THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

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1987 Volume 20 Number 1

Peter O'Donnell's Modesty Blaise

Hammett and the Detective Story

Cornell Woolrich on the Silver Screen

The Rise and Fall of Philo Vance

An Interview with Tony Hillerman
With His Navajo Policemen, He Has Blazed a Trail of Mystery Through the American Southwest

Departments

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Feature Articles

Cover photograph by Carolyn Hartman

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The Uneasy Chair

by Michael Seidman

Dear TADian:

Well, we've done it—another year gone (or started; is it anything like the half-full/half-empty glass question?), and I'm beginning my sixth year of sitting in this chair. It has been an interesting experience, and the excitement I felt when I started editing *The Armchair Detective* has not abated. Each issue brings something new and, over the years, changes. Most of them, I think, have been for the better, and your support (or quick rebuttal) has been appreciated.

Rebuttal. Well . . . it seems that the article by Bill Delaney has raised a few eyebrows. See the Letters pages, and Bill DeAndrea's column. Obviously, I did not think that the article in question would be met with universal applause, but I was more than a bit taken aback by the comment we received from Eugene Honea. As a look at the letters will show, his response was simply to cancel his subscription. I am, of course, saddened whenever we disappoint so strongly that a reader feels that the only recourse is to cancel. In this case, though, the question that comes to mind is: Why not write a rebuttal, why not respond to the issue? (We have invited Mr. Honea to do so.) We could, at this juncture, digress and begin a monologue dealing with the editors, editing, and the selection of material. But we won't, beyond stating the obvious: Mr. Delaney shares with many—if not most—other people the peculiar trait of having opinions. TAD is, and I hope always will be, an open forum, a place where all may be heard. I do not know if Mr. Honea will accept our invitation to submit a reasoned rejoinder. I hope he does. I do not know whether he will again join us as a regular reader. I hope he does.

One change that seems to have happened to us, sneaking up from behind when no one was looking, is the sense that TAD has become a magazine of reviews. Our program of involving you in the writing of these reviews has been too successful. So, we're looking at the situation and attempting to find solutions. One of the suggestions was limiting the length of a critique. The problem with that is that I like longer pieces, because they allow the writer to get to the heart of the matter. The heart of the matter, however, cannot be defined as listing every plot twist and turn, every movement of every character. So, a request that those elements be treated delicately when you are writing.

A suggestion that will be easy for me to accept is to drop negative reviews, *unless* they are criticism in the purest sense of the word and offer an in-depth analysis of style and content leading to a better understanding of literary matters.

Finally, and sadly, I am going to have to reconsider my belief that, for the reviews at least, everyone is entitled to have a say. That means a more critical editorial eye on my part, it means dropping duplicate reviews, it means, unfortunately, that the experience of writing and being published is going to be a bit more difficult to acquire in our pages. The letters you have sent, expressing your excitement at being part of the process, have been something I particularly enjoyed, for a number of reasons both professional and personal. I really do know what it means to you. I was able to make it easy for you for a while. Now, I must revert to type and become an ogre of an editor.

An ogre, perhaps, but still the sender of

Best mysterious wishes,

Michael Seidman

MICHAEL SEIDMAN

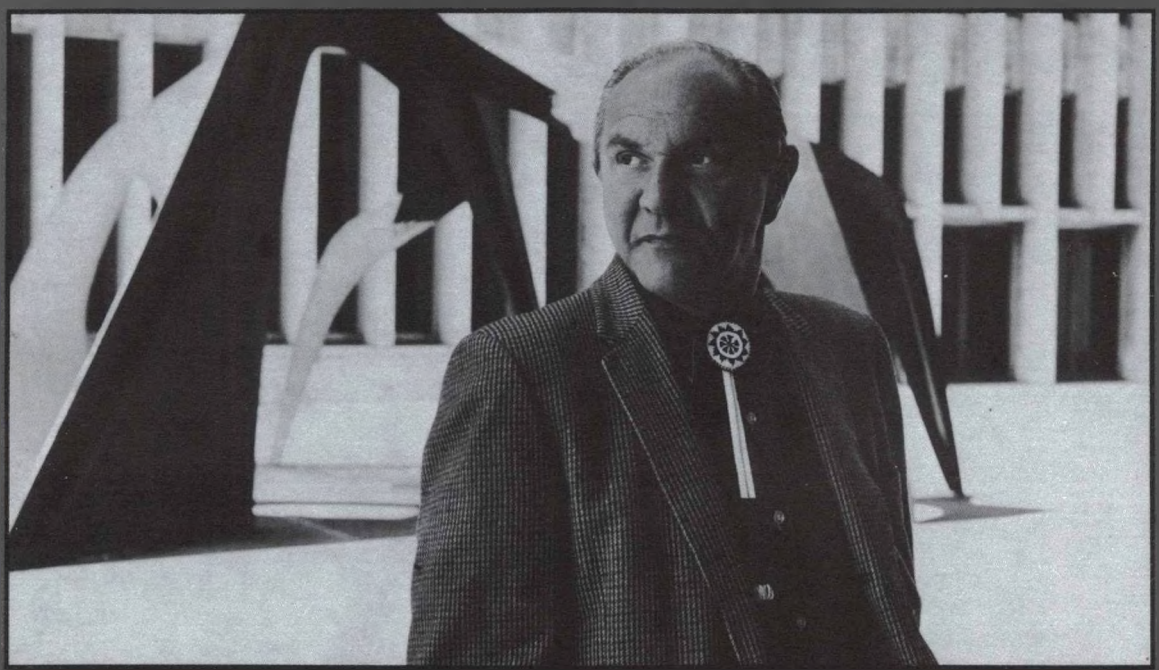


Photo credit: Jerry Bauer

Stanley Ellin: In Memoriam

STANLEY ELLIN was born in New York City in 1916. He graduated from Brooklyn College, married a classmate, became a boilermaker's apprentice, a steelworker, a dairy farmer, a teacher, and a soldier in the Second World War. He then became a writer and wrote full-time for the next forty years.

His very first story, "The Specialty of the House," was published by *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* in 1948. It became an instant classic and was the first of seven short stories in a row to win EQMM's prestigious short-story prize. From the Mystery Writers of America, he received three Edgar Awards: two for Best Short Story ("The House Party" in 1954 and "The Blessington Method" in 1956) and one for Best Novel (*The Eighth Circle* in 1958). In 1975, he was awarded France's Grand Prix de Literrature Policière for his novel *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall.* For lifetime achievement in the field of mystery fiction, the Mystery Writers of America awarded him in 1981 its Grand Master Award. On July 31, 1986, in Brooklyn, New York, he died.

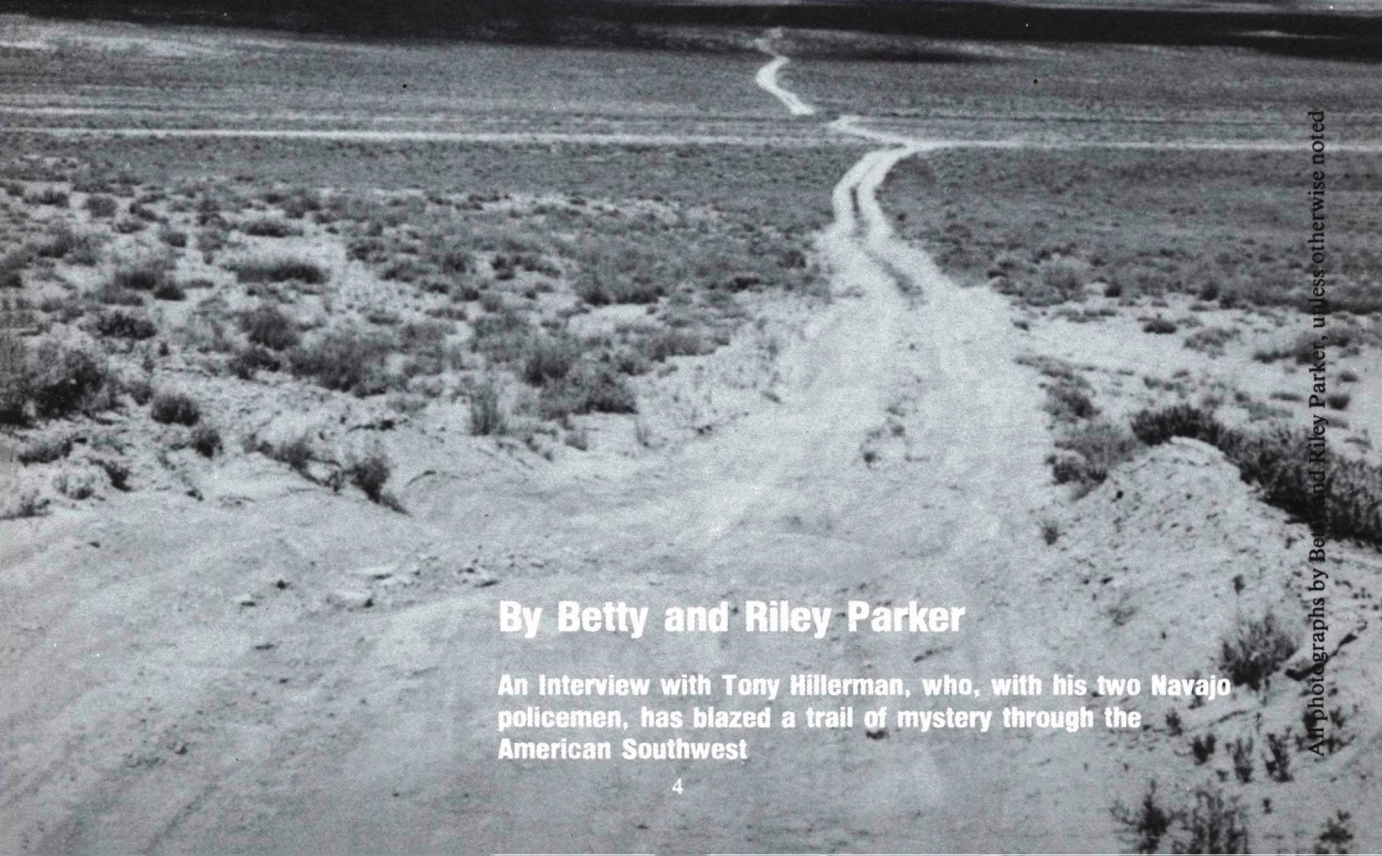
Stanley Ellin's mind was a mind that wondered: What would it be like to nine-to-five it as an arsonist? What would it be like to pull the switch on the electric chair? What would it be like to eat human flesh in a fancy New York restaurant? After wondering, he got down to the hard work of intelligent storytelling. A fastidious revisionist, he wrote one story a year. What he offered his readers, in addition to the care he took, was an exquisite curiosity, superb intelligence, and an alarming, awesome, infinite imagination. That he could touch down on the topics that he did—arson, racial prejudice, sexual victimization, cannibalism—and pivot on them so precisely, earned him the unqualified respect of his peers in the mystery field, as well as an audience that speaks twenty different languages.

Although several of his novels (*House of Cards, The Key to Nicholas Street, Dreadful Summit*) became moving pictures with such actors as Orson Welles, John Barrymore, and Alan Bates, he never wrote *for* the screen; that is, with movies in mind. He was a writer of the short story and the novel first and last, and knew the power of the written word that marched across the page.

In his Introduction to *The Specialty of the House and Other Stories: The Complete Tales (1948-1978),* he recalls as a child *meeting* books. And this is at the center of his work: the knowledge that a writer and a reader, in a sense, are briefly married.

When this sort of writer dies, what becomes of us? We are summoned to his books up on our shelves, to articles about him, maybe to his photograph on the dust jacket taken by a woman to whom he was married for 49 years. But ultimately, if we like to read, we go back to our reading chair. And, if we're lucky, we'll meet other writers who understand, as Stanley Ellin did, that in the end their only job is to meet us there.

—COLBY WILLIS

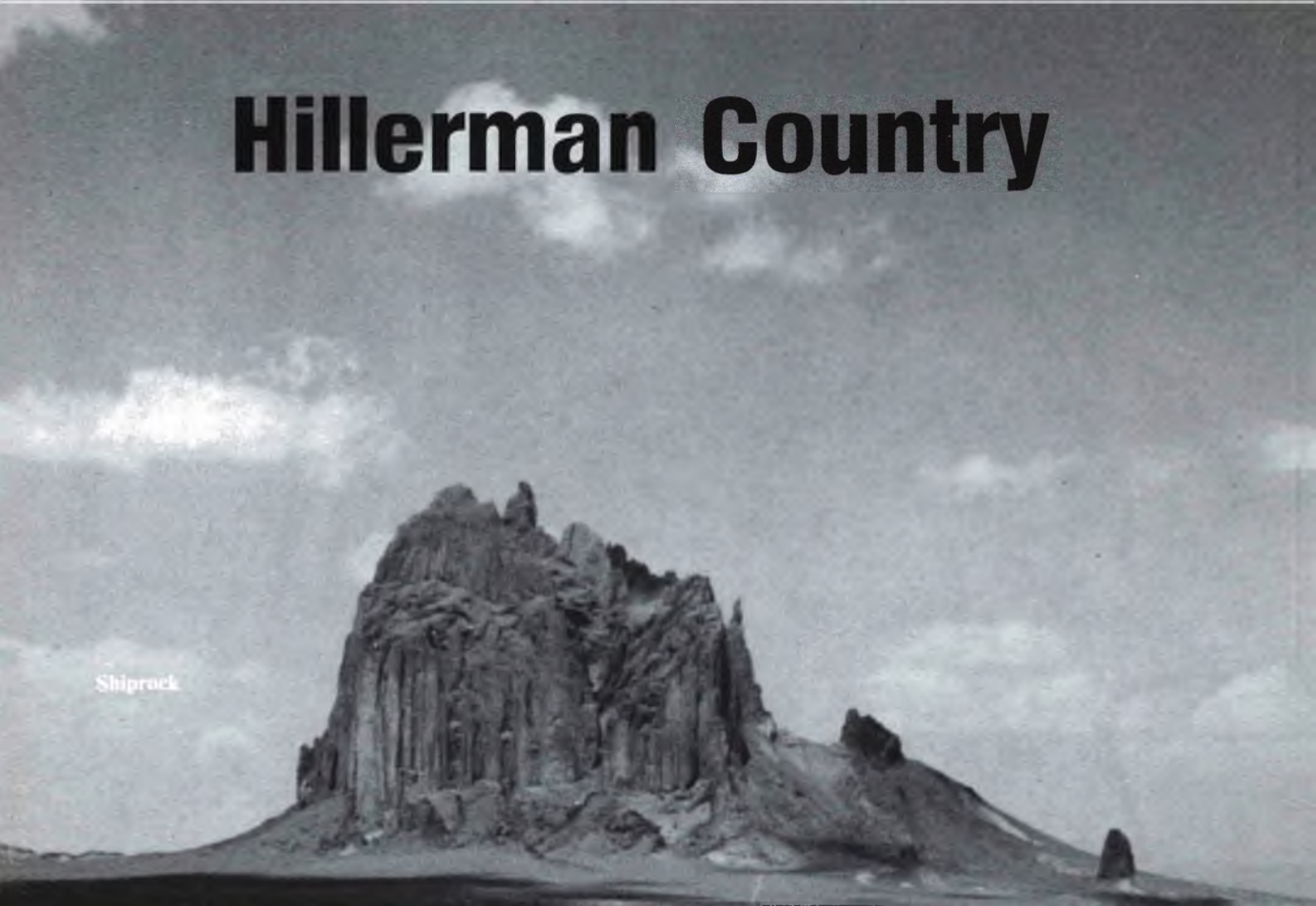


By Betty and Riley Parker

An Interview with Tony Hillerman, who, with his two Navajo policemen, has blazed a trail of mystery through the American Southwest

All photographs by Betty and Riley Parker, unless otherwise noted

Hillerman Country



Shiprock

ANTHONY GROVE HILLERMAN, known to most of his readers as Tony, is a friendly, unassuming Oklahoma boy who grew up to be a reporter, editor, and university professor before he began to create his Navajo Indian police procedurals in 1970. With six of these mysteries published and another out momentarily, he has firmly established literary claims on a vast area of the American Southwest. This Hillerman country primarily encompasses the highways, dirt roads, and sheep trails of the magnificent and forbidding Navajo–Hopi Reservations, with occasional trips to Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Zuni Pueblo.

The high desert of Tony Hillerman's novels contains a lot of space; in fact, the jurisdiction of his fictional Navajo policemen covers an area in which several New England states would fit comfortably. Although the action is usually compressed into a few days, it deals with ancient and timeless ritual, giving the scenes a historical ambience that is both particular to the Southwest and of universal significance. Hillerman's knowledge of and respect for Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee's world is so great that it transmits to the reader, making one wish the mystery would not be solved just yet so he can experience one more desert storm, travel another lonely road, and visit still another deserted hogan.

Although Tony's Navajo police procedurals are complete within themselves and require no previous knowledge to enjoy as mysteries, they can be more fully appreciated, first, by having some knowledge of the conflict an American Indian faces every day in his dual role of American and Indian; and, second, by possessing some understanding of the country in which the action takes place.

Tony tells the story of the movie producer who had an option on one of his books and had Tony take him on a tour of Navajo land. "But where are the pueblos?" the producer wanted to know. "Navajos don't live in pueblos," explained Tony. The producer thought awhile, then said, "You know that and now I know that, but the public doesn't have to know that." Needless to say, the movie was not made and the public was spared another Hollywood travesty.

Three of his mysteries (the first three) feature Joe Leaphorn, a traditional, somewhat cynical Navajo, who has long ago determined where he wants to fit in a complicated Indian–Anglo world. The other three introduce Jim Chee, a younger Navajo who can feel as much at home on the University of New Mexico campus as at an ancient ceremonial on the reservation but is still trying to decide which culture he values more. (The seventh in this series features both Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee, and we should see some more clearly delineated differences between the two as they are forced to use their separate methods and world-views to solve a mystery. This newest effort is due to be at your bookseller's by January 1987 and is titled *Skinwalkers.*)

Beginning at the top of the map of Hillerman country, where the corners of Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah join at what is called the Four Corners Region, the land is high desert–mesa–plateau, averaging in altitude from five to seven thousand feet. Around these four state corners lie remains of ancient Indian civilizations, some excavated and preserved, countless others lying dormant under sage and juniper. The villages, towns, and cities which presently populate the area are subtly influenced by the spirit of a considerable population of hunters, basket-makers, and agrarian cultures which prevailed here hundreds of years ago. Anyone who ponders long this stark environment, overwhelmed by limitless sky, must surely feel that he is forever a guest, for this part of the world belongs to the ancients.

Shiprock is located ten miles east of a sheer volcanic plug which rises 1,700 feet above the desert floor. According to Navajo legend, this is the Rock with Wings and represents the ship which brought them from the North. To Anglos, the rock looks like a windjammer under full sail. It is here, around Shiprock, that *The Ghostway* begins.

THE GHOSTWAY, *a Jim Chee mystery, begins with a shooting outside a Shiprock, New Mexico laundry and for the first time goes outside the boundaries of Hillerman country as far away as Los Angeles. It may be fitting that the most graphic violence of any Hillerman novel (see the interview) takes place outside the reservation and in wicked Los Angeles.*

Teec (pronounced *teace*) Nos Pos, a small community on the main highway from Colorado or Farmington, New Mexico to the Grand Canyon, has a run design named for it. Mexican Hat, not far away in Utah, is on the San Juan River and is at the north end of Monument Valley, a fairyland of red rock formations familiar to anyone who grew up watching cowboy movies. Mexican Water, across the border into Arizona, is a wide spot where the highway goes south to Chinle, home of another large group of deserted ancient Indian dwellings. Passing through the winding hill and mesa country in a valley below and west of the Lukachukai Mountains, it is easy to imagine where Luis Horseman must have tried to hide in *The Blessing Way.*

Betty and Riley Parker operate an antiquarian bookstore dealing in out-of-print and rare books and documents of the West. Parker Books of the West, Box 8390, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504, is a member of the Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America and also specializes in the literature of the Southwest, which includes the mysteries of Tony Hillerman. The Parkers are presently collecting bibliomysteries for their personal library.

"They drove northeastward, mostly in second gear, over a rutted road which now tilted downward . . . the beams lit the broad, sandy bottom of an arroyo below..." *People of Darkness*, p. 154

THE BLESSING WAY, *the first of the Navajo policeman mysteries, has both Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn and the villain using Navajo religion to solve and conceal the crime, respectively. The device works well in this and subsequent books because there is never too much esoteric religion to threaten the readers' interest in the plot or the characters. Archaeologists and anthropologists join the Indians in the caves and canyons of this thriller.*

How very cold it can be when the clouds cover the sun and the biting wind drives the snow and ice across the mesas and into the canyons! All along here there are canyons. At Chinle (*chin-lee*), 93 miles from Shiprock, is Cañon de Chelley (pronounced *shay*), where the Navajos plant their corn, tend their sheep, and endure the tourists. When you get to the Tuba City–Gallup highway south of Chinle, you can turn east through Window Rock, the Navajo National Capital, named for a rock the Navajos call Perforated Rock. (A portion of *Skinwalkers* is set at Window Rock.) Proceed on to Gallup, New Mexico (6,600 feet), where a huge intertribal ceremonial is held every August. Gallup was a railroad town for a long time. Now it is a marketplace for Navajos and ranchers. There are trading posts up and down every street. Navajo rugs and jewelry can be bought everywhere. Farther on east is Grants (6,440 feet), and between Gallup and Grants and a little north is Crownpoint, known to the Anglos for the fine rug auctions held there. *People of Darkness* takes place primarily in this area. Albuquerque lies 78 miles east of Grants.

PEOPLE OF DARKNESS *mixes ancient Navajo customs with that twentieth-century curse, radioactivity—a nice modern touch, as the setting is very close to Los Alamos, and not a few Navajos, as well as others, found work in the uranium mines around Grants after World War II, unaware of the peril they were in. Jim Chee solves this one, picking up an Anglo girlfriend along the way which exacerbates his problem of deciding which world, White or Indian, to choose.*

From Gallup, south and west forty miles, is Zuni Pueblo (6,200 feet), which is a part of the Zuni Indian Reservation extending as far as the Arizona border and encompassing 500 square miles, the setting for most of the action of *Dance Hall of the Dead.*

DANCE HALL OF THE DEAD, *although it may not be Hillerman's favorite book, is undoubtedly his most popular among readers who live in the Southwest. The reason is the Shalako (accent on "shah") ceremony of the Zunis, during which Joe Leaphorn solves the mystery. This ceremony, which lasts all night in early December, is the coldest, most unusual, most uncomfortable, puzzling (to outsiders), and still the most unforgettable of any Indian rites. Hillerman's depiction is familiar to anyone who has spent a sleepless, cold, and wet night stumbling around in the dark of Zuni Pueblo from one Shalako house to another.*

Turning west from Ganado and heading toward Tuba City takes us out of Navajo country and into Hopi-land. There are several very large mesas to the north of the highway, and the Hopis, or someone else, has named them First Mesa, Second Mesa, and Third Mesa. Some very old Hopi villages are almost embedded on top of these mesas. Most of them can be visited, and one can keep from falling off by being very careful. People still inhabit the dwellings that must have been used by their ancestors. They go about their daily chores, participate in dances and ceremonials, make pottery, and suffer the many tourists who are just as curious as you and I are. It is here and in the surrounding area that *Dark Wind* occurs.

DARK WIND *involves Jim Chee with dope smugglers, the FBI, and the Drug Enforcement Agency as well as the Hopis. For the first time, Hillerman introduces a compatible partner for Jim Chee—Deputy Sheriff Cowboy Albert Dashee, a Hopi stationed in Flagstaff at the Coconino County Sheriff's Department. It takes both of them, with their knowledge of Navajo and Hopi witchcraft, to crack this one. Trying to tell the good guys from the bad guys as the plot thickens is great fun.*

Going on to Tuba City, where there are more Hopi settlements and where Jim Chee was assigned for two years before being transferred to the Shiprock subagency, then turning northeast toward Cow Springs and Kayenta completes a large triangle which takes up a big chunk of Northern Arizona. *Listening Woman* is set northwest of Cow Springs. North and a little east of Kayenta is another well-preserved Indian ruin called Betatakin, which the National Park Service postulates could be the ancient home of the Hopis.

LISTENING WOMAN *is the third and last Joe Leaphorn book until the one just being published. In it, Leaphorn has to solve the murder of an old Navajo man and teenaged girl. Along the way there is a remote trading post the owner of which has had it for sale for forty years, a Navajo man who has been studying for the Catholic priesthood, and a beautiful Anglo girl. And, as always, along with these interesting characters, is the landscape which is so important to the Hillerman plots.*

Off to the east of the map in North Central New Mexico is the setting of the southwestern portion of *The Fly on the Wall.* Because both the environment and the story are different from Hillerman's other mysteries, *Fly* can be considered at this point an anomaly among his seven published works in the genre.

THE FLY ON THE WALL *incorporates no Indian policemen in its tale of political corruption and investigative reporting, with a background somewhere in Middle America. John Cotton, the reporter-sleuth, unwittingly moves the action to an area near Santa Fe when he flees the increasing pressure at the Capitol, but the major portion of the work occurs in State House, U.S.A. Contrary to any potential disappointment that this is not another Joe Leaphorn or Jim Chee mystery, the reader may perhaps wish that Hillerman would write more episodes for John Cotton to investigate. Read the book to ascertain the derivation of the title.*

Tony Hillerman is the recipient of several professional awards in the field of journalism, including the E. H. Shaffer Award and the Dan Burrows Award. The Mystery Writers of America recognized him with the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Mystery of 1973, and he was Guest of Honor at Bouchercon X in Los Angeles in 1979. He is now a resident of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

TAD: *The Armchair Detective* is primarily interested in your mystery fiction, but your bibliography also includes regional nonfiction. Were these works written before, after, or concurrently with your popular mysteries?

Hillerman: The first book I wrote was *The Great Taos Bank Robbery,* which was my master's thesis when I was a student at UNM [University of New Mexico]. Then I wrote *The Blessing Way.*

TAD: How did you become interested in the mystery genre?

Hillerman: I was going to write The Great American Novel, but I had been writing all my life for wire services. I had only written short stuff, and The Great American Novel is about 300,000 words long, right?

And I thought, before I try to write that, I had better write something that is much shorter and has a form, a shape, a skeleton. I'd been reading a lot of Eric Ambler and Graham Greene and Raymond Chandler, and I was very much impressed with what guys like these could do with a mystery. So I decided, I will first see if I can write a mystery. And I went down and checked one out of the library and for several hours counted words on lines and lines on pages and things like that, and it averaged out to about 80,000 words, which is a lot more reasonable than *War and Peace.* So that's the reason I decided I was going to write a mystery first. Then, if I could do that, I figured I would try the big book.

TAD: So...

Hillerman: So I wrote *The Blessing Way.* Then I decided to write the big book, which was *The Fly on the Wall.* But as I began writing it, getting into it, the more it became not what I had intended it to be but a mystery-suspense novel. I found I liked to write it better that way. Very early in it, I could see that was what it was going to be.

TAS: Your work for newspapers gave you a lot of background for that.

Hillerman: It sure did. The State Capitol could be about half the State Capitols in the United States. Probably half of them use the same floor plan. I run into reporters all over who say, "I know what State Capitol you're using. You use Jefferson City, Missouri or..." You know, they tend to be alike. It [*The Fly on the Wall*] actually was based on the Capitol at Oklahoma City, where I had worked.

TAD: Do you have the same Jeffersonian philosophy that Cotton had in *The Fly on the Wall*?

Hillerman: I'm afraid so. I'm a Jeffersonian to the bottom of my soul.

TAD: Then you feel that the public can, given the facts, sort them out and make constructive decisions.

Hillerman: I think historically the public tends to be much more intelligent than either the government or the press.

TAD: Why did you leave the political scene and immediately return to writing Indian mysteries?

Hillerman: Well, I grew up among Indians—Pottawatomies, Seminoles, etc., in Oklahoma, and they were my playmates and my friends. When I got to New Mexico permanently, and quickly began to see that the cultures here were still alive and well, I was very much interested in them. The first native Americans I ran into were Navajos, and the more I learn the more interested I get, and I just feel that other people should be interested. The mystery form seems to me to be a really good way to interest people who would never read an anthropology book or a nonfiction book about native Americans.

Ernesto Cata "remembered the year when he was nine, and Hu-tu-tu had stumbled on the causeway over Zuni Wash..." *Dance Hall of the Dead,* p. 1

"The orgy of baking which caught up the women of Zuni each Shalako season had reached its climax during the morning. Now most of the outdoor ovens were cooling..." *Dance Hall of the Dead,* p. 147

TAD: Hearsay among your fans is that teachers on the reservation use your books to teach the youth their own native mythology.

Hillerman: They're used in a lot of Indian schools. They're used in a lot of schools on the Zuni Reservation and on the Navajo Indian Reservation. I have had several Navajo women tell me that their own children became interested in the Navajo culture after they read one of my mysteries. They came back and started asking questions.

TAD: Does the knowledge that your books are being used as teaching aids influence your writing?

Hillerman: Well, not really, because from the very beginning I wanted very badly to be extremely accurate. I was already influenced that way.

TAD: Can you describe how you determine whether or not your information is accurate?

Hillerman: Oh, take *The Ghostway,* for example. I was going to use a subplot based on the traditional Navajo teaching that you should stay out of buildings in which people have died so you're not infected by the ghost. Now the subplot involved, in the end of the book, having the bad guy killed in a bar notorious for selling liquor to drunk Navajos. My idea was that the Navajos would then be afraid to go into the bar and the bar would have to close, thereby effectively solving the problem [of Navajo alcoholism in

Tony's been a good guy, a bad guy, even a fall guy. Now he's working for the Wall Street wise guys, making megabucks investigating a stock-market insider who's turned traitor, and is spilling secrets to the SEC.

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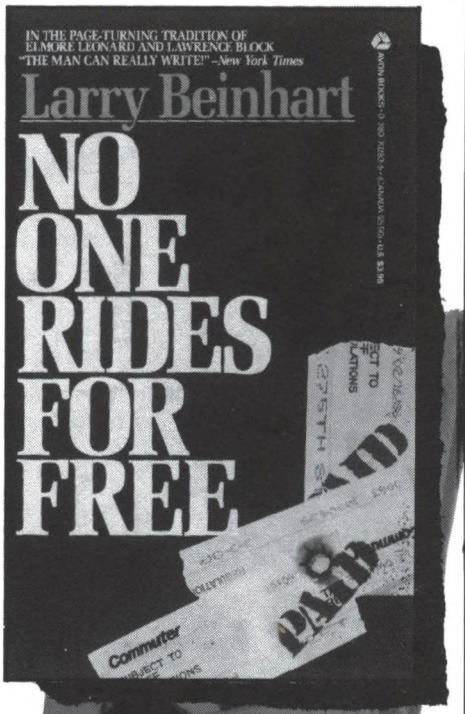

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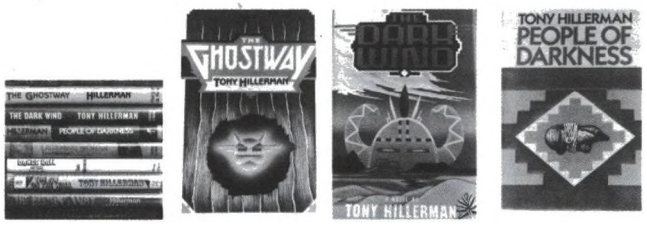


"Along the ruin, the plateau's granite cap . . . had fractured under its own weight . . . leaving behind room-sized gaps in the rimrock..." ***The Blessing Way,*** **p. 4**

that area]. But my own experience and Navajos I know suggested to me that, while it was the way [the teaching] was taught, it wouldn't really work with this kind of Navajo. I talked to a guy who teaches out there. We discussed it. He wasn't sure, either, and we agreed that he would submit the subplot to his class, have them discuss it, and have each one write a paper on it. They unanimously, without a single exception, agreed that theoretically "yes, that's the way we're taught, but actually drunks don't follow the rules." So it wouldn't work. I threw out the subplot. I do things like that.

I have Navajos whom I know read my stuff, and I ask them about it. When I sign books around places like Farmington, Flagstaff, Phoenix, and Gallup, I tend to see a lot of Navajos, and I say, "Have you read any of my books? Find anything wrong with them?" I'm always looking for feedback. I had one Navajo tell me that in *The Dance Hall of the Dead* the little boy was not bashful enough. I had a Navajo policeman I know tell me that I romanticize the Navajo police. You know, I make them better than they are. And I do, of course. I realize that. All people who write police procedurals tend to make their policemen Sherlock Holmes. And, of course, I go to the reservation when I can, and I look into details. I work off a very good map of the reservation.

TAD: Then you know where all the places are that you describe in your mysteries.

Hillerman: The story I'm working on now takes place along the San Juan River. It runs out of New Mexico into Utah and Arizona, along that border. Marie [his wife] and I were up there to look it over again—Montezuma Creek and Bluff and the little towns and Aneth Oil Field—just to make sure it hadn't changed since last time we saw it.

TAD: Do you also use reference works? Do you read the BAE Ethnology Reports, for instance?

Hillerman: I read the proceedings of the Smithsonian Institute, minutes of tribal council meetings, *The Navajo Times, The Hopi Weekly.*

TAD: You read more current material than history...

Hillerman: I think I could teach a course in Navajo history. I think I've read everything that's been written about Navajo history...but there hasn't been much written about it. It's not a subject of broad interest. I just read whatever I can get hold of.

As you read, you see a lot of contradiction. You see a lot of "if A is right, B's gotta be wrong," and when I talk to Navajos it's easy to understand why. There are about sixty clans, and their tradition is oral, so there's a lot of variation in very basic stuff. One Navajo will tell you about a taboo and another Navajo will have never heard of it.

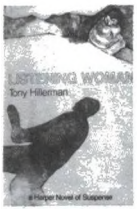
Another thing. There's a great tendency, the same kind of tendency or practice I grew up with as a child in rural Oklahoma, of having fun with strangers. When I was a litle boy I used to watch the people at the country store which my Dad ran tell tall tales to people who drove up to buy gasoline at the gas pumps. I've seen the same thing happen among Navajos. So, the first time I hear something, I think, "That's interesting," but I don't pay too much attention to it; the second time I hear it, I think, "Well, maybe there might be something to it." If I hear it three times about the same way, I think that it must be true. A lot of anthropologists didn't grow up in the country, and they're not familiar with the country man's sense of humor the Navajos are richly endowed with, and they write things down the first time they hear them, apparently.

TAD: The pueblo Indians do that...

Hillerman: I think all rural people do that to city slickers. I bet they do it in Afghanistan.

TAD: Probably. Tony, why don't you bring your Navajo policemen to the pueblos? [There are many pueblos situated along the Rio Grande in New Mexico from Albuquerque to Taos.]

Hillerman: That's a good question. The Navajos are very open. They have a very open and public religion. Part of the pueblo basic philosophy about the Kachina religion requires that a minimum number of



"At dawn, Chee parked the pickup at the windmill. He slammed the door behind him and stood facing the glow on the eastern horizon." ***The Dark Wind,*** **p. 39**

people are party to the esoteric parts of it. You dilute the power if everybody knows about it. A lot of pueblo Indians do not want their photographs taken based on the same philosophy. Therefore, in the Hopis, for example, if you're a member of a Kiva society, you are supposed to know perfectly your own part of the business, but you are not supposed to know anything about what the other Kiva societies do, and they put a very strongly negative value on curiosity. I do not feel comfortable butting into that. I mean, I think it's an invasion of their privacy. I think it's disrespectful of their religion, and I just don't want to do it.

In both *The Dance Hall of the Dead* and *Dark Wind,* you're involved with Zuni and Hopi [pueblo Indians]. You may have noticed it's all seen through the eyes of a Navajo policeman who knows just about what an interested outsider would know—just what he would pick up from reading and asking questions. He makes no pretense of understanding or having any inside information. I don't ask them any questions. If they want me to know something, they'll tell me.

TAD: You mentioned *The Dance Hall of the Dead.* Many who have read your mysteries say it is the best. Do you feel that way?

Hillerman: I hear that quite a bit. In my own opinion, it's not the best. Each one of those books, in my opinion, has serious things wrong with it and spots where I really think it came off well. You know, good parts and bad parts. The plot in *Dance Hall* worked pretty well, I thought. The one that has way the best plot, where I was really proud of the plot, is *Dark Wind.* The one now that people tell me [is the best] is *Ghostway.* I heard that from a lot of people, and several reviewers have said it. To me, I don't really see *The Ghostway* that way yet. I might later on, when I go back and reread it. It has sold far better than any of the others.

TAD: *Ghostway* includes descriptive violence that has not appeared before in your mysteries.

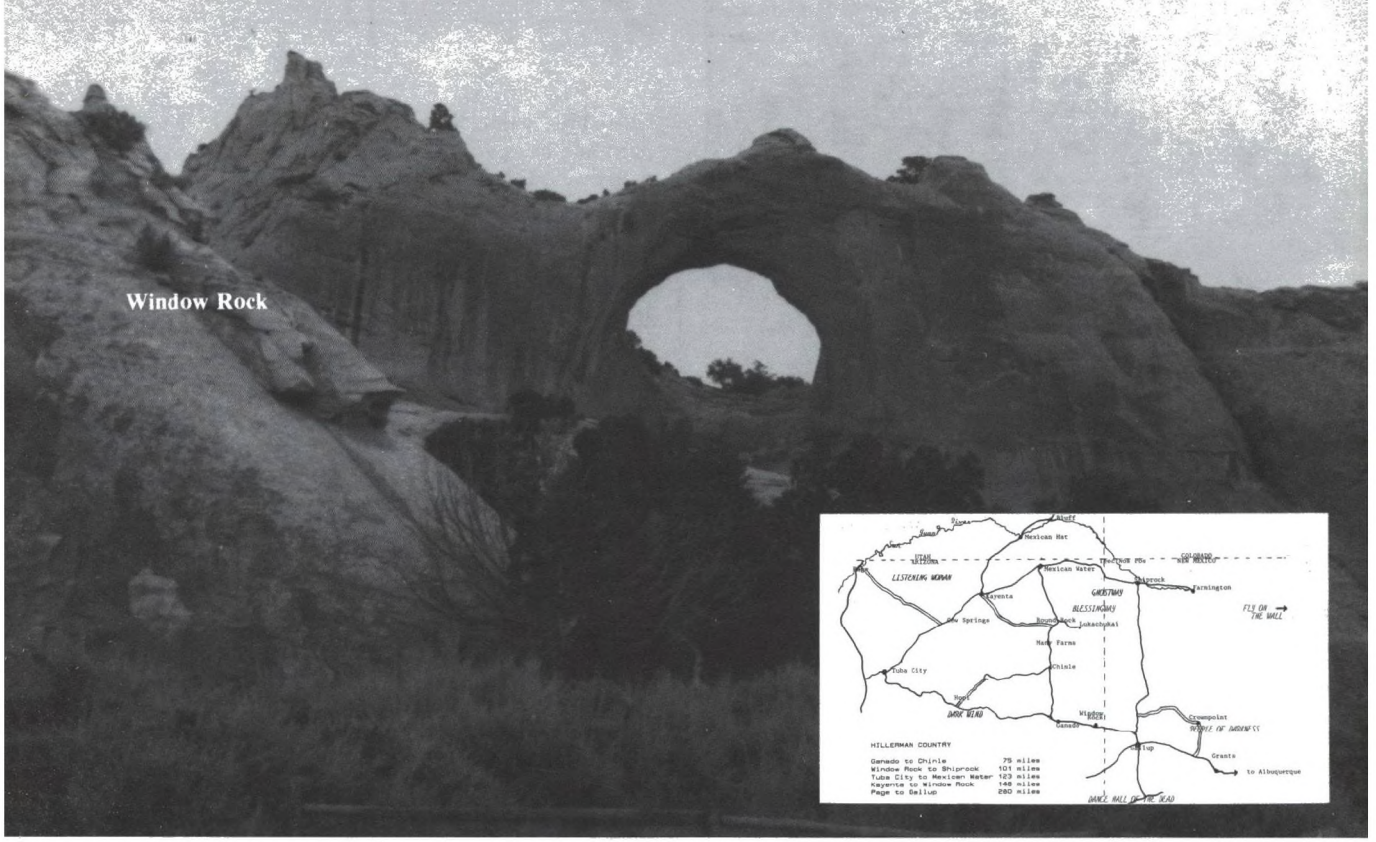
Hillerman: Because of the scene with the animals? Yeah. That's almost certainly true. In *People of Darkness,* where I had a professional killer, I thought I had that guy motivated properly and made a very believable character. People would say, "This guy's a sociopath," and they understood why. I needed a different kind of fellow here, and I had to, I felt, go to some lengths to [make him believable]. I have trouble believing in these kinds of guys. You read newspapers, and they're out there, but it's hard for me to believe in them, really. I think the reader has the same problem. Therefore, I lean over backwards to develop them so they're believable, and that seemed to me the only way I could. I wanted the man to seem frightening, dreadful. I wanted the reader looking at him doing that with absolutely no emotion about it. Actually, all he did, of course, was kill two guard dogs, and he wanted to make the front page of *The Los Angeles Times* and the ten o'clock news because he got more money. He wanted to do something bizarre and ghastly for the media. It wasn't because I've drifted off into enjoying it, describing that sort of stuff, or doing it gratuitously.

TAD: It was developing a character.

Hillerman: I've had a couple of complaints about it. Three. One was from my editor, who owns cats. Two were from readers who raise dogs. One was from a woman who raises Dobermans. Well, she was complaining about it, and I said, "You know, my editor didn't like it either. He wanted me to take out the part about the cats." She said, "To hell with the cats!"

TAD: Are you still planning to write The Great American Novel, or do you feel that what you have done is becoming The Great American Novel, all of it combined?

Hillerman: No, I don't feel that. I feel that I am going to continue writing mysteries. But, seven years ago, I started a novel. I wrote one chapter of it. It's set in the Depression. But when I finished the chapter, I finished it with the realization that I'm not ready to write it yet. It's in my files. The thought of that book is very much alive, and it's developed in those years.



Two years ago, I started another more or less mainstream novel which concerns two thirtyish, fortyish men, one of whom has just been killed... and that book is in its fifth chapter, sitting in my filing cabinet, because I am not quite ready to write it. Both of those books will eventually be written. I am on about page 60 of a mystery novel which involves both Jim Chee and Leaphorn.

TAD: That is the one which will be set around the San Juan River?

Hillerman: Most of it will take place [there]. Some of it in Window Rock, some of it around Shiprock, and a lot of it up in that Gooseneck country, that eroded stone country. That's the one I'll finish first.

TAD: Are you happy writing mysteries?

Hillerman: Oh, yes, I like to. When they're going well, I like to write them. I like to write. I like to write a lot when things are going smoothly and the paragraphs are coming off well...

TAD: Do you have a daily schedule for writing?

Hillerman: No. Until July 1 [1985], I've always had another job. I've tended to write for years, in effect, by [imagination] when I'm driving to work in the morning, driving home from work, in committee meetings, when I'm waiting for telephone calls, when I'm going to sleep at night. Before I get to the keyboard [he uses a word processor], the scene is all fully imagined, so when I actually get to the keyboard, it tends to go rapidly. I write on airplanes—I just write whenever I've got a moment.

Right now, the chapter I'm writing involves Chee visiting a little sub-post office where he's going to talk to this woman. In my mind, I'm building this woman in the conversation that's going to go on between her and Chee. I've pretty well got it now. When I get back to them and pull out that disk and put it in there, I'll know the woman. I know what she looks like, what she's wearing, what the inside of that store looks like, what she's going to say, so it'll go relatively rapidly. But I don't have any time to get up in the morning and write. I may, now that I've retired from the university. I intend to, in fact. It seems to be a good idea. Nearly everybody I know that writes does it.

TAD: You've been doing pretty well without the schedule. Of the mysteries you've already written, which is your favorite?

Hillerman: *Dark Wind* for craftsmanship. *Listening Woman* for best first chapter. *People of Darkness* for one of the best characters—the killer.

Here's something for the readers of *The Armchair Detective*. I work from the presumption that people buy mysteries for entertainment, and obviously, if your characters are a Shaman and a Shaman's patient, and the information that helps solve the

Bessie Nez, detention officer stationed at Window Rock, agreed to let us take her picture posed behind the Navajo Police carryall similar to the one Joe Leaphorn drives.

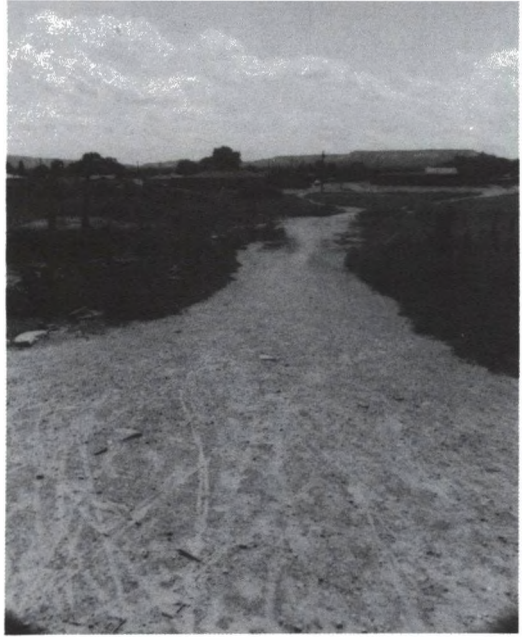
crime concerns taboo violations, then you're going to have a reader who legitimately needs to know and is willing to learn something about taboos and taboo violations.

TAD: The ethno-cultural information you include, then, is on a "need-to-know" basis. You try not to sound "teachy."

Hillerman: I refuse to sound "teachy." A Navajo librarian told me—we were talking about Silko and James Welch and some of the really great Indian writers—and I was saying, "It looks like to me you'd be reading more of them," and she said, "We do read them, and then we say, 'This is us, and it's beautiful,' but books like *Ceremony* and *Winter in the Blood* make you feel defeated, with a lot of hopelessness and despair." Then she said, "We read your books and we say, 'That's us,' again, 'That's us,' but we win!"

TAD: You have a reverence for any people's history and tradition, don't you?

Hillerman: I like people who believe in things. I am really turned off by those whose only interest is the pursuit of pleasure, whose only conversation is about snowmobiling and what they shot on the golf course last Tuesday and what kind of car they have. You couldn't possibly discuss anything religious or metaphysical with them because they never have thought about it. It's not that they don't believe particularly... I've always been interested in cultures that are based on metaphysical positions.



"Lieutenant Joseph Leaphorn spent the afternoon on the ridge that overlooks the village of Zuni from the south . . . the Shalako emerged . . . these immense birds would cross Zuni Wash at sundown..." *Dance Hall of the Dead*, pp. 146–51 (Thanks to Zuni Pueblo for permission to photograph)

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AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Joe Leaphorn mystery set around the Lukachukai Mountains of Eastern Arizona.

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First edition is so stated on copyright page.

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Jim Chee mystery set on the Hopi and Navajo Indian Reservations.

ALA Notable Books List. *New York Times* Best Books List.

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The Fly on the Wall. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. New York: Harper & Row, 1979. New York: Avon, 1979 (paperback). New York: Garland Publishing, 1983.

Political mystery set in the Midwest and New Mexico.

Not in the Indian policemen series.

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The Ghostway. San Antonio, Texas: Dennis McMillan, 1984. New York: Harper & Row, 1985. Thorndike, Maine: Thorndike Press, 1985 (large print edition).

Jim Chee mystery set around the Four Corners area where New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, and Arizona have a common boundary.

The true first edition is the one done by McMillan and in a limited run of 300 copies, with permission of Harper & Row. Harper & Row's edition, which followed in 1985, is the first trade edition.

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Joe Leaphorn mystery set in the northwestern part of the Navajo Indian Reservation of Arizona.

ALA Notable Books list; *New York Times* Best Books List. Finalist MWA Edgar Allan Poe Award competition.

First edition so stated on copyright page. To differentiate the first edition from the book club edition (which is also a stated first), look for a small rectangular indention in the lower right hand corner of the back cover. The indention is on the book club edition. Also, a true first will have a dust jacket with a price on the upper front inside flap, as opposed to the book club jacket, which is blank at that spot.

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One of Charles H. Belding series. Text by Hillerman, photography by David Muench. Large 13¾" × 10½".

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Hillerman has edited and written an introduction to this book of essays on New Mexico by eleven writers, including D. H. Lawrence, Ernie Pyle, and Winfield Townley Scott.

No additional printings listed on copyright page of the first edition.

Skinwalkers. To be released by Harper & Row in January of 1987.

Jim Chee and Joe Leaphorn both star in this one, set around the San Juan River Country in Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, and also in Shiprock, New Mexico and Window Rock, Arizona.

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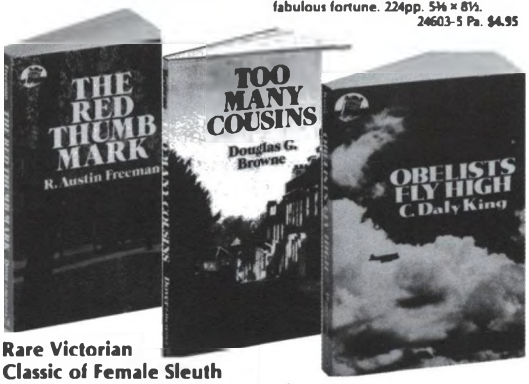

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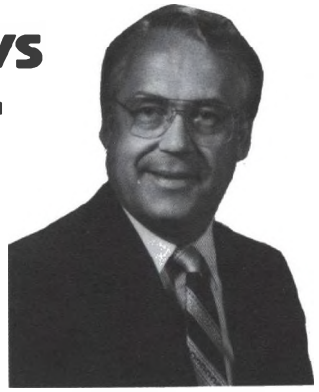


Consulting Editor

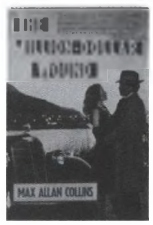
by Allen J. Hubin

Short notes...

The Agent (Doubleday, $16.95), created by Bill Adler and written by David R. Slavitt, has quite a good idea and some creditable execution, but it's marred by the superfluous sex shoveled in by the authors, sporting tandem leers. Leonard Castle is the reigning literary agent of New York. The story opens with Castle running down a Manhattan street dodging bullets, wondering which of his recent clients is sufficiently enraged to want him dead. Castle is an arranger of imaginative book deals, a shrewd student of people, a manipulator with generally good intentions. We learn of eight of his publishing arrangements, centering on a former U.S. President, film stars, an ex-wife of a Senator, an exiled movie director, a talk show host, and a porno queen. Not all the deals worked out as he had planned, and one of the casualties is clearly packing a gun. I think this could have been quite a memorable work if the authors hadn't allowed their eyes to drift below the trash line.

I was enormously taken with Dorothy Cannell's first novel, *The Thin Woman* (1984). Her second, ***Down the Garden Path*** (St. Martin's, $14.95) has some inventiveness and nice touches, but it is on balance a disappointment. Cannell's protagonist, Tessa Fields, is too fickle to be very likeable, and the story could well be 25% shorter. Tessa, a foundling raised by a vicar and his wife, is now driven by two passions: to turn Harry Harkness's indifference into a love matching her own for him, and to identify her mother. She hatches a scheme to accomplish each. In due course, she is installed under a variety of false pretenses in Cloisters, a huge old pile inhabited by the elderly Misses Tramwell and their butler, an allegedly reformed burglar. Sinister things, it develops, are afoot.

Max Allan Collins, completes his Nate Heller trilogy with ***The Million-Dollar Wound*** (St. Martin's, $16.95). The period ranges from 1942 back to 1939 and then again to 1942, the setting from Guadalcanal to Chicago to Los Angeles. Again historical figures appear frequently and well, and each part of the tale rings true; but the parts don't knit together as convincingly as I would like. Frank Nitti runs Chicago for the mob;



Heller tries – not always successfully – to stay out of his way. Rather to his own amazement, he enlists in the Army, lying about his over-age. After brief and traumatic service, he returns to Chicago, re-acclimating with difficulty. Columnist Westbrook Pegler is chasing one of Nitti's henchmen, who runs entertainment unions; he and actor Robert Montgomery want Nate's help. The Feds are also after said henchmen. People are dying in Chicago, and Elliot Ness comes back to help clean up. Heller is in the middle of all this, trying to stay alive, to stir his foggy memory concerning a killing on Guadalcanal, to keep from having to testify against Nitti to a grand jury.

