*, and their professional and private hostilities are also unlikely. As for the young woman who is filling in for a term at the strange place and who as an outsider takes on the inquiry, she is but a lay figure. An earlier death, a second one that is more obviously murder, a disappearance, and a denouement predictable but not well prepared – all leave one unmoved and remembering only that Academe in the title is a misuse of a man's name for the name of a place.

S292 Lewis, Roy
A Question of Degree
CCC 1974

Lewis is a lawyer, a school inspector, a novelist, and a writer on jurisprudence, in addition to venturing into crime fiction. The scene of this, his third, is the Rhondda (in central Wales), where we meet the owner of a cheap restaurant, a silent real-estate man and his secretary, and some assorted natives marked by oddity and inquisitiveness. The rescue of a dog from a disused mine pit discloses the body of a woman, soon identified as Donna Stark. Thereafter, we follow the comings and goings of Chief Inspector John Crow and his talks with an old friend named Luffman, who happens to be in the neighborhood. Though not actively boring, these activities are not entrancing either. Details are plausible, touches of character also, and the denouement that explains the title as well as some relationships is reached by fair means: workmanlike is the word.



S293 McCollum, Robert
And Then They Die
St. Martin's 1985

If a complex plot were enough to make a gripping story, this narrative would deserve high marks. It presents a series of deaths – accident? suicide? – with details well suited to arouse interest, particularly because of the family and other links that connect the victims and the suspects in the small Texas town wittily named Kilkenney. Unfortunately, the characters are neither standard types nor true originals. This goes for the police chief and his helper, a woman journalist suffering from a crippling kidney disease. These days, the striving for the outlandish is a little too much: we shall soon have the hero or heroine detecting in a coma. In the present work, only the solution is trite and thus doubly deplorable.

THE PAPERBACK REVOLUTION

By Charles Shibuk

JOHN BALL

The decomposing body of a young female murder victim, and another young woman—the daughter of a millionaire—missing for over a year, are problems faced by Pasadena police department homicide specialist Virgil Tibbs in **The Eyes of Buddha** (1976) (Perennial). Patient, careful, and painstaking investigation (climaxing in the fabulous land of Nepal) are the hallmarks of this enthralling example of the police procedural school by one of its foremost American practitioners.

An earlier, meritorious Tibbs investigation, **Five Pieces of Jade** (1972), is also available from Perennial.

LAWRENCE BLOCK

The Gold Medal series of paperback originals had many narrative strengths to recommend them, and Foul Play Press has just revived two of them by the then little-known Lawrence Block.

The Girl with the Long Green Heart (1965) offers conclusive proof that the confidence trickster, who usually flourishes best in the short form, can be equally entertaining at novel length.

The Specialists (1969), a better than average big-caper novel about the planning and execution of a bank robbery, is told from a variety of viewpoints in terse, driving prose.

DOUGLAS CLARK

An anonymous letter to Detective Chief Inspector Bill Green describes a murder witnessed by the writer—who claims to be a wartime associate of Green in **Dead Letter** (1984) (Perennial). The problem for Green and Detective Chief Superintendent George Masters is to discover the author of the letter, and then determine whether murder has been done. This is a slightly different approach from an outstanding British practitioner of the straightforward police procedural.

(NOTE: this is the first American edition.)

CLIVE CUSSLER

Series character Dirk Pitt, Deputy Director of Special Projects of the National Underwater and Marine Agency, is faced with a series of complex problems that center around a Soviet plot to take over the United States Presidency in **Deep Six** (1984) (Pocket Books). This long maritime adventure novel is set in 1989, moves very briskly, and contains more than its share of suspense and excitement.

BRIAN GARFIELD

The thematic material of **Death Wish** (1972), wherein model citizen Paul Benjamin becomes a vigilante after the destruction of his family by a criminal band, should be known to all. Its sequel, **Death Sentence** (1975), changes the locale from New York to Chicago and follows Benjamin's actions to their logical conclusion. Although many are killed, these novels are less violent and more thoughtful than one might expect.

A big caper (*c.*1885) involving the theft of gold is successful, but several participants, including a black drifter named Boag, are double-crossed and left for dead. Boag determines to secure both gold and vengeance in **Tripwire** (1973).

A psychopath seeking revenge against four psychiatrists captures and then abandons them, without any resources, in the middle of the infernal Arizona desert in **Fear in a Handful of Dust** (1979).

All are presented by the Mysterious Press.

GREGORY McDONALD

The irreverent Irwin Maurice Fletcher made his auspicious debut in **Fletch** (1974) (Avon). Here, he's an investigative reporter in California and hot on the trail of an important drug dealer. He's also been offered $1,000 by a very rich man who wants Fletch to kill him. *Fletch*, probably Mcdonald's best work, consists mostly of dialogue, moves rapidly, is vastly entertaining, and (believe it or not) features classic detection.

SIMON NASH

If you're interested in the traditional British simon-pure detective story, **Killed By Scandal** (1962) (Perennial) will easily suffice. It starts with the discovery of an unloved corpse during the dress rehearsal of Sheridan's *The School for Scandal* by a small-town theatrical group, and is investigated by Adam Ludlow, senior lecturer in English at North London College, assisted by Inspector Montero of Scotland Yard. It's tersely told, witty, and redolent of the Golden Age.

The full apparatus of Golden Age detection is present in Nash's best novel, **Death Over Deep Water** (1963) (Perennial). Ludlow's vacation cruise in the Mediterranean is rudely interrupted by two cyanide poisonings, but the welcome appearance of Inspector Montero midway through the journey helps to bring all to a satisfactory conclusion. Clues, motives, characterization, shipboard (and shore) atmosphere, and wit all contribute to a performance characterized as "topnotch" by Barzun and Taylor.

HERBERT RESNICOW

"Great" detective Alexander Gold has exactly three days to solve an impossible locked theatre box murder for a prize of $1,000,000—as against his own hard-earned $100,000-in **The Gold Deadline** (1984) (Avon). This novel, with its well-limned ballet background, is a fairly successful and ingenious attempt to write a classical detective story, but it somehow lacks the novelty and freshness of its predecessor, *The Gold Solution*.

ELLIOTT ROOSEVELT

Murder and the First Lady (1984) (Avon) is an engaging first mystery that blends real people with fictional crime and stars the author's world-famous mother, who becomes involved when her English secretary is accused of murdering a Congressman's son. This is a well-written and readable work that's well set in 1939 Washington. Its only flaw is a disappointing ending that betrays the author's lack of experience with the medium.

RICHARD STARK
(DONALD E. WESTLAKE)

Avon continues to reprint the criminous exploits of Parker.

The Green Eagle Score (1967) concerns Parker's attempt to burgle an office safe located in the midst of a highly guarded Air Force base.

The Black Ice Score (1968) is a stolen cache of diamonds belonging to a faction representing an African nation and hidden in New York City. There's another, more lethal group, who want the diamonds left alone. Guess who's caught in the middle?

Plunder Squad (1972) deals with an armored car robbery that goes awry, and the consequences of Parker's bungled attempt to kill a man who double-crossed him, and who now seeks to eliminate Parker.

Butcher's Moon (1974) is twice the length of the usual Stark novel, and one of the better entries in the series. It seems that a group of mobsters has "liberated" a cache of Parker's money from an Ohio amusement park and won't return it. Parker has no option but to declare war on them.

Finally, a two-in-one volume contains **The Sour Lemon Score** (1969) and **Deadly Edge** (1971).

ROSS THOMAS

A small, about-to-emerge African nation will soon have an election to determine which of three possible candidates will become Premier. Two clever Americans lend their expertise to one of the aspirants, and the fun begins in **The Seersucker Whipsaw** (1967) (Perennial). This comic tale has minimal crime fiction elements, but its well-devised background, engaging characters, and brisk pace combine to make this a charming and very entertaining romp.

HENRY WADE

The paperback publishing event of the year, if not the decade, is Perennial's first American edition of the extremely rare and eagerly sought **Mist on the Saltings** (1933). Here is a masterpiece (and a milestone) in all its glory—a magnificent blend of plotting, characterization, atmosphere, and detection that's both powerful and moving. This is Wade's greatest achievement—a peak of Darien reading experience. □

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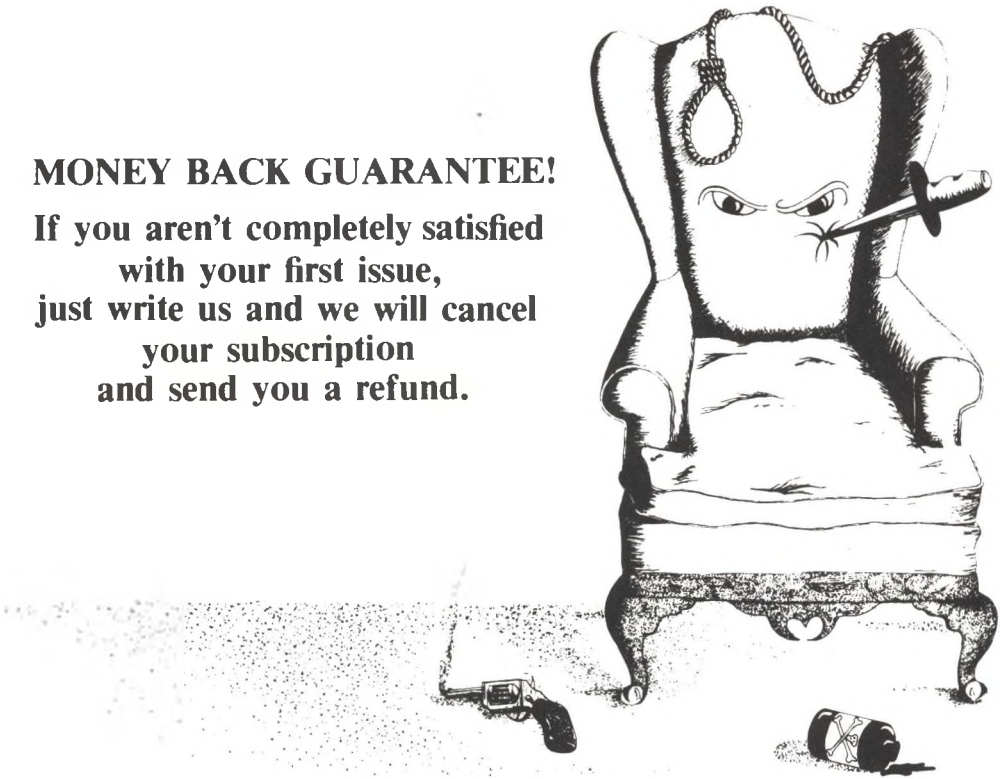

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