England's Home Minister, Patrick Cosgrave, has written three novels about Colonel Allen Cheyney of British Intelligence. The third of these and the first to appear here, is ***Adventure of State*** (St. Martin's, $12.95). The narrative is afflicted with a certain turbidity, but the patient reader will find this a satisfying portrait of the mostly gray world of espionage, of moles and traitors. Cheyney has by this time retired, but an equally retired civil servant on his deathbed asks urgently to see him. Cheyney comes, puzzled, but the man dies of natural causes before he can arrive. But all is not natural about the matter: sensitive Intelligence noses twitch madly. What is it so feared that Cheyney will know, or remember, about the apparently blameless dead man that his own life should be all but forfeit?

Of less than promising materials – a bar pianist and his would-be mistress, both perpetually stoned, a drug-dealing gangster, owner of a chain of sleazejoints along El Camino in Silicon Valley, his wife, once a well-known entertainer and now mostly pickled in alcohol and mourning her long-missing daughter – John Daniel extracts an intriguing tale in ***Play Melancholy Baby*** (Perseverance, $7.95). Casey, hiding out from cocaine dealings he tripped over in Europe and grieving for the true love he bedded and lost there, plays golden oldies at Gershwin's in a

Northern California oceanside resort town. Along comes Dixie Arthur, wife of aforementioned gangster, to sing enchantingly to his playing, to ask him to find her daughter. Against his better judgment (assuming that a brain fried in marijuana is capable of judgment of any kind), he and barmaid Beverly trek up to the Bay area. There murder shortly intrudes, the past rises before Casey's bleary eyes, and he seems to be suspect number one, well on his way also to becoming corpse number two—or is it three? Intriguing, as I said, but with no character or setting worth remembering.

Once again, we have homicide in the hallowed halls of learning—here in Sheepshanks College, Cambridge—in *Academic Murder* by Dorsey Fiske (St. Martin's, $15.95). The dons are at High Table for their evening meal, as usual; one of their number is mostly dining of alcoholic fluids, as usual; one of their number sups of port richly laced with arsenic, not quite as usual. The unthinkable seems to be true: a don has taken to murder. The motive is certainly unclear, as Cambridge's Insp. Bunce learns. Scotland Yard sends along its prime incompetent, Insp. Pocklington, to assist Bunce. And if that weren't enough to burden the Bunce, a rapist in academic garb is working his way through the female population on campus. This is pleasantly done, if dryly; the author could have breathed more life into her characters.

Gerald Hammond's reliably entertaining series about Keith Calder, Scottish gunsmith, continues with ***Pursuit of Arms*** (St. Martin's, $12.95). Here Calder's business is booming: a beautiful Polish refugee, a dancer, asks him to sell a fabulous batch of antique firearms. And Eddie Adoni, the wheeler-dealer of uncertain principles and connections, wants Calder to refurbish a truckload of guns for an unnamed buyer. Both lots of firepower are loaded on one truck for shipment to Calder, and the wrong people come to know of this: the truck is hijacked by a murderous crew. Calder, his customers, and the police blame each other, and Keith decides he must resolve the matter himself. Tense narrative, filled with good and interesting people.

The third case for Sheriff Emil Whippletree, of a small city in central Minnesota, is ***Fourth Down Death*** by Michael T. Hinkemeyer (St. Martin's, $13.95). In the previous novel, Emil had retired; this one takes us back ten years, to a time when football-maddened North Star University is beating national powers right and left. But then, with a blithe sense of inopportune timing, a lady sees the Virgin Mary in a campus pine tree, and the faithful throng to the new shrine. Couple this with the murder of a co-ed, seething faculty politics, a university president who's a past master of media manipulation, plus a campus security chief with a lustful eye on Emil's job, and you have the makings of a most enjoyably complex tale. Which this is.

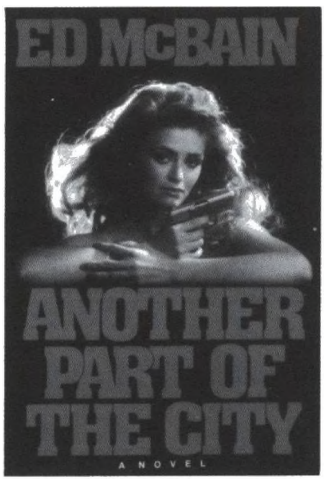
Bill James's first mystery is ***You'd Better Believe It*** (St. Martin's, $12.95). Colin Harpur, a detective superintendent in a city not far from London, is working around the fringes of a proposed bank robbery one of his snitches has told him is coming. Some nasty fellows from London are apparently working with local talent. Harpur's boss, leaning toward a tranquil retirement, wants no waves. But the case falls apart, with police and others dead and the chief villain escaped. Harpur means to have him, one way or another. None of the characters here is very appealing, including Harpur, who's no better than he has to be, but James's slangy story has a feel of rough reality.

I fear, based on ***The Spy Who Barked in the Night*** (Doubleday, $12.95), that Marc Lovell's series about 79-inch spy Appleton Porter is getting a little tired. Earlier tales have been nicely amusing, but this ninth caper is less satis-

fying, especially in the early going. A film company is shooting in Scotlan, in dangerous but unavoidable proximity to a top-secret laboratory. Porter, along with his Ibizan hound Monico, is dispatched to the scene, disguised as a dog handler, to sniff out Clever Freddy, a freelance agent expected to use the film crew as cover to find the laboratory. Porter is composed of equal parts bumble and inadvertent competence, and all manner of adventures—potentially lethal and amorous—naturally befall him.

Manhattan's Police Detective Reardon debuts in Ed McBain's ***Another Part of the City*** (Mysterious Press, $15.95), a grim and compelling vision of that city and our collapsing world society. Masked killers dispatch the apparently blameless owner of an Italian restaurant. Reardon's investigation goes nowhere until faint connections to the killing of an Arab diplomat, the sale of a fabulous art collection, and something to do with silver begin to appear. Reardon is an interesting fellow, and I suspect—I hope—we'll see more of him.

The High Castle by Raymond Steiber (St. Martin's, $14.95) is a pleasant bit of intrigue froth, set in 1926. Jake Barnes survived World War I to become a newspaper correspondent, rising—despite his undisciplined ways—to head the Paris office of the *New York Herald*. Major Latimer, a disreputable English friend of Jake's, asks him to back up a meeting with some folks who want to hire Latimer to do a killing. Jake does the job unwell: the major is shot to death in a London church. So, with a beddable wench coincidentally in tow, Jake heads for Austria, where schemes abound about which it can be fatal to know.



A Case of Loyalties (St. Martin's, $13.95) by Marilyn Wallace is not easy to get into—a stylistic innovation is unsuccessful—but perseverance is well rewarded by an insightful exploration of people and relationships. Tricia Rayborn stole a car off a street in Oakland, where she lives in California. The cops pick her up for taking the car—and on suspicion of murder. Dead of gunshot is a particularly unpleasant number, and perhaps the police have the right idea. Tricia's mother, a would-be painter, rages and loves at Tricia and rages at the police, who wooden-headedly concentrate on Tricia as suspect. Until one of them, Sgt. Goldstein, notices something strange on the wall of a rooming house where the dead man lived.

The latest novel about English banker Mark Treasure by David Williams is ***Murder in Advent*** (St. Martin's, $14.95). The underfunded Anglican cathedral in Litchester is considering sale of its early copy of the Magna Carta. A million pounds or more is at stake. The governing board is split on the emotional issue, and Treasure—as Vicar's Warden—is asked to cast the deciding vote. Decide, he has, but murder and the destruction of the document intervene, and Mark returns to his familiar sleuthly role. A tasty morsel, this, if intensely tranquil. □

THAT Dashiell Hammett's work represents a major landmark in the development of the detective story is acknowledged by most readers and critics of this fictional genre. My purpose is to define precisely what identifies Hammett as an innovator and what connection to the traditional detective story persists in his stories and novels. The focus here will be Hammett's short stories of the 1920s because they show most clearly his experimentation with various techniques. Hammett always thought of himself as a writer of detective fiction, not as the creator of a new literary genre such as the "hardboiled" detective story or the "American" detective story. Many writers about the detective story have de-emphasized the debt Hammett owes to Edgar Allan Poe and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, but a significant debt remains. Though Hammett certainly was an innovator, his departure from the earlier detective story was not a rejection of inherited materials but a broadening of their possibilities.

Hammett's fiction-writing career lasted for only twelve years, 1922–34. His first stories were published in pulp magazines, notably in *Black Mask*, a publication which has achieved historic status because it originally sponsored many of the best American detective story writers of this century. Hammett quickly became the leader and model for the *Black Mask* group. Through the '20s he perfected the art of the detective short story, but toward the end of the decade he began to writer longer works. His first two novels, *Red Harvest* (1929) and *The Dain Curse* (1929), were expansions and combinations of earlier stories. In 1930, he published *The Maltese Falcon* and achieved overnight fame and financial success. This novel was followed by *The Glass Key* (1931) and *The Thin Man* (1934). At this point, his career as a fiction writer virtually ended. *Tulip*, an unfinished autobiographical story, was written many years later and published after his death. Hammett did continue working on screen treatments of several "Thin Man" movies in Hollywood until 1938.

IN THE THREE SAM SPADE STORIES PUBLISHED IN '32, SPADE IS SIMPLY A CLEAR-EYED OBSERVER AND INTERPRETER OF CLUES.

The criticism of Hammett's work has increased dramatically over the last decade and goes far beyond earlier superficial glances at the "hardboiled" hero and the "tough" prose to a much-needed treatment of his principal themes and his stylistic development. Yet there are two limitations of which one is made aware in reading this criticism. First of all, only the five novels have received significant attention. Since Hammett wrote nearly seventy short stories, and since he had achieved a certain reputation and considerable artistry before writing any of the novels, such a view can be only a partial one. Secondly, again, a close study of Hammett's complete work points to a much closer tie to the traditional detective story than has been discussed previously. Though Hammett certainly did create a new focus of interest for the detective story, elements of the inherited form, particularly in relation to plot, are always present; indeed, his last novel, *The Thin Man*, is in certain obvious respects much more of a traditional detective story than it is a "hardboiled" one. Again, this is not to deny his role as an innovator but to see it more clearly and fully. The precise relationship between Hammett's work and that of his traditional predecessors is an elusive one which can best be identified by showing how Hammett worked with an inherited form but expanded its thematic range.

Hammett generally wrote four kinds of detective stories. The first type is almost entirely built on the traditional detective story plot. The second relies heavily on the traditional form, but with a new emphasis on *how* the mystery is solved, as I will make clear. The third type of story is not necessarily a detective story at all – indeed, one largely overlooked fact is that Hammett wrote and published a number of effective stories which do not fall within the detective genre, which focus on a particular character at a crisis point, the point of defining a code of personal integrity in the midst of a hostile environment. Finally, Hammett's greatest work consists of those stories and novels in which the other three types are combined; here a somewhat modified traditional plot structure is integrated into a story of a character, usually but not always a detective, who is struggling to preserve his integrity. *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Glass Key* are the best examples of the fourth kind of story, and they represent Hammett's highest literary achievements.

The traditional detective story plot structure was best summarized by R. Austin Freeman, the successful early-twentieth-century detective story writer. The basic plot includes "(1) statement of the problem; (2) production of the data for its solution (clues); (3) the discovery, i.e., completion of the inquiry by the investigator and declaration by him of the solution; (4) proof of the solution by an exposition of the evidence."[1] Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Purloined Letter," as well as all of

Dashiell Hammett and the Tradition of the Detective Story

By Walter Raubicheck

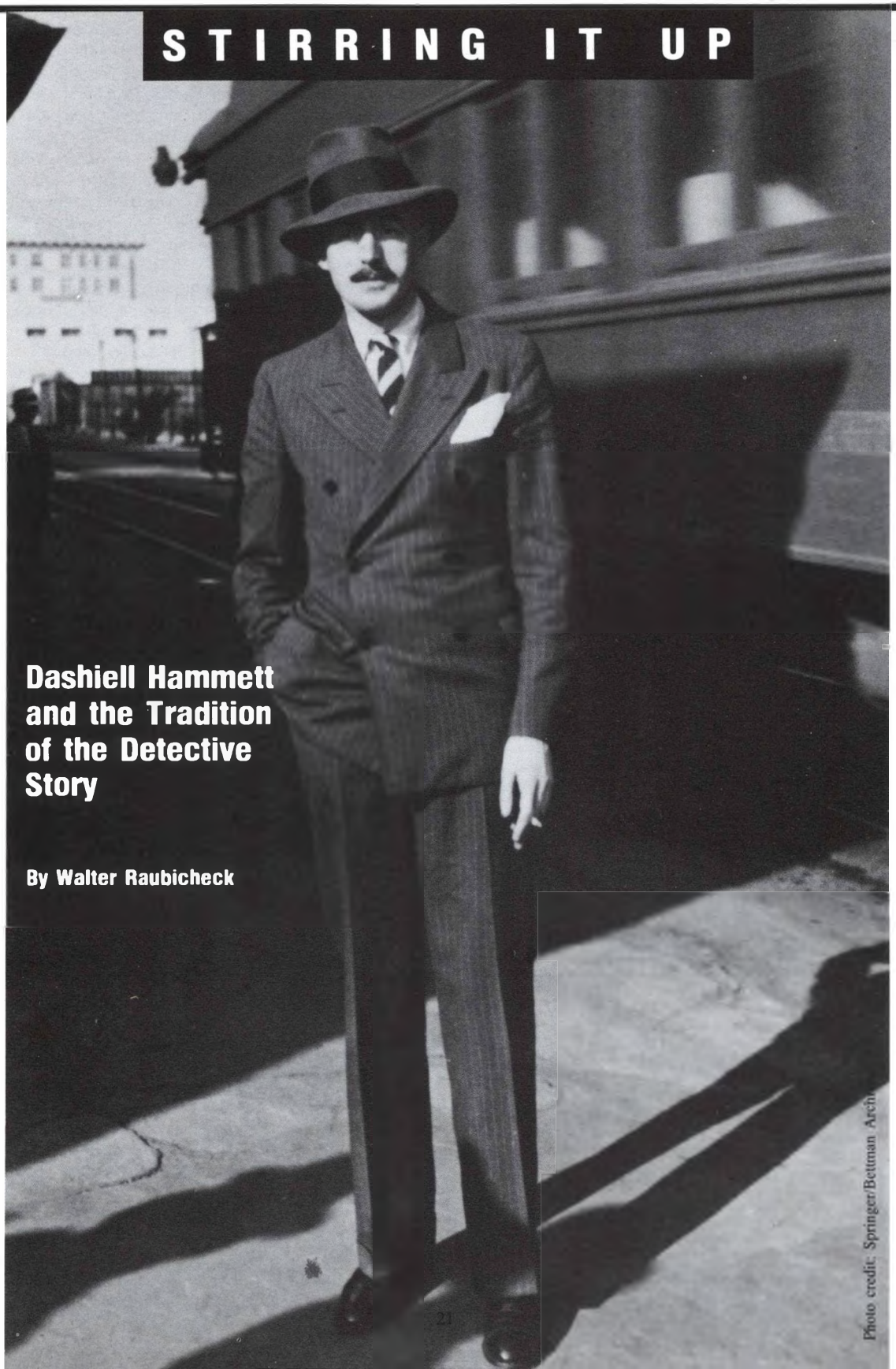


Photo credit: Springer/Bettman Archive

Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, follow this format. Poe actually includes a sort of prologue to his tales, which we may call the Introduction to the Detective, during which Dupin demonstrates his remarkable analytical powers. Doyle often follows Poe's lead here too, as Holmes identifies his client's home county, how he/she has traveled to his rooms, and so on before the problem is stated. During the Production of Clues section of the Poe and Doyle stories, which makes up the body of the plot structure, Dupin and Holmes examine clues, interrogate suspects, and, using inductive reasoning, eventually arrive at the correct solution, which is then announced to an astounded audience. Later, the detective explains to his much less astute but well-meaning companion the steps in the chain of inductive reasoning which lead to the Discovery. This is the final, Proof, section of the traditional plot.

For our purposes, the relationship of what we have called the traditional plot structure to the possibilities for characterization is crucial. It is almost axiomatic that character is negligible in traditional detective stories. Characterization may lend color and impact to the plot structure, but it never diverts attention from it. A partial exception to this role is the character of the detective himself: Dupin and Holmes possess peculiar and striking characteristics, but they are highly stylized and finally implausible characters. The logical unraveling of a trail of clues is the focus of interest of the traditional detective story; character contributes mostly to suspenseful atmosphere in this form, but it is not the central concern of the author.

Dashiell Hammett's early stories were published in magazines such as *Brief Stories, Pearson's, Smart Set, Saucy Stories,* and, most notably, *Black Mask,* a pulp started by H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan in 1920, and sold in 1921. *Black Mask* specialized in crime stories, though it also featured love stories and Westerns. A comparison of the plot structure of some of his *Black Mask* tales to the formula which had been established by Poe, Doyle, and their followers reveals both Hammett's close ties to his predecessors and his unique contribution to the form. Many of the early stories feature the Continental Op, the short, squat, tough detective about whom Hammett eventually wrote 36 stories, several of which were later combined into *Red Harvest* and *The Dain Curse.* Most of these stories begin with the Statement of the Problem, just as in the traditional plot structure, and proceed to a Clues section. The Op, indeed, is a solver of puzzles in much the same way as are Dupin and Holmes. In "The Main Death" (1927), the Op induces that a suicide, not murder, has taken place. After he has interrogated the suspects, the Op concludes from the evidence that the dead man's wife arranged the suicide scene to appear as if a murder had occurred in order to obtain the insurance payments. In "The Farewell Murder" (1930), the Op is called upon to help a threatened man at an isolated estate somewhere north of San Francisco. This setting, reminiscent of many mansions and villas from earlier detective stories, is one aspect of a very traditional structure. Any number of earlier puzzle solvers could have replaced the Hammett detective here. The threatened man is killed, and, with the assistance of such classical pieces of evidence as train schedules and the difference between a left-handed and right-handed knife cut, the Op identifies and captures the murderer.

The three Sam Spade stories which Hammett published in "slick" magazines in 1932 are also good examples of his reliance on traditional plot structures. Spade here is not the existential anti-hero he is in *The Maltese Falcon;* instead, he is simply a clear-eyed observer and interpreter of clues. In "A Man Called Spade," the story ends with a long discussion between Spade and his secretary, in which she asks questions about how he discovered the murderer's guilt and Spade then calmly explains to her the details of the killer's plan—in other words, the Proof section from the traditional plot structure.

Hammett's primary innovation is that his detectives do not always rely on analytical reasoning to solve their cases. In the Op series, physical pluck and especially intelligent hunches are as effective as logic for combatting evil. Again, the Op does interrogate suspects and study clues, as do his traditional predecessors, but this is usually not sufficient. The truth can become clear only when the

Op is able to shatter the wall of falsehood and duplicity which has been erected to bewilder both him and the police. The Op constantly refers to the need to "stir things up." Only then can he see a more accurate representation of the suspects' relationships to each other and to the crime. Then courage, common sense, and intuition lead him to the guilty parties. As he says while pursuing two suspects in "The Golden Horseshoe," a 1924 *Black Mask* story, "What I was working for was to make this pair dust out. I didn't care where they went or what they did, so long as they scooted. I'd trust to luck and my own head to get profit out of their scrambling—I was still trying to stir things up."[2]

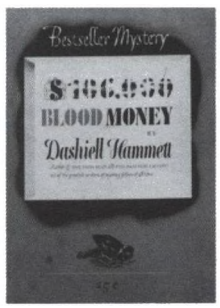
The Op attempts to force murder suspects to act irrationally, even violently, so that their true desires and motivations will surface. In "The House on Turk Street," another 1924 story, the Op manipulates two lying killers so that the woman cannot persuade the man to help her escape: "He was eager to believe her, and her words had the ring of truth to them. And I knew that—in love with her as he was—he'd more readily forgive her treachery with the bonds than he would forgive her for planning to run off with Hook; so I made haste to stir things up again."[3] He succeeds in turning the suspects against each other, and the facts behind the crime start to emerge from the killers' own anger and sense of betrayal.

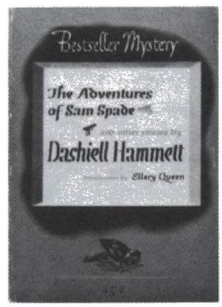
"Stirring things up" is fraught with danger. The Op is always aware that "to stir things up" can be effective only when the time is appropriate, when the progress of the chase has reached the point at which the suspects are vulnerable to manipulation: "One of the operatives went up to the yellow house on the hill, and rang the bell for half an hour with no result. We didn't try that again, not wanting to stir things up at this stage."[4] The success of this dangerous procedure is always dependent on physical courage under the pressure of the possibility of imminent death. When people and situations have been "stirred up," anything can happen, and only a person of extreme resourcefulness can survive in this state of constant uncertainty.

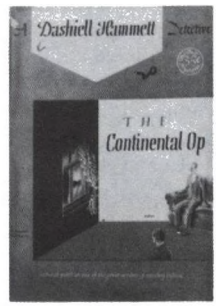
The plot structure in Hammett's Continental Op stories, then, is close to the traditional one in many respects but differs from it in one crucial way: during the Clues section, the detective uses more than logic and intelligence when he sifts data and interviews suspects. As a result, the Proof section often drops out of the plot structure. Proof and Discovery are usually simultaneous in Hammett. Yet it is important to recognize that the Statement of the Problem, Clues, and Discovery sections of the plot are as integral to a Hammett story as they are to one by Conan Doyle. As Peter Wolfe has remarked in his full-length study of Hammett's fiction, "Most often Hammett stirs our imagination by using forms and norms traditionally associated with crime fiction."[5] Indeed, he refers to "Hammett's ongoing practice of mining classic detective fiction for plotting devices."[6] Hammett worked innovations on an inherited form, but he did not destroy one form and create another.

As Hammett was experimenting with narrative strategies in his Continental Op detective stories, he was also always writing character-focused stories outside of the mystery genre. "Holiday" (1923), "The Man Who Killed Dan Odams" (1924), and "Ber-Bulu" (1925) are all first-rate stories which use irony effectively to emphasize the ambiguity and unpredictability of human nature. "The Barber and His Wife," a very early Hammett story, is an ironic

THE OP IS ALWAYS AWARE THAT THE SUCCESS OF THIS DANGEROUS PROCEDURE — "STIRRING THINGS UP" — IS ALWAYS DEPENDENT ON PHYSICAL COURAGE UNDER THE PRESSURE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF IMMINENT DEATH.







depiction of the limitations of an insensitive masculinity devoid of feminine subtlety. The wife of Louis Stemler, the protagonist, frustrated by his narcissism, has an affair with another man. Stemler reacts typically: "To a red-blooded he-man the solution was obvious. For these situations men had fists and muscles and courage."[7] Though he beats up his rival, the wife abandons him for the lover. Stemler learns no lesson: "So this was the world! He had given Becker his chance, hadn't taken the advantage of him to which he had been entitled; had beaten him severely—and this was the way it turned out. Why, a man might just as well be a weakling!"[8] This theme, the need for masculine sensitivity, becomes central to the dilemma faced by the protagonists of the five Hammett novels. That this is so is itself ironic, since Hammett is occasionally criticized for creating cold, automaton-like heroes. The hardboiled prose is actually treated ironically in Hammett's best work.

The irony of Hammett's worldview is immediately apparent in an essay written in 1923, "From the Memoirs of a Private Detective." A few excerpts from this essay, published in Mencken and Nathan's *Smart Set* magazine, reveal his ironic cynicism:

> A man whom I was shadowing went into the country for a walk one Sunday afternoon and lost his bearings completely. I had to direct him back to the city. . . .
>
> [I]n 1917, in Washington, D.C., I met a young woman who did not remark that my work must be very interesting. . . .
>
> Going from the larger cities out into the remote rural communities, one finds a steadily decreasing percentage of crimes that have to do with money and a proportionate increase in the frequency of sex as a criminal motive. . . .
>
> I know a man who once stole a Ferris wheel.[9]

In the five novels, Hammett combines a traditional detective plot structure modified by the need "to stir things up" with a complex characterization which results from his ironic vision. *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Glass Key* are generally agreed to be the masterpieces arising out of this expansion of the range of the traditional story, although European critics and readers often cite *Red Harvest* as his most compelling work.

As Hammett developed as a writer, he learned to use style as an ironic tool. The character of the Op enabled him to give his ironic stance force, wit, and clarity. This colloquial style fits the Op's assumption that evil is intrinsic to all walks of life and enables him to treat corruption and violence as everyday matters. The Op's cynical rhetoric is most effective, however, when it is used to combat the romantic elements which abound in Hammett's work. As do most important American fiction writers, Hammett includes Gothic effects and other elements of traditional romance or fantasy throughout his stories and novels. The Op—and later Sam Spade and Ned Beaumont—insists on a deflating practicality which establishes a powerful romance-realism dichotomy. The Op can be momentarily stunned by the bizarre, but he insists on re-establishing a pragmatic base to the investigation. In "Dead Yellow Women," the Op confronts a contemporary Chinese-American woman who has suddenly metamorphosed into an ancient Oriental queen, and he is awed for a brief moment:

> She was a tall woman, straight-bodied and proud. A butterfly-shaped headdress decked with the loot of a dozen jewelry stores exaggerated her height. Her gown was amethyst filigreed with gold above, a living rainbow below.[10]

But the Op makes a quick recovery:

> "What are you doing here?" I repeated, stepping closer to Lillian Shan.
>
> "I am where I belong," she said slowly. . . . "I have come back to my people."
>
> That was a lot of bunk.[11]

The romantic elements in Hammett's work indicate that his detective figures descend from the archetypal nineteenth-century American hero, Cooper's Natty Bumppo. The Op does possess a number of Leatherstocking's attributes: he is a loner, proficient with a gun, suspicious of the cultural trappings of "civilization," and extremely uncomfortable about the temptations of sex. Yet his unswerving devotion to the methods and goals of the Continental Detective Agency, his namelessness, and his cynicism about inherent morality connect him to Hammett's intrinsically ironic vision of life. Between Cooper and Hammett lies the stark pessimism of American naturalists such as Dreiser and Norris. Aspects of the Cooper hero and the heightened effects of nineteenth-century romantic melodrama persist in Hammett, but modified by his existential awareness of futility and randomness.

The characteristics usually cited as Hammett's innovations are tough language, the "hardboiled" hero, and an emphasis on violence. As I have shown, these elements are actually derived from his interest in depth of character, irony, and romance. These elements make his fiction into literature, but they remain detective stories. In a letter to Blanche Knopf in 1928, Hammett wrote:

> I'm one of the few—if there are any more—people moderately literate who take the detective story seriously . . . Someday somebody's going to make "literature" of it . . . and I'm selfish enough to have my hopes . . . I have a long speech I usually make on the subject, all about the ground not having been scratched yet, and so on, but I won't bore you with it now.[12]

I doubt Hammett's speech would have been boring. And his hopes were realized, to the benefit of generations of detective story writers and readers.

Notes

1. R. Austin Freeman, "The Art of the Detective Story," in *The Art of the Detective Story* edited by Howard Haycraft (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), p. 234.
2. "The Golden Horseshoe," in *The Continental Op* by Dashiell Hammett, edited by Steven Marcus (New York: Random House, 1974), p. 81.
3. "The House on Turk Street," in *The Continental Op*, p. 112.
4. "The Scorched Face," in *The Big Knockover* by Dashiell Hammett, edited by Lillian Hellman (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 98.
5. Peter Wolfe, *The Art of Dashiell Hammett* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980), p. 9.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
7. "The Barber and His Wife," in *A Man Named Thin* by Dashiell Hammett, edited by Ellery Queen (New York: Joseph W. Ferman, 1962), p. 59.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
9. Dashiell Hammett in Haycraft, pp. 417-22.
10. "Dead Yellow Women," in *The Big Knockover*, p. 240.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
12. Dashiell Hammett in Diane Johnson, *Dashiell Hammett: A Life* (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 72. □

He Nails 'Em With Modesty

By Bernard A. Drew

With cool professionalism, Modesty Blaise strips off her shirt and stands naked to the waist.

She gives a nod to her companion, Willie Garvin, and he moves away. As the seconds tick through her head, she grasps the door handle. She opens the door

wide and quietly steps into the room, shoulders back, a smile on her lips.

Five men at the table and a sixth at the bar turn to look at her. Their faces are blank, frozen. They are nailed, their eyes transfixed by her bold appearance.

A second goes by, and Willie slips through another door. He carries a knife in one hand, a piece of lead pipe in the other. No one notices him, until it is too late.

The Nailer, a tactical maneuver designed to give a three-second edge in close combat, is suited to Modesty Blaise, the brash, sexy rival to James Bond.

In the last two decades, Modesty Blaise has appeared in ten action-suspense novels, a short story collection, more than 56 syndicated comic strip exploits, a major motion picture (featuring Monica Vitti) and an ABC-TV movie (with Ann Turkel). Her escapades appear in print around the world, in 92 publications from India to Nigeria, Great Britain to Puerto Rico, Hong Kong to the United States.

Modesty first appeared in a newspaper strip in May 1963. Her creator, Peter O'Donnell, who had served in a number of exotic locales in Persia while with the Royal Signal Corps during 1938-46, conceived her character as a post-war orphan who learned to survive in the streets and in the countryside. An old man called The Professor gave her guidance, and, in good humor, gave her the name Modesty. Blaise she borrowed from Merlin's tutor.

As she matured, Modesty became a professional thief. With her partner and close friend Willie Garvin, she took over and controlled a worldwide criminal network for several years. Retiring at an early age to a comfortable life in England, she still longed for adventure—which she and Willie have found with great frequency in aiding the British Secret Service quell threats to international peace.

Author O'Donnell, born in London in 1920, began his writing career at age sixteen, selling short stories and juvenile fiction to the pulp and other magazines. In the 1950s, he began scripting comic strips, including Garth, Tug Transom, and Romeo Brown. It was while working on the last that he met artist Jim Holdaway, who was to become the first artist for the Modesty Blaise strip.

The seeds of Modesty's character were sown in O'Donnell's work in the adventure strips and in his writing romantic serials for women's magazines. It took him nearly a year to develop her background and personality, but it was worth it. When Modesty Blaise appeared, she was an immediate hit.

"It does surprise me that the response has been so broad," O'Donnell has said in an interview. "I get letters from all over, from all ages, from girls and from professors.

"I write the strips for myself," he explains. "I try to make them entertaining. *The Standard,* London's only evening paper [in which Modesty has appeared from the beginning], serves an upbeat market. It's not in the tabloid style. I don't write down to my readers—I'd be in trouble if I tried to write for all the disparate markets."

Modesty's popularity is international, and this sometimes puzzles O'Donnell: "I would have thought that it's too sophisticated for a number of countries, and I would have thought that it would be unpopular in South America, where the machismo society might oppose the Modesty Blaise idea."

The heroine, while appearing irregularly in the United States, nevertheless has developed a sizable following.

"I take great pleasure in having a number of long-standing fans in America who write to me and who go to great lengths to get hold of the books," says O'Donnell.

Because of differences inherent in the formats, O'Donnell handles his comic strip Modesty and his prose Modesty differently. The books, for one thing, are more graphic in their violence and sex.

British comics regularly offer feminine nudity, and Modesty has stripped in her strip. Once, while hiding from pursuers in the Australian outback, she shed her clothes and darkened her skin in order to mingle with co-operative aboriginals. Constant readers—judging by letters to newspapers carrying the strip—were shocked, and pleased, with the situation.

In the books, Modesty more often uses her body—whether it's for shock value, baring her breasts in order to "nail" her foes in *Sabre-Tooth,* or whether it's to supply therapeutic sex to, say, calm the anxieties of missionary doctor Giles Pennyfeather in *The Impossible Virgin,* or whether it's to vigorously and joyously make love to a companion of the moment.

Modesty's body also comes in for a great deal of abuse as she fights unarmed against strong, highly skilled foes or suffers sexual humiliation and rape at the hands of villainous captors.

Writes O'Donnell in *Murder Ink: The Mystery Reader's Companion:* "...[I]t delighted me to contemplate writing about a marvellous female creature who would be as good as any male hero in the crunch, yet would remain entirely feminine withal. Yes, feminine. No bra-burning women's libber, she."

While Modesty has succeeded as a female character in a genre dominated by males, not all women critics are satisfied. Patricia Craig and Mary Cadogan wrote in *The Lady Investigates:* "Modesty is supposed to be a fearfully liberated woman but, alas for feminism, whenever she is eulogized it is as a sexual object."

Modesty enjoys a curious bond with Willie Garvin. Their relationship is a platonic one, yet it is closer than could be shared by sexual partners, according to O'Donnell. He is her half, her equal, in battling brawny foes or in wriggling out of impossible snares.

"Many find it hard to credit that a man and woman could be so close yet not be lovers," comments

If O'Donnell were searching for an actress twenty years ago, he would have considered Diana Rigg an ideal choice for Modesty; today, he is impressed with Veronica Hamel of "Hill Street Blues."

O'Donnell in *Murder Ink*. "I see no problem here. The bond between them is immense and has many strands. It certainly is not asexual; in fact, it is strongly male/female. But there is a great deal more to sex than the act of physical love, and all this they have in totality, giving them a relationship which is complete."

This also permits a broad cast of characters, which included Modesty's friend Pennyfeather, Willie's constant friend Lady Janet Gillam, and Modesty's former bed partner Steve Collier, who has married Willie's former romance, Dinah Pilgrim.

Having nothing to do with sex, but a lot to do with Modesty and Willie's exploits, are Sir Gerald Tarrant and his assistant Fraser of the Secret Service. Tarrant, who is close to retiring, seldom hesitates to send Modesty from the security of her Hyde Park apartment or Willie from his pub The Treadmill into some dangerous situation in a remote part of the world.

The writer has little difficulty switching between the different mediums. "When writing a book," he says, "I always feel strip cartoon is a more comfortable medium—and vice versa. I would say that I get more satisfaction from having written a book than a strip cartoon story, because the book is entirely my own and allows much more room for the nuance of character. Strip cartoon scripting is technically very demanding, but these stories allow very little elbow room for depth of texture, and can only touch the ground in spots."

Modesty Blaise's wild adventures belie her chronicler's quiet, gentlemanly appearance. He could easily be the model for Modesty's civil servant mentor, Tarrant.

O'Donnell labors in what he describes as "Dickensian quarters" four flights above the well-known El Vino liquor establishment on London's Fleet Street. The office is of modest size and well lighted. It is filled with furniture and bookshelves brimming with reference works and English and foreign language editions of his books. The typewriter is on a tall table behind the desk. On the walls are drawings of Modesty by Jim Holdaway.

"Obviously, I could do my writing at home," says O'Donnell, "but I've always tried to keep the work side of life separate from the family side. It can cut into your family life if you do it at home."

O'Donnell commutes to his office each morning, arriving at 9:30 and staying until 5:30.

"I keep the strip going and do a book every couple of years," he explains. "I do what might entertain me." This has included writing television and movie scripts and stage plays, each with its distinct challenge.

He said that plays, for example, require a compression of time and place and usually must be completed in six acts, whereas a film may have 100 or more scenes.

A recent play, *Mr. Fothergill's Murder,* toured successfully for six months in the provinces, but, when it opened in London, the critics "murdered it" and it closed in five weeks.

"Obviously, I'm not too fond of critics," he says.

His script for a Modesty film ended up being rewritten into oblivion, and Joseph Losey's 1966 movie starring Monica Vitti, Terence Stamp, and Dirk Bogarde bore little resemblance to the original. The character fared slightly better in the 1982 ABC-TV version with Ann Turkel.

"The producer came to see me," O'Donnell recalls. "He had read a number of the books and he wanted to get the character on the screen as closely as possible."

Having seen the final result, O'Donnell says he's just as glad it didn't sell as a series. A California, rather than London, setting just didn't work.

"You have to be philosophical," he says of the film efforts. "You could be lucky like Ian Fleming was. The first James Bond film was of a different style than the books, but it was the right note at the time. I don't suppose Fleming liked it—he wanted David Niven to play Bond. But Saltzman and Broccoli found Sean Connery, who has such presence and moves beautifully."

Appearance and movement would be criteria were O'Donnell to cast a Modesty Blaise picture: "I would want a girl who would move perfectly," he says.

If he were searching for an actress twenty years ago, he would have considered Diana Rigg an ideal

choice for the part. In fact, the actress, popular in *The Avengers* television series, at one time negotiated to make four TV movies, but the project fell through.

Today, said O'Donnell, he is impressed with the looks and acting ability of Veronica Hamel of *Hill Street Blues.*

In the two decades in which he has been writing Modesty Blaise, O'Donnell has altered his approach. Now, he says, "I'm getting more careful about forcing them into situations. I avoid gratuitous violence, though there has to *be* violence. The villains are always black-hearted, thoroughly evil, and that gives me the opportunity to have them react violently.

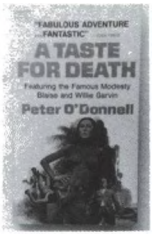
Diana Rigg, seen here with her *Avengers* co-star Patrick Macnee, once considered playing Modesty.

Author O'Donnell thinks that Veronica Hamel, shown with her *Hill Street Blues* co-star Daniel J. Travanti, would make a good Modesty.

"I've moved away from the Bond-type gadgets such as lipstick that shoots out a stream of tear gas, etc. I prefer to get them out of situations using ingenuity and whatever common objects there are at hand."

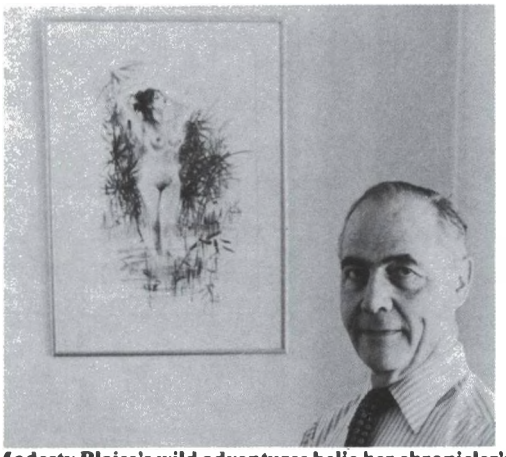
O'Donnell says that it is sometimes hard to keep up with the latest technology in weaponry, he has given up trying to keep Modesty fashion conscious ("A mini-skirt becomes out of date"), and he doesn't permit characters to use the latest slang.

The writer confesses that he reads widely, and, if he comes upon "something intriguing, it goes into the creative reservoir, and I later may use it.



"I like to build up their personal lives. In each book, I reveal a bit more of their past. In *Night of Morningstar,* the first chapters go back to a Network caper. I enjoy doing that, and I've gotten some letters asking how it all started."

Of his years with the character, O'Donnell gives a simple summary: "I've enjoyed doing it," he says.



Modesty Blaise's wild adventures belie her chronicler's quiet, gentlemanly appearance. He could easily be the model for Modesty's civil servant mentor, Tarrant.
Photo: Bernard Drew

BOOK CHECKLIST: U.S. AND BRITISH EDITIONS

Novels:

Modesty Blaise
Hardcover: Souvenir and Doubleday, 1965
Softcover: Pan and Fawcett, 1966; Mysterious Press, 1985

Sabre-Tooth
Hardcover: Souvenir and Doubleday, 1966
Softcover: Pan and Fawcett, 1967; Mysterious Press, 1984

I, Lucifer
Hardcover: Souvenir and Doubleday, 1967
Softcover: Pan, 1968; Fawcett, 1969; Mysterious Press, 1984

A Taste for Death
Hardcover: Souvenir and Doubleday, 1969
Softcover: Pan, 1970; Fawcett, 1972; Mysterious Press, 1984

The Impossible Virgin
Hardcover: Souvenir and Doubleday, 1971
Softcover: Pan, 1973; Mysterious Press, 1985

The Silver Mistress
Hardcover: Souvenir, 1973; Archival Press, 1981; Mysterious Press, 1984
Softcover: Pan, 1975

Last Day in Limbo
Hardcover: Souvenir, 1976; Mysterious Press, 1985
Softcover: Pan, 1977

Dragon's Claw
Hardcover: Souvenir, 1978; Mysterious Press, 1985
Softcover: Pan, 1979

The Xanadu Talisman
Hardcover: Souvenir, 1981; Mysterious Press, 1984
Softcover: Pan, 1982

The Night of Morningstar
Hardcover: Souvenir, 1982; Mysterious Press, 1987
Softcover: Pan, 1984

Dead Man's Handle
Hardcover: Souvenir, 1985; Mysterious Press, 1986

Short Stories:

Pieces of Modesty
Softcover: Pan, 1972; Mysterious Press, 1986

Comic Strip Prints:

Modesty Blaise: In the Beginning
Softcover: Star, 1978

Modesty Blaise: The Black Pearl and The Vikings
Softcover: Star, 1978

Modesty Blaise: First American Edition Series 1
Softcover: Ken Pierce, 1981

Modesty Blaise: First American Edition Series 2
Softcover: Ken Pierce, 1981

Modesty Blaise: First American Edition Series 3
Softcover: Ken Pierce, 1982

Modesty Blaise: First American Edition Series 4
Softcover: Ken Pierce, 1983

Modesty Blaise: First American Edition Series 5
Softcover: Ken Pierce, 1984

Modesty Blaise: First American Edition Series 6
Softcover: Ken Pierce, 1985

Modesty Blaise: First American Edition Series 7
Softcover: Ken Pierce, 1986

Modesty Blaise: First American Edition Series 8
Softcover: Ken Pierce, 1986

Modesty Blaise Book One: The Gabriel Setup
Softcover: Titan Books, 1985

Modesty Blaise Book Two: Mr. Sun
Softcover: Titan Books, 1985

Modesty Blaise Book Three: The Hell-Makers
Softcover: Titan Books, 1986 □

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Crime Hunt

The Disappearance of Eugenia Cedarholm

by T. M. McDade

The newspapers have lately been full of reports of the disappearance of persons, including children, who have frequently been abducted by one parent from the custody of the other. Only rarely is there a report of the discovery of one of those missing persons, though I am sure that many of those so reported have returned from a brief period of travel induced by boredom. There are, however, many who never do return, and the families of those missing face a lifetime of waiting and uncertainty. Some of these cases are doubly tantalizing when the person or persons responsible for the disappearance are known but this knowledge still fails to solve the mystery of the disappedrance.

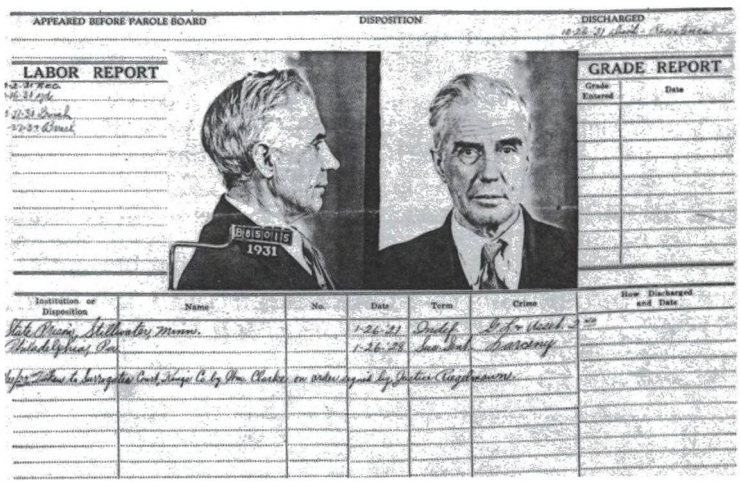
Consider the case of Charlie Ross, a four-year-old boy kidnapped from his home in Germantown, Pennsylvania on July 1, 1874. Negotiations to pay the ransom demanded by his kidnappers were inconclusive, and the kidnappers finally broke off their attempt to collect it. Five months after the boy had been taken, two burglars attempting to rob a house in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, were surprised in the act and shot by neighbors. One of them, Joseph Douglas, seriously wounded, told his captors that he and his partner, Bill Mosher, had abducted Charlie Ross. When asked where the boy was, he replied, "Ask Mosher, he will tell you." Mosher, however, had been killed outright, and, when the authorities returned again to Douglas, he too was dead. Additional evidence later indicated that they were indeed the kidnappers, but what had happened to Charlie Ross has forever remained a mystery.

The disappearance of Eugenia Cedarholm, a thirty-year-old woman, in 1927 presents the same kind of problem, a puzzle for the police who felt they had the man responsible but were defeated at every turn in their search for the victim. Eugenia Cedarholm was born Salfrida Eugeni Cedarholm, in Sweden, March 24, 1897. In 1904, her parents separated, and she came to the United States as a ten-year-old girl in 1907 with her mother, settling in Brooklyn. Mrs. Ingebard Cedarholm was an industrious woman who saved her money and eventually bought a brownstone four-story house at 338 Schermerhorn Street. A 22-room building, it was ideal for the boarding house she managed there with the help of her daughter. When the mother died in the spring of 1927, the building passed to Eugenia.

At the time of Mrs. Cedarholm's death, there was a tenant, Edward Lawrence Hall, a man of uncertain age, who had lived in the house about two years. He occasionally worked in the small restaurants in the Borough Hall section of Brooklyn. The demise of her mother, however, had brought Eugenia a new freedom which she was quick to seize. Just when her liaison with Hall began cannot be established. She and Hall made a trip to Florida, and in July they were in Lincolnville, Maine; from both places she sent postcards to women friends. The two spent the Labor Day weekend in Stratford, Connecticut, visiting a Mrs. Martha Rebestock, whose brother had long been a tenant at the boarding house. While they were there, Mrs. Rebestock admonished her for her flagrant affair with Hall. In the course of this talk, Eugenia confided that she expected to be married soon, although she did not say to whom. The following weekend, Mrs. Rebestock returned the visit by spending three days at the Schermerhorn Street house. She later recalled that Hall did all the cooking and that the couple discussed their plans to rent a house in Freeport, Long Island. On October 4, 1927, Eugenia bought some chairs and other furniture, costing $240, at Macy's and had them shipped to a house at 37 Prince Street, Freeport, and on October 7 the couple moved in.

When Eugenia began traveling about with Hall, she had left a Mrs. Carlson as housekeeper at Schermerhorn Street. In October, Hall appeared there with a Mrs. Reid and a letter, purportedly from Eugenia, authorizing the latter to take over the care of the house. When Mrs. Carlson protested and asked to see Eugenia, Hall got a policeman, who induced Mrs. Carlson to leave. Thereafter, Mrs. Reid and her husband and two children took over under a lease reputedly signed by Miss Cedarholm. Some time later in October, Eugenia, coming to the house, became aware of the change in the housekeepers and sent a wire to Hall in Freeport: "Deal is off if you don't come at once." From here on, only one fact is known of her. She cashed an $800 check at the bank and was seen no more.

Usually, it is a relative who goes to the police to report someone missing. Eugenia had no relatives, but Mrs. Carlson, the dispossessed housekeeper, was uneasy about

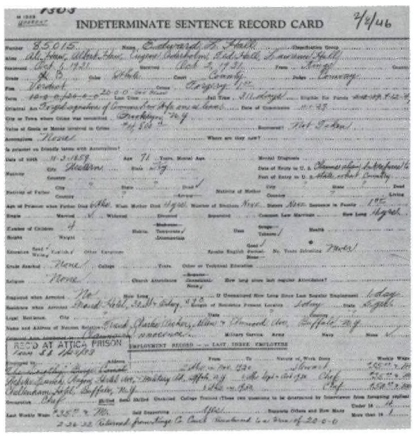


Eugenia, who managed all the finances of the pair, had signed a lease dated September 17 with the owner, Alexander Verity, at an annual rent of $780. She paid $65 for the month of October and an additional sum for moving expenses. The house, a small frame structure, was a one-story building with an attic and a cellar. On one side, a neighbor was 125 feet away, on the other, a house was 45 feet distant. Eugenia had a dog to whom she was greatly attached and which disappeared shortly after they got there. She wrote Mrs. Rebestock of this loss, remarking that "the thing she most wanted in life had been snatched from her." Hall, however, seems to have told a neighbor that the dog had died and was later seen digging a hole in which to bury it.

not seeing her. She turned to the attorney who had been the executor of Mrs. Cedarholm's estate, Charles Akberg, and through him hired a private investigator to locate her. This man went to Freeport and got into 37 Prince Street. All the shades were drawn, and he reported that "there was a condition as if someone had just gone away and left everything." All of Eugenia's clothes were there, but no sign of disorder or a struggle. The last check which Eugenia had signed passed through the bank on October 18. In December 1927, Verity, owner of the house, had a communication from Hall asking him to store the furniture as he and the woman were going to Kentucky. But now even Hall could not be found.

Time went by and nothing seemed to be happening in the case. Early in 1929, Hall was finally located in Philadelphia, where he had been arrested for the theft of a typewriter from a hotel. For this he received a suspended sentence, and, when the police questioned him about Eugenia, they got nothing. He refused to say where his wife, as he now called her, was. He made vague references to the danger she would be in if he did and refused to reveal where they had been married. He was very calm and self-possessed; he even claimed that they had had a child. In the end, they had to let him go.

Months continued to pass. In April 1929, the father of the missing woman, August Cedarholm, arrived from Sweden. The Brooklyn Trust Company, aided by the Salvation Army, had located him and arranged for him to be granted letters of administration of Eugenia's estate. Cedarholm, who was a retired shoe manufacturer, told the press that he had lost touch with his family fifteen years before and could be of no help in locating his daughter. The case was given added publicity when the Board of Transportation announced that they would condemn the Schermerhorn Street premises in the course of subway construction. The value of the building was estimated to be between $25,000 and $40,000.


INDETERMINATE SENTENCE RECORD CARD

Now, nearly two years after she had last been seen, squads of police and workmen descended on the old rooming house and made a thorough search of the premises. The cellar was dug up, as might be expected, but nothing was found. In a lock box were birth certificates and baptismal and vaccination records, but nothing which would assist in locating the missing woman. The District Attorney of Nassau County decided to join in, and the Freeport house was given the some treatment, including much digging up of the grounds, all to no avail.

In November 1930, three years after Eugenia Cedarholm's disappearance, the police work first bore fruit. The search had been on for Hall for some time, and restaurants where he might seek employment were asked to report his appearance. On November 19, Hall called at a small restaurant in Jamaica, and the proprietor called Detective Pritting. Hall was run to earth at the Grand Hotel at 31st and Broadway. He had lost none of his calm and independence, refusing to answer questions about the location of Eugenia, claiming he was doing so to protect her from a "narcotics ring." He claimed that she was in Florida with her three children, the family having grown, at least in Hall's story. This time the District Attorney had more weapons at his disposal. Hall was brought before the Surrogate and when his answers proved unsatisfactory he was found in contempt of court and sent to the Raymond Street Jail. While so confined he was also indicted by the grand jury for the forgery of Eugenia's signature on the lease on the Schermerhorn house to the Reids.

The publicity being given the case now brought a new character on the scene, a woman who established herself as Hall's wife, Nettie Lamar Hall. She claimed that he had abandoned her and her six children in Cook, Indiana five years before. Hall, still adamant, revealed nothing. "I never saw her before in my life," he claimed. To this she responded, "Why, Ted, you know me. I was your wife." She did know him, describing several marks on his body. She said that he had been born in Uniontown, Kentucky on November 5, 1875, which would make him 56 years old then. She had met him in Evansville, Indiana in 1908. In 1920, he had been charged with assault and theft in a lumber camp in Minnesota and spent two years in prison before being paroled. He was returned as a parole violator and spent additional time. Mrs. Hall said that about two years ago one of his sons had received through the mail a protractor for use in school. The enclosed note was signed "Eugenia Cedarholm." Mrs. Hall had forgotten all about that until she had recently read of the Cedarholm case in the newspapers. She mentioned this to a parole officer, who got in touch with the district attorney. Of her life with Hall, she said that he treated her well but that he worked too hard. He was a lumberjack, and she thought the work too much for him. After this confrontation, Mrs. Hall returned to Indiana and her children.

In September 1931, having been held nine months in Raymond Street Jail, Hall came before Judge Conway in the Kings County Court on charges of forgery. A medium-sized, elderly man with gray hair and a deeply lined face, he showed indifference to his prosecutors. He announced that he would serve as his own counsel, despite an offer by the judge to have him supplied with an attorney. In the jury selection process, he used ten of his twenty challenges to dismiss prospective jurymen. He spoke well, in a resonant voice and with calm demeanor, but the evidence was too much for him.

When Mrs. Reid testified to renting the house through him, he asked her on cross examination, "Didn't you hear her [Eugenia] say that anything that daddy – meaning me – did about the lease was all right?" "No," she replied. "I didn't hear that." The evidence established that the signature was not Eugenia's. One of the bank employees, in questioning Hall, had gotten him to write her name on several pieces of paper, and these writings were now used to establish that the signature on the lease had been made by Hall.

The jury took little time to convict him, and he was sentenced to a term of ten to twenty years in prison. Hall gave his age as seventy, probably feeling that he would get better treatment in prison. He staggered as he left the courtroom, though he had not heard the worst yet. A month later, he was returned for resentencing as a second offender, and his new sentence of twenty to forty years might have been read as a life sentence. When Hall got to Sing Sing, he wrote Judge Wingate, the Surrogate, and now offered to answer the questions he had previously refused and for which he had been held in contempt. "I have refused to speak in public to protect her. I will gladly testify to aid in anyway as I loved Eugenia Cedarholm." But it all proved fruitless. When he appeared, he claimed that the woman was in a hotel in Pueblo Beach, Florida when he had been arrested, but the hotel proved non-existent and his directions so vague as to be worthless. Judge Wingate, however, vacated the contempt charge in light of the sentence he was serving.

The settlement of Eugenia's estate was held in abeyance until the statutory time for declaring her dead had passed. Even so, no one seems to have hurried that event until 1939, when the attorney reviewing her life for the court described how her correspondence with friends had ended suddenly in 1927 and she was never heard from again. The court decided that Eugenia was in fact dead and set the time of her death between October 19 and November 1, 1927. Her father, who had died in 1934, was considered her rightful heir, being alive at the time of her presumed death. The remainder of her estate, some $20,000, was ordered to be paid to his two children, a boy and a girl. •

When he was received at Sing Sing, Hall was assigned No. 85015, at which time he gave his age as 71, although according to his wife he would have been about 56. He remained in Sing Sing until he was transferred to Attica prison in 1933, where he remained until July 3, 1944, when he was paroled. There the trail ends. Of his life after release we know no more than we do of Eugenia Cedarholm. □

Collecting Cornell Woolrich Part Two
(writing as George Hopley and William Irish)

Collecting Mystery Fiction

by Otto Penzler

In the previous issue of *The Armchair Detective*, the writings of Cornell Woolrich using his own name were described. This column will list the remaining book publications, covering the work produced under his two pseudonyms, George Hopley and the better-known William Irish.

Why certain books were chosen to appear under the Hopley, Irish, or Woolrich names remains a puzzle, as there are no startling differences among them. It is worth noting, perhaps, that there are no Hopley short stories.

It had been planned to provide a comprehensive filmography at the conclusion of this column, but it has become redundant since an article about the films of Cornell Woolrich by Francis M. Nevins is being published in TAD.

Instead, the next column on collecting will feature a complete listing of every Cornell Woolrich (and William Irish) short story, both alphabetically and chronologically, which should prove useful for the completist collector and Woolrich devotee.

A

CORNELL WOOLRICH WRITING AS GEORGE HOPLEY

Night Has a Thousand Eyes

First Edition: New York, Farrar & Rinehart, (1945). Blue cloth, spine stamped with silver lettering; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a decorative dust wrapper.

Note: The first book under the Hopley pseudonym and one of the most terrifying novels ever written. A mediocre film version starred Edward G. Robinson.

The publisher's logo (the letters "F" & "R" in a diamond) must appear on the copyright page, else it is not a first printing.

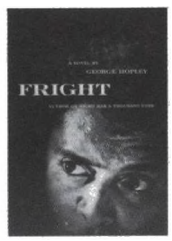
Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 25.00	$10.00
Fine	75.00	20.00
Very fine	100.00	25.00

Fright

First Edition: New York, Rinehart and Company, (1950). Black boards, spine printed with green and red lettering and red rules; front covers blank. Issued in a predominantly black pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The publisher's logo (an "R" in a circle) must appear on the copyright page, else it is not a first printing.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 25.00	$12.50
Fine	100.00	20.00
Very fine	125.00	25.00



B

CORNELL WOOLRICH WRITING AS WILLIAM IRISH

Phantom Lady

First Edition: Philadelphia & New York, Lippincott, (1942). Blue cloth, printed in dark blue on spine; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first novel under the William Irish pseudonym and a modern classic of suspense. It is included on the Haycraft-Queen Cornerstone Library of milestone works in the history of mystery fiction.

Lippincott was extremely erratic about designating its first printings. Sometimes a first printing was so stated on the copyright page, with reprints either being so stated or the first printing statement simply being dropped. Sometimes first printings were not so stated, with subsequent printings being designated. In short, there is no rule of thumb for Lippincott printings of this era, first edition status being determined on a book-by-book basis. *Phantom Lady* has no indication of first printing, but second and later printings are so stated on the copyright page. As is true of many Lippincott books of this era (although by no means all), the dust wrapper of the second and subsequent printings are also so indicated at the top of the front flap. If the flap has been trimmed, beware!

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 75.00	$15.00
Fine	350.00	25.00
Very fine	425.00	30.00

I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes

First Edition: Philadelphia & New York, Lippincott, 1943. Blue cloth, printed in green on front cover and spine, rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first short-story collection published by Cornell Woolrich under any name, and a book so difficult to find in true collector's condition that it may legitimately be termed rare.

The words "First Printing" must appear on the copyright page.

Contents:

"I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, March 12, 1938.

"Last Night," a heavily revised version of "The Red Tide," originally published in *Street & Smith's Detective Story*, September 1940.

"Three O'Clock," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, October 1, 1938.

"Nightmare," originally published as "And So to Death" in *Argosy*, March 1, 1941.

"Papa Benjamin," originally published as "Dark Melody of Madness" in *Dime Mystery*, July 1935.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$150.00	$25.00
Fine	400.00	40.00
Very fine	500.00	50.00

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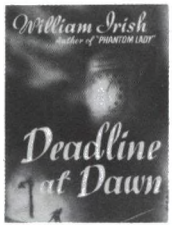
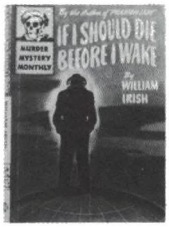




Deadline at Dawn

First Edition: Philadelphia & New York, Lippincott, (1944). Blue-green cloth, spine printed with yellow lettering and ornamentation, front and rear covers blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first edition is *not* so indicated on the copyright page.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 45.00	$15.00
Fine	175.00	25.00
Very fine	225.00	30.00

After-Dinner Story

First Edition: New York & Philadelphia, Lippincott, (1944). Green cloth, front cover and spine have brown boxes printed, in which appear the title, the author's name, and a decorative rule; the spine is also printed with black lettering and imprint logo; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: A landmark short-story collection, selected by Ellery Queen for his *Queen's Quorum*, the list of the 125 most important collections of mystery stories ever published.

The first edition bears the words "FIRST EDITION" on the copyright page.

Contents:

"After-Dinner Story," originally published in *Black Mask*, January 1938.

"The Night Reveals," originally published in *Story*, April 1936.

"An Apple a Day," previously unpublished.

"Marihuana," previously published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, May 3, 1941.

"Rear Window," originally published as "It Had to Be Murder" in *Dime Detective*, February 1942.

"Murder Story," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, September 11, 1937.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 75.00	$15.00
Fine	325.00	25.00
Very fine	400.00	30.00

If I Should Die Before I Wake

First Edition: New York, Avon, 1945. Colored pictorial wrappers. Issued as #31 of the *Murder Mystery Monthly* series.

Note: The first edition, a paperback original, is a digest-sized book, not to be confused with the reprint of the following year, which is a normal-sized paperback.

Contents:

"If I Should Die Before I Wake," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, July 3, 1937.

"I'll Never Play Detective Again," originally published in *Black Mask*, May 1937.

"Change of Murder," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, January 25, 1936.

"A Death Is Caused," originally published as "Mind Over Murder" in *Dime Detective*, May 1943.

"Two Murders, One Crime," originally published as "Three Kills for One" in *Black Mask*, July 1942.

"The Man Upstairs," originally published in *Mystery Book Magazine*, August 1945.

Estimated retail value:	
Good	$15.00
Fine	60.00
Very fine	75.00

The Dancing Detective

First Edition: Philadelphia and New York, Lippincott, (1946). Tan cloth, spine printed with dark blue lettering and ornamentation; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first edition bears the words "FIRST EDITION" on the copyright page.

Contents:

"The Dancing Detective," originally published as "Dime a Dance" in *Black Mask*, February 1938.

"Two Fellows in a Furnished Room," originally published as "He Looked Like Murder" in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, February 8, 1941.

"The Light in the Window," originally published in *Mystery Book Magazine*, April 1946.

"Silent as the Grave," originally published in *Mystery Book Magazine*, November 1945.

"The Detective's Dilemma," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, October 26, 1940.

"Fur Jacket," originally published as "What the Well Dressed Corpse Will Wear" in *Dime Detective*, March 1944.

"Leg Man," originally published in *Dime Detective*, August 1943.

"The Fingernail," originally published as "The Customer's Always Right" in *Detective Tales*, July 1941.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 35.00	$15.00
Fine	100.00	25.00
Very fine	125.00	30.00

Borrowed Crime

First Edition: New York, Avon, (1946). Full-color pictorial wrappers. Issued as #42 of the *Murder Mystery Monthly* series.

Note: The first edition is the only edition; it was published as a digest-sized paperback, identical in format to *If I Should Die Before I Wake*. Although the copyright page states "Abridged Version," there is in fact no other version.

Contents:

"Borrowed Crime," originally published in *Black Mask*, July 1939.

"The Cape Triangular," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, April 16, 1938.

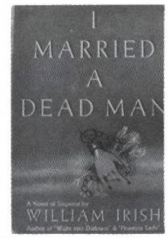
"Detective William Brown," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, September 10, 1938.

"Chance," originally published as "Dormant Account" in *Black Mask*, May 1942.

Estimated retail value:	
Good	$15.00
Fine	60.00
Very fine	75.00

Waltz into Darkness

First Edition: Philadelphia and New York, Lippincott, 1947. Grey cloth, front cover and spine printed with red lettering and ornate



frame around the title; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first edition bears the words "FIRST EDITION" on the copyright page.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 30.00	$10.00
Fine	150.00	20.00
Very fine	200.00	25.00

Dead Man Blues

First Edition: Philadelphia and New York, Lippincott, 1948. Green boards, spine printed with blue lettering and ornamentation; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first edition bears the words "FIRST EDITION" on the copyright page.

Contents:

"Guillotine," originally published as "Men Must Die" in *Black Mask,* August 1939.

"The Earring," originally published as "The Death Stone" in *Flynn's Detective Fiction,* February 1943.

"If the Dead Could Talk," originally published in *Black Mask,* February 1943.

"Fire Escape," originally published as "The Boy Cried Murder" in *Mystery Book Magazine,* March 1947.

"Fountain Pen," originally published as "Dipped in Blood" in *Street & Smith's Detective Story,* April 1945.

"You Take Ballistics," originally published in *Double Detective,* January 1938.

"Funeral," originally published as "Your Own Funeral" in *Argosy,* June 19, 1937.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 30.00	$15.00
Fine	100.00	25.00
Very fine	125.00	30.00

I Married a Dead Man

First Edition: Philadelphia and New York, Lippincott, (1948). Pale lilac cloth, spine printed with dark green lettering and ornamentation; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first edition bears the words "FIRST EDITION" on the copyright page.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 30.00	$12.50
Fine	100.00	20.00
Very fine	125.00	25.00

The Blue Ribbon

First Edition: Philadelphia and New York, Lippincott, (1949). Tan cloth, spine printed with blue lettering and blue ribbon ornament from which the title and author's name drop out. Issued in a blue, black, and white decorative dust wrapper.

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

Contents:

"The Blue Ribbon," previously unpublished.

"The Dog with the Wooden Leg," originally published in *Street & Smith's Detective Story,* February 1939.

"The Lie," originally published under the pseudonym Chick Walsh in *Detective Fiction Weekly,* October 9, 1937.

"Wardrobe Trunk," originally published as "Dilemma of the Dead Lady" in *Detective Fiction Weekly,* July 4, 1936.

"Wild Bill Hiccup," originally published in *Argosy,* February 5, 1938.

"Subway," originally published as "You Pays Your Nickel" in *Argosy,* August 22, 1936.

"Husband," previously unpublished.

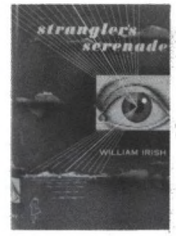
Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 30.00	$15.00
Fine	100.00	25.00
Very fine	125.00	30.00

Somebody on the Phone

First Edition: Philadelphia and New York, Lippincott, (1950). Green boards, front cover printed with red imprint logo, spine printed with red lettering; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first edition bears the words "FIRST EDITION" on the copyright page.

Contents:



"Johnny on the Spot," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, May 2, 1936.

"Somebody on the Phone," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, July 31, 1937.

"Collared," originally published in *Black Mask*, October 1939.

"The Night I Died," originally published under the byline "Anonymous" in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, August 8, 1936.

"Momentum," originally published as "Murder Always Gathers Momentum" in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, December 14, 1940.

"Boy with Body," originally published as "The Corpse and the Kid" in *Dime Detective*, September 1935.

"Death Sits in the Dentist's Chair," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, August 4, 1934.

"The Room with Something Wrong," originally published as "Mystery in Room 913" in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, June 4, 1938.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 30.00	$15.00
Fine	100.00	25.00
Very fine	125.00	30.00

Six Nights of Mystery

First Edition: New York, Popular Library, (1950). Full-color pictorial wrappers.

Note: A paperback original, Popular Library book #258.

Contents:

"One Night in New York," originally published as "Face Work" in *Black Mask*, October 1937.

"One Night in Chicago," originally published as "Collared" in *Black Mask*, October 1939.

"One Night in Hollywood," originally published as "Picture Frame" in *Black Mask*, July 1944.

"One Night in Montreal," originally published as "Crime on St. Catherine Street" in *Argosy*, January 25, 1936.

"One Night in Paris," originally published as "Underworld Trail" in *Argosy*, May 16, 1936.

"One Night in Zacamoras," originally published as "Señor Flatfoot" in *Argosy*, February 3, 1940.

Estimated retail value:

Good	$15.00
Fine	40.00
Very fine	50.00

Marihuana

First Separate Edition: New York, Dell, (1951). Full-color pictorial wrappers.

Note: Published in the Dell 10¢ series as #11. It was originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, May 3, 1941; first book publication was in *After-Dinner Story*, 1944 (see above).

Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 25.00
Fine	75.00
Very fine	100.00

You'll Never See Me Again

First Edition: New York, Dell, (1951). Full-color pictorial wrappers.

Note: Paperback original, published in the Dell 10¢ series as #26. It was originally published in *Street & Smith's Detective Story*, November 1939.

Estimated retail value:

Good	$ 25.00
Fine	75.00
Very fine	100.00

Strangler's Serenade

First Edition: New York, Rinehart and Company, (1951). Black boards, spine printed with yellow lettering and imprint logo; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a largely grey pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first edition bears the publisher's logo (the letter "R" in a circle) on the copyright page.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 30.00	$15.00
Fine	100.00	25.00
Very fine	125.00	30.00

Eyes That Watch You

First Edition: New York, Rinehart and Company, (1952). Black boards, spine printed with blue lettering and imprint logo; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a black, pink, and white pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The first edition bears the publisher's logo (the letter "R" in a circle) on the copyright page.

Contents:

"Eyes That Watch You," originally published as "The Case of the Talking Eyes" in *Dime Detective*, September 1939.

"Stuck," originally published as "Stuck with Murder" in *Dime Detective*, October 1937.

"Charlie Won't Be Home Tonight," originally published in *Dime Detective*, July 1939.

"Murder with a U," originally published as "U, As in Murder" in *Dime Detective*, March 1941.

"All at Once, No Alice," originally published in *Argosy*, March 2, 1940.

"Damned Clever, These Americans," originally published as "Clever, These Americans" in *Argosy*, July 3, 1937.

"Flat Tire," originally published as "Short Order Kill" in *Dime Detective*, May 1938.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
Good	$ 30.00	$15.00
Fine	100.00	25.00
Very fine	125.00	30.00

Bluebeard's Seventh Wife

First Edition: New York, Popular Library, (1952). Full-color pictorial wrappers.

Note: A paperback original, Popular Library book #473.

Contents:

"Bluebeard's Seventh Wife," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, August 22, 1936.

"Morning After Murder," originally published as "Murder on My Mind" in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, August 15, 1936.

"Silhouette," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, January 7, 1939.

"The Hat," originally published as "The Counterfeit Hat" in *Detective Fiction Weekly*, February 18, 1939.

"Humming Bird Comes Home," originally published in *Pocket Detective*, March 1937.

"Through a Dead Man's Eye," originally published in *Black Mask*, December 1939.

It should be noted that proof copies of the books described above may have been issued, but I have never seen one. Should they turn up, they would be a valuable addition to a collection of Cornell Woolrich. Inscribed copies of Woolrich/Irish/Hopley are also very scarce. He was a recluse for much of his working life, had few visitors and fewer friends, and does not appear to have been receptive to advances of admirers. A signature would, therefore, enhance the value of any book by three to five times, possibly more if an inscription is of interest either for its content or its association. □

FADE TO BLACK

Cornell Woolrich on the Silver Screen Part One

By Francis M. Nevins, Jr.

THE STORY of Cornell Woolrich's interaction with Hollywood goes back at least five years before he published his first suspense story. In a figurative sense, it goes back to around 1915, when the eleven-year-old Woolrich was separated from his engineer father and returned from Latin America to New York City, where he had been born. For the next several years, Woolrich lived with his mother and aunt and his maternal grandfather in a stately house on 113th Street near Morningside Park. It was his grandfather who introduced Woolrich to the then-infant art of motion pictures, taking the boy to the neighborhood movie palace every week and eventually turning him into a full-fledged film buff.

In 1921, Woolrich enrolled in Columbia College as a journalism major, but his dream was to become a bestselling author at an early age, like his idol F. Scott Fitzgerald, and in his junior year he began writing what in due course became his first novel, *Cover Charge* (1926). As soon as that book sold, Woolrich quit Columbia to pursue his dream of bright lights and gay music and a meteoric Fitzgerald-like career. His next novel, *Children of the Ritz* (1927), catapulted him momentarily into the big

time when it won first prize of $10,000 in a contest co-sponsored by *College Humor* magazine, which serialized the book, and First National Pictures, which bought the movie rights and invited Woolrich to Hollywood to help with the adaptation.

Early in March 1929, the studio released the film, which was also entitled *Children of the Ritz* (First National, 1929) and was shown in two versions, one completely silent, the other with a musical score and some sound effects, for theaters that had installed the equipment for exhibiting those hybrid pictures which were all the rage during the talkies' infancy. The film was directed by John Francis Dillon from a screenplay by Adelaide Heilbron. Dorothy Mackaill played the rich and spoiled Angela Pennington and Jack Mulhall co-starred as Dewey Haines, the family chauffeur with whom Angela first flirts and then hastily marries after her father temporarily goes broke. Richard Carlyle and Evelyn Hall were cast as Angela's parents, James Ford as her brother Gil, and Aggie Herring as Dewey's mother. Woolrich did not receive screen credit for whatever his contributions to the picture were, but the summary of the plot in the American Film Institute's *Catalog of Feature Films, 1921-1930* (1971) suggests that the film was reasonably faithful to his novel. Most of the contemporary movie reviewers were far from enthusiastic about the picture—*Film Daily,* for example, commented that it was "not for an intelligent audience, but will please the flapper minds"—and no prints of the film are known to survive.

Woolrich's stay in Hollywood was brief; by 1931, he was back in New York, living with his mother, as he would for the rest of her life.

Woolrich's stay in Hollywood was brief, and he received not a solitary screen credit for his tinkerings with various First National scripts. By 1931, he was back in New York and living with his mother, as he would continue to do for the rest of her life. His sixth novel, and the first which he completed after his return from California, was *Manhattan Love Song* (1932), a haunting story of sexual obsession that foreshadows much of his later *noir* suspense fiction. Wade, the narrator, happens to meet the enigmatically lovely Bernice and soon becomes a slave to his passion for her despite the fact that he already has a wife and the fact that Bernice in some mysterious way is controlled by unseen powers. At the climax of the book, Bernice is murdered just before she and Wade are to escape from Manhattan, and Wade is framed for the crime and sentenced to die in the electric chair. It is by far the most powerful of Woolrich's early books, and, as we shall see, in later years he reworked its material more than once into a suspense story. Commercially and critically, however, the book was a flop, and the movie two years later, which was nominally based on the novel, had nothing in common with *Manhattan Love Song* except its name. The studio that bought film rights to the book was Monogram, one of the cheap, independent companies that came and went with dizzying rapidity during the 1930s. *Manhattan Love Song* (1934) was directed by Leonard Fields from a screenplay co-authored by Fields and David Silverstein. These two creative geniuses turned Woolrich's study in *noir* anguish into a tedious comedy in which two wealthy sisters lose their money and turn their mansion and their own services as housekeepers over to the chauffeur and maid in lieu of back wages. Dixie Lee (the first Mrs. Bing Crosby) and Helen Flint played the sisters, with Robert Armstrong and Nydia Westman as the chauffeur and maid, and Franklin Pangborn, Herman Bing, and Cecil Cunningham in featured roles. It is perhaps a mercy that all prints of this picture seem to have vanished.

Woolrich's major creative project for 1933 was a novel which he called *I Love You, Paris,* dealing with the lives and loves of ballroom dancers in the City of Light during 1912. It was the worst year of the Depression. Woolrich's book and magazine markets had collapsed, and he was reduced to sneaking into movie houses by the fire doors for his entertainment. He was hoping desperately to lick the Depression for good by selling this novel to Hollywood, but as it turned out he couldn't even find a book publisher for it and eventually tossed the entire manuscript into the garbage. Many years later, when he was writing his never-finished, never-published autobiography, he claimed that, a year after he wrote *I Love You, Paris,* one of the major studios released a movie which was set in Paris in precisely the year 1912 and which dealt with ballroom dancers' lives and loves. Not only did the central characters dance to Ravel's *Bolero* at the climax, just as they had in his novel, but huge amounts of his dialogue were delivered by the actors verbatim, or so at least he claimed in his autobiography. The only Hollywood film of the period that seems to fit his description was *Bolero* (Paramount, 1934), starring Carole Lombard and George Raft. According to the credits, the picture was directed by Wesley Ruggles from a screenplay by Horace Jackson based on a story by Carey Wilson and Kubec Glasmon. It's impossible of course to tell whether Woolrich's claim of plagiarism was justified, since he had junked the alleged source novel, but it would be an ironic touch worthy of Woolrich himself if one 1934 movie nominally based on a novel of his had nothing to do with the book, while another picture of

Phantom Lady **marked the point at which studios recognized the potential of Woolrich's fiction for top-of-the-line "A" pictures. From left: Franchot Tone, Ella Raines, and unidentified extra. A Universal Picture.**

the same year faithfully adapted a different Woolrich novel without either paying or crediting him.

So much for the prehistory of Woolrich's relations with the movies. It was in 1934, the same year that the Monogram and Paramount pictures came out, that Woolrich began his second life as a writer, selling suspense stories and novelettes to the pulp magazines. But he did not make his first crime-story sale to Hollywood until late in 1937, when Columbia Pictures paid him a monumental $448.75 for film rights to his story "Face Work," which had appeared in that October's *Black Mask* and would later be reprinted under the better-known title "Angel Face." The movie version, *Convicted* (Columbia, 1938), was a 54-minute "B" picture of the sort that all the studios were grinding out like link sausages in the '30s. Quickie director Leon Barsha shot the film on indoor sets in Vancouver, British Columbia so that it would count toward the quota of movies that English law required each studio to make in Great Britain or its dominions as a prerequisite for British release of its U.S.-made features. The screenplay by Canadian actor-writer Edgar Edwards not only kept with scrupulous fidelity to the Woolrich story but even incorporated countless lines of his dialogue—mainly the tinny wisecracks with which his pulp characters habitually insult each other—without alteration. Rita Hayworth starred as Jerry Wheeler, the nightclub dancer who desperately tries to prove that her younger brother Chick did not kill the gold-digging Ruby Rose, for whose murder he has been sentenced to die. The situation harks back to the climax of Woolrich's *Manhattan Love Song,* but the characters and treatment are worlds removed from that unsung *noir* classic. Charles Quigley, a handsome B-picture leading man of the time, played Burns, the plain-clothes detective whom Jerry converts to her cause, and evil-faced Marc Lawrence was cast as Militis, the sinister nightclub proprietor obsessed by Jerry's beauty. All the other actors were Canadian, including screenwriter Edgar Edwards, who wangled himself the part of Hayworth's kid brother. It was a cheap-looking throwaway picture that attracted no attention in 1938 and does not play much better today even in the light of Hayworth's later rise to superstardom. But, thanks to the fact that Barsha and Edwards made only minimal changes in the Woolrich story—building up the role of Chick's faithful girlfriend Mary Allen, for example, and adding a couple of Spanish dance numbers for Hayworth while quietly dropping Militis's practice of branding his women on the hip with a fireplace poker—the film's look and feel capture better than most movies the essence of late-1930s pulp crime fiction. In no way does the picture qualify for the category with which Woolrich is most closely associated, *film noir.*

Woolrich made no more movie sales until after he had joined the migration of pulp mystery writers into hardcover and had published his first two suspense novels, *The Bride Wore Black* (1940) and *The Black Curtain* (1941). The latter book attracted studio interest with its powerful *noir* story of Frank Townsend, who recovers his memory after three and a half years' amnesia, becomes obsessed with the determination to find out who and what he was during the lost years, and finds love, hate, and a murder charge waiting for him behind the curtain. No Hollywood film had yet been based on the subject of amnesia (although such pictures would glut the market later in the '40s), and the best offer for movie rights came from Paramount, the same studio which according to Woolrich's autobiography had pirated his *I Love You, Paris* eight years before. According to his financial records, he was paid $2,225 for permission

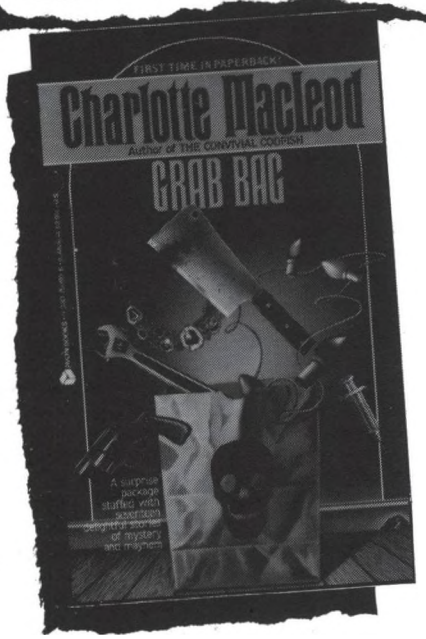
to make the film. During production, the picture's working title was *The Black Curtain* but it was released as *Street of Chance* (1942), starring Burgess Meredith as Frank Thompson (the reason for the change in the character's name being as murky as the reason for changing the title of the picture) and Claire Trevor as Ruth, the woman who loved him in his interim identity. The cast included Louise Platt as Meredith's wife, Sheldon Leonard as the sadistic homicide detective who is out to nail him, Frieda Inescort and Jerome Cowan as the widow and brother of the man whom Meredith is accused of murdering, and Adeline de Walt Reynolds as the mute and paralyzed old woman who holds the key to the nightmare.

The moderate-budgeted, 74-minute film was directed by Jack Hively, a young man who had recently come to Paramount from the B-picture unit at RKO, where he had helmed several of George Sanders's cinematic exploits as The Saint. Its photographer was Theodor Sparkuhl, a gifted veteran of the German expressionist and the French poetic-realist movements in filmmaking. Hively and screenplay writer Garrett Fort more or less followed the Woolrich storyline for the extremely suspenseful first half of the picture. Once Meredith and Trevor return to the mansion where the murder was committed, however, the movie diverges radically from the novel, scrapping the many weak elements in Woolrich's final chapters and all too often substituting clichés from the low-budget detective movies in which Hively had his roots. But the most crucial changes which Hively and Fort made were vast improvements on Woolrich. They took a throwaway element in the novel, Townsend's devising a method of communication with the paralyzed mute witness and thereby laboriously learning the truth, and transformed it into some intensely dramatic on-camera scenes between Meredith and Adeline de Walt Reynolds. Perhaps even more importantly, they scrapped Woolrich's ending, in which the murderer turns out to be a peripheral character, and devised a much better climax, with Claire Trevor herself being exposed as the murderer and then being accidentally shot while struggling with Meredith over a gun. These inspired innovations seem to account for the view of several knowledgeable Woolrichphiles that the movie is better than the novel. In any event, *film noir* specialist Robert Porfirio is right when he remarks that, with its hapless and desperate amnesia victim and its sense of doom and foreboding, *Street of Chance* "authentically captures the essence of Woolrich's universe."

But Porfirio's point relates to the themes in *Street of Chance,* hardly at all to its visual style. The next Woolrich work to be adapted for the screen was made into a movie by a producer and a director whose genius for poetic terror rivaled Woolrich's own. In his third suspense novel, *Black Alibi* (1942) —in which a killer jaguar menaces a large South American city while a lone Anglo hunts the human murderer who may be hiding behind the animal's claws—Woolrich dropped his quintessential themes of loneliness and despair, concentrated on what he called "the line of suspense," and turned out a masterpiece with a sense of menace breathing on every page. The five long set-pieces, in each of which unspeakable horrors stalk a different young woman through the landscape of the night, are among the finest sequences Woolrich ever wrote. Screen rights were snapped up almost as soon as the book was published.

RKO Radio Pictures paid Woolrich $5,175 and assigned the making of the movie based on *Black Alibi* to the production unit headed up by the legendary Val Lewton (1904–1951), who in the early '40s was responsible for some of the most poetic low-key horror films ever made. Lewton had spent two years as a journalism student at Columbia University around the same time that Woolrich had been a Columbia undergraduate, and it is possible, especially in view of both young men's creative bent and Russian roots, that they had known each other in the early 1920s. *The Leopard Man* (1943) was produced by Lewton and superbly directed by Jacques Tourneur (1904–1977), another visual poet well suited to translate Woolrich into the film medium. The 66-minute picture was shot between February 8 and March 9, 1943 on a budget of less than $150,000. Dennis O'Keefe starred as press agent Jerry Manning, with Spanish-born Margo as the castanet dancer Clo-Clo (sanitized from Woolrich's

MURDER SO COZY... AT HOME... AND ABROAD...



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near-prostitute character so as to clear the censors) and Jean Brooks as the actress Kiki, who becomes the bait for the climactic trap. Featured roles went to Isabel Jewell, James Bell, Margaret Landry, Abner Biberman, and Richard Martin. Although meticulously reshaped by Lewton and Tourneur, *The Leopard Man's* screenplay was credited to Ardel Wray, a young woman writer who had recently joined Lewton's unit. The picture followed Woolrich's storyline quite closely—except for a few matters like moving the setting from Latin America to New Mexico and substituting a black leopard for the novel's jaguar—until the final scenes, in which the murderer turns out to be a character not even in *Black Alibi,* and in which Woolrich's terrifying subterranean confrontation is scrapped in favor of a chase through a procession of black-robed, hooded monks.

The most complete account of *The Leopard Man* is in Joel E. Siegel's critical study *Val Lewton: The Reality of Terror* (1973). The film, Siegel points out,

> was a departure from the Lewton formula in several important respects. . . . It was Lewton's first try at a straightforward murder story, and for the first time he included several sequences of explicit bloodshed. In an episode which haunts the memory, a little Mexican girl returning from the store where her mother has sent her to buy food is clawed to death while trying to get someone to open the door. Although the violence is mainly suggested—after the child's shuddery walk home, the attack itself is shot from *inside* the house so that we can only hear what is happening—the fact of the child's death is revealed by a rivulet of blood trickling under the door.

If Siegel read *Black Alibi* at all, he must have been asleep at the time, for he describes it as "conventional," "heavy in explicit bloodshed," "lacking the kind of poetic suspense [Lewton and Tourneur] favored," a book which "hardly merits the highly sophisticated Lewton narrative technique." As we shall soon see, Siegel is not the only film critic who feels compelled to snipe at the literary sources of work by first-rate moviemakers, as if what a Lewton or a Hitchcock or a Truffaut adapted for the screen must have been trash before they transformed it. The story which novel and film share, Siegel tells us, "is essentially a thin, nasty-minded story" in which the murders of several innocent women who die "like trapped animals" are "depicted with an obsessive, rather unsavoury relish. . . little more than an exercise in sadistic voyeurism." In one sense, Siegel is a victim of the exaggerated feminist sensibility of the 1970s, and in another he is more right than even he could have known at the time: the current wave of Mad Slasher horror films which dwell graphically on women being hacked apart can be traced back, as far as storyline is concerned, to *Black Alibi* and *The Leopard Man* (and more immediately, of course, to Hitchcock's *Psycho*). But the end of his discussion of

***Leopard Man*, a 66-minute picture, was shot between February 8 and March 9, 1943 on a budget of less than $150,000. An RKO Picture.**

the picture is a model of balance. "I saw *The Leopard Man* when I was eleven," he says,

> and seeing it again for this book, almost twenty years later, I discovered that almost every shot was fixed in my memory. The death of the frightened child, the young girl alone in the cemetery, those shots of the dancer clicking her castanets through the dark streets—these are artful images of fear that will long haunt those who experience them.

And so many of those images stem either literally or in spirit from Woolrich's novel.

The next film based on a .Woolrich property marked the point at which studios stopped thinking of him just in terms of medium-budget thrillers and began recognizing the potential of his fiction for top-of-the-line "A" pictures. What made the breakthrough for him was *Phantom Lady* (1942), the classic *noir* novel which inaugurated his pseudonym of William Irish. The book takes off from one of those waking-nightmare premises at which Woolrich excelled. A man quarrels with his wife, goes out and picks up a woman in a bar, spends the evening with her, and comes home to find his wife dead and himself accused of her murder. All the evidence is against him, and his only hope is to find the woman who was with him when his wife was killed. But she seems to have vanished into thin air, and everyone in a position to know—the nameless bartender at Anselmo's, the cab driver, the jazz drummer, the peppery Latina entertainer—swears that no such woman ever existed. The man is convicted and sentenced to die, and his secretary, who has long loved him, joins with his best friend in a desperate race against the clock, hunting through the night catacombs of New York for the phantom lady and the reason why so many witnesses could not see her.

Universal Pictures purchased movie rights to the novel and assigned the project to associate producer Joan Harrison, who was just starting out on her own after several years' work with Alfred Hitchcock, and to German emigré director Robert Siodmak (1900–1973), who had been stuck in B pictures such as *Son of Dracula* and *Cobra Woman* since his flight from Hitler to the United States. The 87-minute *Phantom Lady* (Universal, 1944), completed late in October 1943 and released the following February, was directed by Siodmak from a screenplay by Bernard C. Schoenfeld. Franchot Tone starred as Jack Marlow (the counterpart of the novel's Jack Lombard), Ella Raines as Carol Richman (whose nickname in the movie, though not in the novel, is Kansas), and Thomas Gomez as police detective Burgess. The cast included Alan Curtis as the convicted Scott Henderson, Elisha Cook, Jr. as jazz drummer Cliff March, Andrew Tombes as the night bartender, and Joseph Crehan and Regis Toomey as menacing cops.

The plot of the movie follows Woolrich's storyline for about half the distance, then takes off on paths of its own and becomes silly. Siodmak and Schoenfeld gave away the *dénouement* far too early and transformed Woolrich's murderer into a stereotyped Mad Artist, complete with delusions of grandeur, symbolic migraine headaches, and overdone hand gestures. But in terms of visual style the film is very much in harmony with the bleak Woolrich spirit. *Noir* critic Bob Porfirio points out that Siodmak and his brilliant cinematographer Elwood Bredell (who it was said could light up a football field with a single match) caught on film "the essential ingredients of Woolrich's world, from the desperate innocent loose at night in New York City, a city of hot sweltering streets, to the details of threatening shadows, jazz emanating from low-class bars, and the click of high heels on the pavement. The whole *noir* world is developed here almost entirely through *mise-en-scène*." The picture's best-known sequences—the cat-and-mouse on the Third Avenue Elevated platform between Raines and Tombes, and the jam session wherein orgiastic shots of Cook's drum solo are intercut with Raines's "wordless sexual innuendoes"—are based quite faithfully on scenes in the novel. In his essay "Three Faces of Film Noir," critic Tom Milne praises Siodmak for "creating a somber world of wet streets, dingy offices, low-ceilinged bars, crowded lunch counters, and deserted railway platforms, all unified by an atmosphere of heightened realism in which the expressive quality of the image is due entirely to lighting and composition."

Although Jacques Tourneur in *The Leopard Man* also deserves credit, it was Siodmak in *Phantom Lady* who, more than any previous director of a Woolrich-based film, found a visual correlative for Woolrich's haunting style. It was a breakthrough

picture not only for Woolrich but for Siodmak too, and he spent the rest of the decade directing some of the finest *films noir: Christmas Holiday* (1944), *The Suspect* (1944), *Uncle Harry* (1945), *The Spiral Staircase* (1946), *The Killers* (1946), *The Dark Mirror* (1946), *Cry of the City* (1948), *Criss Cross* (1949) and *The File on Thelma Jordan* (1949). In the mid-1950s, he returned to Europe and spent the balance of his life directing features in West Germany, Spain, and France. His reputation rests, however, on his Hollywood suspense thrillers.

The next Woolrich-based picture showed that, even with the success of *Phantom Lady,* the "B" units had not forgotten him. Columbia, the first studio to have released a crime film taken from Woolrich material, rejoined the bandwagon when it bought rights to his novelette "Dormant Account" (*Black Mask,* May 1942) and turned it into *The Mark of the Whistler* (1944), the second in producer Rudolph C. Flothow's series of eight 60-minute suspense-film spinoffs from the popular *Whistler* radio dramas. It was a quite creditable quickie, directed on a budget of about $70,000 by William Castle (1914–1977), who later became well known for his gimmicky exploitation horror pictures, with a screenplay by B-movie veteran George Bricker that stayed remarkably close to the plot if not the mood of Woolrich's story. The star of all but the last Whistler film, Richard Dix, played the down-and-out who happens upon a notice in a discarded newspaper and decides to impersonate the rightful owner of a certain dormant bank account, thereby coming into both big money and big trouble in the form of a maniac out for vengeance on the money's true owner. Featured in key supporting roles were Janis Carter as the eager reporter who covers Dix's rags-to-riches story, Porter Hall as the devious clothing-store owner who grubstakes Dix's plot, Paul Guilfoyle as the wistful little pencil-seller Limpy Smith, and John Calvert as the vengeful madman. Only the last two characters came from Woolrich. The others were invented by Castle and Bricker, and, along with several minor parts, they demonstrate the young Castle's knack for quirky, offbeat characterizations.

The film's alterations in the Woolrich storyline fall neatly into three categories. A few, such as raising the protagonist's age from 27 to the early forties, were due to Richard Dix's mature looks. Others, such as the insistence at the picture's end that Dix will be prosecuted for defrauding the bank, and The Whistler's incessant warnings that those who compromise with conscience must pay their debt to society, were required by the censors. Most of the changes, however, were designed to smooth out those elements in Woolrich's story which strained credibility beyond its limits. In the movie, for example, Dix's name really happens to be Lee Nugent, and since he has legitimate identification in that name as he never did

The plot of *Phantom Lady* follows Woolrich's storyline for about half the distance, then takes off on paths of its own and becomes silly. From left: Virginia Brissac, Ella Raines, Fay Helm. A Universal Picture.

in the story, the bank's acceptance of him as the owner of the dormant account makes more sense. Along the same lines, Castle adds a few brief scenes in mid-picture to explain, as Woolrich did not, how the avenger picked up Nugent's trail after the bank paid him the money. And, at the climax, Castle deftly eliminates that most hard-to-swallow moment in the story in which Donnelly boasts that he has had prepared for a long time an open grave in which he could bury his enemy with a limited air supply. All of these shifts combine with Dix's low-key, almost stoic performance to transform Woolrich's *noir* story, terrifying and incredible as a nightmare, into a cool, controlled, circumstantially plausible little picture that keeps to the Woolrich plot but jettisons most of its power and tension.

No movies based on Woolrich were released during 1945, but by the end of that year he might pardonably have felt that, as far as Hollywood was concerned, he could do no wrong. During the last months of war and the first of uneasy peace, each of three major studios paid him sizable sums for rights to a different novel. He took in just under $20,000 in film money alone that year. The three pictures that were the fruit of these arrangements were released in 1946, each of them a generously budgeted *film noir* with top casts and crews, not a "B" quickie in the lot.

The first of the trio to reach theaters was *Deadline at Dawn* (RKO, 1946), which had been completed the previous July. Woolrich's 1944 novel of the same name—published, like *Phantom Lady,* under his William Irish byline—was a loosely constructed, episodic work the action of which takes place on a single night in the bleak streets and concrete catacombs of New York. By using clock-faces for chapter heads, Woolrich made us literally watch the passage of time as his protagonists—a young man on the run from a murder he knows he will be accused of come

While shooting "Deadline at Dawn," a censorship functionary complained that Susan Hayward "was showing too much cleavage"; but the director and Hayward insisted this was one of the "more pleasing" features of the film.

morning, and a feisty, terrified little taxi dancer who sees the city as a personal enemy out to destroy her—encounter all sorts of disconnected *noir* characters and incidents in their frantic race to escape Manhattan before sunrise. The movie nominally based on this novel was an earnest and ambitious but largely unsatisfying effort, the work of an assortment of artists who could and should have done better.

Four of the major talents behind the camera had roots in the left-wing theatre movement of the 1930s. Producer Adrian Scott was blacklisted a few years later, after refusing to kowtow to the House Un-American Activities Committee; director Harold Clurman (1901-1980) and playwright Clifford Odets (1906-1963), who wrote the screenplay as a favor for Clurman, had been key figures in New York's Group Theatre during the Depression; and Marxist composer Hanns Eisler was commissioned by RKO on Odets's recommendation to write the film's music score. The overlap between Woolrich's world and Odets's—each man a lyrical romantic grappling in his own way with the horrors of existence—might have sparked a fascinating politicized adaptation of the novel. It didn't. Clurman and Odets gave us just a conventional whodunit with pretensions to Higher Meaning, more tightly constructed than the novel but with none of Woolrich's characters, almost none of his suspense, nothing even of his plot except the springboard situation, and no political content either.

Susan Hayward and Bill Williams starred as the couple remotely modeled on Woolrich's Bricky and Quinn (she's still a taxi dancer, but, since this is a wartime picture, he is a naïvely patriotic sailor), with Paul Lukas as a philosophical cabdriver who furnishes free wheels as they try to find a murderer before dawn. The victim of the crime, a predatory bitch of the first water, was played by Lola Lane. Among the people Hayward and Williams intersect with on their quest for her killer are Osa Massen as a beautiful crippled woman, Joseph Calleia as Lane's gangster brother, Jerome Cowan (who had also been in *Street of Chance*) as a Broadway hanger-on plagued by Lane's blackmail demands, Marvin Miller as a blind pianist once married to Lane and still in love with her, Steven Geray as a pathetic little immigrant with a platonic crush on Hayward, and Joe Sawyer as an alcoholic ballplayer with a parallel passion for Lane. Precious few of these characters have any counterpart in Woolrich's novel (although Miller's blind pianist is true to the Woolrich spirit), and each of them except Calleia comes across as a wistful little wimp, each with a tag-line of dialogue repeated *ad nauseam:* Hayward's mournful "I hear the whistle blowing," Williams's self-deprecating "*Non compos mentis*" and his naïve "...and that's the truth," Lukas's gently knowing "Statistics tell us," Geray's meek "Meaning no offense." It is not surprising that the great film critic James Agee qualified his generally favorable review in *The Nation* with a swat at the picture's "pseudo-realism and pseudo-poetry about the lost little people of a big city."

In his autobiography *All People Are Famous* (1974), director Harold Clurman dismissed the film as "run-of-the-mill" and "of no importance." What he remembered best about the project, he said, was the time a censorship functionary visited the set to complain that Susan Hayward "was showing too much cleavage; but Miss Hayward and I insisted that this was one of the more pleasing features of the picture." Clurman's casual attitude met with resentment from the RKO front office, "perhaps because I finished the film on time and it proved moderately profitable." He never directed a movie again. Students of Clifford Odets's work are no better disposed towards the picture than was Clurman. In his critical

The cinematography in *Phantom Lady* has been praised for catching on film "the essential ingredients of Woolrich's world." From left: Ella Raines, Virginia Brissac, Franchot Tone. A Universal Picture.

study *Clifford Odets, Playwright* (1971), Gerald Weales shrugs off the *Deadline at Dawn* script as "of minimal interest." One can appreciate his coolness toward a screenplay the protagonists of which step out of the apartment building where a woman has been murdered and, trying to put themselves in the killer's place, decide that the first thing he must have done after the crime was to cross the street to the Nedick's stand and purchase a soothing glass of orangeade!

But the picture is far from a total loss. Every so often, as *noir* critic Bob Porfirio puts is, "by virtue of *mise-en-scène* alone, *Deadline at Dawn* captures... the quiet desperation of the nighttime people in New York City." The first scene, with its anguished confrontation between the soon-to-be-murdered Lola Lane and her blind pianist ex-husband Marvin Miller, is a *noir* classic, and eerily similar to the scene between the soon-to-be-murdered Constance Dowling and her alcoholic pianist ex-husband Dan Duryea in the very next Woolrich-based movie, *Black Angel.* (Nothing remotely like these scenes appears in either Woolrich source novel.) In the outdoor scenes, which of course were shot in the studio, Clurman and the great *noir* cinematographer Nicholas Musuraca superbly caught the Woolrich image of the city in the deepest hours of the night. And amid Odets's bizarre notions of dialogue come a few lines—as when Lukas, deserted long ago by his wife, says: "For the first six years I shaved every night before I went to bed. I thought she might come back"—which breathe the Woolrich spirit. It is by haunting moments such as these that *Deadline at Dawn* is redeemed.

If *Deadline at Dawn* were the poorer for having junked most of its source novel, the next movie based on Woolrich proved that the same procedure could result in a first-rate picture true to the author's *noir* view of life. Woolrich's 1943 classic *The Black Angel* was written in first person from the viewpoint of a woman and described a terrified young wife's race against time to prove that her husband, convicted and sentenced to die for the murder of his mistress, is innocent and that one of the several other men in the dead woman's life is guilty. Adopting a new *persona* for each operation, she invades the lives of a number of emotionally vulnerable men—a Bowery derelict, a drug-pushing doctor, a Park Avenue socialite, and a gangster—and destroys each of them, innocent and culpable alike. In essence, the book is an extension of the climactic situation in Woolrich's 1932 novel *Manhattan Love Song,* seen through the eyes of Wade's wife. Like most Woolrich novels, *The Black Angel* is a wrenching, bizarre, episodically structured work, with a protagonist whose obsessions grow to madness inside her as she ruins others and herself to save her man from Mister Death. Precious few of these elements are in the movie, yet paradoxically the film is more Woolrich-like than many pictures which in a literal sense were more faithful to their sources.

Black Angel (Universal, 1946) was directed and co-produced by British-born Roy William Neill (1886–1946), an industry old-timer best known for his Sherlock Holmes series with Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. The screenplay was by veteran scripter Roy Chanslor, who set out with Neill to tighten the novel's structure, reduce the number of male characters, make the female lead more sympathetic, and at the same time preserve the Woolrich suspense and

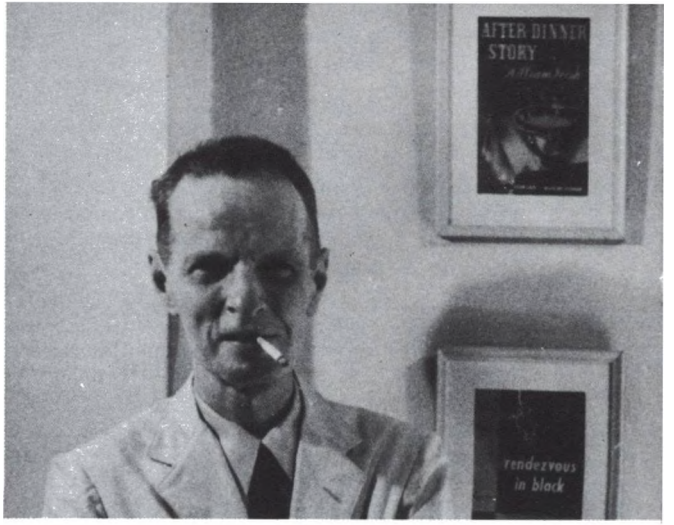
emotional anguish. The casting of the film was near-perfect. June Vincent starred as the title character, Catharine Bennett, and Dan Duryea as the alcoholic pianist Martin Blair, who is a composite of two men in the novel (the heartbroken drunk Martin Blair and the haunted socialite Ladd Mason), supplemented with touches borrowed from Marvin Miller's blind pianist character in *Deadline at Dawn* and with a few of Woolrich's own traits. The episode in the novel about the depraved Dr. Mordaunt was dropped completely, and the M-monogrammed matchbook leads the black angel not to several men, as in the book, but only to one, the nightclub owner Marko, who is more or less the counterpart of Woolrich's love-struck gambler McKee. The part of Marko went to that master of menace Peter Lorre. Broderick Crawford played Captain Flood, promoted from Woolrich's lieutenant of the same name, and the key role of the predatory murdered woman, Mavis Marlowe, was enacted by Constance Dowling. The 83-minute film was completed in May of 1946 and released in August.

Neill and Chanslor had no qualms about radically altering the Woolrich novel. Over and above the changes already described, the cinematic black angel doesn't carry out her quest alone as in the book but is joined by Dan Duryea's Marty Blair character. Although Woolrich's Marty kills himself after his brief encounter with the angel, Duryea not only lives through the picture but is recovering from his alcoholism by the fadeout. Duryea falls in love with June Vincent somewhat as Woolrich's Ladd Mason did with the black angel, but in the movie Vincent does not return his love but stays loyal to her convicted and philandering husband. Yet, despite all these changes and many more, the Woolrich spirit permeates every frame of *Black Angel*, which is one of the finest and least appreciated *films noir* ever made. From the opening sequence with its complex boom shot from the street to the interior of Mavis Marlowe's penthouse, through the climax with its expressionist re-creation of Marlowe's murder through Marty's drunken consciousness, Neill and his cinematographer Paul Ivano invest every shot with a visual style that translates Woolrich into film precisely as any novel needs to be translated—with total fidelity to its spirit and little if any to its literal text. If a single theatrical feature based on a Woolrich book could be preserved for future generations and all the rest had to be destroyed, *Black Angel* is the one which I would opt to keep. It was Roy William Neill's best film, and his last. He died shortly after its release.

Woolrich himself considered the picture a disaster. Early in 1947, the poet Mark Van Doren, who shared a Columbia University background with Woolrich, wrote him a friendly letter in which he mentioned having recently seen the movie. The reference prompted Woolrich to leave his mother and the Hotel Marseilles for a few hours and go see it himself at a neighborhood theater. "I was so ashamed when I came out of there," he wrote to Van Doren on February 2. "All I could keep thinking of in the dark was: Is *that* what I wasted my whole life at?" What his letter demonstrates is, one, that the greatest writer of suspense fiction who ever lived was impenetrably dense as a film critic, and, two, that his contempt for himself knew no bounds. Whether out of good sense or lack of clout, he at least never tried to tell the moviemakers how to adapt his work.

The third and most controversial of the Woolrich-based movies released in 1946 was *The Chase* (United Artists, 1946), an 86-minute picture directed by the erratic Arthur Ripley (1895–1961) from a screenplay by playwright Philip Yordan that was very loosely derived from Woolrich's 1944 novel *The Black Path of Fear*. In the book, Bill Scott escapes from Miami to Havana with Eve, the wife of American gangster Eddie Roman, whose Cuban agents kill the woman and frame her lover, leaving Scott a stranger in a strange land, menaced on all sides and fighting for his life. More than in any other Woolrich novel, *The Black Path of Fear* combines prototypical *noir* elements—love discovered and then snuffed out, a man alone and hunted through a nightmare city—with an ambience of dope dens and sinister Orientals and secret passages and hair's-breadth escapes straight out of the author's early pulp action whiz-bangs. Ripley and Yordan had little interest in pulp stuff. In adapting *The Black Path of Fear* for the screen, they followed the same course as the directors and writers of the year's earlier Woolrich-based films, scrapping almost the entire plot of the novel and going all out to capture its essence visually. Robert Cummings—with his light-romantic manner a most unlikely *noir* protagonist but one who was given such parts by directors as diverse as Alfred Hitchcock (in *Saboteur*, 1942) and Anthony Mann (in *Reign of Terror*, 1949)—starred as Chuck Scott, with the lovely French import Michele Morgan as Lorna Roman, Steve Cochran as the vengeful husband Eddie, and *Black Angel's* Peter Lorre as Eddie's hit man Gino.

As retold by Ripley and Yordan, the story avoids Woolrich's flashbacks and proceeds in chronological order. Scott, a down-at-heels veteran of the recent war, becomes Eddie Roman's chauffeur as he did in the novel, as a reward for returning Eddie's lost wallet intact. In due time, he falls in love with Lorna and agrees to flee with her to Cuba as in the book. It is at this point that the revised storyline goes haywire. The day they are to run off together, Chuck suffers a relapse of the malarial fever he contracted in the Navy and dreams the events that make up the bulk of Woolrich's novel: the stabbing death of Lorna in the Havana nightclub, his own arrest by and escape from



the Cuban cop Acosta (Alexis Minotis) and his encounter with the prostitute Midnight (Yolanda Lacca). Eventually, he discovers that Lorna was killed by Eddie's pet assassin Gino, but he is himself shot to death by the murderer, at which point he wakes from his fever dream. Unfortunately, Chuck's malaria is compounded by a case of *film noir's* favorite disease, amnesia: he has no recollection of his plans to escape with Lorna until a military doctor (Jack Holt) pulls him out of his forgetfulness. Meanwhile, Eddie and Gino meet gruesome deaths in an auto wreck. As the film ends, Chuck and Lorna disembark at Havana and find the same coachman and nightclub that figured in Chuck's dream.

Noir critic Bob Porfirio ranks *The Chase* second only to Siodmak's *Phantom Lady* as a "cinematic equivalent of the dark, oppressive atmosphere" of Woolrich, thanks to its dreamlike ambience, "especially at the conclusion, which collapses the distinction between dream and reality; its eroticism, particularly in the scene where Roman sexually badgers and then abuses his female barber and manicurist; its unprecedented elements, such as the dreamed death of the hero; and its aspects of cruelty and ambivalence..." Other commentators have been far less kind to the film, and, of all the Woolrich-based pictures, *The Chase* is the one most likely to provoke an argument among *noir* aficionados. In any event, it was the last "A" feature adapted from a Woolrich source for almost two years.

The three movies derived from Woolrich material that came out in 1947—all of them within a month's time in early spring—were low-budget efforts, based not on novels but on short stories or novelettes which could be acquired more cheaply, and with obscure people working on both sides of the cameras. Two of the trio were made by Monogram Pictures, the same Poverty Row outfit which back in 1934 had filmed a comic *Manhattan Love Song* based on Woolrich's tragic novel. By the 1940s, the studio was churning out reams of el cheapo product: Westerns, East Side Kids flicks, Bela Lugosi screamers, Charlie Chans, and, once the genre had proved itself in the marketplace, *films noir.* In 1946, Monogram bought movie rights to a pair of Woolrich novelettes and put two different casts and crews to work almost cheek-by-jowl among tatty indoor sets. Both pictures were completed in November of that year and released to bottom-rung theaters in March of 1947. After resurfacing on countless TV late-late shows during the '50s, they sank out of sight, and so far not even cable has resurrected them.

Fall Guy (1947), the working title of which was *One Way Street,* was produced by Walter Mirisch, who would eventually rise to moguldom in the industry. Its Vienna-born director, that perennial B-movie hack Reginald LeBorg (1902—), had just completed a series of Universal horror-suspensers starring Lon Chaney, Jr. The screenplay by Jerry Warner, with additional dialogue credited to John O'Dea, was based on Woolrich's story "C-Jag" (*Black Mask,* October 1940), better known by its reprint title, "Cocaine." But LeBorg and Warner kept little of the story except its springboard situation: a young man comes out of a drug haze with blurred memories of a party, a body in a closet, and a bloody knife, then finds blood on his shirt and the knife in his pocket. He tells his police detective brother-in-law, and the two hunt desperately for the murder scene and the body—if either exists outside the young man's dreams. The totally unknown Clifford Penn starred as Tom Cochrane and Robert Armstrong, fondly remembered for his role in *King Kong* (1933), as homicide cop Mac McClane. Three of the people they run into on their quest are rooted in Woolrich's story—the sleazy elevator operator Joe (Elisha Cook, Jr.) and the happy-go-lucky party-throwing couple (John Harmon and Iris Adrian)—and the sequence in that couple's apartment, with its closet where the hunted corpse might be but isn't, does resemble the parallel scene in Woolrich. All the other characters and plot elements in the movie spring from the less than vivid imaginations of Jerry Warner and Reginald LeBorg. Tom's girlfriend Lois Walters (Teala Loring), Lois's guardian "Uncle Jim" Grosset (Charles Arnt), the singer Marie (Virginia Dale) and her boyfriend Mike the vengeful boxer (Jack Overman), and tough-talking Inspector Shannon (Douglas Fowley) have no counterparts in the Woolrich story. The closeted body in "C-Jag" is that of a man, and the plot revolves around a standard gangland double-cross; in the movie it is that of a woman whose blackmail victim has concocted an elaborate murder-and-frameup scheme to get rid of her. The filmmakers left out the memorable "singing walls" sequence, which had been the leitmotif of the radio version of the story on CBS's *Suspense,* and tossed in a handful of mind-boggling plot twists for their climax. An occasional line of voice-over flashback narrative might almost have come from Wool-

rich ("My brain rattled inside like the tongue of a bell, my eyes forgot how to see"), and a few shots evoke a passable *noir* mood. The rest of *Fall Guy's* 64 minutes, much like Le Borg's later quickies for Monogram and Lippert and other independents, is dreary routine.

While that picture was under way, another low-budget producer named Jack Wrather was using the same studio facilities for a Woolrich-based film of his own. *The Guilty* (Monogram, 1947), a 71-minute time-waster completed just after Thanksgiving of 1946, was directed by German emigré John Reinhardt (1901–1953) from a screenplay by "B" stalwart Robert R. Presnell, Sr. that was loosely derived from Woolrich's novelette "He Looked Like Murder" (*Detective Fiction Weekly,* February 8, 1941), better known as "Two Fellows in a Furnished Room." But, like Reginald LeBorg and Jerry Warner across the Monogram lot, Reinhardt and Presnell revamped their source material to the point of ruination. Both the film and Woolrich's story start with the same premise: slowly and against his will, a young man comes to believe that his roommate and best buddy have brutally murdered his girlfriend and stuffed her body into an incinerator. Many of the picture's later plot developments—the suspect protests his innocence, claims he can clear himself if he can find a phantom whistler, goes on the run, is tracked down by his buddy, who then finds the whistler and pins the murder on a kindly old uncle figure—come more or less intact from Woolrich. But the director and screenwriter superimposed on this layer of the film a catalogue of all the most familiar elements of late-1940s *cinema noir.* One: almost the entire picture is told in flashback as, some time after the main events, Mike Carr returns to his old neighborhood and tells his tale to the bartender in the local tavern. Two: Carr's roommate, Johnny Dixon, the one accused of the murder, is transformed into that icon of post-Hiroshima *noir,* The Mentally Disturbed War Veteran. Three: rather than settle for one key female character as Woolrich did, Reinhardt and Presnell opted to split her in two, turning the murdered girlfriend into yet another *noir* cliché, The Twin Sisters, One Good, One Evil. Then, at the end of the long, long flashback sequence, they dragged in one more whiskered *noir* device by having their viewpoint character, Carr, turn out himself to be the murderer.

The casting of the picture was as routine as everything else about it. Bonita Granville, producer Wrather's wife, played the twins, with B-movie tough guy Don Castle as Carr and Wally Cassell as Dixon. Regis Toomey played Heller, the plainclothesman in charge of the murder case, and John Litel the avuncular character who in Woolrich's novelette was indeed the killer. Reinhardt manages to evoke a convincingly claustrophobic atmosphere—although much of it is attributable less to his directorial skill than to a very tight budget—but there is not much else to recommend in this specimen of bottom-rung *noir.* Jack Wrather's main claim to fame is not this picture or any other movie he produced but his membership in President Reagan's "kitchen cabinet" and his company's TV series such as *Lassie* and *The Lone Ranger.* □

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The Agatha Christie of Japan

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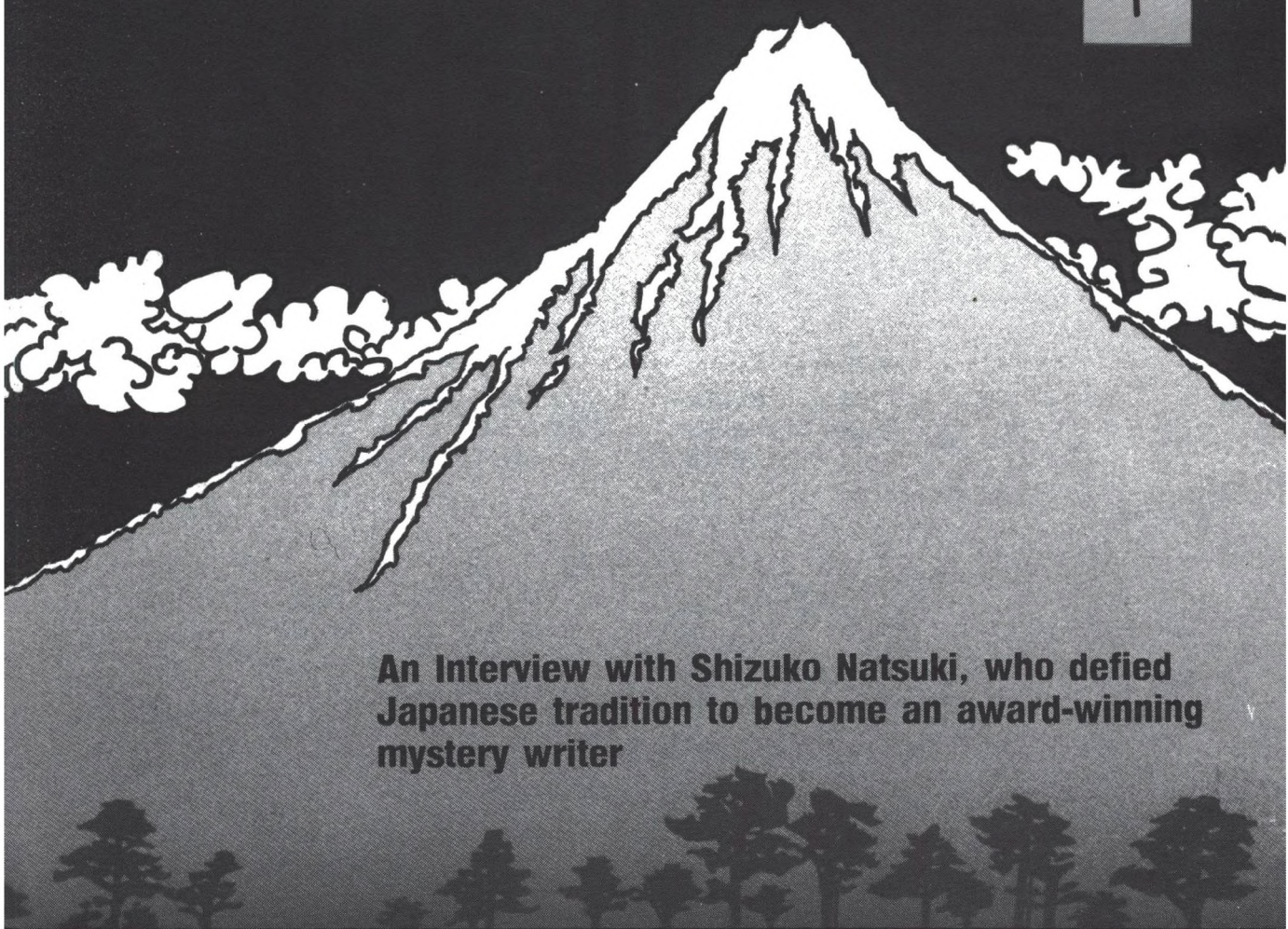


An Interview with Shizuko Natsuki, who defied Japanese tradition to become an award-winning mystery writer

By Mark Schreiber

WHEN it comes to naming the foremost female mystery writer in Japan, no one else even comes close: Shizuko Natsuki is the acknowledged queen of the genre. Her career as a writer of note began unusually early: while still an English Literature major at Keio University, her story "Watashi dake ga Shiteru" ("Only I Know") received an unprecedented nomination for the prestigious Edogawa Rampo Mystery Award. She subsequently received the top honor in 1973 for her novel *Johatsu* (*Disappearance*).

Often dubbed the "Agatha Christie of Japan," it is ironic that social attitudes almost prevented Natsuki from taking up her writing career. She married into the family of a major petroleum importer, and her husband initially demanded that she give up writing. At first she complied, but she was, fortunately for her readers, unable to suppress her writing talent. Now, two decades later and the mother of two teenagers, Natsuki frequently reflects on this problem of combining motherhood with a career in Japan's traditionally minded society. In addition to her many works of fiction, last year she published *Tsuma-tachi no Hanran* (*Rebellion of the Wives*).

Responding to an increasing interest in modern Japanese literature, several of her short stories have appeared in English in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine,* and last summer her 1984 novel *W no Higeki* (also a hit film in Japan) appeared in English soon after publication in Japan under the title *Murder at Mt. Fuji.* This novel, as do many contemporary Japanese works, centers around family conflicts—jealousy, adultery, divorce, and rivalry over an inheritance. In examining a wealthy family's attempt to cover up the murder of one of its members, *Murder at Mt. Fuji* emerges as an exceptionally interesting study in conspiracy by group consent.

A petite, small-boned woman of about average size for her generation [many younger Japanese tower over their parents], the 46-year-old Natsuki wears her straight black hair in a modified bob. Her most distinguishing feature is her large black eyes, which give her an inquisitive appearance. Although not widely recognized by her countrymen, she often wears large tinted glasses when in public. While Natsuki speaks and reads English, the following dialogue was conducted in Japanese, in a limousine *en route* to Mt. Takao in West Tokyo.

Schreiber: Where are we headed now?

Natsuki: I'm on the way to talk to a famous potter in Mt. Takao. The book I'm working on now has a hero who is a pottery maker, so I have to learn as many details as I can about pottery.

Schreiber: People often refer to you as the "Agatha Christie of Japan." Are you comfortable with this sort of comparison?

Natsuki: No, not at all. As for my being a female mystery writer, it's certainly an honor to be compared with such a great author, but most of her books focused on a different era, around the 1920s. Christie's novels don't go into social problems the way mine do. These days, mystery stories have to reflect real human problems in a way that readers can relate to, so, if people feel that I resemble Christie, except on the superficial level of being a female mystery author, I must be doing something wrong.

Schreiber: What is your background?

Natsuki: I was born and raised in Tokyo but spent part of the war years in Atami [a seaside resort town]. I finished Keio University at 22 and married two years later. Since then, I lived over ten years in Fukuoka, Kyushu. I've been living in Nagoya [a major city about two hours from Tokyo] for the past nine years. My husband is an executive in an oil company.

Schreiber: Did your husband oppose your taking up writing?

Natsuki: In the beginning, he was against it and asked me to give it up. But now he doesn't complain. I've done a good job of taking care of the household, and now the children are almost grown up. Still, it's the norm today for a "Japanese husband" [she says this phrase in English] to oppose his wife's working and earning money.

Schreiber: Had you held any other jobs prior to writing your book?

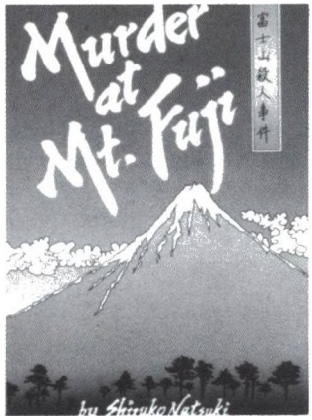
Natsuki: While in college, I worked on scenarios for TV dramas, but I got married soon afterward and didn't do much writing for a while after that. In Japan, very few women write mystery novels, and many people asked me to write, so I started again.

Schreiber: From what age did you want to become an author?

Natsuki: From about the sixth grade of elementary school, I started thinking about it in passing, but I more or less passed through that phase. I goofed off all through college. I didn't have any confidence in becoming a writer.

Schreiber: Are there any mystery stories in particular which you liked when you were younger?

Natsuki: I did read a lot from high school onward. I remember enjoying *The Red Redmaynes* [1922] by [British novelist] Eden Phillpotts, which led me to Agatha Christie, and from there to Poe, S. S. Van Dine, Ellery Queen, John Dickson Carr, and others. But I guess that for me Christie was the most interesting, because her stories seemed so well put together, so plausible.



Schreiber: Do you receive a lot of mail from your readers, and do they write in to suggest ideas for stories?

Natsuki: I get fan mail on occasion, about half from men and half from women, but they don't suggest anything. They just write that they enjoyed my book, and that I should keep up the good work.

Schreiber: What is your daily schedule like? Do you have a set time for your work?

Natsuki: I get up early, around 6:40, and fix breakfast and *obento* [a Japanese-style box lunch usually containing rice, grilled fish or meat, and pickles] for my husband and children. Then I go back to sleep. In the old days, I used to start with the housework as soon as everyone left, but now I need more rest. I start writing around 10:30 and work until late afternoon. My office is upstairs, in a six-mat Western-style room [i.e., carpeted, not having straw *tatami* mats] full of books. I kneel on the floor beside a big writing table that almost fills up the whole room.

Schreiber: In what sort of format do you do your actual writing?

Natsuki: I write by *tategaki* [in vertical columns] on 400-character *genko yoshi* [standard manuscript form paper] using a fountain pen. I'd say most Japanese authors still do their writing by hand.

Schreiber: Really? I'd say very few Western authors still do their writing in longhand. Haven't you thought about trying a word processor?

Natsuki: Actually, I have been considering getting one, but now my son is preparing for his high school entrance examinations; I'm afraid if I had one in the house he would start playing with it and get distracted from his studies. (She smiles.) I'll start looking around for one after this April. But I don't think I will actually use it for my work—probably just for correspondence.

Schreiber: Are there any characters who appear regularly in your books?

Natsuki: Well, I don't make it a rule, but I have used one character, Miss Riyako Asabuki, in a number of my novels. She's a female lawyer, about 26 years old when she started, but I guess now she's getting along in years. (*She smiles.*)

Schreiber: Is Miss Asabuki based on an actual female lawyer or someone else you know from real life?

Natsuki: No. She's completely fictitious.

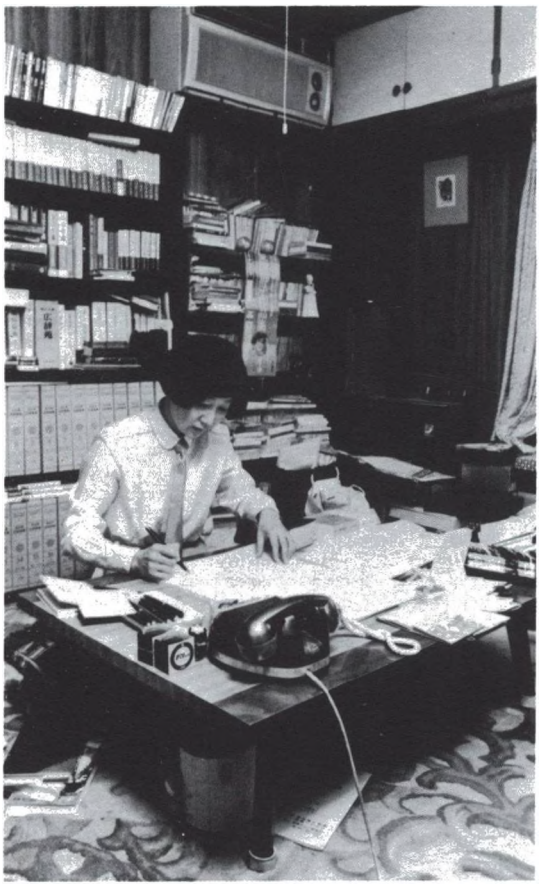
Schreiber: How do you obtain information or technical material for your stories? If you have questions, do you submit your manuscript to a doctor or lawyer, for example?

Natsuki: It depends on the situation. Most of the time, I just call them on the phone and ask them whatever I need to know. I've never attended an autopsy, although I did go into a morgue on one occasion to see what it looked like.

Schreiber: A number of interesting recent English-language mysteries set in Asia were based on some actual historical incident, such as the disappearance of the fossils of Peking Man, and so on. Have you used this method in any of your own books?

Natsuki: In *Misshitsu Koro* [*Locked Room Voyage*], the plot is loosely based on the murder of a Japanese girl which took place on the Soviet passenger liner *Baikal* several years ago. Another idea I've had is to

do a book which covers a much wider scope, about the U.S.S. *Indianapolis*. This was the Navy cruiser which transported the atomic bomb from California to Tinian. On its return, the ship was torpedoed and sunk by a Japanese submarine, and there was supposed to have been a panic and some sort of racial incident among the black and white members of the crew. Many of the sailors were eaten by sharks. Anyway, I'd thought about doing a fictionalized account, but I haven't had the time.



Schreiber: What would you say is the most difficult part of writing a mystery novel?

Natsuki: For me, I've always thought that it is creating a story with realism, to make it plausible for the reader. The other thing is developing believable motives for the characters' actions.

Schreiber: Why do you think *Murder at Mt. Fuji* was selected to be the first of your books to be translated and published in English?

Natsuki: At the suggestion of my agent, we had *Mt. Fuji* and two other novels, *Kokubyaku no Tabiji* [*Journey in Black and White*] and *Daisan no Onna* [*The Third Woman*] translated and submitted together. It might be that they thought *Murder at Mt. Fuji* would be the best choice because Mt. Fuji is in the title.

Schreiber: One of the differences between the original Japanese novel and the English version of *Mt. Fuji* is that you have a young American woman, Jane Prescott, figure prominently in the story.

Natsuki: Yes, I wrote in that part before sending off the manuscript for translation. I thought the change would make the book a bit more appealing to foreign readers, by giving them at least one character they could relate to, so to speak.

Schreiber: You've used overseas locations for a number of your novels. Do you do much traveling?

Natsuki: I always try to go abroad once a year. I've been to the U.S. four times and Europe three, but it's mostly to get material for stories, not for vacations. A number of my books were based outside Japan. For instance, *Daisan no Onna* [*The Third Woman*] was in Paris. *Kokkyo no Onna* [*Woman at the Border*] took place in San Diego, and *Yasei Jidai* [*The Wild Era*] was mostly in Northern England. In *Roma Kyuko Satsujin Jiken* [*Murder on the Rome Express*], the entire action takes place on a train from Paris to Rome. But my next book will be set in Hokkaido [Japan's northernmost island]. □

J'Accuse!

by William L. DeAndrea

"Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean . . ."

—Raymond Chandler

"Nice talk, pal, let's see some action."

—Dominic Desio (my cousin)

The first thing on the agenda is an explanation. Last issue, in the course of praising Sue Grafton's new private eye novel, I tossed off an implied criticism of Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer, saying you sometimes got the impression he was struggling to keep his lower lip from trembling. I did that because I figured it would be a shorthand way of pointing out a trait of the hardboiled detective novel, as currently constituted, that gets on my nerves; something Grafton does less than anybody I've read.

I did *not* know, when I gently tweaked Macdonald's memory, that my little column was going to be immediately preceded by an attack of alphabetical dysentery spread out over nine and a half pages of the magazine. It was called "Ross Macdonald's Literary Offenses," and it was written by an individual named Bill Delaney.

This was undoubtedly inspired (if mean-spirited dreck can be said to be inspired) by "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," something Mark Twain wrote when he was publishing everything he thought of because he needed money. I don't know if Delaney needs money. I do know he didn't get much of it from this article.

When Mark Twain, an undisputed giant of American Literature (oops—better wait, and check that with Delaney) . . . When Mark Twain, generally conceded to be a giant of American Literature (that 's better), trashed a writer of some importance, if not of equal stature, it was, shall we say, less than becoming. Still, Mark Twain being who he was, his opinions still had some weight.

Who the hell is Bill Delaney? I mean, he may have credentials up the kazoo, possibly academic ones (we'll get to that later). *I've* never heard of him, but there are a lot of people I've never heard of.

But I don't know who Bill Delaney is. He may be a wonderful person. But this screed of his makes him out to be, like his apparent idol, Raymond Chandler, a snot.

For instance. He makes a big deal of a joke Lew Archer makes to a cab driver. Based on his knowledge of the sense of humor of every single human being who has ever driven a taxicab, he begins to heap scorn on the cabbie's response, as if the Delaney Way is the Only Way. Or rather, the Chandler way. And to depart from that is Sin.

It's unfair, and it's dumb. He takes all the examples he attacks from *The Moving Target*, the first Lew Archer novel, written before Macdonald got into the themes that obsessed him and dominated the latter half of his career, so of course we're not really looking Macdonald dead in the eye at all, are we? And it's dumb because the whole nine and a half pages could be boiled down to one sentence—*Raymond* didn't like Macdonald, and neither do *I!*

Delaney prints something Chandler wrote about *The Moving Target* (perhaps the reason that particular book was chosen?) that is wildly unfavorable. Well. If Delaney has read Frank McShane's collection of Chandler's letters, he knows already that Chandler had wildly unfavorable things to say about lots of people, even whole genres, as witness Chandler's disingenuous one-paragraph dismissal of science fiction.

If he read the letters closely, he would also have seen that Chandler was a backbiting hypocrite, trashing James M. Cain or Erle Stanley Gardner in letters about them, but fawning over them in letters written *to* them. I grant that this kind of attitude has no effect on someone's virtues as a writer, but I am here to tell you it certainly puts a dent in my respect for him as a critic.

I find it humorous, by the way, that the Chandler opinion of Macdonald contains the following sentence: "Here is a man who wants the public for the mystery in its primitive violence, and also wants it to be clear that he, individually, is a highly literate and sophisticated character."

This from the man who wept when his wife died because he had never written anything "worthy of being dedicated to her," a sentiment that provokes in me the response, "Why the hell *not*, Ray? Let's see the twist-marks on your arms where people kept you from writing all that Great Stuff." I don't know. Maybe it was the public for the mystery in its primitive violence.

Delaney scorns Macdonald's style, his decision to name his character after Sam Spade's partner, his plots (but not his Master Plot, which he doesn't discuss), his reasons for writing, and his interpretation of his own character, and ends by saying that Macdonald almost singlehandedly destroyed the hardboiled detective story.

Delaney prints one excerpt from a piece of fiction that he thoroughly approves of.

"It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, mid October, with the sun not shining and the look of hard wet rain in the clearness of the foothills. I was wearing my powder-blue suit, with dark blue shirt, tie and display handkerchief, black brogues, black wool socks with dark blue clocks on them. I was neat and clean, shaved and sober, and I didn't care who knew it. I was everything the well-dressed private detective ought to be. I was calling on four million dollars."

"This," Delaney says, "is how a private detective should behave."

Well, aside from the fact that there is damned little going on in that paragraph that could be described as *behavior*, let's have a look at it. I like "the hard wet rain in the clearness of the foothills." This is an important scientific discovery, either in meteorology (rain when it isn't even partly cloudy) or geology (glass foothills). I like the description of the wardrobe followed by the assertion that he is "everything a well dressed private detective ought to be," i.e., a cross between a pimp, a high school nerd (clocks on socks), and the Riddler from the *Batman* TV show. We can also tell from the wardrobe description that this passage was written with the assumption that it would be paid for by the word, but that the author's taste overcame his greed, since he neglected to tell us what kind of underwear the "well-dressed detective" had on. We can also deduce that the character has rotten taste in clothes, that in the circles in which he travels it is customary to be sloppy and dirty, unshaven and drunk. And it tells us that he is a snob, in the British awed-by-your-betters sense.

The quote, of course, is the opening passage of Chandler's *The Big Sleep*—the *beautiful* opening passage, as Delaney would say.

The stuff that came after was me, slicing baloney to make a point. Mockery is an *easy* game, Mr. Delaney. It is very popular with adolescents. *Anybody* can do it to *anyone*, but it doesn't prove a damn thing. You've got opinions, state opinions. Do not reveal to us your dogmas. In short, grow up.

Now *I've* got a few opinions, while we're on the topic.

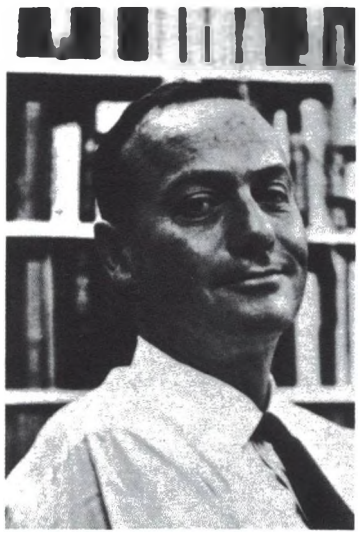
In my opinion, Ross Macdonald was a great writer, far better than Chandler, about whom, by the way, Macdonald was never anything but exceedingly generous. It is not unusual for a writer to be better than the person who inspired him. Witness Ellery Queen *vs.* S. S. Van Dyne, for instance.

Anyway, in my opinion, Ross Macdonald *had* to be a great writer to get away with some of the crap he pulled, like using the identical plot thirteen times, or having Lew Archer stumble by windows whenever people are talking about their crimes, or that silly scene in *The Chill* in which Archer wanders into a guy's house at the precise moment that he freaks out and re-enacts a portion of a decades-old crime.

None of which matters. Because Ross Macdonald delivers *real detective stories* in addition to everything else he gives. Real clues that relate to actual plots that are actually resolved.

And there is this: Macdonald *cared*. A

decent person with a full set of emotions wrote the Lew Archer books. Macdonald appeals to the reader's humanity not to the touchy-superman-masochist-snob-wiseass-prig I see in Philip Marlowe.



Now, before we close the first Delaney Invitational venom-fest, I want to play a game. I used to play it a lot as a child. It's called: Am I The Only One? Like, am I the only kid in the world who likes vanilla better than chocolate? Am I the only one who hears Frank Sinatra hitting a clinker in every single line of music? Now, I want to ask, am I the only one who holds the opinion I do of the works of Raymond Chandler, i.e., that they are totally without merit of any kind, that the plots are stupid, that the characters run from unadmirable to hateful but are always unbelievable, and that the language is the language of a robot talking through a sneer?

I *don't* want to hear from you if you love him, even from my close friends and colleagues whose work I admire immensely, even if you think you are doing pale but worshipful imitations of the man even as you exceed him by miles. I have been hearing from Chandler lovers since I learned to read. *I* want to hear from anybody who thinks the way I think, and is willing to risk scorn (similar to the scorn you face when you say you like Mickey Spillane) to admit it.

Actually, there *is* one such person, but that is not the reason I married her. I didn't find out that Orania shared my feelings about Chandler (albeit in a milder form) until after vows were exchanged. I had been afraid to bring it up.

In any case, my immensely talented and perceptive wife has a theory about why academics, at least, are mad about Chandler. Orania, who spent seven years in Academia (studying with Russell Nye, who *invented* popular culture as an academic discipline, and Larry Landrum, long a Chandler fan and high muckety-muck in the PCA) before running screaming back to the real world (publishing is the real world?), anyway, running screaming *away* from the English Department, says that the reason Chandler goes over so big with a lot of these people (though not Nye or Landrum, whom she reveres) is that he's *safe* for them.

Given academic definitions, of "serious literature," there is no way that what Raymond Chandler wrote can be confused with "real novels." (P. D. James, on the other hand, makes these people *really nervous*.) Furthermore, since no one in Chandler's books could be mistaken for a human, they are free to like these Mere Mysteries without having to admit that a genre novel could offer insights into the human condition as well as, or even better than, a novel of Alienation in Suburbia.

Could be. I was fortunate enough to get out of college before exposure to Graduate English Departments.

By the way, I think Hammett is terrific. Someday, when I have more energy, I will treat you to my Theory of Left-Wing Politics in the Mystery Story. Bet you can't wait.

"Well, it's been building up inside of me for, oh, I don't know how long..."

—The Beach Boys

As long as the cork is out of the bottle, I might as well air the rest of my gripes about a lot of current hardboiled detective stories. For one thing, originality has never been a highly prized commodity in this community. One seemingly trivial example of this which speaks volumes is character names. It started with Hammett, as so much did. He wrote (in his worst book) about a guy named Beaumont. Fine. They have to be named something. (A digression—now, they *really* do, because naming them nothing has already been done twice, by Hammett and by Bill Pronzini.) After Beaumont, Chandler came along and toyed with Mallory for a while before settling on Marlowe. Do you detect a trend here, folks? Then a former academic gave us Spenser. With an *S*. No first name. Probably didn't want to have a weightlifter named "Edmund," and didn't want to confuse us otherwise. Now, in addition to these, we've got a couple of Fletchers and a Thomas Kyd. Max Collins, one of my favorite contemporary writers, succumbed to herd instinct long enough to resurrect Mallory. With no first name, though I can't see what's wrong with "Thomas."

Okay, you budding private eye writers, brush up on your Elizabethan literature, and create the Next Big Detective. Call him "Jonson" (no *h*, no first name), or, if you've really got hair, go the whole nine yards and title your first book *Shakespeare on the Case*. I mean, if you're going to (a) copy and (b) invite comparisons, you might as well go all the way to the top.

Or you can pick up the abortive name chain that again started with Hammett—Sam Spade to Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer. The possibilities are endless. Ralph Wrench. Steve Stapler. Vic Vise. Harry Hoe. If you don't use a tool, once the Elizabethans (and pre-Elizabethans) are used up, you're going to be stuck with private eyes named Thackeray, or Wordsworth, or (God forbid) Suckling. Or (God *forbid*) think of something new.

My other peeve with a lot of private eye writers is that they are living in a world that hasn't changed since the 1930s. How many of them show you a hero who fails at something else, goes totally broke, and, in an attempt to scramble up some money, opens an office, takes an ad in the Yellow Pages, goes down to City Hall, gets a license, and bingo, he's a private eye?

First off, private investigators (at least in New York and California, where a lot of the offending material is set) are licensed by the *state,* and it takes months. For another thing, you just can't *get* a license to be a P.I. any more than you can just *get* one to be a surgeon. In New York, you need *three year's* experience as a police or other government detective, or three years as a police officer at the rank of sergeant or above, or three years of employment as an operative for an already-licensed detective. Also, there is a little matter of posting a bond of *twenty thousand dollars.* So please. No more having a guy rooting in garbage cans, thinking he'd like to be a P.I., and hanging a shingle before the sun goes down. Thank you.

Whew. This controversy stuff is exhausting. Tomorrow, I'm going to go and have the vents in my spleen sewn back up.

Back in TAD 19:2, I criticized an article by Herbert Resnicow that had appeared in TAD 18:4 (watch for my new show—*Bill DeAndrea, Cannibal Critic*). He had written a list of forty rules to write good mysteries; I said, among other things, that God had only ten rules that would get you into Heaven. Herb has responded, and you can read his letter in the letters section, and we understand each other much better now, and I love happy endings.

The only thing I want to respond to in his letter is his statement that breaking *ten* of the forty rules he lists would probably result in a bad mystery. With that, I agree. I also say it's probably okay to be four times stricter than God if you're going to be ten times more lenient when the time comes.

If you get cable TV where you live, and your local cable company carries the Arts & Entertainment Network, you might want to check it out. It has come to be the outlet in this country for BBC crime shows which Mobil doesn't buy to put on *Mystery!* on PBS. They're not *all* gems, but a lot of them are okay. And, since the British do a lot of three- and four-episode stories, the turnover is pretty rapid. If you don't like what they've got now, wait a couple of weeks. Offerings have ranged from *Maelstrom,* a Gothic set in Norway, which was predictable but educational, to a snappy five-part adaptation of Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White,* with Jenny Seagrove (who played *Diana* on the serial seen on *Masterpiece Theatre*) as Laura and a wonderful actress named Diana Quick as Marian. My favorite was a low-key series called *Shoestring,* about a private eye named Eddie Shoestring (look, it's *way* better than Swinburne, or Lovelace), who works part-time for a regional radio station which pays him to investigate cases people phone in on the air and then come back later and report results. Trevor Eve stars. You may remember him from the short-lived American series *Shadow Chasers,* but I doubt it, since you were probably watching *Cosby* the way I and everybody else was.

Eddie gets cases like those of real-life P.I.s—missing children, swindles, like that, but it's amazing how nasty crime short of murder can be. He is the worst fighter on television since probably Katherine Murray, and it's fun to see how he's going to avoid a fat lip this week. A&E shows everything four times in twenty-four hours while they're running them, and everything eventually comes back, so you may have a shot at *Shoestring.* In the meantime, there's bound to be something else.

It's July when I write this, with six months of Edgar eligibles to come, but, in the Fact Crime category, it's going to take one hell of a book to beat *The Underground Empire* by James Mills (Doubleday, $22.95). Mills is a reporter and novelist (*Report to the Commissioner*) who spent five years following the activities of Centac, an autonomous unit within the Drug Enforcement Agency that had unprecedented success against the big boys of international drug trafficking. Mills shows how governement corruption in dope growing countries is, to say the least, rife, and how the U.S. knowingly allows the business to go on in exchange for other considerations.

Needless to say, the bureaucratic instinct for mediocrity prevailed, and Centac no longer exists.

The book is amazing, filled with characters and incidents which writers wish they could invent. But the key message is, there is a way to stop this garbage, so why aren't we doing it? There was a Rex Stout book in which Nero Wolfe's client bought ten thousand copies of a book she felt important and sent them to legislators and influential people all around the country. If I had the money, and I thought politicians could read, this book would be a definite temptation to do the same thing.

STANLEY ELLIN

I was a guest lecturer at a college on Long Island a few years ago. After I spoke, the English Department invited me in for tea. One of the faculty (I never got his name) came over to me and in the course of the conversation said, "I know a guy from the meeting house in Brooklyn—Stan Ellin. I understand he's a mystery writer of some sort."

When I finished gagging, I said, "Of *some sort?* He's one of the two or three best alive!"

The faculty member gave a shrug and an "Is that so?" as if I were just being nice about his acquaintance and had overdone it some. He moved on, leaving me with a lowered opinion of English education, at least at that college. Later, though, I realized the teacher wasn't entirely to blame. Stan Ellin wouldn't brag to someone he met at the meeting house. I doubt if Stan would brag to anyone at all. I didn't know him well—I saw him and Jean only at mystery functions—but I owed him, professionally and personally.

Professionally, Stanley Ellin's work showed me—showed all of us—the potential depth and breadth of our genre. He once told me he agonized over every word, but the agony never made it to the printed page. Stan's prose was smooth and beautiful, like a first-class railway carriage that carried us through unexplored reaches of the human mind. He could make us laugh, shudder, and do both at the same time. From secret sexual obsessions, to plots to overthrow countries, to murderous racists, Stan never blinked. And he never forgot (or let us forget) the *humanity* of his heroes, or of the worst of his villains. He even explored his own beliefs in a novel called *Stronghold,* the story of a prosperous and devout Quaker who finds himself and his family in a nightmare situation that it seems only violence can help.

When and if Literature is freed from its current captivity, and is recognized by the universities and the journals for what it is—stories about people that illuminate the human condition—Stanley Ellin will get the recognition he deserves. Not, as I understated at the faculty tea party, as one of the two or three best mystery writers alive, but as one of the finest American writers of the century.

Personally, it is much simpler. Stan Ellin was the one who took me in.

I met Stan at a Bouchercon at the Waldorf in New York in October of 1978. It had been five months since I'd sold my first book, and it would be five months more until it would be published. I was meeting mystery professionals, many of them my idols, for the first time, and I didn't know what to say to them. I didn't feel like a fan, but I knew I wasn't a peer. But Stan Ellin *treated* me like a peer. He wasn't gladhanding; he meant it. He acted as if my making a career in this crazy business were a foregone conclusion, and that went a long way toward making *me* believe it. About a year and a half later, that book won an Edgar, and it was even more precious because Stan Ellin was the one who handed it to me.

Stan died the week I write this at the age of 69. He was as fine a man as he was a writer, and that's saying something. He was the kind of man whose death could make a person like me, who had probably spent a grand total of three and a half hours over the course of seven years in the man's company, feel as bereft as would the death of a favorite uncle.

Stan is survived by a wonderful family, and by his work. He will be missed. □

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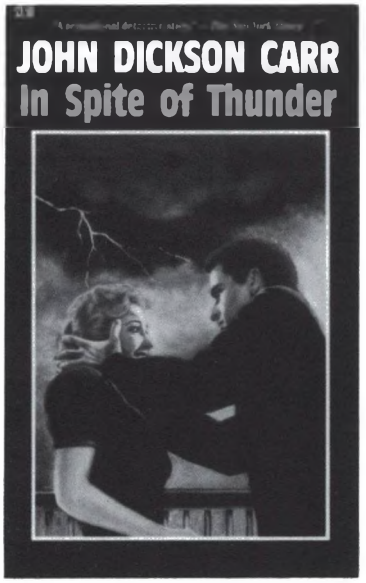

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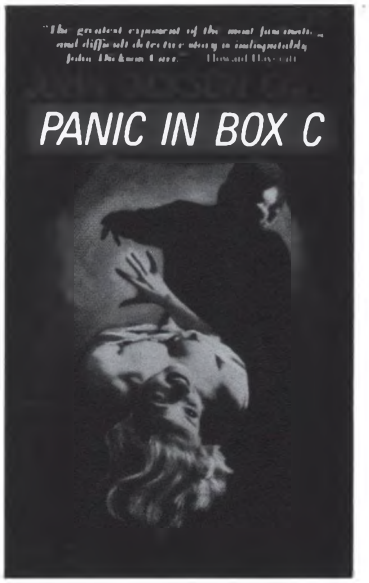

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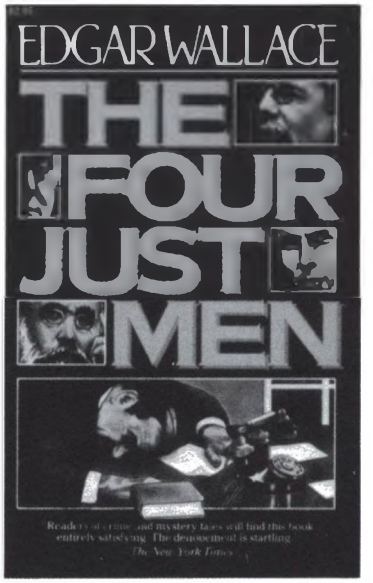

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TAD at the Movies

by Thomas Godfrey

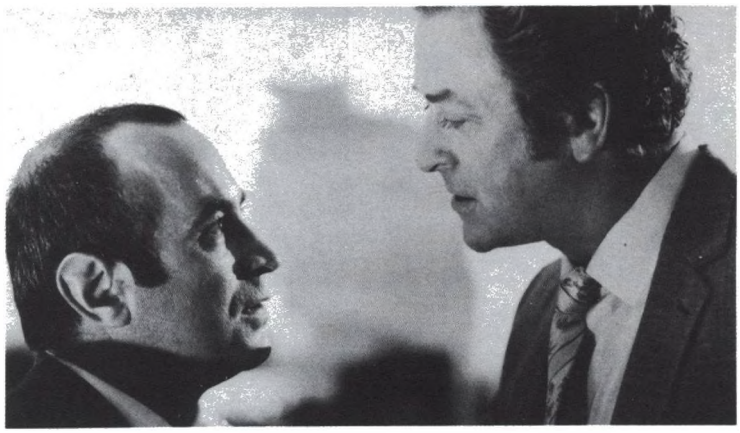
Mona Lisa is a stylized tale of sexual obsession. Unlike its predecessors *Laura, Portrait of Jennie,* and *Last Tango in Paris,* it is primarily a tale of self-obsession, of people caught up by their sexual drives, conscious of the implications, yet fixated by their desire.

In the '40s, sexually obsessed characters usually became lost in their fixation on other objects. They lost their judgment, behaved irrationally, and had a brush with death that was sometimes fatal, sometimes only sobering. Since *Tango* (1972) and *Diva* (1980), the obsessed lover no longer gets so lost that he loses sight of his own needs. The object of his affection may excite him to frenzy, but his own wants are never displaced from mind.

Villains (like Laird Cregar in a number of '40s melodramas of obsession such as *I Wake Up Screaming, The Lodger, Hangover Square*) always behaved in this fashion. They became fixated but never to the point at which they forgot their own instinct for self-preservation. The obsessed hero was not so far-sighted. In *Laura,* Dana Andrews was, like Cregar in *Screaming,* a cop captivated by a woman and driven to doing irrational things. Unlike Cregar, he has only her interests, or the interests of her memory, at heart. He was an altruistic figure, to be contrasted with the sycophantic, but equally obsessed, Clifton Webb and the parasitic, supercilious Vincent Price.

In the British-made *Mona Lisa,* there are no altruistic figures. The only possible exception is the main character's best friend, who runs an auto business and fantasizes of mystery plots filled with opera stars pursued by homicidal dwarves. But for all the eccentricity, this friend is thinly sketched out, a character without his own drives, someone for the main character to express his thoughts to, someone who gets him from one spot to another when the plot dictates it, a plot device, not a person.

The central figure, played by Bob Hoskins (*The Long Good Friday, Cotton Club*), is a Cockney hood, just out of jail for driving a getaway car. He is hired by a stylish black callgirl (Cathy Tyson) to drive her from job to job, baronial mansion to posh hotel, as it turns out. At first, he does not take to the idea, nor to her. And she, in turn, is critical of him. When she gives him money to tone up his wardrobe, he appears in a Hawaiian outfit that looks right off the rack at a rummage sale.



Porno king Caine gives hireling Hoskins a "motivational peptalk" in *Mona Lisa.*

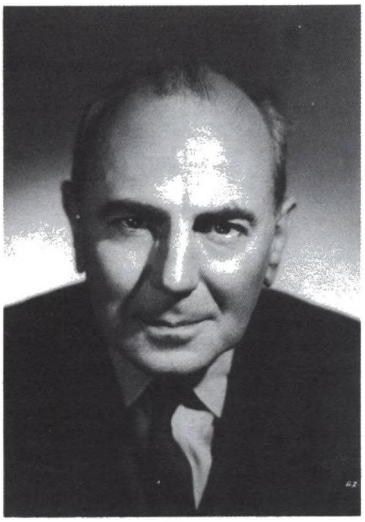
Director Neil Jordan on the set of *Mona Lisa*

Later, as the relationship is cemented, he begins to take to her, and she trusts him enough to ask him to help her find another prostitute, whom she knew in her days of street-walking, who has disappeared and may have fallen victim to the sadistic pimp they once shared.

Hoskins is an engaging actor, a British Edward Asner with the animation of Edward G. Robinson in his victimization roles (*Scarlet Street, Woman in the Window*). He is not showy and ripely theatrical like the British character actors of the past such as Robert Morley and Cedric Hardwicke, yet he holds your attention just as fast, being ordinary and common without becoming boring or sentimentalized.

His scenes with Michael Caine, playing his former and current boss, the local porno and pandering king, are almost joyous. When they run into each other in a swanky London gambling club, they go at it with such spontaneity and ease that you forget they're still acting.

It's good to see Caine in some decent films, *Hannah and Her Sisters* having been released just prior to this. He has spent the past few years in some dreadful stinkers such as *Blame It on Rio, The Island,* and *Dressed To Kill.* Though he has just a few scenes, as one of the most dissipated, degenerate characters of h



Nasty but urbane George Zucco at the time of *The Black Raven*

career, his performance is so strong that yo feel his presence even when he is not around.

Tyson has the right look as the self-possessed hooker, though her acting is a little too lifeless in a modelish sort of way. There is no vulnerability in her interpretation, not enough emotion behind the look. It's not clear why Hoskins is so attached to her, and why she risks everything to fulfill one reckless obsession in the end.

Irish novelist Neil Jordan does a terrific job in his first directing assignment, though he over-values some of the story elements and throws the movie off by the end. He works too hard and too long trying to evoke a visceral response from the audience to the deepening depravity. The audience gets the idea right away, even if censorship inhibits graphic depiction, and things start to drag, finally seeming too long and unpleasant by the time the bloodbath-catharsis brings the obsessions-on-a-collision-course-plot to an end.

The film makes another mistake by wallowing too long in the more sulfurous aspects of Hoskins's search. The prostitute's "secret" has been apparent to the audience long before it occurs to Hoskins. The revelation arrives so late that it makes him seem unbelievably naive for a man who survives in this milieu. There is also a contrasting sub-plot involving Hoskins's estranged daughter that fails dramatically.

Still, for all its length, this is a stylish, exciting thriller. Whether its miscalculations will make it ultimately unrewarding will be a matter of debate among its viewers.

On video cassette:

★ ★ **The Black Raven** (1943) George Zucco, Noel Madison, Byron Foulger (D: Sam Newfield)

Cut-rate cassettes in a rack between the Bromo Seltzer and the Ex-Lax at the local drugstore provided the opportunity to see this wartime poverty-row thriller. The only "name" in the cast is one-time screen Moriarty Zucco as the shady owner of an inn near the Canadian border where a variety of "types" take refuge in a storm.

Not surprisingly, there is a murder (someone everyone would like to kill) and a phantom. This sort of plot was common in the era.

It probably cost less to film *The Black Raven* than it would to remodel your kitchen next week, but, for all the cheapness, it's not so bad. The plotting and dialogue are formula-basic, the situations ultra-familiar, but it entertains without appalling in its simpleminded fashion.

Zucco is typically nasty and creepy in his usual urbane manner, though (surprise!) he's not the villain but the amateur detective who solves the crime. Even with its cardboard sets, murky lighting, traffic-cop direction, and radio-chiller score (which sounds as if it were recorded in a phone booth), *The Black Raven* is considerably above PRC's usual bottom-of-the-barrel standard. (Or is it just that I started out expecting so little that mediocrity seemed like genuine achievement?)

★ ★ ½ *The Seventh Victim* (1943) Kim Hunter, Tom Conway, Hugh Beaumont (D: Mark Robson)

A weird mystery from the man who gave us *Cat People, I Walked with a Zombie,* and *Bedlam* – producer Val Lewton. As usual, he's dealing in shudders, atmosphere, and a hint of the supernatural.

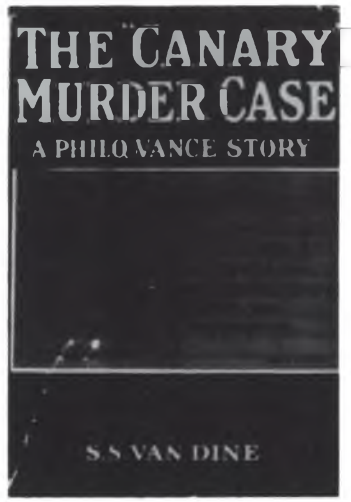
In her screen debut, Kim Hunter, best remembered for her stage and screen performances as Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire,* plays a girl dismissed from a school for orphans after her sister (and guardian) disappears. Without money to pay her tuition, she returns to wartime Greenwich Village to find what happened to her. The search leads her to an unexpected husband, a failed poet, a sinister psychiatrist-author, devil-worship, and finally murder.

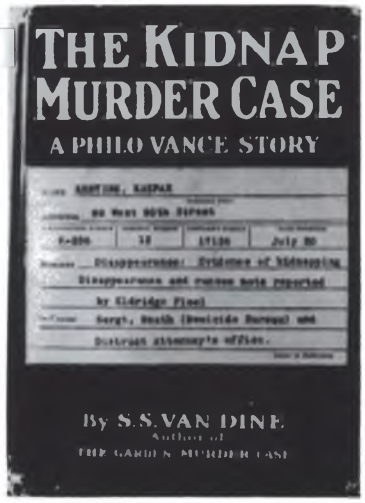
Though the ending satisfies more artistically than logically, this eerie film should be seen for its many superb moments – a suspenseful sequence in the night-time subway, a thrilling pursuit down some dark alleys, a terrifying shower sequence that anticipates what Hitchcock would do later in *Psycho,* and a very affecting scene between Hunter and Isabel Jewell, playing the sister's friend and co-worker, that manages to be both portentous and poignant at the same moment.

Not all of it is working at this high level. The devil cult looks about as threatening as a library discussion group (perhaps this was Lewton's intention), and there is a kindly old Italian couple who run a restaurant that are so stereotyped I expected them to break into the famous "spicy meatball" commercial. And there's that abrupt, puzzling ending.

Yet, for anyone interested in learning about the forgotten art of creating mystery and suspense on the screen without relying on gore and violence, *The Seventh Victim* is a rewarding experience. □

Time and Hollywood eroded the essence of this erudite sleuth





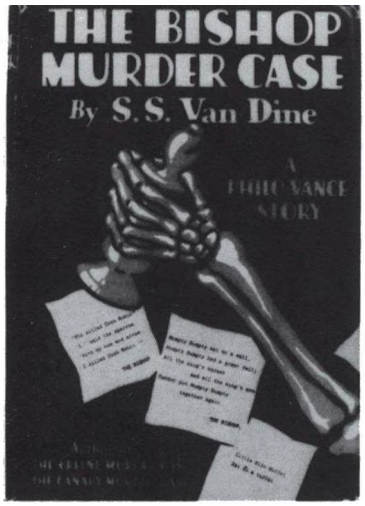
By John Loughery

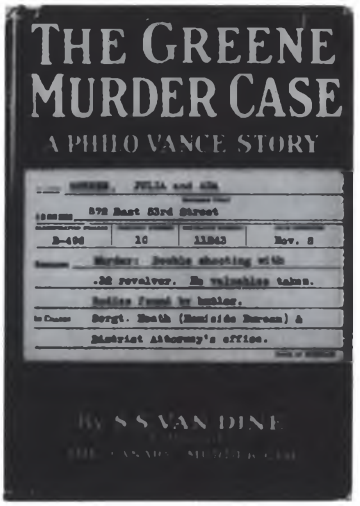
The Rise and Fall of Philo Vance

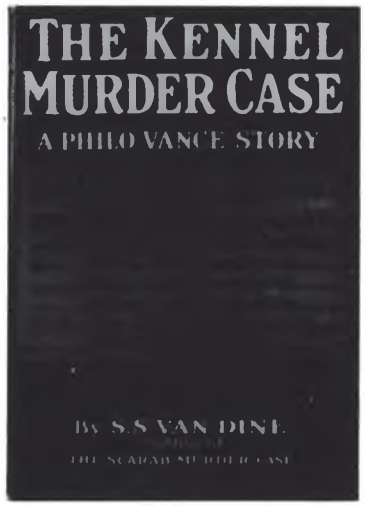
In the late 1920s, the most famous and highest-paid detective writer in America was Willard Huntington Wright—otherwise known as S. S. Van Dine, the creator of Philo Vance. Before 1926, the year of *The Benson Murder Case*, the impoverished Wright had been living on the fringe of the literary world. When success finally came, it was almost unprecedented: five bestselling books and a prosperous stint in Hollywood, followed by seven more detective novels. Yet, at the time of his death in 1939, Wright's once-devoted audience had dwindled considerably, and twenty years later he was again a forgotten man, a literary fossil. Some ardent fans can still be found, but a great revival of his books is—as Vance would say—"deuced unlikely."

What accounts for this sharp decline? True, most of the Van Dine novels are of uneven quality, and the last three are particularly weak. The "test of time" was not on their side to begin with. Then, too, the fascination with pampered, affluent sleuths was bound to fade with the '20s.[1] The resulting rise of the hardboiled detective story in the darker days of the '30s (giving murder "back to the people who are really good at it," in Raymond Chandler's words) made the Van Dine mode seem quaint and precious. And of course a stronger writer followed Wright within a few years, co-opting his territory: the languid, intellectual Vance and his narrator-friend run a poor second to Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin.

Yet there are other reasons to account for Wright's failure beyond shifting fashions, social change, and stiff competition. (After all, many writers continue to create valuable work long after their "moment" has passed and greater figures have appeared on the







scene.) Some of the other reasons for Wright's faltering talent and eventual obscurity can be located in the period long before his transformation into Van Dine—in the youthful attitudes of Willard Huntington Wright, critic and editor.

At twenty, with a few connections but no college diploma, Wright had in 1908 landed himself a job on the *Los Angeles Times.* He quickly became the paper's literary editor. In his four years of writing for and editing the book section of the *Times,* Wright established an enviable reputation. His standards were high, his energy was enormous, and his audience was primed for a sarcastic tone in the spirit of H. L. Mencken. The young man whose literary gods were Conrad, Nietzsche, and Dreiser exhibited nothing but scorn for those artists willing to "sell out" and "go commercial." And, though he had read Poe, Conan Doyle, and G. K. Chesterton with some admiration, Wright looked upon mystery and detective fiction as beneath contempt.

"Mystery yarns are at best sad affairs," the California critic wrote in 1910. "They make their strongest appeal to children, divinity students, savages, stenographers, and other people of inferior intelligence and faulty education."[2] Always careful to make the appropriate distinction between mystery and detective writing, Wright was nonetheless equally uncharitable toward the latter. "The woods are full of detective stories—most of them bad. In fact, any serious detective story is of necessity bad," he announced in 1912. "[Detective fiction] appeals to the most primitive cravings within us."[3] That remained, for the next ten years, the attitude of the man who would later be credited with revitalizing detective fiction in America.

From the *Times,* Wright moved on to a position of greater prominence—which for him meant moving east, to New York. As editor of *The Smart Set,* a job attained through the auspices of his friend Mencken, Wright became one of the most talked-about literary personalities in New York. Soliciting work from Ezra Pound, D. H. Lawrence, and Frank Wedekind, he basked in his role as champion of the avant garde. So provocative were Wright's selections for the magazine, and so cavalier was he with the publisher's funds, that he lost the job after a year and was then forced to try his luck as a freelance writer.

A productive period followed. With the help of his brother Stanton, a brilliant painter, Wright wrote *Modern Painting* (1915), one of the earliest and most erudite defenses of abstract art, and *The Creative Will* (1916), a treatise on aesthetics. He also published a Dreiser-style novel, a study of the German philosopher Nietzsche, short stories, and essays on art, literature, travel, and education. There was only one serious problem with this heady success, arrived at before the age of thirty: Wright was making no money. Constantly in debt, he could barely support himself on the advances and royalties his books provided— much less support the wife and child he had left behind in California. (Wright continued all his life to send money west to them.) His situation soon became desperate.

Other difficulties—a complete lack of tact and a drug problem, among them—contributed to Wright's professional and physical collapse in 1918. The decade that had started so promisingly ended with Wright broken and rejected, taking whatever work he could get. Throughout the early 1920s, he traveled back and forth between New York and California,

reviewing for the movie magazines, lecturing, frequently breaking down again, and borrowing from anyone in sight. Friends who visited Wright in his New York hotel saw a frazzled man obsessed with making a comeback, full of unrealized potential and impossible projects.

All of this changed with a luncheon meeting at the Century Club in Manhattan early in 1926 between Wright and Max Perkins, the famous Scribner's editor of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Ring Lardner, and other greats. Wright had pulled himself together to prepare three 10,000-word summaries for detective novels he wished Perkins to consider. He had little hope that *The Benson Murder Case,* the first of the three, would on its own make him any money. (Wright was completely mistaken on that count.) A trio of similar stories, released over a two- or three-year period, was more likely to find its audience, he reasoned. He had already tried one publisher who dismissed the whole idea.

Perkins was not long in making up his mind. Detective fiction may have been an uncertain investment in the '20s, but Scribner's was willing to gamble on such original material. An advance of $3,000 and a contract for all three novels were ready within a few weeks. This suited Wright perfectly, and the long, profitable career of Philo Vance was launched. It marks an important moment in the history of detective fiction in America.

In an essay published two years after his success, entitled "I Used To Be a Highbrow, But Look At Me Now," Wright discussed—with typical exaggeration—the circumstances leading to his transformation from cultural critic to crime novelist. He wrote about awakening one day in 1923 and finding himself unable to move. His pace of work had finally overpowered him, and under doctor's orders he was not to move or attempt any writing or serious reading. He then chanced upon detective stories, as a harmless diversion, and read nearly every one in print. The doctor thought he was resting, but in fact Wright was figuring out his own plot lines. He finally obtained permission to resume writing—but not before January 1, 1926.

It was an elaborate, romantic mythology Wright was constructing for himself in this famous essay: confinement in bed for two years, the voracious reading of 2,000 detective novels [which would have meant almost two a day for three years!], the whimsical decision to try his hand at detective fiction, the doctor's order to refrain from writing until the stroke of New Year's Day. The truth was a little more mundane.

Wright had been contemplating the idea of an admittedly popular, money-making novel for three or four years. He began reading E. Phillips Oppenheim back in 1922, moving on to Melville Davisson Post, R. Austin Freeman, Leroux, Phillpotts, Christie, Bentley, H. C. Bailey, and all the other masters. The first draft of a detective story was underway by 1924—a fact which Wright warned his wife and daughter to tell no one of, especially brother Stanton. (The indomitable Stanton resisted commercial temptations all his life, and the brothers were estranged in Wright's last years.) For Willard Wright, a decision to move into the realm of "popular writing" could not be simply announced; it required a glamorous, fateful story. It also called for a pseudonym to hide behind—S. S. Van Dine.[4]

Despite Wright's embarrassment about this new undertaking, it should not be assumed that he held detective fiction in quite the same low regard that he had in his younger, brasher days. The energy and fastidiousness with which he threw himself into the labor of writing the first books suggests otherwise. In fact, at 38 years of age in 1926, Wright was determined to make a good job of it, largely because he saw detective fiction as a momentary detour in his career. The intricacy of the plots, the passages of genuine suspense, and the careful pacing found in the *Benson, "Canary", Greene,* and *Bishop Murder Case*[s] were achieved by someone fully absorbed in his work and excited by the creative challenge. And, most importantly for him, Wright had brought to life an unusual sleuth who was obviously dear to his heart.

Embodying so many of his creator's interests,

Warren Williams starred as Philo in *The Dragon Murder Case.*

quirks, and frustrations, Philo Vance could only have been a character of Willard Huntington Wright's design. The years of struggle and disgrace had not given rise to a benevolent sleuth on the order of Father Brown or Lord Peter Wimsey, but to a strange cynical aesthete. An art student and connoisseur, Vance is a man with the intellectual skill to solve elaborate crimes and serve the law better than the police, but who does so only on his own terms. His "terms" involve firm control of the interrogations, emotional detachment from the plight of the victims, more-than-occasional bending of the letter of the law, and a healthy skepticism for circumstantial evidence and mere "facts."

Philo Vance leads the intellectual's ultimate fantasy life. A bachelor, he lives in quiet luxury, impresses everyone with his formidable vocabulary, and occupies himself with whatever scholarly pursuits interest him at the moment. Yet the world-at-large needs him. The men of practical affairs come knocking at his door. The expert help he offers the police with their toughest cases is given largely for the satisfaction of his own curiosity, for the joy of wrestling with a complicated challenge, or as a favor to his friend, the district attorney John F. X. Markham.

So divorced is Vance from the ordinary motives of detectives and police officers that, when the criminal is particularly clever, Vance is apt to unmask him with reluctance, regretfully ending a well-suited match. His respect is often for his adversary; only grudgingly does he admit the necessity of serving something as abstract and unpleasant as "the good of society." Vance is perfectly capable of solving a crime as he would a puzzle—and the letting the guilty one go free, assuming that no further murders will result. The secondary characters, Markham and Sergeant Heath, are there to see that this does not happen. As famous in his day as Sherlock Holmes or Hercule Poirot, Philo Vance was an original—a perfect fantasy-revenge on the practical world that had no

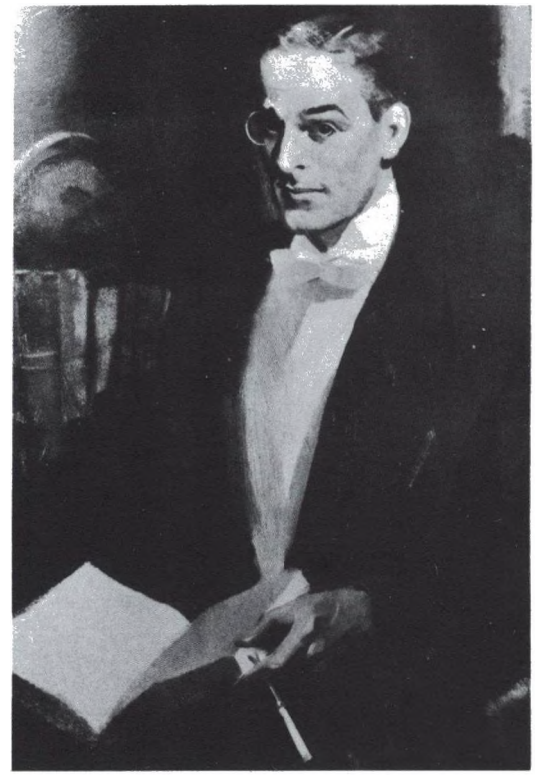
use for Willard Huntington Wright.

The Depression, Hollywood, and a beautiful new wife all played their part in prolonging the life of Philo Vance and his ghostly narrator.[8] Wright had lost money in the stock market crash, only to discover how much more was to be made by selling movie rights and working on screenplays. Celebrity treatment in Hollywood was an unexpected luxury to the man who had been an embittered writer for *Photoplay* magazine and a menial copy-editor in 1921 and 1922. Furthermore, Wright's divorce and immediate remarriage made the thought of forsaking the good life none too appealing. He had another person to care for, and he was enjoying the kind of glamorous Manhattan existence he had envisioned for himself twenty years earlier. It was just that the terms of success were very different now.

The first signs of Wright's weariness with his task are evident in *The Scarab Murder Case* (1930). After *The Bishop Murder Case,* a story of demoniacal crimes, cleverly devised clues, and odd, stylized characters, Wright had moved on to different, less exciting territory. His fictional world became narrower and paler. Cashing in on the Egyptian craze of the late 1920s, *The Scarab Murder Case* has an intriguing setting (a private Egyptological museum on Gramercy Park) but contains some of Wright's thinnest, least memorable characterizations. The crime is solved in 48 hours with few detours, a pattern followed in all the other Van Dine books—almost as if the murder were an abstract problem to be dispensed with as quickly as the detective, or the author, can do so.

It is likely that Wright was aware of the rut into which he was falling. He put aside his next novel for over two years and turned to screenplay work for Warner Bros. This flagrant prostitution of his talent brought in a small fortune but further exhausted him. It was not until early 1933 that Wright returned to the novel he had long since promised to Scribners. *The Kennel Murder Case* was published with the familiar announcement that this book was positively his last before returning to literature and criticism. Far from being his last, this sixth Van Dine novel was followed by another that same year. Overloaded with minor characters, *The Dragon Murder Case* reaches desperately for eerie effects but has the distinction of being the least credible of all the Van Dine books.

Among the many differences between the novels Wright wrote before 1933 and those written after that date, two stand out. Most important are the changes in Philo Vance himself. Vance's debonair qualities gradually became more forced, and the showy erudition tapered off and was eventually dropped in *The Kidnap Murder Case.* Some annoyed readers might have seen this as a blessing [how those footnotes irritated reviewers!], but, without the affectations and the learned disquisitions, Wright did not have much left on which to build a personality or a style for his character. As a result, the most colorful detective of his time became, in the stories of the mid-1930s, bland, tired, and more than a little boring.



Various people at Scribners who read the first drafts suggested that Wright tone down Vance's alienating smugness and many eccentricities. Perkins passed these suggestions on to Wright. The author's brief reply could stand as a comment on his own life. There was no need for Vance to be likable, Wright explained. Did that really matter? It was enough that he should be memorable.[5] Clearly, Wright knew what he was talking about: *The "Canary" Murder Case* (1927), the second in the series, broke all publishing records for detective fiction. *The Greene Murder Case* (1928) and *The Bishop Murder Case* (1929) which followed were also well received, and, by mid-1928, Paramount Studios had decided that here was a writer worth looking into.[6] Wright had "made it."

Between 1927 and 1930, Wright became known as something of an expert in the then under-studied field of detective fiction. The introduction he composed to his 1927 anthology, *The World's Great Detective Stories,* was a lengthy survey which approached its topic with the same thoroughness and perception that the writer had previously applied to modern art. His "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories" was widely quoted, and he wrote many prefaces for other

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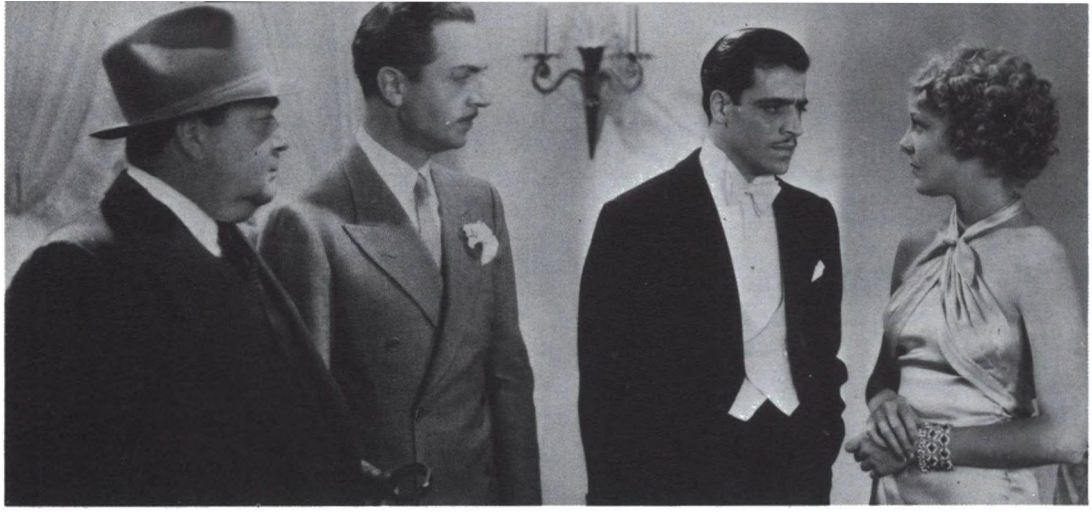


William Powell starred as Philo in *The Kennel Murder Case.*

authors' books. In all his public statements of this period, Wright called for a serious reconsideration of the merits of detective fiction and the need for craftsmanship in the writing of such books. Yet there is another side to this image. In his letters to his mother, wife, and daughter in California, Wright referred to the anthology and the prefaces as hack work soon to be dispensed with.

For his phenomenal success was agreeable to Wright only so long as the public was aware of his "real" abilities. Accordingly, not long after his pseudonym had been unmasked and his real name was known, Wright began announcing the imminent end of Van Dine and Philo Vance. He told reporters on numerous occasions that he would soon be going back to serious novel-writing, music criticism, and linguistic research. But, with each announcement, the trap of fame and wealth which would make such an end unlikely—and ultimately impossible—became more apparent. In an interview in the Los Angeles *Herald* in October 1928 (headed "Creator to 'Kill Off' Sleuth"), Wright faced the issue directly, though he avoided the obvious conclusions.

> And what is a man to do? Here I am offered $50,000 for something I haven't even thought about—caught, like a squirrel on a treadmill, with all this money coming in.[7]

Yet he would, he insisted, be able to overcome the lure of affluence and easy success.

Another difficulty has to do with method. The approach Vance originally applied to crime detection was unique in its day. The cases were cracked not so much by the accumulation and analysis of facts leading to an abstract deduction as by a "psychological" process. Philo Vance would minutely study the circumstances surrounding the murder—the work of art under aesthetic examination—and compile a theoretical picture of the individual likely to have committed an act of violence in that particular manner. It was the psychological fingerprint of which Vance, the student of temperament, went in search. The suspects were then matched against the revealing details of the murder, so to speak, in contrast to the usual method of dryly weighing the factors of motive, opportunity, and physical evidence. The psychological-profile concept gave way later to more mundane clue-hunting, chance mistakes on the part of the criminal, and tedious bluffs and chases. Wright could not sustain the technique outlined by Vance in *The Benson Murder Case* (chapter VIII).

By the time of *The Casino Murder Case* (1934), it was obvious that Wright had begun to construct his stories with the movies foremost in his mind. A breaking and entry by Vance and Van Dine, a climax in a darkened gambling den with a gun pointed at Markham, Vance actually fired upon, and a last-minute rescue—these are all ingredients that would never have appeared in the earlier books. (Even worse is a scene in *The Kidnap Murder Case* in which Vance and Van Dine hide high in a tree in Central Park to await a ransom pick-up. Nero Wolfe leaving his brownstone would be a less unsettling prospect! It is not surprising that *The Kidnap Murder Case* was the only completed novel of the twelve not made into a film.)

All of Wright's attempts to adapt Vance to the new spirit of gangster movies and hardboiled detectives were doomed to failure, but he tried hard nonetheless. *The Garden Murder Case* (1935), with its background of horse-racing and bookies, even comes close to violating one of the author's own "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories": Vance, for the first time, shows interest—tepid, but sincere—in a member of the opposite sex. (Rule Three was clear-cut: "There must be no love interest in the [detective] story.") Gymnastic stunts such as a simulated fall from an apartment balcony (*The Garden Murder Case*) and gun-packing bravado and shoot-outs (*The Kidnap Murder Case*) did nothing to recapture the audience which was slowly deserting Wright. Interested in holding on to his penthouse as long as possible, he came to the conclusion that all future

books would have to be linked to pre-arranged film deals.

An association with Hollywood is the only explanation for *The Gracie Allen Murder Case* (1938) and *The Winter Murder Case* (1939), Wright's last two novels, which together form one of the most dismal conclusions to any career in American letters. At the suggestion of a Paramount executive who decided that the popular, zany Gracie Allen would make a suitable comic sidekick for Philo Vance, Wright prepared a novella which was used to devise a screenplay for the film, released in 1939, starring Gracie Allen and Warren William. The story, later expanded into novel length by Wright, is more like a bad pastiche of earlier Van Dine than a serious tale of suspense. (In the movie, Gracie refers to the detective as "Fido" Vance.) Wright's willingness to subject his character—in effect, his own carefully constructed persona—to parody brings us back to the earlier values of the *Times* critic who disdained creative men who lost sight of their original dreams. In 1938, Wright was in poor health, unhappy with himself, and unhappy with the kind of work to which he had devoted himself.

On April 11, 1939, Wright died of coronary thrombosis in his Central Park West apartment. On his desk at the time of his death was the second draft (Wright customarily wrote three) of a novel, *The Winter Murder Case*. This brief work, only half the length of his usual completed third draft, was published by Scribner's that fall. It is difficult to judge a story lacking in the descriptions and transitions that would have been added later, but it is safe to say that *The Winter Murder Case* would have contributed nothing surprising to the Van Dine body of work. Written as a vehicle, which never materialized, for the Norwegian ice-skating star Sonja Henie, Wright's twelfth novel is the only one set outside of New York City and presents a gray-haired Philo Vance, who seems strangely inconsequential when wrenched from his usual habitat. It is appropriate that Wright should have selected a line from Wordsworth for the story's epigraph: "Stern Winter loves a dirge-like sound." Wright was aware that the end was coming.

While Willard Huntington Wright deserves credit for creating a vast, enthusiastic market for detective fiction in America, paving the way for the likes of Hammett, Stout, and Chandler, and for breaking the British domination that seemed insuperable in 1925, there is no cause to deny his failure in his own time and in ours. Only a great detective writer has more than a few books of quality in him, and it is probably true that, when any writer works solely for the money, he will eventually lose his spark. But Wright's problem was also, certainly, a failure to respect the form of literature to which he had turned. This ambivalence was a cloud that hung over his writing. As a young man, Wright liked to boast that he could tackle anything he set his mind to. In the end, that easy confidence was a poor substitute for a legitimate belief in detective fiction.

Notes

General note: Biographical information about Wright is taken from the Willard Huntington Wright Scrapbooks and the Scribner Archive at Princeton University and the Wright Collection of family letters at the University of Virginia.

1. In truth, this statement is stretching a point. Two years after the stock-market crash and the close of the '20s, the S. S. Van Dine books were still selling very well. It was not until the mid-1930s that the popularity of the aristocratic Vance began to decline.
2. *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 1910.
3. *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1912.
4. Of his choice of a pseudonym, Wright said that the "S. S." was chosen to bring to mind the easy-to-remember steamship initials and that Van Dine was an old family name. (Family records, however, do not reveal this name on either side of the family.) Of course, "S. S." was also the common designation for *The Smart Set*—echoes of Wright's year of glory—and Van Dine is suggestive of the great painter's name.
5. John Hall Wheelock (ed.), *Editor to Author: The Letters of Maxwell E. Perkins* (New York: Scribner's, 1950), p. 214.
6. The Philo Vance movies and Wright's Hollywood experiences are chronicled in detail in Jon Tuska, *The Detective in Hollywood* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), pp. 21–51.
7. *Los Angeles Herald*, October 15, 1928.
8. "Ghostly narrator," indeed. The most incredible aspect of the twelve novels is that Van Dine, the narrator of all the stories, never speaks aloud in his own voice, even when directly spoken to. Unlike Watson, Hastings, Archie Goodwin, or any other narrator of comparable importance, Van Dine is completely silent as a character himself. Vance alone occupies center stage. This is surely one of the gravest literary mistakes, or weaknesses, of the series, resulting in some absurd scenes. □

What About Murder

by Jon L. Breen

• ANDERSON, David R. **Rex Stout.** New York: Ungar, 1984. x + 134 pp. Bibliography. Index.

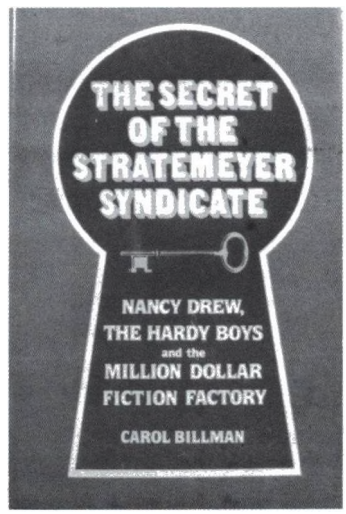
The Nero Wolfe books deserve and will eventually inspire a critical monograph as good as Francis M. Nevins, Jr.'s *Royal Bloodline* on Ellery Queen (see WAM #201) or Robert Barnard's *A Talent to Deceive* on Christie (#127). But this study, though of some usefulness, is not the book. Following a chronology, a brief biographical chapter on Stout, and an overview of the Wolfe saga, Anderson devotes three chapters to a discussion of 19 or the 33 novels. Since most of his comments on the individual novels are composed of plot summary, his failure to cover *all* the Wolfe novels is especially unfortunate. Anderson eschews solution giveaways, even of *A Family Affair* (the windup of which is unconscionably revealed in Robert Goldsborough's otherwise admirable pastiche, *Murder in E Minor*), though he comes so close, one wonders why he bothers. Subsequent chapters discuss Wolfe, Archie, the other continuing characters, and Stout's place in the genre.

On the whole, Anderson is far too indiscriminately admiring of Stout's work. He makes little distinction in quality among the novels, seeming to find them uniformly excellent. In answering Stout's critics, Anderson erects straw men and never addresses the author's only real shortcoming as a writer of detective fiction: his failure to create a solid fair-play puzzle plot most of the time. While Stout was virtually unmatched in style and characterization, his plots, while just as artificial, are far less satisfying than those of Queen, Christie, or Carr—or, for that matter, Gardner, Coxe, or Halliday.

• BILLMAN, Carol. **The Secret of the Stratemeyer Syndicate: Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, and the Million Dollar Fiction Factory.** New York: Ungar, 1986. xi + 187 pp. Illustrated. Bibliography. Index.

Edward Stratemeyer (1862-1929) was responsible for creating some of the best-known and least "respectable" characters in juvenile fiction. Some of the books he wrote himself; others he outlined and farmed out to a number of anonymous writers who were hidden behind such house names as Victor Appleton, Arthur M. Winfield, Laura Lee Hope, Franklin W. Dixon, and Carolyn Keene. Nancy Drew novels under the latter name were usually the work of Harriet Stratemeyer Adams, who called the shots for the syndicate from her father's death to her own passing in 1982.

Though lacking the stylistic verve of Bobbie Ann Mason's *The Girl Sleuths* (see WAM #50), this is the fullest treatment of the Syndicate to date, and its emphasis is on five detective series: the Rover Boys, Ruth Fielding (Billman's favorite, little remembered today), the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew, and the Happy Hollisters. Billman synopsizes a representative title from each series: *The Rover Boys Down East, Ruth Fielding at Cameron Hall, The Mystery of the Chinese Junk* (Hardys), *The Clue in the Crumbling Wall* (Drew), and *The Happy Hollisters at Sea Gull Beach.* She puts Stratemeyer's output in perspective with nineteenth-century boys' and girls' fiction; offers details on exactly how the series-book assembly line worked; identifies some of the writers behind the house names (Howard Garis, St. George Rathbone, Walter Karig, Leslie McFarlane, the last three of whom do not appear in the book's rather hit-and-miss index); finds the parallels between juvenile and adult mystery fiction (for example, the similarities of Nancy Drew's adventures and



Mary Roberts Rinehart's novels); and provides a sound analysis of the style and plot formulae of the series books. A final chapter describes the syndicate's more recent history, including a discussion of movie and TV adaptations, and analyzes the reasons for its success.

Billman includes a three-page checklist of Stratemeyer mystery and adventure series (but no listing of titles in individual series), sixteen pages of notes, and a six-page secondary bibliography.

• DARBY, Ken. **The Brownstone House of Nero Wolfe.** Boston: Little, Brown, 1983. 178 pp. Bibliography.

Ostensibly the work of Archie Goodwin, this compilation locates the famous brownstone (*not* on West 35th Street), describes it room by room (with detailed floorplans) and profiles the various continuing characters in the Wolfe series. Archie expresses outright anger at the inaccurate floorplan that appeared in William S. Baring-Gould's *Nero Wolfe of West 35th Street* (see WAM #220). The novels are extensively quoted throughout. Near the end of a fairly pleasurable tour (the amount of pleasure in proportion to the reader's tolerance for the Sherlockian approach), Darby introduces the ersatz Wolfe letters that have made this a controversial book. Here, Darby saddles Wolfe with his own reactionary opinions on social issues not addressed in Stout's novels. Overall, Darby has done a good job of what he set out to do, but the anti-homosexual jeremiad attributed to Wolfe represents a serious lapse in taste and judgment.

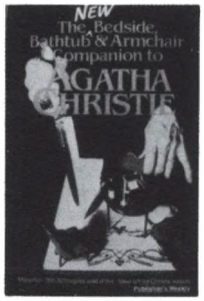
• EAST, Andy. **The Cold War File.** Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1983. xiv + 362 pp. Bibliography. Index.

East presents dossier-style accounts of over seventy spy-novel series that debuted before 1969. Most entries are under authors' names, but a few entries for publishers are included, e.g., the Fawcett and NAL/Signet "Intelligence Groups." Though some readers may find the mock-official jargon a little too cute (a film adaptation, for example, is always referred to as a "visual project"), there is considerable critical content and much solid biographical information both on the authors and their fictional creations. The big names are here (James Bond, Matt Helm, George Smiley, Nick Carter, Quiller), plus lesser-known figures little covered in other reference sources, such as Norman Daniels' John Keith, Peter Rabe's Manny deWitt, Don Smith's Phil Sherman, and Don Von Elsner's Jake Winkman. East does not disparage TV novelizations, and there is considerable information on the various *Man from U.N.C.L.E.* paperbacks and their perpetrators.

Arrangement is by author, including a "Field Bibliography" (series checklist), giving both hardcover and paperback reprint publishers. Appended are additional titles in series that continued past the 1969 cut-off date and information on series that changed paperback publishers after that date. There is a two-page bibliography of secondary sources, plus a name index to the secret agents covered. This is the most valuable reference source to date on series espionage fiction.

• GERBER, Samuel M., ed. **Chemistry and Crime: From Sherlock Holmes to Today's Courtroom.** Washington, D.C.: American Chemical Society, 1983. xiii + 135 pp. Illustrated. Bibliography. Index.

Primarily nonfiction, this collection leads off with three essays (35 pages) on chemical applications in mystery fiction. Two concern the Sherlock Holmes saga: Ely Liebow's "Medical School Influences on the Fiction of Arthur Conan Doyle" and editor Gerber's "A Study in Scarlet: Blood Identification in 1875." The third is Natalie Foster's "Strong Poison: Chemistry in the Works of Dorothy L. Sayers." Anne G. Bigler provides some attractive period-flavor illustrations. The essays are of primary interest to specialists.



• KRAMER, John E., Jr., and John E. Kramer III. **College Mystery Novels: An Annotated Bibliography, Including a Guide to Professorial Series-Character Sleuths.** New York: Garland, 1983. xvii + 356 pp. Index.

In one of the best specialized bibliographies in the mystery field, the authors, father and son, have identified 632 novels and single-author collections of special interest to academic readers, 324 involving professorial series characters and the rest "free-standing." In the first section, more than fifty sleuths are profiled in considerable detail and their book appearances listed with British and American publication data. The subjects are arranged by date of first appearance, from Jacques Futrelle's Augustus S. F. X. Van Dusen a.k.a. the Thinking Machine (1906) to S. F. X. Dean's Neil Kelly (1982). Among those discussed are characters as well known as Amanda Cross's Kate Fansler, Edmund Crispin's Gervase Fen, John Rhode's Dr. Priestley, and Arthur B. Reeve's Craig Kennedy, alongside names as relatively obscure as Francis Grierson's Professor Wells, Gavin Holt's Luther Bastion, Charles J. Dutton's Harley Manners, and Milton K. Ozaki's Professor Caldwell. Most comments are descriptive rather than critical, but there is much humor in the descriptions. The larger second section annotates individual non-series books, these also arranged chronologically. The famous and the obscure are given equally thorough attention, with plot summary, author biography, identification of characters and scenes of special interest to the academic world, and some usually favorable critical comments. (The compilers are so kindly in their assessments that the rare mildly discouraging remark screams out from the page.) The volume's title is broadly applied, both sections including books that involve academics *away* from the academy as well as those with campus settings.

There are some errors, though not *too* many for so ambitious a work. Death dates are lacking for many surely deceased authors. Entry #353 has lost its title—it is John Stephen Strange's *Murder on the Ten-Yard Line,* which does appear in the index. A few names appear in mangled form: "Octavius" Roy Cohen, "Frederic" Brown, Edgar "Allen" Poe, Lord Peter "Whimsey," and John Putnam "Thayer."

An appendix lists the outstanding titles in both categories, which are also designated by an asterisk in the main text. There are indexes to series characters, authors, and titles.

• RILEY, Dick, and Pam McAllister, eds. **The New Bedside, Bathtub, and Armchair Companion to Agatha Christie.** Foreword by Julian Symons. Second edition, with new material edited by McAllister and Bruce Cassiday. New York: Ungar, 1986. xviii + 362 pp. Illustrated. Bibliography. Index.

Through page 315, this is a straight reprint, with smaller page size, of WAM #135. That *Poirot Investigates* and *The Tuesday Club Murders* are still identified (in the book's system of visual symbols) as novels rather than short-story collections suggests that errors have not been corrected. The 34 pages of new material, mostly unremarkable, included a supplement by Michael Tennenbaum to the Christie filmography, through the 1986 TV movie of *Dead Man's Folly;* articles by Bruce Cassiday (on Tuppence and Tommy and on serving as victim at a Mystery Weekend), Edward D. Hoch (a welcome sorting out of the best of Christie's many short stories), Tennenbaum (on the film version of Kathleen Tynan's *Agatha* and the BBC's recent Christie adaptations), editor McAllister (on recent Christie paperback covers, among other topics), Ann Romeo (on the Detection Club's various collaborative works), and Emma Lathen (on the *Murder, She Wrote* TV series, contrasting Jessica Fletcher with Miss Marple); plus an updated secondary bibliography and a list of Christie adaptations available on video.

• WINKS, Robin W., ed. **Colloquium on Crime.** New York: Scribner's, 1986. 216 pp. Index.

Mystery critic Winks asked his fifteen favorite living authors to write essays on their craft, suggesting that they address such matters as how they entered the crime fiction field, how much of themselves goes into the writing, the influence of other authors, their attitudes to critics, the future of the genre, its alleged conservatism, and the effect of its new-found academic attention. Eleven of the fifteen agreed, and their responses make an excellent book.

The authors' approaches to the subject are quite varied, some offering much autobiographical detail, others practically none. Robert Barnard provides tantalizing descriptions of some of his rejected novels and admits to cribbing his unpleasant Australian cop in *Death of an Old Goat* from Joyce Porter's Dover. Rex Burns reveals that the name of his detective, Gabriel Wager, was purposely symbolic. Two writers who seem to pay little attention to Winks's questions are Michael Gilbert, who expands on his controversial thesis that thrillers are harder to write than detective stories, and Donald Hamilton, who offers a motivational lecture for potential writers. Other contributors are K. C. Constantine, Joseph Hansen, Reginald Hill, Dorothy Salisbury Davis, Tony Hillerman, James McClure, and Robert B. Parker.

Winks declines to reveal the four favorites who declined to participate, but what he says about them provides a stimulating puzzle. He tells the reader "that had those four been present, the balance between American and English would have been as exact as an odd number could make it, and that the same would be true between the genders. . ." This statement works regarding nationality, where the present score is seven American to four British. If all four missing writers were British, the score would be eight British to seven American. By my figuring, however, even if all four missing writers were women, the score would be only five women to ten men. One must conclude either that Winks, a Yale history professor, is woefully weak in math, or that at least two of the ten included writers I have assumed to be men (based either on face-to-face knowledge, photographs, or clues in their essays) are actually women! □

Paper Crimes

by David Christie

Swamp Sister by Robert Edmond Alter, Black Lizard Books, 1986, $3.95. **Hazzard** by R. D. Brown, Bantam Books, 1986, $2.95.

Imagine *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* or *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a hardboiled suspense novel, and you have a rough idea of Robert Edmond Alter's **Swamp Sister** (a new paperback reprint of a book published originally in 1966). Most of the characters speak in local dialect, and most of their lives revolve around rural customs. Like Huck Finn, the book's main character, Shad Hark, is a boyish young man, has a drunkard for a father, and consequently lives on his own, more at home in the wilderness than in civilization. Like Tom Sawyer, he has a predisposition for adventure, particularly for taking plunder. He forms an attachment to a character who, as the daughter of a relatively prosperous local family, recalls Becky Thatcher.

The only thing missing is innocence. Unlike Tom, whose attempts at piracy were pure play, Shad is out to plunder a very real plane that crashed in the swamp near Sutt's Landing, somewhere in the South, some four years before; in addition, he is carrying on an adulterous affair with a local woman as the book opens. His Becky Thatcher's attraction is purely sexual, and she is interested not so much in him as in the $80,000 he may or may not have found on the plane. So, it happens, are most of the townspeople; the money does not so much corrupt them as it gives them an opportunity to show how predatory they were to begin with. Shad must contend not only with them, but also with a big-city insurance investigator, and several are killed in pursuit of the money.

The contrast between the slow, simple, innocent pace one tends to associate with rural life and the violence and venality displayed by these characters lends *Swamp Sister* a very entertaining tension, which is reinforced in two ways. First, Alter writes nicely about nature, making the swamp seem lush, teeming; often resorting to long descriptive sentences, one clause crowding out another much as the swamp vegetation grows thickly, each plant competing for space: "It was a water prairie, land-locked with forest, draped with strangler-fig vine as fat as fire hoses, and jungled with thick bamboo-like stalks of cane." Moreover, Alter often depicts the swamp as silent, still, lonely, but shattered by sudden violence—an alligator surfacing suddenly to snatch its prey, for instance—and these descriptions appear in close association with the townspeople, obviously meant to inform their behavior. There is an overriding image of apparent placidity only thinly masking ever-present danger.

Second, even if Shad possesses some measure of individuality and depth, other characters are largely stereotyped. There are a town bully, obtuse but bigger than anyone else and pleased to use his physical superiority to intimidate others; his subservient weasel of a sidekick, living vicariously off the bully's reputation; the intelligent man from the big city who attempts to manipulate the locals but is very much out of his element. The familiar characters prompt one to accept the familiar view of slow and sleepy rural life, which makes the contrast with the novel's violent action that much greater.

Still, stereotyping is more a drawback than an advantage, and, as if to provide relief from his stereotyped characters, Alter includes a truly interesting, if entirely mystifying, figure. He is the husband of the woman who is carrying on adulterously with Shad, an ineffectual writer of boys' adventures for pulp magazines. He is interesting because he is apparently self-parody; a note at the end of the book informs the reader that Alter was himself "the author of fourteen children's books and three adult novels" whose "stories appeared in numerous magazines including *Adventure, Saturday Evening Post* and *Argosy*." Unfortunately, the character does not work; he is totally unnecessary to the story, and, if Alter did intend self-parody, its purpose is impossible to discover.

There are other drawbacks. The setting and the use of dialect for the characters' speech allow Alter to adopt some rather homey description in his narration that might seem overwrought in another context but which work here: "The moon was fat and gold-dollar proud," or "He felt like yesterday's newspaper left out in the rain." But the dialect itself becomes tiresome. Since it is based only on slight alterations of a few words—"hit" for "it," "air" for "there," "goan" for "going," and a few others—it seems artificial and cumbersome. More importantly, although the plotting is good throughout most of the book, yielding one or two surprises along the way, the ending is very predictable; the book is a suspense story that loses its suspense at the end.

Swamp Sister has its faults, but it has enough going for it to be worth reading.

R. D. Brown's *Hazzard* concerns the attempt of a man named Cheney Hazzard to establish himself in Southern Texas, where he has bought a half-interest in an industrial security business franchised by the company for which he worked in Boston. Once in Brownsville, Texas, however, Hazzard finds the dead body of his estranged wife, is harassed by the local police chief, who believes Hazzard killed her, and hires a lawyer who turns out to be a beautiful and conveniently available woman. The wife, Sherry, regularly brought drugs and money across the American-Mexican border for a powerful gangster, José Cataldo, who demands that Hazzard return a million dollars Sherry is supposed to have had when she died.

Even if the question of whether Hazzard and his lawyer strike up a more-than-businesslike relationship holds little suspense, this is a promising beginning: if Hazzard can determine the true circumstances of his wife's death, and, more interestingly, just how he plays law against outlaw to escape the threats of both, are rife with possibility. Regrettably, though, the novel contains serious flaws, the most prominent being that Brown crams in needless complications that become tedious.

There is a plethora of obviously false suspects, for instance. Although Sherry's death is apparently a suicide—she is found on a bed, a plastic bag over her head, an open pill bottle beside her, with no sign of struggle—no fewer than five people are accused of killing her. Among those accused are several red herrings, the problem being that one would have trouble mistaking them for anything else; they serve to distract Hazzard from considering seriously a question that he asks early on, but then ignores until very late, even though it points to a character involved directly in Sherry's death. But because the question has been expressly stated, the reader remains aware of it and grows more impatient each time it is ignored, with each new accusation. Similarly, Hazzard discovers that each of the principals protects a secret, and in most cases guilty, identity, but the same sense of impatience prevails with each new revelation.

Along with extraneous information, there are extraneous characters. Brown introduces two characters and subsequently kills them off for the sole purpose of demonstrating Hazzard's abilities. But the book's opening scene serves the same purpose; so do Hazzard's successful attempts to recruit clients for his business; so do his eventual confrontations with Cataldo and the police. How many demonstrations do we need?

Hazzard's character is also problematic. He prides himself for relying on his intelligence rather than on force, but he comes across as clever only at times; a secret purpose for his move to Texas, we learn, is to rescue his two stepchildren, both of whom are in serious trouble. Yet both end up dead, in large part because his attempts to rescue them are incompletely planned. Moreover, his speech often sounds like a series of business reports: he quotes statistics a lot and likes to estimate the probability for the success of everything he does in percentages. After making love to his lawyer, he declares, "As I lay beside Daisy in the large four-

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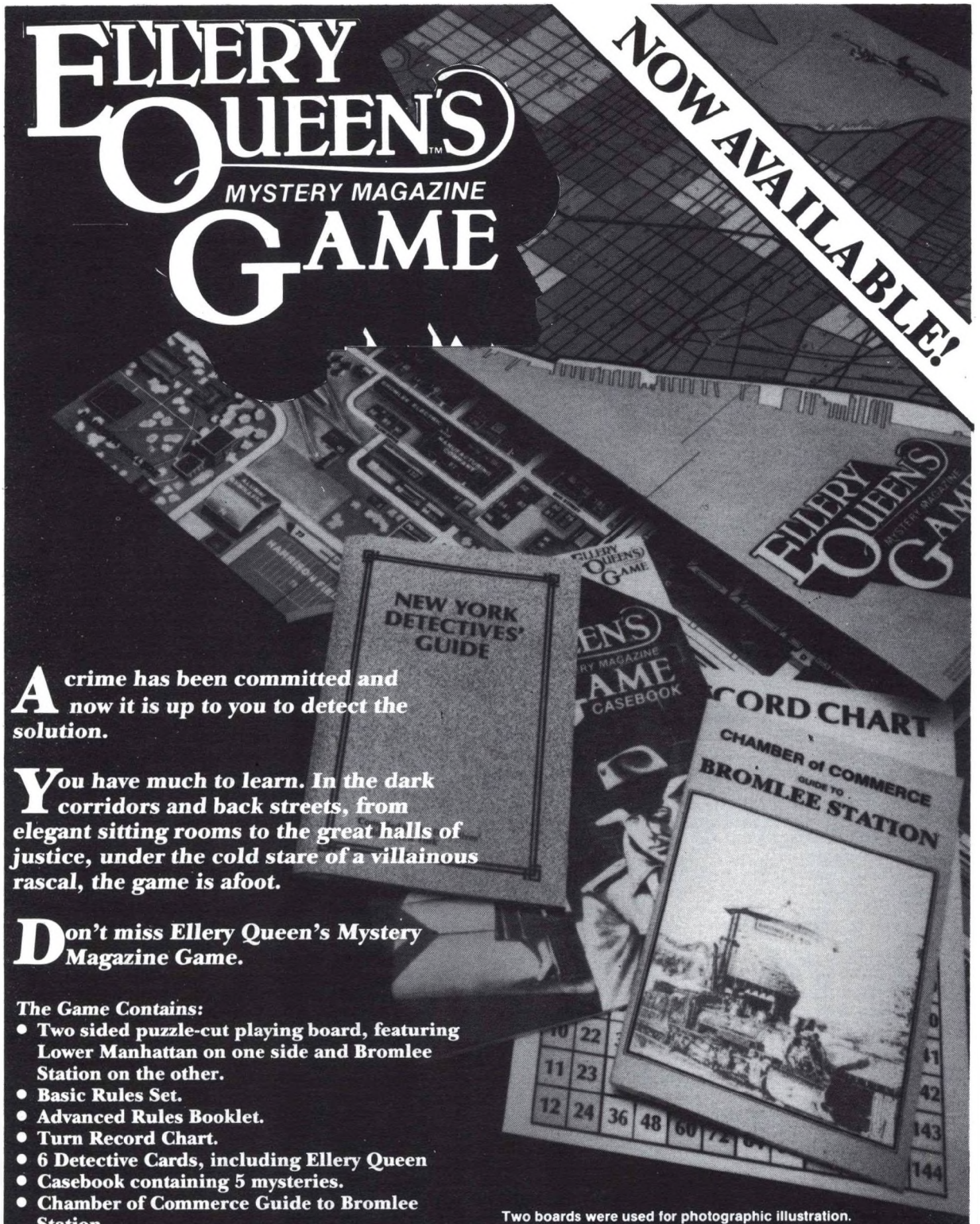

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Two boards were used for photographic illustration.

poster, I went over what had happened like a miser counting gold." Talk about passion. He is bland, humorless, and endlessly fascinated with making money, which may, unfortunately, make him an appropriate hero for the '80s.

Brown makes basic writing mistakes. An example: while driving, Hazzard is being followed. "I turned on the state road that led only to the Immigration Training Center," he says, then describes the road as "a dead end" a sentence or two later. But on the next page, he says, "Two miles down the road there was a fork where a service road led to an irrigation pumping station." Is it too much to ask that an author remember what he has written from one page to the next?

All this is unfortunate, because the parts of the story that do not seem extraneous are really quite good. In particular, Hazzard works by his wits, as we have already noticed, and the trap he springs on Cataldo is very clever. The way in which Brown writes about it is effective, because he succeeds in taking in the reader even as Hazzard takes in Cataldo. Nevertheless, there is too much wrong with *Hazzard*. Pass it by. □

Novel Verdicts

by Jon L. Breen

Explanation of symbols:

- **A** (all or more than three quarters of the book devoted to courtroom action)
- **½** (one-half or more of the book devoted to courtroom action)
- **¼** (a quarter or more devoted to courtroom action)
- **B** (relative brief courtoom action; less than a quarter of the book)

• Butler, Gwendoline (1922–). **A Nameless Coffin.** London: Bles, 1966. New York: Walker, 1967. **(B)**

Two incidents on Inspector John Coffin's London beat—a series of purse-snatchings by knife and a murder in a building undergoing demolition—may be connected with a coat-slashing incident in the town of Murreinhead, Angus. In the course of an effective off-trail detective novel, there are about twenty pages of interesting and frequently humorous activity in the Scottish town's magistrates' court, as viewed by Clerk of Court Giles Almond. Actions covered (not connected with the main mystery) include a trespassing case, in which a local crank famous for her belief in ghosts is accused of knocking over a hen-run; a dangerous driving case; and the case of a drunk who feels shortchanged when the taciturn magistrate fails to say "a few words" in sentencing him.

• Canavor, Frederick. **Rape One.** Seattle: Madrona, 1982. (¼)

Dartmouth student Billy Waterman is the suspect in a series of New York City rapes, attributed to a handsome, polite young man who wears white tennis shoes with red laces. The victim in the first case to go to trial is young freelance writer Pamela Metcalfe. Fabled criminal advocate Big Bob Jacobs defends, and Assistant D.A. Jim Bridges gets the dubious honor of prosecuting. The sides are even-handedly presented, and the reader is not quite sure who is on the side of the angels until near the end of the book. This is just the kind of novel which committed trial buffs love. Himself an experienced prosecutor, Canavor offers an insider's view of how trials really work. The procedural detail is extensive, and the whole book has a feel of reality, its drama the inherent drama of the courtroom rather than the melodrama of the TV screen. Among the unusual elements is an extensive portrayal of witness-coaching by the prosecutor. The reader never enters the jury room, but the wait for the jury is one of the longest in fictional annals, and there is more on the machinations of the advocates during jury deliberation than in any book I can recall. (In an inside joke for lawyers, one expert witness is called Dr. Mathew J. Bender, after a prominent legal publishing firm.)

• Dewey, Thomas B. **A Season for Violence.** Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett-Gold Medal, 1966. **(B)**

One of the most admired of private eye novelists presents a rare non-series book. In the Midwestern City of Gilesport (state unspecified), a WASP youth of prominent family is accused of raping an Italian girl from "Crudsville" on the wrong side of the river. District Attorney Dick Kramer has Senatorial aspirations and a painfully unhappy marriage to a daughter of one of the "first families." Sub-plots involve drug traffic on the river and a fortyish housewife seducing her young football-star gardener. Offering plenty of sex, crime, and dirty politics, this is a fair-to-good example of the kind of Gold Medal paperback best practiced by John D. MacDonald. The courtroom action (about 19 pages) is effectively done, but most of the trial takes place offstage.

• Hensley, Joe L. (1926–). **Robak's Cross.** Garden City: Doubleday, 1985. (¼)

An Indiana circuit-court judge by profession, Hensley has included courtroom scenes in several of his previous novels (see NV #219-221), but this book includes his most extensive (and best) trial action to date. Series lawyer Don Robak is defending Ed Sager, an alcoholic accused of murdering his sleep-around wife Beth. Everyone, including Robak, assumes Sager is guilty—indeed, the defendant himself thinks he must have done it, though he does not remember, and he seems determined to die. As always, Hensley brings the Midwestern town of Bington and its people to life. Trial action is excellent, from first-chapter jury selection to in-court climax. There is some spirited sniping between Robak and flamboyant prosecutor Herman Leaks, and Robak creates sparks when he calls some leading citizens to prove Mrs. Sager's infidelity.

• Martin, Lee, pseudonym of Victoria G. Webb (1943–). **Too Sane a Murder.** New York: St. Martin's, 1984. **(B)**

Veteran Fort Worth policewoman Deb Ralston is assigned to the case of Olead Baker, a young man with a history of mental problems who has apparently killed several members of his own family. She gradually comes to like Olead and become convinced of his innocence, scarcely turning a hair when her 19-year-old daughter Becky (who seems immature for her age) becomes romantically involved with the accused man and visits him in his odorous padded cell. The characters of Deb and Olead are very well drawn and carry the reader's interest most of the way. Unfortunately, the ending is parodoxically both disorganized and overly neat, a formulaic conclusion to a mystery that began as anything but. The author has no apparent interest in trial procedure, and the ten or so pages of courtroom action are a shambles of sentimental melodrama.

• Rossiter, John (1916–). **The Villains.** London: Cassell, 1974. New York: Walker, 1976. **(B)**

Former Detective Chief Superintendent Rossiter makes it clear in his foreword that this is to be an exposé of unscrupulous defense lawyers, and it is safe to say that barrister Sinter and solicitor Weizsack are as deep-dyed a pair of villains as you're likely to find in contemporary fiction. The book opens with Detective Sergeant William Gault in the witness box to testify against William Henry Toffler, accused of maiming, disfiguring, and disabling him. For most of the first forty pages, we get a detailed description of Gault's injuries—broken jaw, missing eye, crushed genitals—followed by a courtroom ordeal in which the victim becomes the accused, framed via a damning photograph with a prostitute. Following the sham trial, Chief Inspector Hansen joins with Gault's wife, a former policewoman, to try to clear his name. This is an extremely downbeat book, too angry and didactic to be completely successful as fiction, however valid it may be as a policeman's cry of pain. □

Why did detective fiction make its debut in the short story format?

By Charles E. May

Although the detective story is now more familiar as a novel form to its many admirers, its formal beginning as a short story in America with Poe's Dupin is well known, as is its adoption in that form in England before it was later expanded into the novel. And in many ways, the story of detection seems most appropriate for short fiction, so much so that it is little wonder that critics have suggested that Conan Doyle's genius was better suited to the short story than to the novel.

There are two basic reasons why the short story seems an appropriate form for the tale of detection. The first stems from a notion as old as Boccaccio and later developed in more emphatic fashion by the writers and theorists of the German novella—that is, that the story form does not deal with the commonplace but with the unusual. At the very beginning of "The Speckled Band," Watson reminds us that Holmes refused to "associate himself with any investigation which did not tend towards the unusual, and even the fantastic." Chesterton notes in "The Blue Cross" that the detective Valentin, when he cannot follow the train of the reasonable, "coldly and carefully followed the train of the unreasonable," keeping alert for any oddity that might catch his eye. As Chesterton says: "In short, there is in life an element of elfin coincidence which people reckoning on the prosaic may perpetually miss. As it has been well expressed in the paradox of Poe, wisdom should

reckon on the unforeseen." And indeed, in both "The Speckled Band" and "The Blue Cross," it is the unusual that is foregrounded.

The second reason why the short story seems so appropriate a form for the tale of detection concerns the relationship between the story and the reader. As Chesterton's Valentin says, "The criminal is the creative artist; the detective only the critic." Indeed, in the detective story, the criminal is the artist in that he creates the plot, both in the sense of evolving the mystery which the detective must solve and of providing the plot of the story that the critic must lay bare. Thus, the reader is embodied in many ways within the detective story itself as he follows the ideal reader within the story, who is of course the detective.

The detective mystery story is a natural offshoot of the supernatural mystery story, and the word "natural" is used here purposely. The supernatural story was a story of a violation of the natural order; the detective story is the story of the violation of the social order.

In the detective story, the criminal is the artist in that he creates the plot . . . "the detective is only the critic."

The movement is one from belief in the supernatural to disbelief; thus the disruption in the detective story becomes a human disruption of the social order rather than a superhuman disruption of the natural order. The transitional figures in this movement from the supernatural to the criminal are the amateur ghosthunter in Bulwer-Lytton's "The Haunters," who discovers that the supernatural can be attributed to a criminal mind of a quasi-scientific bent, and Le Fanu's Dr. Hesselius in "Green Tea," who finally determines that the supernatural monkey which so plagues the minister can be attributed to a physical/psychological source.

The detective as the critic does not create but rather unravels and exposes the hidden plot of the story. The two basic methods by which he does so are the two basic methods by which any reader or critic lays bare the mystery of the story which he reads. W. H. Auden, in his delightful essay "The Guilty Vicarage," pinpoints the two methods precisely. Holmes is the "genius in whom scientific curiosity is raised to the status of a heroic passion," whereas Father Brown solves crimes by "subjectively imagining himself to be the murderer."[1] These two methods suggest the means by which anyone reads the tightly woven short story form—that is, either by following the material details of the story or by identifying with the characters.

As any good critic does with a story, Holmes knows the importance of determining out of a number of facts which are incidental and which are vital—that is, to use the language of the Russian Formalist critics, which motifs in the text are bound ones and thus essential to the plot and which are free motifs and thus inessential. The detective story, says Dorothy Sayers, is a form that absolutely depends for its unity on its capacity to be analyzed. It is, as it were, made for criticism or explication, and would not exist without the reader's participation in the process of explication in which the detective engages.[2] Thus the detective story depends on a reader who perceives himself as a super-reader, not an ordinary or casual one. As Sayers points out, the Holmes-Watson relationship makes this clear. The ideal or super-reader believes that the average reader is supposed to understand no more clearly than Watson does, and thus he places himself above Watson in the text.

A central key to analysis of the detective story is of course the attention one must pay to the details of the text itself, for the explicator is one who perceives that details are meaningful because they are traces of human events, symbols of what is now absent but is nonetheless significant. As G. K. Chesterton notes in "A Defence of Detective Stories," the detctive story is the earliest form of popular literature to express "a sense of the poetry of modern life." It is the social, not the natural, the human, not the inhuman on which the detective story must focus, for in a basic sense, says Chesterton, the city is more poetic than the countryside, because "while Nature is a chaos of unconscious forces, a city is a chaos of conscious ones." There is no stone in the street nor brick in the wall that does not have a human imprint and thus constitute a "deliberate symbol."[3] Sherlock Holmes is of course the master of what Chesterton calls the "romance of detail."

"The Adventure of the Speckled Band" is a paradigm of the classic detective story formula widely imitated since. A visitor comes to Holmes's residence, distraught because of a mysterious crime already committed. The "romance of detail" is laid bare when Holmes says that "there is no mystery" in his "mysterious knowledge" that his visitor has come by dog cart and by train to see him—only his observation of details and the conclusions he draws from them, deductions which Watson says are as "swift as intuitions, and yet always founded on a logical basis." As usual, Holmes's task is to "throw a little light through the dense darkness" which surrounds the lady, whose situation is horrible precisely because her fears are so vague and her

suspicions "depend so entirely upon small points, which might seem trivial to another."

Her story is a variant of the classic locked-room mystery which Poe explored in "The Murders of the Rue Morgue." The visitor tells of the death of her sister, supposedly by fear, and her last words: "It was the band! The speckled band!" As is also usual, the story is fraught with red herrings—that the stepfather keeps a baboon and a cheetah (which might make one suspect the "Rue Morgue" solution) and that there are often gypsies about the place. In the detective story, however, as in the short story generally, it is not by the obvious solution, but rather by the unusual one, that the mystery is laid bare. The reference to the speckled band itself is the most obvious clue, which would seem to point to a band of gypsies or the band that a gypsy wears on his head, a direction which Holmes considers and rejects, but only after he has visited the home and discovered the meaning of the meaningless—the two clues of the bell

The supernatural story is concerned with a violation of the natural order; the detective story is concerned with a violation of the social order.

rope which a dummy and the ventilators which do not ventilate. Because these two items have no function within the naturalistic realm of the story, they must obviously have a function in the mystery of the story. That is, they are aesthetic motifs purely—motifs that constitute the hidden plot.

The hidden plot is not revealed until the speckled band itself, a swamp adder, is seen wound around the head of the stepfather. As is also common for the detective story, and as is appropriate to the process of analysis of a text, the laying bare of the plot can only take place at the conclusion of the events of the tale, as Holmes reveals to the average-reader Watson the events which took place in the narrative that has preceded the story.

"The Speckled Band" is a paradigm of the detective story in that it lays bare the previous story at the same time that it prevents the recurrence of that story. The fact that the threatened woman is a twin to the sister previously killed by the serpent, and that the second murder is to take place in the same room on the same fastened-down bed, indicates that what we have here is a previous event which will be

repeated in duplicate unless the critic detective reveals the story's mystery. Thus the "plot" rebounds on its creator when the serpent returns to bite the doctor. As Holmes says, "Violence does, in truth, recoil upon the violent, and the schemer falls into the pit which he digs for another." The central clue is seen by Holmes when he first enters the doctor's room and utters the words the sister uttered just before her death, the words of the title of the story. Thus the ambiguity of the title of the story is transformed into the solution—a solution pointed to by the purely aesthetic clues of the mock rope and the mock ventilator.

Mock clues which reveal themselves to be the real clues are also central in Chesterton's Father Brown story, "The Blue Cross"; the aesthetic solution is the true solution. The tone of "The Blue Cross" is considerably lighter than that of "The Speckled Band," both because the crime is one of theft rather than of murder and because the story depends on the device of roleplaying as well as the convention of playing with the presentation of clues themselves. In this classic triangle of victim, pursuer, and detective, roles are manipulated in such a way that the victim, Father Brown, plays the roles both of the criminal, leaving clues to his actions, and the detective, who has solved the crime before it has been committed. Thus the meaningless clues only have meaning aesthetically within the "plot as plot" of the story itself. The professional detective, Valentin, head of the Paris police, serves as the reader of the text which Father Brown creates.

Three basic character images are set up in the story: the criminal Flambeau, noted for his great height (six feet, four inches) and his powerful physical strength, so much so that he takes on the folklore image of a powerful Paul Bunyan–like figure; Valentin, who is one of the most powerful intellects in Europe and a man who reasons from strong, undisputed first principles; and Father Brown, who from the perspective of both Flambeau and Valentin, is only a little priest with a face as "round and dull as a Norfolk dumpling," with "eyes as empty as the North Sea." The story does not focus, however, on Father Brown and Flambeau, who accompanies him dressed as a priest, but rather on the traces that Father Brown leaves behind for Valentin to follow.

And the clues are indeed such that appeal to Valentin's penchant for following the unreasonable when he cannot follow the train of the reasonable. His encounter with the sugar bowl which has salt in it and with the cross-labeled oranges and nuts are of course true clues to the reversal of roles being played by Father Brown, in which the victim is really the detective. As Valentin follows "the first odd finger that pointed," he begins to fit the "natural" side of the story together—that Flambeau has posed as a priest to steal the jewelled cross from the greenhorn Father Brown. All this he says is the "most natural thing in all natural history," with nothing wonderful in it at all. Thus, the crime seems clear enough. But the reversal or game that this story plays with the usual detective convention is that Valentin cannot determine the connection between the mysterious traces of events which have lead him to Flambeau and the crime itself. "He had come to the end of his chase; yet somehow he had missed the middle of it. When he failed (which was seldom), he had usually grasped the clue, but nevertheless missed the criminal. Here he had grasped the criminal, but still he could not grasp the clue."

The final section of the story presents the dialogue on which Valentin eavesdrops between Father Brown and Flambeau, a conversation that Valentin at first takes to be a quite ordinary theological discussion common to two prelates, in which Father Brown argues for reason and Flambeau, thinking to imitate the usual priestly view, argues for the irrational—another reversal of expectation, similar to the salt-sugar, nuts-fruit reversal which Father Brown has perpetuated earlier. Reason, says Father Brown, is always reasonable, "even in the last limbo, in the lost borderland of things." The reversal is dramatically embodied in the climax, when Flambeau declares that he has switched the parcels and thus has the jewels while Father Brown has the duplicate. He says that Father Brown is "as good as a three-act farce." But the switch has of course been switched, and Father Brown has left the jewels in a shop to be sent to a safe place.

The detective story is made for criticism or explication, and would not exist without the reader's participation.

Father Brown has supplied false clues for two reasons—to make sure that his companion is a criminal by finding out if he has tried to pass unnoticed (by switching the salt and sugar and by changing the bill at a shop to three times its amount) and to supply the clues which Flambeau himself would not supply. Father Brown's profession as a priest has enabled him to determine Flambeau's disguise, just as his reason, which he calls just "good theology," has enabled him to set up the plot in such a way that it will be successfully traced by Valentin. Father Brown says he knows all the tricks of the

criminal mind because, by always hearing men's sins, he is made aware of human evil.

That Chesterton's Father Brown is the critic on the quest of the artist-criminal has been noted before, most prominently by Jorge Luis Borges, who has used the detective story genre in his own self-conscious way to reflect upon the relationship between reader or critic and artist or criminal. Perhaps the best-known Borges story which plays this particular detective game is "Death and the Compass," which has been compared with "The Blue Cross" in a recent article by Aden W. Hayes and Khachig Tololyan.[4]

Erik Lonnrot, the detective hero of Borges's story, in his search for a mysterious hidden meaning of a crime, follows the plot created for him by Red Scharlach, who has sworn to kill him. Hayes and Tololyan, however, suggest that Borges's genius goes beyond the "more prosaic complexities" of "The Blue Cross." They note that Borges's Lonnrot embodies the critical impulse represented in Jacques Derrida, Pierre Macherey, or Freud – that "the errors, the slips, the haphazard gaps and lacunae of a text must be read as evidence of a deeper order or, failing that, as evidence for the existence of an underlying system which has rules for producing error and uncertainty, and thus negates attribution to pure, random chance." Consequently, Lonnrot, because he prefers a rabbinical explanation rather than an explanation based on chance, is successful in following the clues that Scharlach plants for him, which are not clues to the death of the rabbi but rather purely aesthetic clues created by Scharlach.

Certainly Borges's story is a self-reflexive parody of the detective story, but this does not make Chesterton's "The Blue Cross" any less a self-reflexive comment on the nature of the detective story itself, for Father Brown also creates purely aesthetic clues which lead to the solution of the crime or plot. So also, for that matter, does Sherlock Holmes, and before them both, as recent critics have discovered, did Poe's primal poet/detective Auguste Dupin. From its beginnings, detective fiction has been closely aligned with the conventions of the creation and interpretation of the short story genre – a form which has always been self-consciously concerned with the creation of a latent aesthetic plot, hovering just beneath the surface of manifest mimetic details.

Notes

1. W. H. Auden, "The Guilty Vicarage." In *Detective Fiction: Crime and Compromise,* edited by Dick Allen and David Chacko (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), pp. 400-10.
2. Dorothy L. Sayers, "The Omnibus of Crime." In Allen and Chacko, *Detective Fiction,* pp. 351-82.
3. G. K. Chesterton, "A Defence of Detective Stories." In Allen and Chacko, *Detective Fiction,* pp. 384-86.
4. Aden W. Hayes and Khachig Tololyan, "The Blue Cross and the Compass: Patterns of Order in Chesterton and Borges." *Hispanic Review* 49:395-405 (Autumn 1981). □

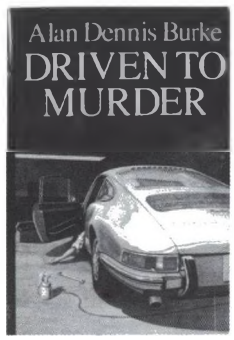
Book Reviews

General

Driven to Murder by Alan Dennis Burke. Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1985. $15.95

In *Driven to Murder* the reader must repeatedly intuit what the author finally voices: that a crime "only has to be logical in the mind of the killer." To establish the validity of this maxim, Burke sends out many conflicting signals over the course of this novel, and all of the plot complications are deliberately confusing, because the author wants the reader to see how difficult it actually is to ferret out the motives that lie behind the act and, most importantly, the consequences of crime. The narrative perspective comes from Assistant District Attorney Jack Meehan, and very little of his case makes any sense to him for the greater part of the novel, as he first believes one story and then the next, then disproves one on the evidence of the other, only to question in turn that story's validity. The crime in question is the murder of James Goodfellow, the husband of the Mother of the Year—the headlines scream "Mom of Year Plugs Hubby 5 Times"—and a classic "small town boy who made good," except that the money he earned as an accountant may have been laundered as payment for his participation in a scam that took unsuspecting VW and Porsche owners to the cleaners and made a certain dealership, Parkside Porsche-VW, quite prosperous. James has a wife, Georgine, the previously mentioned "Mom of the Year," who is classically beautiful, and three darling children, as well as the house, car, silver and china, VCR, swing-set, and such that go with today's version of the American Dream: family and possessions, well-paying job, and excellent professional image.

That such a paragon of virtue as James should be shot repeatedly and at point-blank on his suburban lawn shocks the media and yet does not quite sit well with the District Attorney's office, despite all of the circumstantial evidence that points to a domestic crime of passion. Meehan's first clue that Georgine Goodfellow may not be telling a straight story of her husband's death comes as he reviews tape recordings of her confession, where inconsistencies stand out, use of language is very careful, and omissions are obvious. Meehan's gut feeling that Georgine is innocent is buttressed by interviews with her women friends and by the dim recollection that he went to elementary school with her. But here Jack's emotions take over, for he is by his own admission strongly attracted to Georgine, who even in her sixth-grade picture was striking and who now realizes quite well what an effect she is having on the ambitious young assistant district attorney, particularly since Jack has not been putting the necessary time into his own marriage.



Driven to Murder charts Jack's personal temptation with respect to Georgine, cast against the background of the enticements which the worlds of business, industry, and government place before those who elect to participate in them. Accordingly, most of the dragons which Meehan encounters are spawned by the very organizations that are supposed to slay them: his work in the District Attorney's office is fascinating and gives satisfaction when a criminal is brought to justice, yet he feels hobbled by political concerns as well as public media reaction, and he is both intrigued and repulsed by a job offer that would remove him from public service and give him even more power and money than he already has. His counterparts in the car-repair business, upon which Jack's investigation comes to focus, are equally charmed by the possibilities of doing a repair job right and yet getting rewarded for *not* fixing vehicles. According to one of Jack's informants, the guy who seems to do best is the one who "cheats customers. Inflates repair bills. Turns back odometers. Sells demos for new." Jack, as he investigates the car scam that is at the bottom of *Driven to Murder*, tries to set back his own personal odometer, and, in the last analysis, he can't do it and has to continue counting up the miles he's driven, as it were. This auto-metaphor is reinforced by the brief and thoroughly convincing appearance of an aging widower and policeman-turned-private-eye, Walter Hamparian, who is slain just as he is on the verge of unmasking the killer and starting a new relationship with a woman he very much likes. And, finally, the method which Walter uses to flush out the criminals, that of bringing a finely-tuned VW (dubbed "the Trojan Rabbit") into the suspect repair shop and asking to have its engine "looked at," speaks to the central issue which Burke confronts: how are people tricked? Are they tricked because they play by the rules? Are they tricked because they expect others to play by the rules or to play straight? Or are they tricked because they expect to be? *Driven to Murder* raises these issues in so many ways—in the naming of the dead man (*Goodfellow*), in the senselessness of the slaying of the senior-citizen private eye, and in Meehan's alternating gullibility and fear.

—Susan L. Clark

The Big Picture by Michael Wolk. New York: Signet, 1985. $2.95

Max Popper runs a small literary agency near Times Square. To eke out a living, he also writes pornographic novels. Rushing to finish his latest, overdue masterpiece of "vile filth," *Leather Love*, he encounters a group of thugs looking for his office neighbor, slimy P.I. Thorton Marsdale. Marsdale has been trying to blackmail them for a half-million dollars with a stolen film. The thugs, deciding Max might know too much about the film, first try to kill him and then frame him for Marsdale's murder. Eluding both the police and the killers, Max must find the film—a copy of the science-fiction blockbuster *Masters of Zendar*—and figure out its importance, in order to clear his name. He is assisted in his efforts by Rita Scardino, an escort-service receptionist and aspiring model, who was hiding in Marsdale's apartment when he was killed.

Nicely written in a wisecracking, hard-boiled style, this is a very enjoyable paperback original. Characterization is fine, and action is plentiful (at various times a desperate Max borrows/steals not only a cab but also a bicycle, a limo, and an ambulance). This is the first entry in a planned Times Square series.

—M. Hornyak

Murder Is Academic by P. M. Carlson. New York: Avon, 1985. $2.95

Nearly all the action in this tale of rape-murders occurs on an upstate New York campus at Laconia, and readers can be justifiably forgiven if there is initial difficulty in sorting out the profusion of proper names. Any campus is populous, and there is a fairly large cast for this drama, including tenured and untenured professors, teaching assistants, grad students, and

undergraduates. Not only the college residents but the entire area, including Syracuse, is being terrorized by a series of rape-murders, with the victims usually found near highway ramps and bearing triangular cuts on the cheekbones. The tragedies take on a personal significance for the students when one of their members has the misfortune to be the latest object of attack.

A group of women students seek the aid of Jane Freeman, a professor and psychologist, to help them form an educated defense against future attacks, and she agrees, although already over-burdened with teaching, research, and writing. Jane, along with two other professors, is eligible for tenure, and all three have been working long hours on articles in their fields, hoping for publication before the tenure vote. Among the grad students, there is Maggie Ryan, a transfer from another college, who is fortunately accepted by three other grads who live in a co-op house, not the least attraction being her talents as a musician, as are the other three. The other women in the house are Mary Beth Nelson, linguistics grad who is working toward her degree, with emphasis on the Mayan language; Sue Snyder, a Russian major; and Jackie Edwards, French grad. As might be expected, with four women and their friends arriving and departing, the co-op is a busy place, but all four women respect the others' privacy. Maggie and Mary Beth appear to find a special bond, recognizing some deep, private unhappiness in each other. Some subjects, such as Maggie's love life, are taboo, and Mary Beth has some hidden fears which almost surface in Maggie's company. A part of Maggie's past is revealed when Mary Beth persuades her to attend a little theatre production nearby and one of the professional actors, Nick O'Connor, is delighted to renew his acquaintance with Maggie, who helped him some years earlier when his wife died unexpectedly—and he, in turn, has seen her through a disastrous affair with a fellow actor.

Nick is soon a regular visitor at the house, accepted and well liked by the other women, especially Mary Beth, who applauds the effect his company has on Maggie. All of their lives are suddenly turned into a nightmare when Jackie, their housemate, becomes the Triangle Murderer's next victim. After the initial shock and the departure of the grieving parents and the press, Maggie proves to be the leader in taking action, and the results she achieves are ingenious and startling. Not only does she succeed in trapping the murderer but also in bringing Mary Beth's life back into focus. Every campus would like to have a Maggie Ryan, and readers will hope to hear more of her.

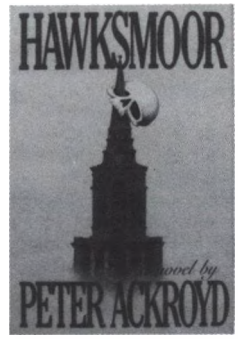
—Miriam L. Clark

Hawksmoor by Peter Ackroyd. New York: Harper & Row, 1985. $16.95

Ackroyd, better known as a literary critic (his latest work is a very readable biography of T. S. Eliot) here serves up an eerie concoction sure to please readers looking for the offbeat.

Twentieth-century Detective Superintendent Nicholas Hawksmoor of New Scotland Yard is investigating a series of murders on the sites of several eighteenth-century London churches. As the murder puzzle becomes more complex and the murderer seemingly more elusive, Hawksmoor is assailed by self-doubts about his professional abilities, almost to the point of a mental breakdown.

Meanwhile (in alternating chapters) eighteenth-century Nicholas Dyer, an architect who works for and with Sir Christopher Wren, is designing and building the churches near and in which the twentieth-century murders will take place. Dyer, who grew up an orphan on the streets (his parents died in one of London's epidemics of the 1660s), finds himself a superstitious throwback in the early days of the age of reason. His discomfort becomes more and more manifest, his superstitions more irrational, until his ability to work is seriously affected. Sir Christopher calls on him in his rooms, and there follows a classic debate on reason *vs.* superstitious fear. "This superstitious Humour disarms men's Hearts, it breaks their Courage . . . It is a Disgrace to the Reason and Honour of Mankind," says Sir Christopher. Dyer disagrees, replying that "Men move by Rote . . . Nothing is free from Danger." The men part with the issue unresolved, and the stage is set for Dyer's ultimate downfall.



The alternate chapters, first one featuring Dyer, then one with Hawksmoor, move the action and lives of the novel's two protagonists closer and closer together. Finally, it seems there is almost a time warp, or that time has no real meaning, as the fates of the two Nicholases become inextricably linked.

This is not an easy page-turner of a book. The philosophical issues as well as the author's style (thoughtfully literate) make for comparatively slow going. The rewards are large, however: the delightful stylistic contrasts between the contemporary and the eighteenth-century chapters; the local color of both eras; the architectural lore; the philosophical ideas; and last, but certainly not least, the novel's well-developed and compelling plot, make this a book to be savored.

—Alice O. Christiansen

The Death of a King by P. C. Doherty. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. $12.95

P. C. Doherty has made an interesting story of what might have been nothing but dry history. In *The Death of a King*, Edmund Beche is a clerk in the Royal Chancery, and it is through his letters to his friend Richard Blinton that the story unfolds.

One morning, a Royal messenger delivers a writ demanding that he meet with King Edward III. Poor Edmund spends an uncomfortable 24 hours wondering what sin he might unwittingly have committed that the King requires his presence in court. The next day, he is awakened by the King's men, who have been sent to escort him to Edward, and he goes off with them, wondering what his future will be.

But there has been no sin by Edmund; instead, Edward III needs his services. Edmund is told the story, part of which is general public knowledge, of the deposing, imprisonment, and finally the murder of Edward II, the King's father. Edward III tells the clerk that his "task is to research the background of my father's death. Not, I repeat, not to hunt down his murderers. That is the task of others." Because the King was a youth at the time of his father's death, he says that he does not know the truth of it and that the time has come to discover what it is. Edmund has been chosen as His Majesty's detective because he has a reputation for industry, competence, and discretion. The King wishes all that has occurred at this meeting to be kept in absolute secrecy. The stated reason for Edmund Beche's enquiries is that he is writing a history of Edward II's reign. This will give him access to those people whom he wishes to interview.

And so the story begins to have intrigue, and interest. Edmund is a clerk with no experience as a detective who has been given a Royal decree to determine the events of the past. Of course, he cannot anger the King, for, in the fourteenth century, angering a king could cause imprisonment or death. So Edmund, after being sworn to secrecy, accepts the King's letter of commission and begins his research.

The tale of Edmund's investigation, as told completely through his illicit letters to his friend, is fascinating. These letters of course go against the King's wishes, and

Edmund suffers some for that, but he needs to discuss his mission with someone and Richard is his closest, most trusted friend. In order to carry out his assignment, Edmund travels to France and Italy as well as throughout England. He meets with many people with whom he, in his station, would normally have no relationship. There is a great deal of travel and intrigue in the book, both of which help to maintain the reader's high level of interest.

The Death of a King is a little slow to catch fire, but, once it does, it becomes difficult to stop reading. It is one of those unique mysteries which pushes itself into daily life, making the reader wonder what is going to happen next even when there is no possibility of reading another chapter for several hours. The ending is natural and fitting as well as surprising.

—Rosemary Swan

Possession by Celia Fremlin. Academy Chicago, 1985. $4.95

For he who reads his mystery stories at the end of a long day and seeks some sense of order in the world, the horror book, no matter how well written, does not fill the bill. This reprint of Celia Fremlin's 1969 suspense story, set in a quiet English community, is an introspective first-person narrative by a woman, Clare Erskine. She is seen primarily in her role as mother, but a mother who perceives her role in the community as successful, or not, depending upon the way in which her children (in this case two daughters, Sarah, 19, and Janice, 17) succeed. Success in Clare's world is dependent upon marrying off her daughters, and she is delighted when Sarah, who has previously seemed attracted only to losers, brings home a solid, sensible accountant, Mervyn Redmayne. The dramatic tension is based upon Clare's need to see herself as a modern mother—not interfering, not possessive—in the face of increasing knowledge that her involvement may be necessary to protect her daughter's physical safety and emotional stability. She is appalled to realize that she is perceived as "old fashioned" by a nineteen-year-old who sees "possession as a form of love."

Clare's struggles with her role are seen in counterpoint to those of her friends and neighbors, who have varying success in freeing themselves from their children who prefer to remain dependent, and to Mrs. Redmayne, who also exists only in relation to her son, Mervyn, and whose needs run at cross purposes to Clare's. Against this background of personal conflict is the unraveling story of Mervyn's family background. But it is unfair to go any further in detailing the plot. It is well drafted and moves slowly but effectively to draw the reader into Clare's web of confusion. The readership for this book will probably be limited to those women who can relate to motherhood, to the conflicts between mothers and daughters, and to the changing rules of the game for women who devote their lives to being successful mothers (and wives) and who can only achieve that success vicariously. This is not a book to be read to while away a summer afternoon, or to provide reassurance that this is an orderly world. It is disturbing and provocative to the reader who is drawn into Clare's dilemma. Not everyone will want that challenge.

—Colleen Barnett

New Year Resolution by Alison Cairns. New York: St. Martin's, 1984. $12.95

A classic formula for the murder-mystery is the creation of an out-of-the-way location, peopled with a cast of realistic, true-to-life characters with interconnecting lives and sinister secrets. Cairns accomplishes this most effectively: the reader's interest is captured from the start by her finely-drawn descriptions and a carefully-crafted web of the so-called "petty" emotions of ordinary life.

The residents of the six houses on isolated Redlands Way share many problems, both blatant and hidden. As they come to light one by one, the drama of the everyday is heightened and intensified. The runaround husband and his resentful, neglected wife both ignore the needs of their benefactor, her father. The attractive invalid woman who moved into the neighborhood to be near her ex-lover keeps their relationship from her spinster sister/nurse. The overworked single mother struggling to raise a teenaged son alone receives an unexpected holiday visit from her long-lost husband, fresh out of prison. The Christmas season always seems to sharpen and crystallize emotions, and the delicate balance between selfishness and sacrifice, hatred and harmony tips when one of these neighbors is found dead. Did post-holiday depression claim another suicide, or was this murder? One New Year resolution which all the denizens of Redlands Way seem to have made is to keep something back from the police.

Cairns's writing is involving and avoids clichés. Rather than submitting to the well-worn device of using a detective as the eyes of the reader, all action is evolved through the individuals suspected. Her matter-of-fact style is pleasant enough, but structure is her major strength. She shows great promise in this, her second novel, as a potentially significant contributor to a genre which is relatively easy to do badly but quite a challenge at which to excel.

—Linda Umstead

Shed Light on Death by L. A. Taylor. New York: Walker, 1985. $14.95

All but the most loyal fans of J. J. Jamison, the cheerful investigator for CATCH (Committee for Analysis of Tropospheric and Celestial Happenings), will be disappointed in this UFO murder mystery. *Shed Light on Death* is the third in the series of Jamison cases, but it is difficult to see the appeal unless you're a UFO buff or yearn for small-town Minnesota life.

When an alleged UFO landing is reported in nearby Fox Prairie, Jamison, his wife Karen, and Cameron Rogers, another expert

and arguably the most obnoxious Ph.D. in the history of academia, are summoned to the scene. Despite marks in the ground, a mutilated rabbit, and other evidence, it does not take this unlikely trio long to determine that the whole affair is a carefully orchestrated hoax.

But, before they can put their findings together, Rogers is murdered by a mysterious sniper and Jamison is wounded slightly in the process. Jamison, his wife, and newsman Jackson Powell spend the rest of the book eliminating suspects and eventually solve the murder. But the solution comes about through a series of all too convenient coincidences.

The tone is too light to evoke any real suspense. When J.J. is wounded, wife Karen is seemingly more concerned that his best sportcoat has been ruined. Jamison endures with a little too much patience the insults and barbs directed at his wife by the abrasive Rogers. The Jamisons are just too nice a couple for anyone to believe they are ever in any real danger, and J.J. does not seem to know how to handle his wife, much less murderers.

In the early going, Rogers attacks newsman Powell in a fit of rage. The scene becomes comic when J.J. is prevented from going to Powell's aid and is easily pinned to the ground by Karen.

There are too many coincidences as the plot unfolds and not enough surprises to satisfy mystery fans. But Taylor's portrait of small-town Minnesota may be enough to maintain her following.

—William Moody

The Beast Must Die by Nicholas Blake. New York: Perennial, 1985. $3.50

This book, like all Gaul, is divided into three parts. The first part is in the form of a diary written by Frank Cairnes, who writes detective stories under the pen name of Felix Lane. As the diary opens, it deals with the death of Cairnes's son, Martie, caused by a hit-and-run driver. The father does a great deal of soul-searching, blaming himself for letting the boy go out alone at dusk.

Eventually, Cairnes steadies himself and devotes his energies to tracking down the killer. The local police, in the person of Sergeant Elder, have no clues. After much deductive reasoning, Cairnes builds up the figure of X, who has to fit a certain mold. A clue is stumbled upon in a fortuitous manner that leads to the mistress of X. Under his name of Felix Lane, he courts the actress Lena Lawson. Eventually, this discloses the name of X as George Rattery. His life fits the mental picture of X. Cairnes decides to kill Rattery in a boating accident.

The next part is written in conventional story fashion and describes Cairnes's abortive attempt to kill Rattery.

Now for the third part. George Rattery is dead by poisoning. Cairnes's diary comes to light, and, when he is accused by the police as the murderer, he calls in Nigel Strangeways to clear his name. Inspector Blount and Nigel have long talks about Cairnes's guilt. After much cerebration, Nigel brings the case to a stunning conclusion.

Except for the clumsy device of the first clue, this book is well written and makes for a compelling read. Highly recommended.

—Howard Rapp

Private Eye

All the Old Bargains by Benjamin M. Schutz. New York: Bluejay Books, 1985. $13.95

Benjamin M. Schutz continues to show the promise exhibited in his first Leo Haggerty book, *Embrace the Wolf*.

This time, Haggerty is hired by a Mrs. Benson to find her runaway daughter Miranda. Haggerty is immediately fired then rehired by the girl's father. The investigation quickly reveals that Miranda (known as Randi) is a bright, attractive girl who has gotten herself involved with drugs, porn, and prostitution.

The plot hinges on where Randi is and why she got there. The investigation goes routinely at first. Soon, Haggerty realizes that he is going to need help. He calls on his "backup man," Arnie Kendall. Arnie was mentioned in the first book but was not used. Schutz seems to be building a cast of characters, and Arnie proves to be a major, and deadly, one. Schutz also introduces Samantha Clayton as a love interest for Haggerty. If Schutz continues to develop her in future books, she and Arnie could prove to be good but disparate allies for Haggerty.

Schutz has a knack for quick but believable character development. I found myself caring about the characters, even some only briefly shown.

The book is a fast read, moving well from routine investigation to a war-zone situation and finally to the problem that caused the problem. This is gritty stuff. If you like hardboiled, this is one egg you will want in your basket.

—Ron Tatar

Flood by Andrew H. Vachss. New York: Donald I. Fine, 1985. $17.95

This is a first novel that mixes hardboiled conventions with elements of spy-novel gadgetry. The combination results in an entertaining romp.

Burke is a self-described survivor. His office is protected by a combination of security devices that are topped off by a 140-pound Neapolitan mastiff named Pansy. Burke makes his living through several clever and marginally legal ways.

He is hired by a woman named Flood who wants him to find the man who raped and murdered her best friend's child. Flood is a martial-arts expert who has plans of her own.

Burke's attitudes toward people are best summed up in his description of an informant named Michelle. "Her gender might be a mystery, but in my world, it's not who you are, it's how you stand up."

Mama Wong provides food and informa-

tion. Max the Silent helps with the rough stuff. Max cannot hear or speak, but he is the deadliest man in town.

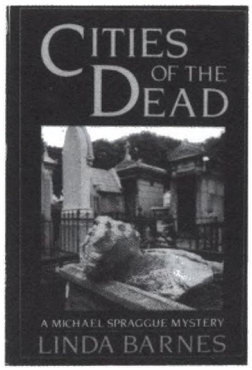
These are just some of the supporting characters who make *Flood* a perfect example of an '80s pulp. I mean that in the best possible way. Secret clans, electronic wizardry, street cynicism, nasty bad guys, Eastern mysticism, and an obvious love for life's unique individuals make this a book that is fun to read.

Burke's $40,000 1970 Plymouth, how he got it, why it cost so much, and what it does is a perfect example of why you just might like this book. —Ron Tatar

Cities of the Dead by Linda Barnes. New York: St. Martin's, 1986. $14.95

There's enough evidence to the contrary to deny any charge that the private investigative novel is dead or even dying, but Linda Barnes's *Cities of the Dead*, the fourth in her Michael Spraggue series, certainly suggests some serious exhaustion in the genre. Absent a truly interesting central character or a gripping puzzle in its plot, this novel relies on gimmickry: an exotic setting (New Orleans), trendy fads (haute cuisine), and a hero who seems more a composite than a person. Spraggue, pronounced with a long A, is independently wealthy (Peter Wimsey *et alia*), a former private detective turned actor (Philip Marlowe as Charles Paris), and has a rich Aunt Mary who helps him to solve his cases with her resources and contacts (any number of Golden Age models); with all this, he's basically boring.

In this novel, the case revolves around the Spraggue faithful family gourmet cook (yes, that's how one is supposed to see her), accused of murder at a "Great Chefs" banquet in New Orleans. Because it's set in New Orleans, we have—of course—Mardi Gras, Cajun overtones, some local curiosities (the nature of cemeteries in a locale with a very high water table), and even voodoo. But all these touches seem added on, and



they are not, in fact, at all necessary, for the puzzle is based on matters domestic, in an almost pure Ross Macdonald fashion. The locale could just as well have been Omaha, insofar as the plot is concerned. The exotic aspects are present, it seems clear, only to give the book some life and interest. But, without appealing characters and an interesting crime, the exotica seem self-indulgent, the life has the quality of an informed travel book, and the interest points outside the plot rather than toward it.

The previous three Spraggue novels were much the same. The first, *Blood Will Have Blood* (1982), was located in the theatre and had as its gimmick Dracula and vampires. *Bitter Finish* (1983) took place mostly in the Napa Valley, where Spraggue is part-owner in a winery (what would Philip Marlowe say to *that*?), and was overflowing with wine arcana. *Dead Heat* (1984) centered on Massachusetts politics *and* the Boston Marathon. One need only compare writers such as Agatha Christie or Raymond Chandler, who used the same locale and, often, similar characters in novel after novel, but whose people and plots were marvels of life, interest, and invention. In Barnes's novels, the paraphernalia has come to dominate; the plots are quickly forgotten; the secondary characters are figments of a lack of imagination. In *Cities of the Dead*, there is the lovely Cajun girl, apparently a prostitute or the like, yet of course intelligent and misunderstood. In *Bitter Harvest*, for example, the major suspect is the former lover of Spraggue, a talented and beautiful winemaker. No chauvinist, Barnes, certainly, but also no one to miss a cliché where available. The novels are more reminiscent than engaging.

Yet, despite all this gimmickry and derivation, there is still the essence of an interesting, likable, and viable series character in Michael Spraggue. If the wealthy family bit does seem tired (and too convenient a device to enable Spraggue to get information or help easily, or to dispense with that recurring problem of private detectives—fees), his acting career does have a depth and feel to it, and the profession enables him to have a real sense for role playing when he is involved in questioning other characters or otherwise dissembling. And he's a nice, thoughtful, good man—a decent man in a tradition which has come to demand decency. It is in Michael Spraggue, not New Orleans, gourmet cooking, or marathon races, that Barnes's novels will find their substance. A greater emphasis on those old, sustaining virtues of mysteries, plot and character, will do more to energize a potentially interesting series character than all the exotic doo-dads one can invent.

—Robert A. Lee

Wind Chill by Nick O'Donohoe. Toronto: Paper Jacks, 1985. $2.95

Nathan Phillips, Minneapolis P.I., goes ice-fishing with Lieutenant of Homicide Jon Pederson. They catch a corpse with its face sawed off. The newspaper account has the effect of inciting every blackmailer who is not frozen over for the winter into Nate's office either to hire him for vague purposes or to screw up his investigation. Terrorists and IRA gun smugglers pop up. A lot of people want Nate dead. Two FBI men treat him rather badly. A smug matron keeps hounding him about his lust life while her husband inanely quotes at him selected imaginary trivia from news magazines. All the while, his cop friend remains peculiarly inattentive to all the proceedings.

It would be unfair, perhaps, to suggest that we too should be inattentive to the proceedings. After all, O'Donohoe has some good ideas here. His detective is an average sort of a man: not very good with a gun, not very big or imposing. He works in a refreshingly mystiqueless city full of clean air and snow. Indeed, the environmental scenes are particularly effective, with nice descriptions of how life slows down or stays indoors during Minneapolis winters. Detectives cannot survive there in trenchcoats. There are some fine descriptions of how the weight of winter alters the chase and turns bundled-up perpetrators into indistinguishable balls of wool. But, with promising ingredients and some narrative ability, the author falls short of the kind of novel he evidently tried to write. The trouble lies in the author's insistence on saturating the book with levity. Inside Nate Phillips, you see, lurks a stand-up comedian. Much of the dialogue is too obviously manipulated to feed the creature his diet of straight-lines.

There are some other problems. The author does too little with key characters of whom I would like to have learned more. On the other hand, he does too much with unimportant characters such as Nate's buddies, who seem to have been dragged into

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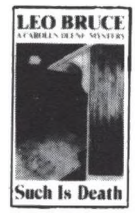

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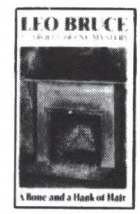

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the parlor like children just to be introduced to the company.

For my tastes, I would prefer to see O'Donohoe dispense with the omnipresent humor and develop a harder narrative – the kind that I thought seeped through in some of his well-wrought evocations of place.

– Robert Sandels

Some Predators Are Male by Miles Tripp. New York: St. Martin's, 1986. $12.95

I looked up the meaning of "sinuous" again after reading it in paragraph three of this book, and, sure enough, I knew I was in trouble – and so was the book.

"Sinuous" is applied to the way Shandy, John Samson's secretary, approaches him with the news that a client awaits. The client, Neil Pensom, is a television production assistant for a company serving British TV, whose life has been turned upside-down and sideways. Strange events have been occurring to him: a woman accosts him in Antwerp, where he is on assignment for a production, claiming that he is married to her (he isn't), and generally causing him great unrest until he flees from her.

Going next to Germany, he is kidnapped in an improbable way, finally escaping to return home to his flat in London, where yet another surprise – in the form of Felicity Flowerdew (she with the "sensuous" smile) – provokes him to an uncharacteristic sleep-in while he cold-heartedly decides what to do next. The "next" is to flee from there and bunk in with Anthony Vestier, who is not what Charles Paris will be at 73. He is an old actor with some apparently "lovable" traits who welcomes Neil in his hour of need. At that point, Neil makes the first intelligent move of the book. He calls on Samson to solve his dilemma.

It is here that Shandy assists the private detective with a little brilliant snooping via cute phone calls while clucking over John Samson and his diet. Samson is overweight, which causes her to make caustic but sincere remarks about his problem, ordering the "right" kind of lunch while he pores over Pensom's diary of the diabolical events of late. The diary seems to be a melodrama, and Samson must decide if his client is insane or is being driven insane by dastardly forces of evil. No matter.

By this time, we really don't care that much. What has happened to Neil is unreal because it is unrealistic. We are asked by an author, whose background is the law, to believe that a half-way intelligent man (despite his past of gambling and losing) is so unnerved by events that he does not think to make a few phone calls (to a lawyer, for example) to set things straight. And we are asked to believe that his captors' claims that the British Consulate in Germany will not believe him without a passport and proper clothes is credible enough to stop him from getting away. These, and other assumptions in the story, simply do not wash in 1986.

Nearly all the characters in this novel are flat and quite stereotyped. Even as actors, the bad guys are not scary. Only Samson has some endearing qualities. He is an interesting man dragged down by a story. His eccentricity includes an avid interest in clocks, and one expects the Lovejoy-like lecture on the "real" ones and their value.

I would like to meet him again, but in a better story. This one could have been first-rate, ready to be filmed by Hitchcock, but it falls short. Now, if the author were to create a story in which a clock played the central part in a murder, and John Samson were to call in Lovejoy, and the trail led to . . . and . . . well, maybe next time.

– Cal Branche

Every Brilliant Eye by Loren D. Estleman. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1986. $14.95

Few would argue that the best fictional private eye in the Greater Detroit area is anyone other than Loren Estleman's ex-Vietnam MP Amos Walker. In his newest and sixth published case, Amos is visited by a redheaded ex-hooker who has been living with his old war buddy, Barry Stackpole. According to the redhead, Barry has fallen off the wagon again despite Amos's earnest efforts to prevent it. Moreover, Barry, a successful newspaper columnist, has written a book that could blow the lid off a labor-union-organized-crime linkage involving the local police force. Everyone wants either Barry or the book, or both, burned. In the process of locating Barry and saving him from the clutches of hit men and hangovers, Amos encounters a conniving cutie of an editor, Louise Starr, who will do just about anything to corner the book. Some of the anything involves jumping in and out of bed with Amos, who has found both Barry and the book. Unfortunately, Amos loses Barry again before he can find out what is going down. Then there is a former police detective who blew his own head off for no apparent reason, plus a number of wealthy legals who want to hire Amos to bring Barry in. Along the way to Barry's rescue and the resolution of the puzzle, Amos comes in for the usual knocks on the noggin, attempted assassinations, and chanced-upon corpses. The title, by the way, has nothing to do with P.I.s. Estleman took it from Yeats: "The death of friends, or death of every brilliant eye that made a catch in the breath."

Regretfully, this is not the best of the Walker outings. Although the writing is as polished and engaging as ever, the story line lacks the freshness and fast pace of *Motor City Blue* or *Angel Eyes*, and the characters are not as sharply drawn as those in Estleman's Shamus Award-winning *Sugartown*. What little violence there is in *Every Brilliant Eye* is so subdued and off-hand that it almost seems irrelevant. The entire work is very low-key and offers little in the way of Estleman's usual suspense, surprise, or excitement. Yet, if you are an Amos Walker fan, you will not want to miss it. If you have never read him before, you are advised to start with one of Estleman's earlier efforts, say, *The Glass Highway* or *The Midnight Man*. These two show Amos and Estleman at their breathtaking best.

– Robert A. Baker

Anthology

The New Black Mask Quarterly, No. 1, edited by Matthew J. Bruccoli and Richard Layman. San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985. $7.95

An interview with Robert B. Parker, an excerpt from his *Promised Land*, and a brief comment about it by Parker; stories by Chandler, George V. Higgins, George Sims, Arthur Lyons, Loren D. Estleman, Nelson Algren, and William F. Nolan; a serialization of Jim Thompson's last novel. Those are the contents of this new quarterly. It's hard to find fault.

Oh, I could quibble that the Parker interview offers little that hasn't appeared in countless other Parker interviews (beyond the unremarkable revelation that the first piece of casting for the *Spenser: For Hire* series on ABC was Robert Urich to play Spenser).

And I could note that it's probably a good thing that Arthur Lyons hasn't published any other Jacob Asch short stories. He certainly doesn't manage, in this one, to develop the criminal depravity and grit characteristic of his best novels. Nor does Estleman do full justice to Amos Walker,

who usually shows more wit and allusiveness to Hollywood than he does in "Bloody July." He also usually provides a solution which has some basis in the developed evidence. Not here. How does Walker figure things out this time? I haven't the vaguest idea.

But the Lyons and Estleman stories positively glow in comparison with Chandler's "Backfire," which was never meant to see print, was designed, instead, to serve as the basis for a "treatment," then a screenplay, then a movie. There is little nuance to "Backfire," and little of the care with his prose that is largely responsible for the paucity of Chandler's published work. Still, "Backfire" hasn't been readily available before, and any "new" Chandler is worth having.

Nolan's piece is too clever by half, without supporting wit. And Sims's epistolary tale is probably too obscurely fragmented for the taste of most readers.

On the other hand, Algren's "Say a Prayer for the Guy" is marvelous, richly evocative, eloquently simple. The editors note that he understood "his grotesque characters," that he could "sympathize without sentimentalizing." It's true: "Then, it turned out, nobody knew where the old man lived or even what his full name was. Nobody had called him anything but Joe for years. Some said it was Wroblewski, some said it was Makisch, another said it was Orlov." That is first-rate writing in anyone's book.

So is "A Case of Chivas Regal," Higgins's wry character study of a judge and the "court officer" who admired him. As always, Higgins has a fine ear for dialogue. But the too-rarely recognized truth is that his real strength is in *using* the dialogue to bring the characters to life. Listen to former pro wrestler Panda Feeney describing to a judge he doesn't like how he reacted to learning that another injury would leave him crippled for life:

"That scared the hell right out of me. . . . In wrestling there's no insurance. I did not have money. I was always undercard, a couple hundred bucks. And I didn't have any trade, you know. Something I could do. But I am scared, so what I do, I take what comes along. I get into security. I become a guard."

Notice that "did not." It's the properness of someone unhappily bound to the formality of an audience and an occasion but who isn't comfortable with it. That's why it jars with the surrounding informality. And it tells us a world about Panda and his distaste for the judge he's talking to.

I've saved the best for last. Jim Thompson's *The Ripoff,* at least based on the first installment, is likely to be brilliant. The opening chapter leaves us in suspense, the narrator trapped in a bed, in a locked room, held there by a German shepherd trained to kill at any movement. Of course, he must move. But how? Through the next six chapters, we don't learn. Instead, we discover that "The terror had begun three months before." And we're left with our lead character and the woman who will eventually leave him in that room heading off to what is probably the same room. Thompson writes compelling prose that takes us, with agonizing slowness, through a world of madness and horror. I'm eager for part two.

The idea of *The New Black Mask Quarterly,* the editors tell us, is "homage to the original *Black Mask*." But the magazine "will not be restricted to hard-boiled detective stories." Fair enough. The original wasn't either, though that's certainly what it is remembered for today.

So what if the cover shows Spenser played by Mike Connors back in the days when he was Joe Mannix or if the first two lines on page 40 are inverted? The old pulps were lots sloppier. Any new periodical devoted to publishing crime fiction is a welcome addition to the marketplace. If this first volume of *The New Black Mask Quarterly* isn't consistently brilliant, it's at least consistently interesting. You can't even say that much about the original.

—Jeffrey M. Gamso

Women Sleuths edited by Martin H. Greenberg and Bill Pronzini. Academy Chicago, 1985. $4.95

At the beginning of this collection, Greenberg and Pronzini explain that the stories are "chosen on the basis of two criteria—(1) their excellence as mystery/suspense fiction and (2) their relative obscurity." Volume I contains "The Toys of Death" (1939) by G. D. H. and Margaret Cole, "The Calico Dog" (1934) by Mignon Eberhart, "The Book That Squealed" (1939) by Cornell Woolrich, and "The Broken Men" (1985) by Marcia Muller.

Although I consider only Woolrich a personal favorite, I found each of these tales to be a pleasant way to pass some time. That faint praise is indeed damning, however, as the "Excellence" which the editors claim is certainly an exaggeration. The Cole and Eberhart stories are leisurely looks at murder among the wealthy, and, frankly, the characters are not interesting enough to counteract the lack of suspense. Woolrich creates a B-movie saga of an unlikely heroine (a prim librarian) who flowers while solving a criminal puzzle ignored by the police. Muller's tale of confused identity stands out merely by being so different from the rest: it does, after all, reflect its decade.

The inclusion of work by Marcia Muller raises two disturbing points. Does this story really belong in the same volume with the other three, in terms of style and era? Can a story from 1985 truly be in "relative obscurity," as the authors demand? True, "The Broken Men" does have a female sleuth, but perhaps its main reason for inclusion is that Muller is a frequent collaborator of co-editor Pronzini.

Forthcoming volumes in the "Academy Mystery Novellas" series are to feature authors such as Simenon and Westlake, and themes such as humor. I hope that Volume I is merely a lackluster start to what will become an entertaining series. After all, the concept is a good one, and the brief author biographies at the end of the collection are a nice touch.

—Bert Eccles

Winter's Crimes 17 edited by George Harding. New York: St. Martin's, 1985.

Jon L. Breen's "A Thumb on the Scales" is a neat little tale of murder and justice. It nicely builds suspense and leads to a logical end, yet succeeds in adding a clever twist for the unwary reader. "A Light on the Road to Woodstock" provides the background for Ellis Peters's Brother Cadfael entering religious orders. A lot of history is given, somewhat detracting from the crime elements and the tightness of the plot. For a cynically modern story, try "The Casebook Casanova" by Miles Tripp. The titular lover is a particularly unlikeable professor who psychologically abuses women on the pretext of doing research for a book. In Stephanie Colston he meets his match.

Peter Lovesey's "The Secret Lover" also deals with the ironies of love and possession. The ending is foreseeable shortly before it is revealed, but that does nothing to lessen the enjoyment. With an aura of science fiction, James McClure skillfully blends history, hospices, and the chill of death in "The Last Place on Earth." Irony and retribution for prior acts play an important part in an unpleasant but realistic story.

These are only a few of the thirteen original stories in this edition of the *Winter's Crimes*

series. Other authors include Julian Symons, Sara Woods, Michael Underwood, Jennie Melville and John Wainwright. There is not a poor story in the lot. The best depends only on your personal taste.

—Fred Dueren

Dark Banquet: A Feast of Twelve Great Ghost Stories edited by Lincoln Child. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. $15.95

Michael Gilbert once said in conversation, "The ghost story is a form of cheating." If one can accept this premise, then one can enjoy most of the twelve classic tales collected here (a companion volume to *Dark Company*, St. Martin's earlier collection of ghost stories). There are occasional shudders and gasps, especially if one reads alone, late at night, with a howling rain storm outside.

All of the authors represented here have long ago passed on to the land of shades, the last born and the last to die being H. Russell Wakefield (1888–1964). There are no modern tales here. Yet, with a few exceptions, the stories hold up quite well.

Most of the stories have appeared in countless other anthologies, the oft-collected "The Signalman" by Charles Dickens leading a closely following pack including "The Horror of the Heights" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "They" by Rudyard Kipling, "The Inexperienced Ghost" by H. G. Wells, and "The Upper Berth" by F. Marion Crawford.

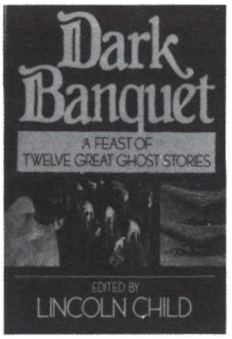
The Crawford tale truly holds up well. It is about a drowned ghost occupying an upper berth in stateroom 105 aboard the *Kamtschatka* crossing the Atlantic. A man named Brisbane (the narrator) is assigned to the lower berth. There is much tension and suspense over the porthole that will not stay closed; and the thing, both dead and alive in the upper berth, that smells of rank seawater, will linger in the memory.

"They" by Rudyard Kipling is a lyrical story of children-ghosts, a blind woman, and the man from the other side of the county. It is beautifully written and could be used as a guide for writers wanting to learn the art of understatement.

The best story in the collection is "The Yellow Sign" by Robert W. Chambers, from his book *The King in Yellow*. It is about an artist and his model, the girl called Tessie, their love, and their dreams of death. It evokes the same feel later present in the dark classics of Cornell Woolrich—the sense of bleakness, despair, darkness—and has a particularly well-done variation on Poe's "The Premature Burial."

Close behind the Chambers work is "How Love Came To Professor Guildea" by Robert Hichens. This is really a novella and the longest story in the book. Professor Guildea denies his need for love, despises anyone making any demands on his independence, and lives only for his science and research. When a ghost occupies his residence, he finds his freedom threatened. This, too, is a story of love, coupled with fear, and ultimately is resolved in surprising fashion by the failure of the heart.

E. F. Benson's "The Man Who Went Too Far" is also very good, though not strictly a ghost story. It tells of a man who found joy in isolation and communing with nature, which incredibly led to his growing younger. He tells his friend that this is partially due to his hearing the pipes of the great god Pan. He finds the final revelation when he comes face to face with Pan. The last sentence of this story is one that will be hard to forget.



Of the others, "The Inexperienced Ghost" by H. G. Wells and "Seaton's Aunt" by Walter de la Mare are well written but predictable. Surprisingly, M. P. Shiel's "The House of Sounds" is the worst of the lot, all but unreadable. The writing is ponderous in a story that is more fantasy-adventure than about the supernatural. Time has not been kind to this work. Also, Robert Louis Stevenson's "Thrawn Janet" is a very difficult read, as it is written in a Scottish dialect, much of which will be incomprehensible to most readers. Yet, unlike the Shiel story, a struggle to the end does have some reward, for, if a ghost story should have a scare or two in it, Janet M'Clour, the lady in the title, certainly delivers her share.

There is one short-short, the excellent "Blind Man's Buff" by H. Russell Wakefield. This tells about Mr. Cort, who ignored the danger in going to the Manor after sundown, and what happened to him one dark night.

The introduction by the editor is brief, but the headnotes, though likewise brief, do provide some useful information about these authors and their other works in this field.

On the whole, this will not be everybody's cup of tea, but, for those who like the macabre in small doses, it will satisfy their particular hunger. —Robert Samoian

Thriller

King Solomon's Mines by H. Rider Haggard. New York: Tor, 1985. $3.50

Allan Quartermain, the great white hunter and narrator of *King Solomon's Mines*, dedicated his tale to "all the big and little boys who read it." Since its first publication in 1885, the book has been reissued regularly, most recently by Tor as a tie-in with the release of the latest film version, starring Richard Chamberlain. The book is the better buy.

Quartermain is an aging hunter and guide, toothless and short. As soon as this adventure business pays off, he would like to go back to England and settle down in a country cottage. Meeting up with Sir Henry Curtis and Naval Captain Goode, he agrees to set out with them in search of a missing brother and the fabled treasure of Solomon, which is to be found somewhere in the heart of Africa unknown.

After many struggles, they reach the twin mountains—Sheeba's Breasts—which lead to Solomon's road, and there they have more adventures among the fierce but magnificent Kukuanas until at last the mystery of the mines and of the white men who came before is solved. Along the way, we learn how the Zulus innoculate their cattle with a length of diseased ox tail. There are professional discussions of the relative worth of three double-500 express elephant guns and the no. 12 central-fire keeper's shotgun. There are frequent self-mocking descriptions of Englishmen in the wild—the punctilious Captain Goode tramping the bush in tweeds and a gutta-percha collar. What great stuff!

This wheezy old romance has an appeal and durability which leads one to wonder if it isn't more than just a well-told tale. Haggard, like Kipling, had the storyteller's knack of taking the reader headlong into fantasies with such deadpan verisimilitude that one hardly has time to dwell on all the improbabilities. Moreover, whether he meant to or not, Haggard tells us a great deal about the Victorian gentleman in Africa. In his three greatest romances, *King Solomon's Mines*, *She*, and *Quartermain*, Haggard sends Englishmen into the wilderness to search for treasures and to confront the savage in themselves.

—Robert Sandels

The Twelve Deaths of Christmas by Marian Babson. New York: Dell, 1985. $3.25

There is something strangely appealing about the Christmas murder mystery. The "Season of Brotherly Love" makes a perfect if perverse backdrop for man's most unbrotherly crime. Many mystery writers have known and made use of this ironic fact. The best by far (for evoking a picturesque Christmas and a picture-perfect murder) is Ellery Queen's *The Finishing Stroke*, but Christie (*Holiday for Murder*), Grimes (*Man with a Load of Mischief*),

Marsh (*Tied Up in Tinsel*), etc., have all tried their hand. Marian Babson's contribution, *The Twelve Deaths of Christmas* (first published by Walker in 1979), is a worthy effort.

The story is classic. The worst kind of murderer to apprehend, the spur-of-the-moment, motiveless maniac, is not only loose in London but seems to be killing at will. Babson uses alternate chapters to tell the story: one moment we are inside the murderer's head, privy to his/her rational and irrational scheming; the next we are at Maude Daneson's homey boarding house, where, we soon discover, the killer, among others, lives (or lives among others...). There *are* a few chapters involving the police and their efforts, but these are brief. The police are singularly ineffective in this novel, and their "solution" of the case is purely gratuitous.

The sharp contrast that Babson creates between holiday cheer and homicide, between Daneson's tenant's festive preparations and the killer's thoughts, are well conceived. She does, however, an equally wonderful job of weaving the two elements together. In Chapter 11, for example, our anonymous murderer thinks of attending a local Gilbert and Sullivan production; at the beginning of the next chapter, Major Entwistle, a boarder at Daneson's, descends the stairs whistling a Gilbert and Sullivan tune—appropriately enough, "I've Got a Little List"!

Babson makes full use of irony (Iris, Maude's niece, says one evening, "We're all locked in safe and cozy for the night now") and humor (in a casual aside, Babson equates sex maniacs, religious cranks, and literary critics). In fact, the only minor flaw is her villain, who seems to possess every clichéd symptom of paranoia known to man.

At heart, however, Babson's tale of multiple murder is a psychological thriller. The action of murder is not central; the thought of murder is. Throughout the novel, there is an invisible *deus ex machina* propelling all the characters toward their destiny. (Even the murderer is found to have a brain tumor—the ultimate way to lose one's self-control.) Babson's theme, the mad are among us and unrecognizable, is a chilling one for holiday fare, and she does a creditable job of convincing us that this is true.

—Mattie Gustafson

Police Procedural

The Gold Frame by Herbert Resnicow. New York: Avon, 1986. $2.95.

This is the third novel by Herbert Resnicow dealing with the cases of husband-and-wife team Alexander and Norma Gold. Gold has been dubbed "a mighty intellect on the order of Nero Wolfe," and there are some parallels (but more contrasts) between the two detectives. Both are immensely erudite and are big, heavy men, but, where Wolfe is fat and flabby, Gold is sheer muscle. Neither man goes out very often, but, where Wolfe is confined to his quarters for psychological reasons, Gold has recently suffered a heart attack and must avoid physical exertion. Wolfe needs a lot of money to maintain his lifestyle; Gold is well off (before his attack, he was an expert consulting engineer) but cares more for the puzzle to solve than the fees involved. Wolfe's cases are told by his legman, Archie Goodwin, who lards his narration with much snide humor at Wolfe's expense. Gold's cases are told by his wife, whose narration is full of Jewish humor and witty remarks at her dearly loved husband's expense. And, in both series, there is hardly any violent action onstage; these are puzzle stories, and Resnicow plays fair with the reader.

Alexander and Norma, along with Pearl Hanslick, have been called by Burton Hanslick's client, Daniel Pereia Belmont, to investigate a painting that is purported to be a newly discovered Vermeer. Belmont is an enormously rich man, Chairman of the Board of the Fine Arts Museum of New York, and owner of the museum itself and the property on which it stands. He has a personal, as well as a financial, interest in learning whether the painting is genuine. And, while he is explaining the situation to the four, a phone call from the museum interrupts them with the message that Director Orville Pembrooke has been murdered.

Alexander deduces immediately that the murder and the investigation are connected, but Belmont does not want him to investigate the crime. He does not seem particularly upset by the news.

But, if Belmont is rather blasé about Pembrooke's death, the staff of the museum have an entirely different reaction: one and all, they are jubilant. Every one of them hated Pembrooke, and they would all gladly chip in for a medal to be awarded to the murderer. That joy is tarnished by their realization that every one of them had ample motive, and is suspect.

Pembrooke had lunch every day in his private office, to which no one was ever admitted without a specific invitation. And his lunch was always the same: champagne and oysters, which he extracted from their shells with his own personal oyster knife. Being left-handed, he would wield the knife with his left hand, while wearing a glove on his right hand to protect himself from cuts from the shells. He was found with the oyster knife in his neck, and there were no indications of anyone else having been in the room; the handle of the knife contains Pembrooke's fingerprints only. It seems like an impossible crime indeed.

We learn much fascinating detail of exactly how a museum operates; what everyone does and how, how paintings are authenticated and restored, and how fakes are detected (not an easy job; it is acknowledged that even experts, and groups of experts, can be deceived, and that *any* museum's exhibits may include some that are forgeries).

The suspense mounts as the investigation proceeds, and Alexander is up against a deadline; he must make his report on the authenticity of the Vermeer within a limited time. And, while he convinces Belmont that he cannot investigate the painting without investigating the murder, he will get nothing for solving the latter without a satisfactory report on the former.

This is one of the finest puzzle-murder mysteries of recent times.

—Robert A. W. Lowndes

Fourth Down, Death by Michael T. Hinkemeyer. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. $13.95

Fourth Down, Death by Michael T. Hinkemeyer is the third in a series featuring Emil Whippletree, elderly sheriff of Stearns County, Minnesota. With his creaky bones and even creakier educational credentials, Emil is sure no rural Sherlock Holmes. But his all-punches-pulled interrogations, his all-embracing compassion, and his deep sense of personal failure and guilt are more appropriate here than two-fisted righteous indignation, for this trail ends with a criminal, a crime, and even a punishment hard to imagine anywhere else but Hinkemeyer's Stearns County.

We have been to this neck of the woods, some seventy miles north of Minneapolis, several times before, most notably in Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* and most recently in Garrison Keillor's *A Prairie Home Companion*. If you found Gopher Prairie disgustingly parochial and Lake Wobegon even more disgustingly benign, perhaps you will feel more at home in St. Cloud, where rock-ribbed practicality co-exists with an almost tangible spiritual dimension. This interplay of the sacred and the profane gives Hinkemeyer a unique slant on some fairly heavily worked raw material: religious visions, collegiate football, academic intrigue, vaulting political ambition, and, of course, murder.

Found in some brush along the river bank (the "Garden of Gethsemane") near the campus of North Star University is the very pretty, very rich, and very dead body of Alicia Stanhope, promising honor student and promising, but evidently not always delivering, tease outside the classroom. The revealing clue: stuffed in her mouth is a small Nerf football bearing an image of the college church. Clear as a Minnesota lake,

somewhere in the feuding academic, athletic, and religious communities of this rural Paradise Lost lurks a crazed sex killer. Maybe. And will the religious nuts get in the way of the homecoming game?

A good case can be made for the book's plot and style; however, most of Hinkemeyer's characters are as hard to swallow as Emil's chewing tobacco. I cannot for the life of me imagine what attracted him to these people: a manipulative college president with a carefully crafted aura of respectability; a beloved football coach standing by "his boys" while trying to set a new win record; a reactionary department head scheming reaction; a retired military veteran with a dark secret; impatient victim's parents threatening to go over the cornpone sheriff's head; an idealistic young professor denied not only tenure but also suspected of murder. I should think that a writer's instinct for self-preservation would be enough to warn him off. One would truly need a touch of the divine to breathe life into these cardboard cutouts!

So, too, the elaborately woven religious symbolism of the novel stands in sad contrast to the unbelievable religious characters. Bunny Hollman, who, after claiming to have seen the Virgin Mary in a pine tree starts spouting erotic poetry, good and bad news for members of the congregation, and inaccurate point spreads for football games, wears thin real quick. Gabriel's Guards, a sort of Hell's Angels for Christ, come and go without adding anything detectable to the story. Particularly annoying, to me at least, why do thousands of seemingly sensible people happen to believe in the dubious authority of Bunny's crackpot visions? Hinkemeyer brought this pitiful, shapeless mass to a new Fatima in the Forest and simply ditched them.

It's a real shame, too, since Hinkemeyer can develop characters, especially small-town types, as well as anyone. "Cowboy John" Pfluger, for example, a completely typical small-town hood, brought a smile of recognition to my ruddy country-boy face with his low ends and even lower means. So too did a waitress at a local watering hole and an alcoholic deputy sheriff. Hinkemeyer, at his best, anyway, should also be credited with having found small-town America's voice, the kind of affectionate verbal roughhousing that is possible among people who have known each other intimately all their lives.

We can only hope that, in Emil's next case, which I hope is not long delayed, Hinkemeyer will give us a whole gallery of believable people observed up close as well as a cleverly crafted storyline and deep blue lakes.

—Peter A. Prahar

The Death Ceremony by James Melville. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. $12.95

While attending a prestigious New Year's tea ceremony in Kyoto, Superintendent Tetsuo Otami of the Hyogo Prefectural Police Force is witness to the assassination of the tea ceremony's Grand Master. The assassination is obviously the work of a professional, but, when Otami is assigned to the case, he finds it increasingly difficult to decide whether the victim was the assassin's target or an unfortunate bystander who got in the way of the true target: the British Ambassador to Japan, who was also in attendance. Further complicating the case is the possibility that Otami's house guest, an English student of Japanese culture, might be involved.

James Melville is the pseudonym of Peter Martin, a British diplomat who has spent some time in Japan as the Cultural Counsellor for the British Embassy in Tokyo. An avowed enthusiast for all things Japanese, his love for the Japanese people and their culture shows through in this latest novel in the Superintendent Otami series. Utilizing a style similar to that of Tony Hillerman in that his detective is a part of the native culture, Melville allows the reader to view the Oriental world through a native's eyes to excellent effect.

But, unlike Hillerman's work, the Otami series is more akin to the cozy village mysteries of the British tradition. There is none of the American PI novel's usual toughness, while the characterization is downplayed, except for the Japanese culture, which becomes almost a character in itself. In the end, while the plot is tangled enough to satisfy any aspiring amateur detective, it is the Japanese culture and the unique thought processes of the Japanese characters that make Melville's new novel such an enjoyable read.

—Charles de Lint

Sleep with the Angels by Robert L. Bolton and Russ Musarra. Brecksville, Ohio: SNB Publishing, 1985. $3.95

It is a cool autumn night in Cleveland. Jesse Scranton and Jimmy Darner, a pair of two-bit armed robbers, are out for a night of fun. They abduct, rob, rape, and abandon a nurse, Carla Maxwell. Hurrying from the scene of the crime, they run a stop sign and are stopped by a patrol car. Afraid that their gun-laden car will be searched, they shoot the two policemen, killing one. More police arrive, and Scranton and Darner are forced to flee on foot.

Homicide Detective Bob Romano and his colleagues quickly establish the identities of the two cop-killers. Scranton and Darner, however, have vanished. Weeks of searching prove fruitless, and the investigation grows cold. Romano, in charge of the special unit working exclusively on the case, doggedly tries to uncover new leads. He also becomes increasingly attracted to Carla Maxwell, who learns that the rape has left her pregnant. Meanwhile, Scranton and Darner, who have been holed up in the city, resume their criminal activities by sticking up motorists and then leaving them locked in the trunks of their abandoned cars to die. When and how will they finally be caught?

Sleep with the Angels is written in a realistic, no-frills style that quickly catches hold of the reader and his emotions. Like its main character, Detective Romano, it can be both tough and sentimental. Notable among the well-drawn secondary characters are Artillius Banks, a dapper escaped con who helps the police, and a bank guard named Pinkerton Powell. This is the first book in a planned series.

—M. Hornyak

McGarr and the Legacy of a Woman Scorned by Bartholomew Gill. New York: Viking-Penguin, 1986. $14.95

We like to find a body on the first page, since it saves a lot of conjecture about who is going to get it first. So does Chief Inspector Peter McGarr of Dublin Castle, since it rescues him and his wife Noreen from a boring holiday at her father's horse farm. McGarr does not really get far from the horses, since the body is that of Fionnuala Walton, Ph.D., D.V.M., Founder and Proprietress of Greenore Eugenics, the horse breeders. Miss Walton is dead from a broken neck at the foot of the attic stairs. McGarr calls it a crime and stays on to investigate as a favor for the new Assistant Commissioner, who says: "Friends of mine in the area and the less made of it the happier I'll be."

This is the seventh of Gill's novels about McGarr, a sleuth who has been favorably compared to Simenon's Maigret. His detection methods are devious, and part of the deception has his wife (red-haired, green-eyed Noreen) under her maiden name infiltrate the other family involved in the operation of Greenore Eugenics. These are the Daughertys. In fact, it was the late Dan Daugherty who "scorned" Fionnuala two days before their marriage for Mna Doran, who was carrying his son. This son, Tom, is

now Manager of Operations for Greenore Eugenics.

Not only are the families involved together in the breeding operation but also in the ownership of the very valuable land on which it stands. The cast of players is rounded out by Fionnuala's sisters, Siobhan and Machala, a niece, Deidre, and Tom's brother, Dan Junior.

Gill gives vivid descriptions and is at home in the machinations of racehorse breeding, pedigree, and estrus charts as well as the facets of a stud farm. His people are believable in both speech and action. The use of language and turns of phrase give color to the dialogue and stamp it as undeniably Irish. We have read several of the earlier novels in this series and look forward to the next appearance of the astute Inspector and his delightful wife.

—Richard and Karen La Porte

Farmboy by Marian Skedgell. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. $14.95

A book with one-dimensional characters makes for boring reading. This is the problem with Marian Skedgell's book. Her characters have no depth or body.

Psychiatrist Dr. Lucille Esker and her ex-husband, Dave Littlejohn, a State Police officer, are rejoined, if not until death do them part, then at least until they solve the murder. Billy Durke, young man-about-town, is killed near the state farm where his brother, Colin, is already doing time for killing their father. Colin is blamed for his brother's death, too.

The most glaring fault of the book is that it is not even a well-constructed mystery. Skedgell violates a basic tenet of a good mystery by not playing fair with the reader when she reveals the murderer. The culprit must be someone who has a central role in the story, not someone who hovers around the edges. While this last sentence might spoil the book for some, it is a point that must be made.

This is a Joan Kahn book. One expects better from her.

—Richard H. Beaupre

Not Exactly a Brahmin by Susan Dunlap. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. $12.95

"Realism" in the police procedural usually means gore by the gallon, barrack-room bawdiness *à la* Joseph Wambaugh, or a warts-and-all exposé of lawbreaking law-enforcers. This appealing and intriguing police mystery by Susan Dunlap presents a much more low-key, gentle, yet believable portrait of a Berkeley woman homicide detective, Jill Smith, investigating the killing of a wealthy society "Brahmin" the brakes of whose Cadillac fail on the city's steepest hill. The plot is an old-fashioned mystery, with a limited cast of suspects, solved mostly by the detective's sympathetic understanding of human character. But the book is very much in the police procedural rather than "great detective" mould. There are lovingly detailed detours exploring the social world of the Berkeley cops, apart from the central investigation. The realism comes from the unsensational but up-to-the-minute construction of the Berkeley *milieu* and the likeable portrayal of an everyday young woman, with ordinary vices like addiction to doughnuts and ice cream and untidiness, who nonetheless is a tough, street-wise, and resourceful detective. The mystery narrative is suspenseful, full of teasers, and with a skillfully orchestrated rigmarole of last-minute red-herrings. Definitely recommended for the mystery and police-life buff, who will look forward to this author's next one.

—Robert Reiner

Junior Year Abroad by Howard R. Simpson. New York: Doubleday Crime Club, 1986. $12.95

"The nude girl lay face down half in and half out of the bathroom shower, her black hair a damp, bloody mop, clogging the drain."

The stabbing victim is an American student who is spending her junior college year in France under the auspices of Willington University's foreign studies program. Inspector Roger Bastide of the Marseille police is assigned to head the murder investigation. He gets little assistance from the university staff. For the most part, they are distracted by academic politics. Clues are few, progress slow. Bastide is further hampered by interference from his abusive superior. The arrival from the United States of the victim's self-important father, demanding action *now*, does not help either.

Then the body of a second American girl, roommate of the first victim and bearing similar wounds, is found in a cave. The plot thickens. Assisted by his Corsican associate, "Babar" Mattei, and an inept underling named Lenoir, Bastide's methodical police work begins to unearth pieces of the puzzle. Suspense simmers nicely, slowly heating up to a full, violent boil with a well-crafted climax.

Despite its setting, *Junior Year Abroad* is less an academic mystery than a gastronomic one. Bastide is a policeman of appetite. His mind dwells on food. He anticipates it, he prepares it, he consumes it in jubilation. Page after passage after paragraph... He also enjoys a sexual appetite that is lovingly revealed. Fortunately, Bastide wrenches himself from these passions often enough to satisfy those who prefer the pursuit of mystery to vicarious mastication and copulation.

Competently written, *Junior Year Abroad* is a well-paced suspense novel to be enjoyed by he who relishes any or all of its main ingredients: an able police procedural and an epicurian delight in food and sex.

—Pat Fickes

Death of a Nymph by David Delman. New York: Doubleday, 1985. $12.95

This book is an odd combination of being almost annoyingly cute to skirting the edge of being hardboiled. Not surprisingly, these shifts in tone do not work that well.

Lieutenant Jacob Horowitz has been invited to speak at Byrd School. This is an exclusive all-girl school populated by mostly bitchy and neurotic people. The invitation to speak is the result of the friendship between Jacob's wife, Sergeant Helen Horowitz, and Olivia Templeton. Olivia is a strong candidate to be the next headmistress of the school.

In short order, there is a confrontation between Jacob and Roger Denny, who is competing with Olivia for the job. That evening, Jacob is shot and wounded in his home, and Olivia is found murdered in hers with the letters EX marked on her forehead.

Roger Denny quickly becomes the prime suspect. Helen wants to find out who shot Jacob and killed her friend. She runs into opposition from her superior, Deputy Inspector Cox, and from Lieutenant Kelsey, the homicide cop in charge of the case. Roger Denny disappears, and nude paintings he had done of several staff members and students are being slipped under their doors with the letters EX marked on the paintings.

What does EX mean, and who killed Olivia? Unfortunately, I did not find myself caring very much. The author seems to be trying too hard to say things in a different way. This results in a somewhat muddled flow that slows the narrative. Thin characterizations also make some characters' actions hard to buy.

I found the book far too easy to put down. I finished it, but I can't recommend that you start it.

—Ron Tatar

Inspector Ghote Hunts the Peacock by H. R. F. Keating. Academy Chicago, 1985. $4.95

Academy Chicago Publishers here releases in paperback the 1968 *Inspector Ghote Hunts the Peacock,* a cross-culturally fascinating entry in the Inspector Ghote series. Bombay Police Inspector Ganesh Ghote, a both timid and courageous soul, flies unexpectedly, with great nervousness and anticipation and at extremely short notice, to the city of his dreams in the country of his dream—that is, to London, England—in order to present his injured superior officer's paper at an international conference dealing with narcotics and international drug-dealing. He arms himself with a garishly checked woolen overcoat—winters in England are expected by Bombay standards to be impossible—as well as with a set of preconceptions about his dreamland.

His reaction to stepping for the first time on British soil is mixed. Ghote's experience delivering Superintendent Ketkar's paper is an unmitigated disaster, but the missing-person case he reluctantly investigates in London during welcome breaks in the conference proceedings proves in the final analysis to be a success, and a resounding one at that. Ghote has an uncanny ability to "latch on to things," and he can assume an adopted cultural identity in order to disarm, a witness or a source of information. That ability comes to good use for him, because the early culture shock he experiences nearly undoes him. Initially awed by London and by the idea of Britain and Empire, Ghote comes to find a reality that is quite different from what he expected, not just a clash of cultures in many respects but the moral differences between cultures. Seemingly bi-cultural, for he has seen England in his mind as a second home, he finds himself disoriented. For every person he feels he can trust, there are others he mistrusts. He has to find individuals who, regardless of their culture, can be reliable.

The initial problem arises when, upon arrival at Heathrow, he is immediately contacted by an effusive cousin, Vidur Datta, who runs an Indian restaurant in London and keeps a very Indian home. Datta appears at the airport, prostrates himself before the embarrassed Ghote, and begs his distinguished police officer relation to look for his wife's niece, Ranee, nicknamed The Peacock by her friends, because she is so proud and individualistic. Datta and his strong-willed wife speculate that The Peacock, who has been missing since Trafalgar Day, has been seduced, abducted, abandoned, and perhaps murdered by the pop singer Johnny Bull, whose steamy lyrics resound from jukeboxes in most of London's cheap cafés. The Peacock, in whose room Ghote, to his discomfiture, is quartered for the duration of the conference, may be a runaway (Ghote exhaustively searches her remaining belongings and comes to some contrary conclusions) but may have gone on her own accord. But Ghote cannot, try as he might, find a lead that pans out. Out of pride and familial obligation, even though he would rather not be burdened with the matter when preparing to deliver the dreaded paper, he traces The Peacock's movements—he becomes, in effect, her posthumous tail—and interviews Johnny Bull and his current groupie Sandra, as well as her associates at the Cock Robin Cafe, the three vicious and drunken Smith brothers, who, according to their proud mother, furnished their flat on what they had been able to steal in a month.

In the process, Ghote initially learns more about late 1960s British culture than he does about The Peacock, who remains ever elusive. He encounters his first miniskirts ("two girls showing four long plump stretches of nylon-covered leg above four soft rounded knees. . . . For perhaps two minutes he regarded the phenomenon earnestly. Then he found that his mind was made up. He did not approve") and roving bands of racist youths, as well as teenaged English girls sold on a romantic vision only remotely approximated by the late 1960s rockers ("She couldn't stop loving that man, no more than a butterfly can stop singeing its wings in the candle-flame") and finally—remember, this *is* in the late 1960s—comes to grips with an English culture that glorified India in its myths of Empire and in the Indian-inspired music of artists such as sitarist Ravi Shankar, but which despised the individual "colored" person. Ghote's disillusionment becomes the flip side of his over-awe for things British, so that the man who arrives at Heathrow in a gaudy checked woolen overcoat, with a bag which he finds to his horror is different and therefore gauche, leaves a man who sees Big Ben and Westminster as smokescreens for real English behavior. In between, Ghote is subjected to haughty shop assistants, who either tell him he can't afford what they have or patronize him in telling him what they have he *can* afford, and to members of New Scotland Yard and the London police force, who ignore him or mock him mercilessly: "That someone as pompous, self-satisfied and prejudiced could be walking the beat as a London policeman sent all his notions of what Britain stood for cascading to pieces."

But, as there always is an England, there always is a happy ending, or at least a semi-happy ending. The Peacock never surfaces, but Ghote is able, back-handedly in his investigations, to uncover an international drug ring, and he is supported not only by the vigilant constable on the beat—another British cliché of the "bobby" ringing true—but also by Superintendent Smart (with a name like that he *must* be trusted), who resolutely does not hold to the class, race, sex, and age distinctions that repeatedly disturb Ghote. As an Indian, Ghote finds that English people expect him to either acquiesce to their particular cultural definitions of people's status or not, and his view of them is that of an outsider who nevertheless has kept the outer trappings of their cultural myths as an ideal. For the most part, these people look at him and see "Indian" or "colored." They don't see the obvious—the common humanity—and, when the disappearance of Ranee, The Peacock, is solved, it is precisely because the obvious has been overlooked. *Inspector Ghote Hunts the Peacock* merges mystery with cross-cultural differences, and the result is enthralling. Keating writes so that one's tendency to skim is effectively stifled; it is easy to read every word of this mystery, because the reader literally sees it through Ghote's eyes, and they are eyes that redefine mystery through the perspective of the outsider looking in to a place he would like to be, only to find out that that place is where he could be and that he desperately wants out, yeat at the same time needs to bring the criminal to a justice that transcends cultures.

—Susan L. Clark

Cozy

Not Dead, Only Resting by Simon Brett. New York: Dell, 1986. $3.50

Simon Brett's new mystery, *Not Dead, Only Resting,* can be best compared to the majority of episodes of the television series *Murder, She Wrote.* It is diverting, sometimes fun or thrilling, and it moves along fairly well, yet, in the end, it hasn't done much beyond what was expected.

The "resting" of the title is the term used by the English acting profession as the time

between acting jobs. Professional actor/amateur detective Charles Paris finds himself in one of these periods and takes up with a fellow actor to do a redecorating job in order to make ends meet. The flat they are to do is owned by two homosexual men who own and operate the restaurant below. They have closed it up and gone for a month-long holiday in France. When Charles and friend show up, they find one of the men murdered and the other missing.

It is hard to say much more about the plot without giving away too much because there is not a great deal of substance until all the loose ends are tied up toward the end. A large portion of the book is concerned with setting up all the supposedly unrelated elements of the mystery. Though they are not boring, they are not quite interesting enough to stop the reader from thinking, "Where is all this leading?"

There are a few elements from the *Murder, She Wrote* school of plot structuring that make the book less than believable. One is the obvious red herring suspect. You know, the prime suspect who has been given the most obvious motive and opportunity so that the audience will not miss it, but, because it is so blatant, he couldn't have done it. If he had, there would be no mystery. Another is the "big coincidence." There is a coincidence in *Not Dead, Only Resting* on which most of the solution hinges, yet there seems to be little or no reason for it to happen the way it did, except to serve the plot.

In the way of characters, the book is lacking. Much of what it is trying to say is that we should be more tolerant of homosexuals, yet it portrays them as stereotypes. As for Charles Paris, he seems constantly downtrodden and depressed. He is separated from his wife, he drinks too much, and he has an agent who will barely lift a finger for him. None of this is recent—it has been happening for years. Paris just does not seem to have enough nerve to do anything about it. He does not seem to have much character, good or bad, to command the reader's interest.

All in all, *Not Dead, Only Resting* has little to offer except a mildly diverting read, which does not make it bad, just okay.

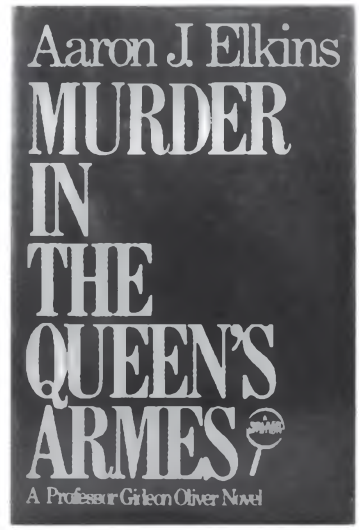
—John Kovaleski

Murder in the Queen's Armes by Aaron J. Elkins. New York: Walker, 1985. $14.95

It's a busman's honeymoon for newlyweds Gideon and Julie Oliver at the Queen's Armes in Dorset, England. Gideon, a professor of physical anthropology who does not rejoice in his nickname "the skeleton detective," drops in on a dig being run by Nate Marcus, a former classmate. An atmosphere of suspicion among Marcus's co-workers and an impending investigation into his questionable theories and management quickly lead to a disappearance and a corpse, identified by Gideon's skeletal detection. He later shows himself conversant with psychological skills as well, to solve this and a subsequent murder.

Fans of Elkins's two previous Oliver mysteries will miss agent John Lau but cheer the reappearance of Professor Abe Goldstein, though he fits into Thomas Hardy country a trifle uneasily, like matzo at a cream tea. American readers should enjoy the triumph of Gideon's anthropological methods over the more traditional investigation of Scotland Yard's Detective Inspector Bagshawe. And Julie and Gideon's well-deserved marital bliss will bring a smile to the lips of the most jaded.

Indeed, Elkins's strongest suit is his engaging series characters. The closed circle of suspects is less involving, and Elkins does not depict the European background of this book (and of *Fellowship of Fear*) with as much feeling as he did the Olympic Peninsula



in *The Dark Place*. The anthropological evidence ranges from somewhat dry to quite interesting, with fascinating and relevant asides on cross-cultural body language. The necessary clues are fairly presented, leaving the less than observant reader chagrined. But all is not armchair detection: a suspenseful episode puts the Olivers in jeopardy from a hound worthy of the Baskervilles. In sum, a satisfying puzzle, leavened with humor and peopled with charming characters we will look forward to meeting again on home ground.

—Meredith Phillips

The Latimer Mercy by Robert Richardson. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. $12.95

The cathedral town of Vercaster resurrects its defunct Arts Festival to celebrate the 400th anniversary of a visit by Elizabeth I, and Augustus Maltravers, playwright, wit, and brother-in-law of Canon Cowan, is in town to oversee the start of the festivities. The day before the festival opening, a rare sixteenth-century Bible, the Latimer Mercy, is stolen from the cathedral; the day after the opening, Diana Porter, a controversial actress, disappears from the Dean's garden party. Are the two events related? The police think not; then, on the fourth day of the festival, horror is literally brought home to Maltravers when a human hand is nailed to the Canon's front door. Further strange and frightening events follow. Maltravers, early on, says of the Bible theft, "It's so pointless, there has to be a point." Is this true of all the incidents, or is there a madman roaming the cathedral city?

Robert Richardson has created in this first novel a work which effectively combines the theatrical and ecclesiastical mysteries. He has peopled his world with characters ranging from the elderly, kindly, gently humorous Bishop to the dedicated young deputy Precentor to the practical Canon Cowan and his capable wife, Melissa, and the comfortable Dean and his overbearing spouse. Maltravers at one point says of the garden party that it is "Barchester revisited." We find, also, Detective Chief Superintendent William Madden, a cold, humorless man who has a supreme belief in the infallibility of police routine, and his rather more imaginative, and infinitely more likable subordinate, Detective Sergeant David Jackson. The best-drawn characters are Augustus Maltravers and Tess Davy, an actress and Maltravers's love. Through their eyes, we see the ripples of pain and sorrow which the events surrounding the festival cause, and it is Maltravers who ultimately understands where the police have gong wrong and recovers the truth.

The novel is not flawless; there are some cumbersome phrases, the humor is at times forced, and there is a red herring of a particularly obvious sort. There is, however, much more to recommend the book. Richardson has a fine sense of character, place, and plot. The reader can experience the

calm of the cathedral precincts; he who has an interest in the theatre will delight in the descriptions, alas too brief, of the theatrical productions which make up part of the festival. He who reads mysteries for the puzzles will be more than satisfied, for there are sufficient clues to discover the culprit, yet none so obvious that one can be certain of his deductions too early. He who reads for character and *milieu* will finally put the book down hoping for a return engagement by Augustus Maltravers, David Jackson, and Tess Davy.

—Krystan V. Douglas

Death and the Princess by Robert Barnard. New York: Dell, 1985. $3.50

Superintendent Peregrine Trethowan of Scotland Yard makes his second appearance for Robert Barnard in *Death and the Princess*.

Before succumbing to cancer in Brixton jail, Snobby Driscoll warns of a plot involving the young Princess Helena—*distant* heir to the Royal throne, but Royal, nonetheless. Perry Trethowan is sent to guard the princess on her daily round of charitable activities and to find out the truth concerning the alleged plot.

In the course of his investigations, Perry meets Royal attendants James Brudenell, Princess Helena's private secretary (who later turns up dead, a supposed suicide), Lady Dorothy Lowndes-Gore, the princess's lady-in-waiting, and various other secretaries, footmen, clerks, and chauffeurs along the Royal "conveyorbelt of flunkeydom." He also interviews a representative sample of the princess's latest batch of boyfriends: Jeremy Styles, actor; Harry Bayle, M.P.; the honorable Edwin Frere, youngest son of a peer and therefore among the idle rich, etc. The other corpse, journalist William Tredegold, is among these four or five boyfriends currently attending the princess.

With two dead bodies on the scene, Buckingham Palace is concerned, Scotland Yard is concerned, and Perry spends the remainder of the book discussing various and sundry noble misdeeds with various and sundry noble persons. The whole thing, to quote Garry Joplin, Perry's surprisingly intelligent Watson, is "boring as hell."

Dorothy L. Sayers makes her investigations such a joy that the solution almost doesn't matter. Agatha Christie makes the solution such a triumph that her sometimes tedious investigations are more than worth the effort. Barnard/Perry's investigation is long and tedious; the solution, though a bit surprising, does not make up for what has not come before.

Barnard does have his moments. His description of Edwin Frere is priceless: "he was tall, fretful, handsome, with a lock of hair falling over cold blue eyes; he had a ski-slope nose and petulant mouth, and he looked at the [gambling] tables with a yearning, hungry expression, as if he had arrived at the gates of Paradise five minutes after closing time." And I must confess that Perry gets better with every outing. He is almost human (or at least interesting) in *The Case of the Missing Brontë*, Barnard's third book starring this Scotland Yard Superintendent.

But *Death and the Princess*, though a "nice little murder," is definitely forgettable.

—Mattie Gustafson

Put Out the Light by Sara Woods. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. $13.95

Sara Woods's 45th mystery will please the fans of Meg and Roger Hamilton and their close friends and partners in crime detection, Antony and Jenny Maitland.

As usual, the story begins with the Hamiltons having a friendly chat in the Maitlands' living room after their traditional Tuesday-night dinner. They are discussing the new play in which Meg will star: a rewrite of a recently discovered outline of a mystery by Restoration author Sir John Cartwright. Meg is quite excited by the treatment given the play by writer Jeremy Skelton.

The reader is shortly introduced to the cast at a publicity party, where the producer announces that the opening will take place on a Friday the 13th. The announcement is hardly out and remarked upon when a black cat saunters into the room and, once seen by all present, promptly drops dead. This sort of puts a damper on the affair and gets people to wondering how the devil the cat got *into* the room, for goodness's sake. Is it a harmless prank or a bad omen?

Superstition is played to the hilt when rehearsals get underway and a series of odd happenings begin. The first day, a line from Shakespeare is found scribbled on Meg's dressing table: THIS IS NO PLAY OF MINE. Every few days thereafter, a new event causes disruption: a frightened magpie set loose in the theater, a thunderous voice issuing ominous epithets. Obviously, someone, or something, wishes to foil the production. The producer calls upon Antony Maitland to determine the source of the aggravations. Soon, he and the cast are divided on their ideas as to the perpetrator. Is it the ghost of Sir John Cartwright, who does not like the changes in the play, or does some member of the ensemble have a secret desire to foul the boards?

When the shenanigans reach the point that a member of the cast is nearly asphyxiated by the gas heater in his dressing room, the police get involved, and the worries take on a more serious tone. How far will the vicious ghost or mysterious prankster go? All the way to murder? The veteran comedian thinks so and is soon proved correct. She is found with a dagger in her back.

Since Antony has used well his ample reasoning powers and talent for observation, he is soon able to tie the incidents together and name the heinous murderer. (Since there was never but one plausible reason given for not wanting the play to go on, the deduction did not amaze me, but everyone else was impressed.)

For the followers of the Hamilton/Maitland mysteries, *Put Out the Light* will nourish their habit: ten chapters begin with the Hamiltons and Maitlands hashing over the events of the day, or of the previous day, in the Maitlands' living room over drinks or tea, after breakfast, lunch, or dinner. This gets a little tiring for me after a while, as I would like to see a little of the action first-hand rather than hear of it through Meg's teasing musings. And I wonder why they have a Tuesday-night ritual of dinner together when they also share meals almost every other day of the week. Ah, well, man cannot live by plot alone.

Sara Woods does present lively characters, a tantalizing peek into the backstage workings of live theatre, and a mild mental puzzle for the reader to solve.

—Linda Lee Barclay

A Clubbable Woman by Reginald Hill. New York: Signet, 1985. $2.95

As both players and fans can attest, rugby can sometimes by a violent sport. In this novel, Reginald Hill explores not only the mayhem on the playing field but also the passions in the clubhouse and in the players' homes, and a knowledge of rugby rules is not necessary for the enjoyment of an excellent detection tale involving Hill's odd-couple team, Dalziel and Pascoe. This is another example of their early association, first published in England in 1970 and now available in the United States.

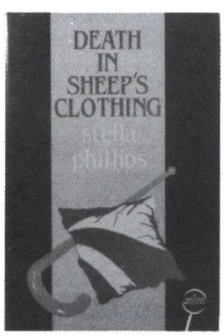
The story begins with a Saturday afternoon rugby game in which 39-year-old Sam Connon receives a healthy kick to the head, administered by one of his own teammates, according to some players, and, dazed, Connon leaves the field. In the clubhouse, an old friend, Marcus Felstead, administers a reviving drink and sends him on his way home. En route, Connon is stopped by the local law for erratic driving, given a sobriety test, and released. Arriving home, he finds his nosy, belligerent neighbor, Dave Fernie, also concerned over his behavior as he turns into his drive. According to Sam's later testimony, he enters the house, sees his wife Mary sitting in the lounge watching television but does not disturb her, feeling suddenly very ill, staggers to his bed, and passes out. The police are called to the scene several hours later, when Connon comes to and discovers his wife dead, evidently from a terrible blow to the head as she sat watching television. By the time Superintendent Dalziel and Sergeant Pascoe arrive, Connon has been sedated and questioning is necessarily postponed. No murder weapon is found, and there is no clue as to its identification.

It comes as no surprise to Pascoe that his superior, Dalziel, is also a member of Connon's rugby club and, while no longer an active player, is still known as "Bruiser" Dalziel to other club members and, of course, knows Sam Connon personally. While filling in details of Connon's earlier prowess and promise, Dalziel manages to disparage Pascoe's involvement with football—implying a lesser sport enjoyed by holders of university degrees such as Pascoe's. This is only another of Dalziel's constant denigrating references to the differences in their respective educations and backgrounds, which Pascoe is certain are designed purposely for his irritation. Despite their obviously opposite

views and lifestyles, they work well as a team and seemingly enjoy their bickering relationship. Dalziel is also able to brief Pascoe concerning the murdered woman, having known her before her marriage to Connon, and implies that she was generous with her favors but not an outright tramp. When Connon's daughter Jenny arrives, both she and her father are questioned extensively, and then the detectives begin to interview other club members. Following Mary's funeral, Dalziel and Pascoe are called to Connon's home to examine a letter Jenny has received, an anonymous scrawl informing her that Connon is not her natural father. Although Jenny admits little, she has always felt that her mother used people and delighted in stirring up unpleasantness, and Sam now confesses that Mary taunted him several times while angry, telling him that Jenny's real father was one of his fellow club members.

As the detectives dig more deeply at the club, they find another situation similar to Mary's pre-marriage days, this time involving Arthur Evans and his stunning younger wife Gwen, who is greatly admired by all male club members, with Arthur openly and angrily jealous. Pertinent to the murder case, club gossip has Arthur suspecting Connon of having an affair with Gwen, and on the night of the murder she was absent from the club for an unexplained period, but then so were several of the men. As the investigation proceeds, the detectives uncover other club intrigues, Dalziel using his usual bulldozer tactics and slyness and Pascoe operating on what he hopes to be a more cerebral plane. The surprising solution results in one of Hill's best police procedurals. He has a talent for incorporating humor and such a credible human element with police detection that his admirers are never disappointed and will count this one of his superior tales.

—Miriam L. Clark



Death in Sheep's Clothing by Stella Phillips. New York: Walker, 1983. $2.95

Grace Roach, who was assaulted and robbed years ago in her antique shop, has retired to a spacious rural English home to live the life of a recluse. Nephew and heir-to-be George and his wife Laura join her in Elmbridge, slowly remodeling a former police station. Aunt Grace has few other contacts: her faithful companion, the gardener's boy, an ex-German aviator now in the antique business.

Why would anyone steal half of a set of Meissen figurines? For that matter, why would anyone smother Grace Roach as she sits alone in her home one evening? This is the puzzler that Stella Phillips sets bland Inspector Matthew Furnival to solve when he is called into action by the energetic young Sergeant Cantwell of the local constabulary. She contrasts Furnival's measured advances to the solution with Cantwell's eager spurts of activity as suspicion rests on one, then another of those who might have benefited from Grace Roach's death: George Shannon who needs money now, not when Aunt Grace dies a natural death; Laura Shannon, wishing she had never moved to the dull countryside where there is nothing to do and no money with which to get away; Miss Bennett, the housekeeper who is bullied by her employer; Sid Robbins, "simple minded" but known to have been violent; Bill Baer, who knows well what a genuine pair of Meissen figurines would bring in the antique market; or even the mysterious prowler who has been seen in the neighborhood.

The well-plotted story leads to a dramatic climax, but the author is fair in providing clues for the careful reader. Stella Phillips has written several other Furnival mysteries, only one of which has been reprinted by Walker in the United States. We may hope that others will follow and provide more insights into the character of the reticent Chief Detective-Inspector Furnival.

—Colleen Barnett

Oxford Blood by Antonia Fraser. New York: W. W. Norton, 1985. $13.95

Antonia Fraser, in her fifth Jemima Shore mystery, has taken the deathbed confession of an elderly midwife and spun a tale of murder and mystery that falls somewhere between an episode of *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* and P. D. James's *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*.

After much trepidation, Jemima is persuaded by her boss at Megalith Television, Cy Fredericks, to do a story focusing on the lives of the upper crust of Oxford's undergraduates. "Golden Lads and Girls" is to be reminiscent of *Brideshead Revisited*. Cy wants this Brideshead extravaganza to be chock-a-block with the privileged few indulging in their privileged lifestyles. Quickly, things start to go wrong, as the most golden of the lads, young Lord Saffron Ivy, realizes that someone wants him dead.

In spite of his good looks and numerous charms, Lord Saffron is not a shining example of good manners and breeding. His quick temper and tendency toward public brawls have made him less than welcome at most of Oxford's more exclusive restaurants and clubs. Couple this with the fact that he stands to inherit a vast fortune, and you do not have to look too far afield for a motive to murder on the part of any number of suspects. As in other Jemima Shore mysteries, Antonia Fraser has assembled a cast of characters so stiflingly entwined in one another's lives that you cannot help but wonder why they have not tried to do away with each other before now.

In her professional capacity as host of a documentary series, Jemima becomes an intimate observer, an intruder with a license to probe into other people's lives without always asking permission first. As in other investigations, Jemima does not always keep her distance. When the link between the midwife's confession and her assignment for "Golden Lads and Girls" comes to light, she is determined to find the truth. Her investigation will unravel the lives of people who for twenty years have been willing to do whatever is necessary to prevent the truth from going beyond their own small circle.

While Jemima is still the ever-elegant symbol of the self-sufficient female, in *Oxford Blood* you become aware of subtle changes in her personality. She is very involved with a lawyer named Cass Brinsley. Through this relationship, we first see glimpses of Jemima actually considering what her life would be like if she settled down a bit. Do not worry—Jemima is not going to trade her white Mercedes for a shopping cart. For Antonia Fraser's allowing Jemima to develop and to move forward will guarantee that future mysteries will make Jemima's fans even more eager to come back for more. Antonia Fraser should take a page out of her own life and realize that Jemima Shore can do anything she sets her mind to.

—Germaine Arginteany

Oxford Blood by Antonia Fraser. New York: W. W. Norton, 1985. $13.95

Jemima Shore, Megalith Television's leading investigative reporter, is once again embroiled in a curious puzzle. The story begins in a Catholic hospice. In her quest for absolution, Nurse Elsie Connolly is

convinced that an old wrong must be put right. Her dying mutterings to Jemima allude to a baby switch she helped to perpetrate over twenty years ago. Jemima agrees to explore the legal aspects of the situation, but, unfortunately, she is not the sole person privy to the secret. Nurse Elsie received three other visitors at her bedside before dying with a clear conscience. Did her revelation give one of them a motive for murder?

Jemima's professional commitments prevent her from immediately pursuing the legalities of Nurse Elsie's confession. Her lecherous boss, Cy Fredericks, is determined to produce a program aimed at the privileged students at Oxford (largely due to his amorous involvement with a young socialite). He is sure that the "Golden Kids," as he calls them, mean big bucks for his TV studio. Although opposed to the idea at first, Jemima eventually gives in for two reasons. Unbeknownst to her boss, (1) she plans to dramatically contrast the hedonistic lifestyle of the elite with the droning struggle of the majority of the undergraduates, and (2) young Viscount Saffron, son of Lord St. Ives, who was the object of the baby switch, is prominent among the students to be viewed through the relentless eye of the TV camera.

Who is the true heir to the St. Ives title? At stake is the vast wealth and estates of the St. Ives family, including historic Saffron Ivy. All will be directed to the rabid racist Andrew Iverstone if Saffron is proved to be a bastard.

When Professor Mossbanker, affectionately known by all and sundry as "Proffy," discovers the lifeless body of a young student, his death is considered an accident. Several later attempts at young Saffron's life, however, lead the reader to believe that the killer's intent missed his true mark—a killer with an unstable mind so angered by the fact that Saffron is not what he seems that only spilling the interloper's blood will bring him relief.

Jemima's "carefully undefined" romantic relationship with Cass Brinsley is skillfully interlaced throughout the twists and turns of the plot and acts as a buffer to her casual sexual escapades. If a liberated female sleuth is your cup of tea, and you happen to dote on the British aristocracy, madcap characters, the bizarre indulgences of the youthful rich, and the past indiscretions of their parents, you will definitely enjoy this diversion.

Cozy —Liz Tarpy

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A Clubbable Woman by Reginald Hill. New York: Signet, 1985. $2.95

Behind the clever title, this is a rather good police procedural. The middle-aged wife of a rugby club member is apparently murdered by a blunt instrument. Her husband is but one of many suspects. Series detectives Superintendent Andrew Dalziel and Sergeant Pascoe of the provincial city police turn over many of club's rocks and expose a lot of sexual hanky-panky among the members before bringing the case to successful conclusion.

I had read some good reviews of the more recent of Hill's output when I chanced upon this first novel. I hope that Hill has lost his annoying propensity for sharing the baser thoughts of his characters with the reader. I also think that the author's attempt to make Dalziel a watered-down version of Joyce Porter's Superintendent Dover is a mistake. (By now, this opinion has been proven or not.) Except for the foregoing and, oh, the misleading title, the overall is pleasing enough to permit the book to be recommended.

—T. J. Shamon

Chains of Gold by Margaret Lamb. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. $13.95

Chains of Gold takes place in Newport, Rhode Island, amid the monied aristocracy. The heroine is Penny Miller, a writer for the New York magazine *Pleasures and Palaces*, who is asked to go to Newport to help a colleague write a story about the charming old Wentworth house. The magazine article is to include an interview with Miss Victoria Wentworth, the last scion of the wealthy family. Penny decides to take the assignment, in part because she needs money to pay her psychiatrist, who is curing her of "paranoia and fantasizing."

As soon as Penny arrives in Newport, she is thrust into the web of an eighty-year-old murder mystery. Who killed H. H. Wentworth, the family patriarch, in 1901? Was it his wife, the ever-controlling Eugenie? His daughter, the shy Elizabeth? Was it, perhaps, Victoria Wentworth herself—a child at the time of the crime?

The murder setting was a lavish party for Elizabeth and her British fiancé, Lord Deake. Elizabeth despised the thought of marrying Deake; a match arranged by her parents for social reasons.

Luckily for Penny Miller, everyone who was at the scene in 1901 seems to have kept diaries, notes, or books of original poetry—all of which bear on the crime. Also helpful—although potentially irritating to the reader—is Penny's predilection for fantasies which help her clarify certain facets of the long-done murder.

It is through these documents and daydreams that Penny eventually "solves" the case. When she propounds her solution at the book's end, you feel that Penny's been very clever, but you also realize that her solution is only *one* possible reconstruction of the actual events.

During her "investigation," Penny meets Pierre Rose, a college professor who is an expert on the Wentworth family, and Quint Wentworth, Victoria's nephew (several times removed)—the true last of the Wentworth line.

Current action is interspersed with Penny's dreams, in which she imagines that she is back in turn-of-the-century Newport. Her intuition is brought to the fore during these imaginings, and she reconstructs what she has learned (through diaries, interviews, newspaper records, and library files) about the crime's scenes and characters. We found many of these interludes bothersome; they make the story disjointed.

Chains of Gold is different—and interesting if you're keen on reading about a long-ago, high-society murder as envisioned by a stereotyped neurotic-New Yorkish-unmarried-female detective.

Margaret Lamb writes cleverly ("Society seemed to be a locked-room-crime case where nobody was ill-bred enough to spring a denouement, though everybody knew who-done-it"). But the story starts, then stops; flares, then flutters. If you can adjust to the arhythmical pace, you may well enjoy this tale of long-buried secrets and newly dug clues.

—S. Jeffery Koch
Patricia M. Koch

The Paperback Revolution

by Charles Shibuk

NICHOLAS BLAKE

In the dead of winter, Nigel Strangeways travels to Essex on the trail of a missing cat. Unfortunately, this charming eccentricity ceases, and reality intrudes, when two children find **The Corpse in the Snowman** (1941) (Perennial). This is one of Blake's better early efforts, and discerning critics, including Barzun and Taylor, have found much to admire in this work, published in England as *The Case of the Abominable Snowman*.

JOHN DICKSON CARR

A murder is committed in a locked room, and a man is killed in the middle of an empty street—with watchers at both ends. It all seems incredible and impossible. **The Three Coffins** (1935) (International Polygonics) was published in England as *The Hollow Man* and is a model of ingenious plotting and puzzle-making. It also ranks as one of Carr's three best novels and contains Dr. Fell's famous locked-room lecture.

DOUGLAS CLARK

Eleven murders in eleven months by differing means poses a problem for the police of England's northern counties. Masters and Green of Scotland Yard are consulted, and a possible pattern is soon apprehended. So, too, is the possibility of a twelfth crime. Investigative teamwork between local police and the Yard men produce the guilty party in **Performance** (1985) (Perennial). Purists, however, may take strong exception to this novel's ending.

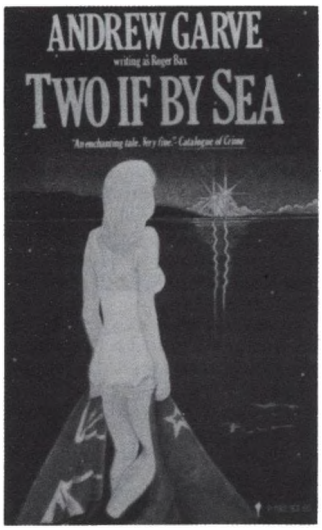
A. A. FAIR
(ERLE STANLEY GARDNER)

The investigating team of small, brainy Donald Lam and the somewhat larger, more aggressive Bertha Cool were among this author's most endearing series characters, and their early adventures were first-rate. Although **Bats Fly at Dusk** (1942) (Ballantine) is the seventh in this series, and not quite up to its author's highest standards, there are enough mental and physical gymnastics to provide a good evening's entertainment.

ANDREW GARVE

Two If By Sea (1949) (Perennial) was originally published under the pseudonym "Roger Bax" and appeared in England as *Came the Dawn*. It tells the suspenseful story of how two Englishmen ingeniously plot to smuggle their native-born wives out of Russia via boat. This novel was the basis for the 1953 film *Never Let Me Go* with Clark Gable.

The Ascent of D-13 (1969) (Perennial) concerns the efforts of two men who must climb a dangerous mountain in order to find and destroy a secret weapon before it falls into enemy hands. This is Garve's masterpiece—a tense and really exciting novel that you do not want to miss.



MICHAEL GILBERT

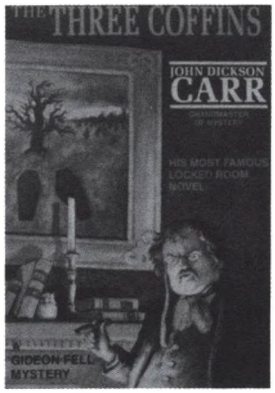
The Long Journey Home (1985) (Penguin) is a tale of international finance, cold-blooded murder, and a thirst for vengeance. This thriller is dexterously plotted and told with subtlety. It moves very well and features sharp characterizations. In other words, just about what you would expect from this veteran author whose talent for reader involvement is uncanny. Series character Jonas Pickett makes several brief appearances.

PALMA HARCOURT

Climate for Conspiracy (1974) (Jove) posits a newly independent Republic of Canada rife with anti-British (and American) feeling. Mark Philip Lowery is knighted and sent to Canada as England's first Ambassador with the warning that severe attempts will be made to discredit him and the nation he represents. A lucid plot line combined with an understated storytelling approach, and an unexpected ending, have produced one of the better spy stories of recent months. This is the first American edition.

GEORGETTE HEYER

This popular author's first essay into crime fiction, **Footsteps in the Dark** (1932) (Berkley), has just received its first American publication. It's a light-hearted tale, set in an old English priory mansion with a reputation for being haunted, and features a cowled intruder called "the monk" who might be a ghost—or something else. This is not a major rediscovery, but it is a pleasant minor work.



ELLERY QUEEN

The Tragedy of X (1932) (International Polygonics) is the first and best of the quartet of novels devoted to the elaborate problems in deduction that starred ex-Shakespearean actor Drury Lane. Queen authority Mike Nevins has said that it "must be ranked among the supreme masterpieces of the golden age of detective fiction, a book of staggering complexity, stunning ingenuity, and dazzling fairness to the reader." This column concurs.

JOHN RHODE

This once-popular (especially in England) and prolific author was one of the important practitioners of the Golden Age. He wrote straightforward detective stories in the demanding tradition of Crofts and Wade, and his series character Dr. Lancelot Priestly is an impressive creation. One is tempted to call him the British equivalent of Nero Wolfe.

The Claverton Affair (1933) (Perennial) is one of Rhode's better early tales that finds Dr. Priestly investigating the suspicious death of an old friend who recently named him as a trustee in his will. Barzun and Taylor have praised the puzzle, the atmosphere, and the unusual method of murder in this work, published as *The Claverton Mystery* in England.

Barzun and Taylor consider **Death in Harley Street** (1946) (Perennial) the best Priestly novel, and this column is inclined to agree. It is certainly a major work that approaches the masterpiece plateau. *Death in Harley Street* deals with a very ingenious method of revenge that demonstrates its author's scientific expertise, and presents Dr. Priestly at his ratiocinative best. Don't miss this one either.

DANIEL STASHOWER

The Adventure of the Ectoplasmic Man (1985) (Penguin) is one of the many manuscripts by Dr. John H. Watson that have been discovered in recent years. It stars Sherlock Holmes and Harry Houdini and concerns the theft of several indiscreet letters written by the Prince of Wales, stolen from a locked vault. While this adventure is not a major "discovery," it is an agreeable work that has its share of entertainment value.

HENRY WADE

New Graves at Great Norne (1947) (Perennial) is a straightforward police novel that contains three murders—including the strangulations of two elderly women. Critic Jacques Barzun found many first-rate elements in this work, which is published for the first time in America.

The Litmore' Snatch (1957) (Perennial) is one of the few stories about child-kidnapping that is given the form of the classical detective story, thus enabling the author to treat sensational subject matter in his own inimitable style. This is Wade's last novel and it is a successful attempt to come to terms with post-World War II values.

Although Wade was one of the really great mystery writers, these two novels do not represent him at the height of his powers. They are both, however, works of considerable merit and distinction. □

Letters

From Ted Serrill:

Yes, wrong decision. Keep "Classic Corner," whatever else you drop.

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From Fred Dueren:

I will vote to keep more reviews and drop the "Classic Corner." The "Classic Corner" idea is good if you truly print classic stories that are not generally available, but most of what has been printed is just early and obscure.

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From Helen Pollack:

Perhaps you could continue "Classic Corner"—which I always enjoy—if less space were alloted to some of the interviews. In TAD 19:2, Ross Thomas contrives to say almost nothing in the almost twelve pages devoted to him.

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From Jeanne M. Leveque:

Having newly come to reading your magazine I have three comments on this latest issue (TAD 19:2). (1) "TAD on TV" could have been cut short since the shows reviewed are no longer on the air—a quibble, I will admit, but somewhere you complain of need for space. (2) On p. 180, you *really* cut something important in the article. The paragraph begins mid-sentence at the bottom of the page, right-hand column. (3) And what is really important—I tried two bookstores to find a book you reviewed on page 208: *Private Eyes 101 Knights: A Survey of American Detective Fiction 1922-1984* by Baker and Nietzel. I have been involved on a research project studying the genre (not limited to American) for about five years with an eye to a possible publishing for paper trade. I would very much like to get a copy. A more up-to-date research volume is needed than the *Encyclopedia* and the *Detectionary*. How do I get a copy? The people in the stores recommended that I get in touch with you.

✓ Unfortunately, our lead time often results in reviews of shows that have been cancelled or are otherwise no longer on the air, i.e., movies. With the increasing use of VCRs, however, and the availability of many programs on tape—and through networks of friends and aficionados—we feel that it is still worthwhile to have these programs reviewed.

You are right about the missing lines in the Mark Twain article. We do our best to prevent errors from slipping into the final product, but occasionally something gets past us.

I hope that by now you have located a copy of 101 KNIGHTS. *As I am writing this, I have someone else searching out a copy for you. If they haven't found one, the address of Popular Press should be sent. (Aren't time warps wonderful?)* —*Michael*

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From Susan L. Clark:

I write book reviews for TAD in my free time, but I spend all my remaining time teaching at Rice University. I will be teaching a Continuing Education course in the Winter '87 session which I think will be of interest to TAD readers. The course is called "Deadlier Than the Male," and I will cover detective fiction written by and about women. This course will begin in February '87. The fee, which will be *very* reasonable, has yet to be determined.

Anyone interested should call (713) 520-6022 or write: Rice University, Office of Continuing Studies, P.O. Box 1892, Houston, TX 77251-1892. I look forward to seeing some of TAD's readers there.

From Peter M. Fergusson:

I purchased my first copy of TAD the other day, hooked by the cover heading *Science Fiction Detective Story*—not bad, gentlemen. I have thoroughly enjoyed the magazine and will send in a subscription.

Now to a comment or two on problems with writing a science-fiction detective story. I have to agree with Dr. Asimov that the combination of the two forms *seems* to be a natural. However—the majority of publishers don't see it that way.

I write science fiction (as P. M. Fergusson), and my first *published* science-fiction detective story, "Murder To Go," will appear in the October 1986 issue of *Analog*—or so Shelly Frier tells me. This is far from the first one I've written, and even this one is making it into print only because Stan Schmidt is an A-#1 risk taker. Four other stories lie gathering dust because there isn't a market. The science fiction isn't "hard" enough for *Analog*, and *no* detective magazine will touch cross-genre stories with a printer's devil—I have the rejection letters to prove it ("Great story, but we can't use cross genre"—EQ). Most science-fiction editors feel the same way, particularly the book publishers, unless the author has a couple of Nebulas or Hugos to his credit—nominations don't count. For short stories, *Analog* is the exception, and now, possibly, *Asimov's*, since Gardner Dozois became editor.

I like detective stories. I like science-fiction detective stories even better, which is why, against the odds, I keep writing them. But getting them published is a witch.

For those who are interested and want to know more before buying the copy of *Analog:* "Murder To Go" falls into the category of police procedural, and the detective is a lady by the name of Debbie McKenzie who happens to be Chief of Homicide on Luna some two hundred years in the future. Another Debbie McKenzie, "Death of a Diplomat," is in the works, which, since the idea came from Stan Schmidt and he's commenting along the way, will most likely also appear in *Analog*.

As a side comment, it amused me to note that, at the end of the article, Baker and Nietzel remark that someday someone may write a Mike Hammer in the twenty-third century. I hope they'll settle for his great-great-grandson, since I have the first of the Leo Hammer stories about ready to go to my agent. It may be of interest to hopeful readers that Leo inherited his ancestor's disposition (much to the dismay of his rather stodgy family) and Betsy, which he carries as a backup to his more modern armament—a predilection which Leo explains: "Even if I

don't hit the SOB first shot, the racket old Betsy makes blows his nerve to hell."

I write with the concept in mind that where humans and allied alien races are concerned, no matter what the technology, the motives for crime are unlikely to change, and that solutions are generated in the detective's head rather than in trick, futuristic gimmicks. Forensics will advance, as will the arsenal of the criminal, but a detective still detects, and it is his *use* of the technology to put together the pieces that makes the story.

Alien forensics is another matter. It was Stan Schmidt's comments over lunch at the Grand Central Oyster Bar about the legal and logical complications where a non-humanoid alien is involved, that gave birth to "Death of a Diplomat." (Is it a crime for Xzyyx to kill and eat poor Paddy McGonigle, or isn't it? Bad form, perhaps, but maybe Xzyyx was acting quite acceptably in *his* terms and thought he was doing Paddy a real favor. What about the case in which both killer and victim are aliens? Add a human instigator with a bad case of xenophobia and a large helping of ill will, who sets the situation up in the first place, and...you get the idea.) It is at this point that the human detective can acquire a real Excedrin headache because motivation is based on an alien world view. A detective trying to apply the "greed, lust, anger, revenge, or psycho" line of reasoning in such a circumstance has problems.

Readers seem to either love this kind of story or hate it, since it tweaks their sense of what is right and normal. Personally, I think it's a challenge to both read and write. I hope that a solid readership will develop for the science-fiction detective story, which will put sufficient pressure on publishers to encourage writers to produce more of its type.

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From Gordon R. Speck:

It is always a pleasure to see an article about Sherlock Holmes, but I must take issue with Barbara Lawrence's "Putting Women in Their Place" (TAD 19:2).

As I chewed upon Lawrence's selection of canonical examples and her conclusions drawn from them, my receptive mood sobered, she—in my opinion—having selected neither the best nor the ripest fruit from that particular tree of knowledge. Such differences, of course, provide the spice of life and the life of articles, but too much of a good thing becomes unpalatable.

Lawrence asserts that Martha in "His Last Bow" is the woman we know everywhere else in the Canon as Mrs. Hudson, an assertion that assails many Sherlockian palates like a green persimmon. Holmes and Watson, after seventeen years of intimate friendship, address each other by surnames. Is it, then, even remotely possible that either of them would so forget himself as to call Mrs. Hudson Martha, even if that really were her given name?

Lawrence's grande finale banishes any lingering hope of an idyllic Sherlockian interlude or even of tangential canonicity. Who is this Parker who shoots through the window of 221B? It's all a TAD mysterious.

From Herbert Resnicow:

This is in response to William DeAndrea's perceptive criticism ("J'Accuse!" TAD 19:2) of my *The Whodunit List* (TAD 18:4).

I agree with almost everything he says.

It takes ten rules to get into heaven and forty rules to write a good whodunit because it is harder to produce a good whodunit than it is to get into heaven. Proof? Compare the number of people in heaven with the number of whodunit writers, including writers of not-so-great whodunits. To make matters worse, I am finding more and more examples of writing that annoys me, and am well on my way to reaching fifty rules for whodunits.

Certainly it is impossible to make rules which, if followed, would produce a good whodunit, a good mystery, or a good story of any kind. I gladly accept the suggestion to call these "rules" advice. (It is possible, however, to provide an infallible rule on how to write a bad whodunit: write a story which has in it at least ten of the "don'ts" listed.) (Now someone will write a story which violates all forty of the admonitions and it will be so good that I will feel like an idiot.)

The one point of disagreement I have with Bill is the suggestion that I do not consider some very good mysteries, mysteries. I would not, even if I could, cast anyone out of the mystery genre. In my *The Third Conflict* (TAD 17:2), I claim that there are as many kinds of mysteries as there are mainstream stories, and, in the *List*, I make it very clear that I am discussing only whodunits. I clearly state that, even though I am limiting myself to whodunits, this is "a list of musts, shoulds, and dislikes for those who want to please me and my like." In short, the list is a set of presonal preferences.

Bill shows his usual perspicacity when he suggests that I believe "a mystery story is something like a crossword puzzle with characters." I have, in fact, written a series called "The Crossword Mysteries" (Ballantine paperback original), in which the clues to the murder are hidden in, and intertwined with, the solution of crossword puzzles, but I have not, I am sure, made them as coldly mathematical as the name implies, nor would I enjoy reading them if they were. My preference is for rational inductive/deductive whodunits. These are the stories I like to read and try to write, not always successfully, I'm afraid. So why do I love Ross, Gregory and John D., Tey, Francis, Thomas, Paul, Dentinger, Ellin, DeAndrea, and a hundred others like them? Because man does not write by rules alone. Nor read by rules, nor live, nor love. Or even advise.

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From Terry Ann Craig:

I'm writing in response to your "Uneasy Chair" column in TAD 19:3 about author identification. I've been reading mysteries of all sorts for years and have frequently been surprised when a familiar author took me into unfamiliar territory.

I do tend to trust an author. I will, for instance, automatically pick up anything by Martha Grimes or Arthur Lyons. I will *not*, however, automatically buy it. I look it over, check the blurbs, read the first paragraph, and then make my decision. If I read a book and am surprised by its content I certainly don't get angry. As far as I'm concerned, nobody is responsible for warning me about a book's contents. If I don't like the new direction, I'm not so quick to buy the next time I see the author's name. But I certainly don't blame him for trying something new. If I like the new direction, fine. And since I enjoy literary analysis, I like to see how an author goes about creating a new story or style or character.

I don't, in short, believe that the author owes me anything. If I like his work, I buy it. If for some reason he loses me, he loses my support. He may owe himself his best effort, but he should certainly feel free to experiment—how else is he to grow and develop? This doesn't mean that I take a clinical approach to my reading; on the contrary, I invest considerable energy and emotion in the authors I like. I do *trust* writers such as Grimes and Lyons and Joseph Hansen and Dick Francis and Loren Estleman, and trust is not something that I give easily. I know that the writers are not really friends or family, but I am fond of them, delighted to see their works on the shelves, happy to renew my acquiantance every time. But they are not bound to remain what they were when we first met.

By the way—I enjoy *The Armchair Detective* enormously. I particularly like the variety you offer, and the reviews are very helpful. Maybe someday I'll gather my courage and submit something. Thanks for a fine journal.

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From Linda Barclay:

I particularly like your putting the question [of author identification] to the readers of TAD 19:3 for a couple of reasons: one, it shows that others are interested in the subject, which may indicate a change in some publishing traditions; and two, I'm curious as heck to find out how the masses feel about it.

My own feelings are, why not? I don't think an author should feel any more restricted to lending his name to more than one series or category, than Dustin Hoffman should feel restricted to playing a particular character type. If I like an author, then I am delighted to find he has a range of style and

interests. If I only want to read certain types by a certain author, then I check out the cover style, blips, etc., depending on the circumstances.

However, I also realize that some readers have no more sense about choosing a book than they do a movie. They pay no attention to directors and producers, and no attention to cover style and flap descriptions. There are so many readers (and my mother is one of them, God bless her) who expect Jack Higgins to write just the same in every book. It took Mom twenty-some-odd-years to get tired of Rinehart, and before that it was Louis L'Amour. She'd be terribly disappointed if Higgins wrote a romantic comedy.

I just wonder if those type fans are the greatest majority of the reading public. And, Michael, if my theory is correct, then you won't get a fair scope from your readership because, I would think, they are a more discerning, intelligent group than the great public. Then again, the fanzines do draw their share of author and/or category fanatics, don't they? I anxiously await the results of your inquiry, and your opinion of same.

I very much enjoyed the interview with J. Gardner by E. Bitowf. (Wouldn't Ebitowf be a neat name?) He seemed to be quite familiar with Gardner's works, which is always nice. There is one thing that bugs me about interviews in general, and it happened a couple of times here. Probably can't be helped under the pressure of doing an interview—it happens on TV shows, too: the interviewer has a list of questions, apparently, and sometimes totally ignores a titillating answer by the subject and rushes, instead, on to some question unrelated to what the subject just brought up. And I don't have the magazine with me, so I can't give you a legit example, but it goes like this.

Q. Why do your heroines always have blonde hair?

A. I like blondes. Out of twelve marriages, I had the most fun with the five blondes. The brunettes were boring, and the redheads totally fascinating for entirely other reasons than brains or humor.

Q. Do you do much research on the towns you write about?

A. Yes. I employ...

When I see or hear an answer like the first one, I want the interviewer to say, "Oh really? If redheads are so fascinating, why don't you write about them, as well?"

But, as I said, I guess the pressure of the interviews, and sometimes the pre-agreed-to questions prohibit spontaneity in the interviewer.

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From Bill Malloy (Managing Editor of The Mysterious Press):

Bill Pronzini is incorrect in announcing that a trade paperback edition of his superb book, *Gun in Cheek,* will be published by Warner Books ("Letters," TAD 19:3). In fact, *Gun in Cheek* will be the first book published in *The Mysterious Press's* new trade paperback line, Mysterious Library—which will go on to reprint some of the finest titles in mystery fiction and reference. *Gun in Cheek* will be in bookshops in March of 1987.

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From Jon L. Breen:

I have to apologize to Bill Pronzini for irritating him with my "What About Murder?" item on *Gun in Cheek.* He had let me know after an earlier review that inclusion in the book did not necessarily mean he thought the individuals discussed were "bad writers," and, to satisfy that objection, I added the word "implicitly," which I guess wasn't enough. This is why I drew the implication I did: when Bill quotes an odd infelicitous line or two from a writer (as with Queen, Halliday, or himself), the reader is led to reflect that even the best may stumble. But, when he devotes several *pages* to a writer's output, as with Prather, in a book devoted to "alternative classics," the reader is led to reflect that the basic appeal of this writer must be his entertainingly bad writing. Still, Pronzini and not I is the authority on his opinions, and I am genuinely sorry to have misrepresented them.

TAD 19:3 is a fine issue. I especially enjoyed, without agreeing with it for a minute, Bill Delaney's hilarious debunkery of Ross Macdonald. I am sure there will be many considered responses. All I will say is that the total effect of a writer's work can overcome any number of specific lapses. And that the statement Macdonald "always displayed a patronizing attitude toward his chosen medium," choosing a pseudonym to "keep Kenneth Millar unsullied," is profoundly unfair. He wrote several mysteries as Millar before adopting the Macdonald name. The reason for the pseudonym was to avoid being confused with (or appearing to trade on) his wife, Margaret Millar, whose reputation in the field was already considerable.

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From John W. Mitchell (who lives and works in California):

This letter is in response to Bill Delaney, whoever he is, and his backward look at Ross Macdonald in TAD 19:3.

First, let me tell Delaney that he showed all of us that he has never traveled the California coast, for there are many places where one would have to drive around a hill, and loop under the road one was just on, to arrive at the beach. This happens because of the design of the freeway off-ramp in location to the hill. The base of a hill may have several levels.

Second, there is a place near Santa Barbara where the Pacific Ocean goes more east and west than north and south. Therefore, depending on the design of the off-ramp he could go east and be headed for the ocean. Again, travel the coast and see.

Third, the issue of the cab shows someone looking for fault, but here is an answer that should help you. *The Moving Target* was published in 1949. During that time, it was not uncommon for L.A. people to take the train to Santa Barbara. It was called the Coast Train, and it pulled in to every little

town along the way, and in 1949 cabs were cheap.

Fourth, Delaney underestimated the understanding of cab drivers. I took a cab into Beverly Hills and placed the same question to my cab driver: "Do the people live in caves?" and he picked up on the fact that I could see no houses in the canyon in which we were, so he said, "Yeah, thirty-room caves up each driveway you see."

Fifth, you went after the statement, "The light-blue haze in the lower canyon was like a thin smoke from slowly burning money," and why I do not know, for it shows once again that you know very little about California and its social structure. Could it be that the slow-burning money refers to the price paid for the land in the lower canyon, meaning that Archer thought the prices were too high? And once again you show your lack of knowledge when it comes to the California coast, for there is a light blue haze that settles in the canyons.

It would be a simple thing for me to go on to numbers six through twenty, but in Delaney's article he shows that he prefers Raymond Chandler over Ross Macdonald, and that is okay, but he must know that Chandler also made errors in his works, such as in *Bay City.* If you follow his directions, you will end up in Santa Monica, yet he also refers to Santa Monica itself. Now, how can two cities be located on the same spot?

These are the kinds of things that the reader overlooks to find pleasure in the story that he or she is reading at the time. After all, it is fiction, and that word, fiction, gives the author the right to redesign locations and settings. But, between Chandler and Macdonald and the descriptions that they gave us, I would have to say that it was Ross Macdonald who knew the coast and its people the best and it was Chandler who knew and understood the city best.

I would like to ask Bill Delaney how, as a

detective, he would address the maid of a client when he may have to use her later. Would he insult her by saying something like, "I don't want to talk to you, you're only the maid," or would he say something to make her feel good so that he could use her when he needed her?

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From Fred A. Glienna:

Bill Delaney's rending of Ross Macdonald is harsh, although reasonably on the mark. Certainly, Macdonald's formalized style, which so often called attention to itself and to its author, enjoys among general readers a reputation far in excess of what it deserves. Even Macdonald's reputation for complex, labyrinthine plots is tarnished by the similarities among so many of the books, and Delaney is correct in pointing this out.

But I wonder how many other authors could take the extremely close scrutiny to which Delaney subjects passages of *The Moving Target?* Certainly, Elmore Leonard would fail, and so would Robert Ludlum and Robert B. Parker, to name only three current authors with lofty reputations. Indeed, if Macdonald is unworthy to be linked with Chandler and Hammett, then Parker, with his thin plotting, is no more qualified to be hooked to them, either.

I suspect that most "popular" authors appear better if their works are read at speed. An intense perusal of each work, phrase, reference, image, and nuance would subvert all writers except Homer, Dante, and Donald Hamilton on a good day.

For me, Macdonald's shortcomings, when compared to the two giants with whom he is so frequently linked, are revealed this way: I can't ever read two of his books in a row, because his weaknesses then start screaming out, a failing that does not apply to either Chandler or Hammett.

To a certain extent, most writers of series novels bear this same failing, and one expects to put other titles, or at least, some time, between reading various installments; it's just that Macdonald had such a high opinion of himself that I tend to come down harder on his failings.

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From Eugenia Honea:

Re: the "article" by Bill Delaney in TAD 19:3: please cancel my subscription to TAD immediately.

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From Cindy Vargo:

If the fellow who wrote the article on Ross Macdonald is such an expert, why didn't he know Macdonald's real name (Kenneth Millar). Or why Macdonald used a pen name? Is Delaney a frustrated Robert Parker?

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From Philip Hopbell:

I can't believe you would publish some kid's term paper for "Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction 201." Bill Delaney's piece is terrible. Quoting Tolstoy: "Groan. More after I get off the floor."

From Joe R. Christopher:

I particularly enjoyed in TAD 19:2 the first half of Frank D. McSherry's "Alice in Murderland." I have had much the same article, with probably a less lively approach, planned for many years; and I have collected some of the books for it. But I'm relieved that McSherry has done it, for at my current rate of progress it would have been at least another ten years before I got to it. This means I get to cross that project off my ever-lengthening list of future plans.

But since I have thought about the topic, let me add one item to McSherry's basic list: *Black Alice* by Thom Demijohn (copyrighted by Thomas M. Disch and John T. Sladek) (Doubleday, 1968). The book has a nice epigraph from Carroll's *Alice,* and its eleven-year-old heroine, Alice Raleigh, talks to an imaginary Dinah, who is sometimes a cat and sometimes a sister. Admittedly, the novel becomes less Carrollean as it goes on, but there are some general thematic parallels throughout (although does not fit McSherry's emphasis on *outré* crime; Alice Raleigh is kidnapped).

A large number of items could be added to McSherry's second list of works with minor references to Carroll. Just recently, Alisa Craig's *A Dismal Thing To Do* (1986) appeared, with a title and an epigraph from "The Walrus and the Carpenter"; it has no internal references to Carroll, however. My favorite of the minor allusions is in Dorothy L. Sayers's "Striding Folly" (1935). Lord Peter refers to the White Queen remembering the future as well as the past, but the reference to *Through the Looking-Glass* comes in a story with important chess games and a dream (a nightmare) about a person being chased on a chessboard, so it has more resonance than most allusions. For simple allusions to the *Alice* books, one can check any of Sayers's novels, I believe. Unless it was in an edition of one of her religious plays with a very short preface, I don't think Sayers ever wrote a book that didn't have a Carrollean allusion—certainly I've run across them in the introductions to the Dantean translations.

I might add, since McSherry and I are both interested in science fiction and fantasy, that "Striding Folly" includes real precognition (*real* within the fictional world, of course), not just a claimed ESP for plot purposes. I might add, secondly, for others interested in SF (not in fantasy, in this case), that the last footnote to my essay "Lewis Carroll, Scientifictionist" (*Mythlore,* 9:3/33 [Autumn 1982]; 9:4/34 [Winter 1983]), contains a survey of several SF stories based on Carrollean materials. I've added an item or two to my collection since I wrote that essay, and I may sometime turn that footnote into an essay on the topic—if someone such as McSherry doesn't beat me to it.

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From Janet A. Rudolph:

I would like TAD readers to know about the Mystery Readers of America, an international organization with members in 37 states (disregard the old flyer) and three foreign countries. The 1986 membership is $15 per year and entitles members to a year's subscription to the *MRA Journal* (6 issues), notices of events and mystery classes, parties, etc. Local chapters are being formed in other areas.

The *MRA Journal* is a thematic mystery periodical containing reviews, essays, articles, interviews, reading lists, calendar, and a section on members in the news. The last issue was on Murder and the Arts, the present issue (April/May) is on Murder in the Plot (Gardening), then Mystery Travel, Mysteries in India, something to coincide with Bouchercon and Murder on the Menu. We meet all our deadlines and come out faithfully every two months.

In the Bay Area we have monthly meetings which may be social or are combined with some aspect of crime fiction (speakers—writers, private eyes, etc.). In addition, I teach thematic mystery fiction—the next class is on The Contemporary British Mystery Novel. There are also seminars taught by other people which I can arrange in any area. Next October 16–October 30, MRA is going on a mystery reader's tour of England. I will be the honorary escort. We will be meeting with British mystery writers over tea and spirits as we meander the British West Country and the South and stop in London. Our trip is limited to sixteen and is just about sold out. Next Spring (1987), we will be going to York and East Anglia for two weeks. In the fall of 1987, we hope to go to Holland and France on a mystery tour. Thanks for giving me the opportunity to address your readers. □

Dial N for Nonsense

by Louis Phillips

Agatha Christie and the Self-Referential Sentence

Douglas R. Hofstadter writes a regular column for the *Scientific American* and has collected his writings together in a volume called *Metamagical Themas* (New York: Basic Books, 1985). In an essay on self-referential sentences, Hofstadter quotes the following contribution from Ann Trail:

Does this sentence remind you of Agatha Christie?

Hofstadter goes on to comment: "That last sentence – one of Ann Trail's – is intriguing. Clearly it has nothing to do with Agatha Christie, nor is it in her style, and so the answer ought to be no. Yet I'll be darned if I can read it without being reminded of Agatha Christie! (And what is even stranger is that I don't know the first thing about Agatha Christie!)"

Does the above paragraph remind you of Eilery Queen?

• • • • •

Thoreau and the Naked Theif

There is a short passage in Thoreau's *Walden* (in the opening chapter on "Economy") that often reminds me of the non-barking dog made famous by Holmes. Thoreau writes: "I have heard of a dog that barked at every stranger who approached his master's premises with clothes on, but was easily quieted by a naked thief."

Must be the makings of a short story there.

• • • • •

Where Nero Wolfe Might Go Sailing

Somewhere between Yorke Peninsula and Kangaroo Island, leading eastward from the Indian Ocean into Gulf St. Vincent, South Australia, is a thirty-mile-wide-channel known as *Investigator Strait*.

• • • • •

Murder Mysteries and Emily Dickinson

Elizabeth Daly, who wrote a number of fine mysteries, once chose the title for one of her books from the following lines by Emily Dickinson. Can you figure out which phrase Daly chose?

Doom is the House Without the Door –
'Tis entered from the sun,
And then the ladder's thrown away
Because escape is done.

'Tis varied by the dream
Of what they do outside. . .

ANSWER:

The House Without the Door (Murray Hill Books, 1942). I wonder what other titles of mysteries have been inspired by the poems of Emily Dickinson?

• • • • •

Thomas DeQuincy and the Philosophers

". . . [I]f a man calls himself a philosopher and never had his life attempted, rest assured there is nothing in him; and against Locke's philosophy in particular I think it is an unanswerable objection (if we needed any) that, although he carried his throat about with him in this world for seventy-two years, no man ever condescended to cut it."

– from *Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts*

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Armchair Mystery Blowing Kit

Are you tired of reading detective stories in the old-fashioned way? Then try reading them inside bubbles that blow about in the wind. Just dip your mystery blower into a disk of our special mixture of water, soap, and ink, and you are underway to a fascinating evening (or day) of detective story fun. One dish gives you an entire novel or an anthology of short stories. Please specify language. □

Minor Offenses

by Edward D. Hoch

One of the problems with writing this column six months before its publication is that I sometimes tend to speculate on future events which will be old news by the time the column appears. From the vantage point of summer, it seems to me that the most important and far-reaching short story event of 1986 could well be the September publication of *Murder in Manhattan* by William Morrow.

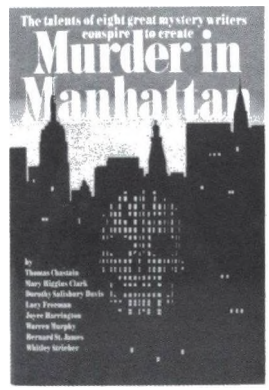
Murder in Manhattan is an anthology of eight new mystery and suspense stories written especially for this book, although two of them will have appeared in the August issues of *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Playboy* a month or so before publication. The authors are a group who call themselves the Adams Round Table and consist of Thomas Chastain, Mary Higgins Clark, Dorothy Salisbury Davis, Lucy Freeman, Joyce Harrington, Warren Murphy, Bernard St. James, and Whitley Streiber.

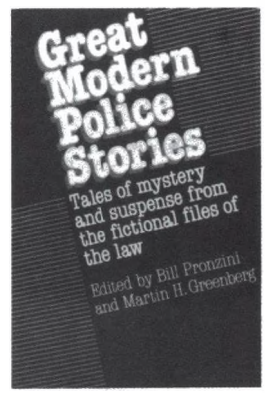
The unique thing about *Murder in Manhattan*, distinguishing it from all previous mystery anthologies, is the large commitment made by the publisher—an exceptional advance payment to the authors and a promised advertising budget of $125,000. This is a promotional figure usually reserved for bestsellers, and in fact anyone with a knowledge of publishing can tell you that Morrow will not show a profit on the book unless it does indeed become a bestseller.

So we wait to see what September will bring. Possibly it will be the first anthology of mystery and crime stories ever to appear on the *New York Times* bestseller list. If so, it could herald a whole new attitude toward anthologies and collections of short stories. It could prove once and for all that mystery anthologies need only to be backed by aggressive promotion to sell well. If that is the case, *Murder in Manhattan* would seem to be in the right hands. It was put together by Bill Adler, the man who created the Robins Family books written by Thomas Chastain, and he is already planning to follow it with *Murder in L.A.*

At its midpoint, the year has seen a number of very good mystery anthologies. *Great Modern Police Stories*, edited by Bill Pronzini and Martin H. Greenberg (Walker, $15.95), brings together a dozen stories and novelettes from the 1940s to the present by such well-known proceduralists as Lawrence Treat, Georges Simenon, Frances and Richard Lockridge, Michael Gilbert, and Ed McBain. Included are non-series stories by Cornell Woolrich, John D. MacDonald, William Campbell Gault, Jack Ritchie, and others, as well as a new story by Susan Dunlap.

Another outstanding new anthology is *American Murders*, edited by Jon L. Breen and Rita A. Breen, which brings together for the first time eleven detective short novels from the old *American Magazine*, first published there between 1934 and 1954 and never reprinted till now. The collection, available from Garland Publishing at $18.95, includes short novels by such once-popular writers as Phoebe Atwood Taylor and Herbert Brean, along with those by writers like Hugh Pentecost, Richard Martin Stern,





and Mignon G. Eberhart, who are still active. The best thing about these stories is that they are all traditional whodunits, virtually novels in miniature. Jon Breen and his wife contribute a valuable introduction and headnotes, as well as a checklist of all the mystery short novels published by the *American Magazine*. The result is a fitting tribute to a publication, and a genre length, now vanished.

More Tales of the Defective Detective in the Pulps (Bowling Green State University Popular Press, $9.95 paper, $19.95 cloth) is a sequel to an odd anthology published three years ago. Here again, editors Gary Hoppenstand, Garyn G. Roberts, and Ray B. Browne have searched through the old pulps and come up with a collection of eight stories (all from 1939 issues of *Dime Mystery Magazine*) about detectives with some sort of physical or mental handicap. The result offers ample proof that not all pulp stories are worth reviving.

Sad to say, the latest of Dennis McMillan's limited-edition series of Fredric Brown pulp stories, *Pardon My Ghoulish Laughter* ($30, introduced and signed by Donald E. Westlake), is more evidence of this fact. After seven volumes of his pulp stories, even the talents of Fredric Brown wear thin. The lead story here, "The Incredible Bomber," is undeserving of reprint even as a period piece.

A better collection of pulp stories can be found in *Hard-Boiled Dames* edited by Bernard Drew (St. Martin's Press, $16.95). These fifteen stories of female detectives and crooks from the 1930s pulps includes the original pulp illustrations and some interesting historical background. None of the stories is from *Black Mask*, which never used women as series characters, but many important *Black Mask* authors are represented by stories which appeared elsewhere. The book has a brief preface by Marcia Muller.

This year's MWA anthology is *Last Laughs*, edited by Gregory Mcdonald (Mysterious Press, $16.95), a nice collection of fourteen stories, even if a few of them might not seem all that humorous.

Another of the massive volumes from Avenel Books, *101 Mystery Stories*, edited by Bill Pronzini and Martin H. Greenberg, offers the best hardcover bargain around for only $8.95. Most of the stories are short-shorts, but mainly unfamiliar ones by top authors.

Turning to the mystery magazines, one of my favorite stories so far this year is Lawrence Block's "As Good As a Rest" in the August EQMM. Though it may not appeal all that much to the traditional mystery reader, I found it a refreshing change of pace. I had no idea where the story was headed until the final page, and what more can one ask from a good mystery?

"The Gallowglass" by David Braly (AHMM, August) offers proof that the traditional locked-room mystery is still alive and well. I hope we will be seeing more like this from Braly.

Donald E. Westlake's popular series thief Dortmunder returns in "Horse Laugh" (*Playboy*, June), which probably works better as humor than as a crime tale. □

Catalogue of Crime

by Jacques Barzun

S322 Michael Gilbert
Dr. Crippen (Famous Criminal Trials)
Odhams 1953

A short book, so short one fears the treatment will be skimpy, but it is not. Every important fact and inference is clear, all the theories are stated and judged, the trial and summing-up are tersely reported, and, in addition, a foreword and a postscript supply further thoughts that can only be called wise. Such abilities invite attention to the author's latest publication in the genre: *The Oxford Book of Legal Anecdotes.*

S323 B. M. Gill
Seminar for Murder
Scribner's 1985

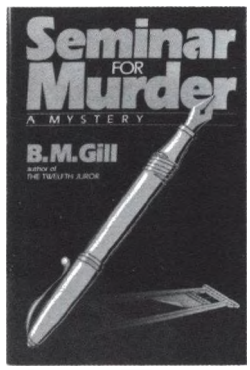
This academic lady began with a remarkably well-wrought and austerely written tale called *Death Drop.* She went on with two more, each showing great ability but a gradual slackening of control over form and content. In this latest, the faults continue to worsen: characters and behavior are unlikely, and the language is so obviously designed to be youthfully up-to-date that one begins to suspect a literary agent saying, "Don't sound like the schoolmistress that you are." These defects make the "seminar"—actually a club meeting of crime-fiction writers—quite dull, even and especially when murder follows the Detective Chief Inspector's keynote address to the assembly of authors and their dependents. Among these is a particularly obnoxious infant in arms and his unmarried mother, whom we are to like and admire for her "irreverence." Let us hope for reform and a return to early mastery.

S324 John Sherwood
Green Trigger Fingers
Scribner's 1984

Death at the BBC was a good piece of not-too-distant historical reconstruction—only half a century in the past. The present tale finds Celia Grant, the middle-aged widow who lives by horticulture, at the center of a brutal village killing—two weekenders murdered for no apparent reason. Celia goes to work unraveling the strands of botany, art, and parochialism, to an accompaniment of additional mayhem. A bit huddled at the end, but otherwise agreeable—for the reader, that is: Celia decides to leave the village.

S325 Dorothy Uhnak
Victims
Simon and Schuster 1985

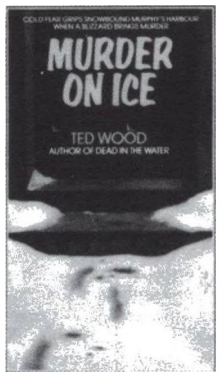
To New Yorkers, the Genovese case is a badge of shame: a young woman was beaten and stabbed to death while a couple of dozen neighbors watched, hiding behind window curtains and the security of locked doors. Miss Uhnak has turned fact into fiction, no doubt with modifications. Anna Grace is



killed because she is mistaken for someone else, and the crime is represented as typical of the violence that goes on in big cities with the connivance of officialdom, from the police to the U.S. Senate. The narrative skill shown in the author's previous tales exerts itself here again, but her view of the urban jungle is driven in so hard that it loses the power to convince, even though a former policewoman is speaking.

S326 Maurice Walsh
Danger Under the Moon
Lippincott 1957

One can see why the late George Stevens, who was an excellent editor and a good judge of literature, published this piece of fiction. It has a superficial charm and keeps promising dramatic interest. Actually, this first-person account by a jailbird of his return to his native town in Ireland is worse than a missed opportunity; it is painful. We want to know why he killed his cousin Robin and why he got off with a sentence of twelve years for manslaughter, as well as how he is going to fare among those he had left behind—mother, lover, and the rest. What we get is Irishisms and irrelevance, literary allusions and melodrama of a low order. A pity.



S327 Pamela Elizabeth West
Madeleine
St. Martin's 1983

Novelized true crime is a tricky feat. It is attempted here to re-create the enigmatic figure of Madeleine Smith, the beneficiary of a verdict of Not Proven at the Edinburgh assizes of the spring of 1857. The author draws on Madeleine's outspoken love letters to Emile but is no match for them in her own prose. The result is a lumbering narrative the chief originality of which consists in the use of little verses, satirical and sentimental, that the case gave rise to in the town and the local press.

S328 Harold T. Wilkins
Murders Solved and Unsolved
Odhams 1958

The fifteen cases are divided into six types. Each set is dealt with summarily by a mind whose vulgarity is displayed in its continual snorting at people "of the time"—people who did not see this or do that in our enlightened way. A few of the cases are not even mysteries—for example, the so-called Bermuda Triangle. The one contribution to knowledge is the reproduction of documents relative to the case of the *Mary Celeste.* Elsewhere, suspicion and repetition fill pages lacking even in surmise, let alone cogent reasoning.

S329 Ted Wood
Murder on Ice
Scribner's 1984

We are still not far from Toronto, at Murphy's Harbor, where the police force consists of one man and his dog Sam. Both are engaging creatures and do things just remarkable enough to be accepted as true without straining our right to believe. But, unlike Reid Bennett's excellent first adventure, *Dead in the Water,* this one is made up of incidents less varied and scenes less inherently attractive. That is what one must expect when water turns to ice. □

Checklist

by M.S. Cappadonna

MYSTERY, DETECTIVE AND SUSPENSE FICTION PUBLISHED IN THE U.S. MAY-JULY 1986

Adams, Harold: **The Fourth Widow.** Mysterious Press, 15.95

Auster, Paul: **Ghosts.** Sun and Moon Press, 12.95

Ballard, Mignon F.: **Raven Rock.** Dodd, 15.95

Beechcroft, William: **Chain of Vengeance.** Dodd, 14.95

Belfort, Sophie: **The Lace Curtain Murders.** Atheneum, 14.95

Biggle, Lloyd: **The Quallsford Inheritance: A Memoir of Sherlock Holmes from the Papers of Edward Porter Jones, His Late Assistant.** St. Martin's, 15.95

Bramble, Forbes: **Dead of Winter.** Hamish Hamilton, 18.95

Breen, Jon L. and Rita A., eds.: **American Murders: 11 Rediscovered Short Novels from the American Magazine, 1934-1954.** Garland, 18.95

Brett, Simon: **Dead Romantic.** Scribner's, 13.95

Bruce, Leo: **Such Is Death.** Academy Chicago, 14.95

Burns, Rex: **Ground Money.** Viking, 15.95

Cain, James M.: **Career in C Major, and Other Fiction.** McGraw, 17.95

Clancy, Tom: **Red Storm Rising.** Putnam, 18.95

Cody, Liza: **Head Case.** Scribner's, 13.95

Coker, Carolyn: **Vines of Ferrara.** Dodd, 14.95

Collins, Eliza G. C.: **Going, Going, Gone.** Scribner's, 13.95

Cook, Bob: **Disorderly Elements.** St. Martin's, 12.95

Corrington, John William and Joyce H.: **So Small a Carnival.** Viking, 15.95

Courter, Gay: **Code Ezra.** Houghton, 18.95

Crider, Bill: **Too Late To Die.** Walker, 14.95

Cross, Amanda: **No Word from Winifred.** Dutton, 14.95

Daniels, Philip: **A Genteel Little Murder.** Academy Chicago, 14.95, 4.95 pa.

Deford, Frank: **The Spy in the Deuce Court.** Putnam, 17.95

Drew, Bernard A., ed.: **Hard-Boiled Dames: Stories Featuring Women Detectives, Reporters, Adventurers and Criminals from the Pulp Fiction Magazines of the 1930's.** St. Martin's, 16.95

Eberhart, Mignon S.: **A Fighting Chance.** Random, 14.95

Ferrars, E. X.: **I Met Murder.** Doubleday, 12.95

Freemantle, Brian: **The Blind Run.** Bantam, 15.95

Gardner, John: **Nobody Lives Forever.** Putnam, 13.95

Gash, Jonathan: **The Tartan Sell.** St. Martin's, 14.95

Gill, B. M.: **Seminar for Murder.** Scribner's, 13.95

Giroux, E. X.: **Death for a Doctor.** St. Martin's, 13.95

Goldfuss, Howard S.: **The Judgment.** Donald I. Fine, 16.95

Grafton, Sue: **C Is for Corpse.** Holt, 14.95

Gray, Malcolm: **Look Back on Murder.** Doubleday, 12.95

Harrison, Ray: **Death of a Dancing Lady.** Scribner's, 13.95

Highsmith, Patricia: **Little Tales of Misogyny.** Penzler, 15.95

Hill, Susan: **The Woman in Black.** Godine, 15.95

Hilton, John Buxton: **Moondrop to Murder.** St. Martin's, 12.95

Holt, Samuel: **One of Us Is Wrong.** Tor, 14.95

Jeffries, Roderic: **Almost Murder.** St. Martin's, 12.95

Johnson, Haynes and Howard Simons: **The Landing.** Random, 17.95

Jones, R. W.: **Saving Grace.** St. Martin's, 14.95

Kaye, M. M.: **Death in the Andamans.** St. Martin's, 14.95

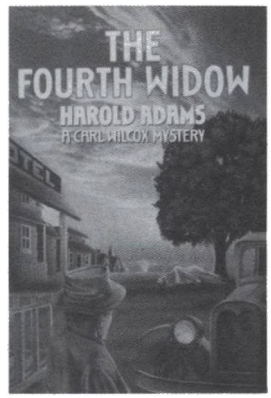
Kellerman, Faye: **The Ritual Bath.** Arbor House, 15.95

Kemp, Sarah: **Lure of Sweet Death.** Doubleday, 12.95

Kenyon, Michael: **A Healthy Way To Die.** Doubleday, 12.95

Knight, Kathryn Lasky: **Trace Elements.** Norton, 15.95

Kunstler, James Howard: **Blood Solstice.** Doubleday, 16.95



Lescroart, John T.: **Son of Holmes.** Donald I. Fine, 15.95

Lewin, Michael Z.: **Late Payments.** Morrow, 13.95

Linington, Elizabeth: **Strange Felony.** Doubleday, 12.95

Luber, Philip: **Deadly Convictions.** Warner, 15.95

Lupica, Mike: **Dead Air.** Villard, 15.95

Lutz, John: **Tropical Heat.** Henry Holt, 14.95

Mcdonald, Gregory, ed.: **Last Laughs: The 1986 Mystery Writers of America Anthology.** Mysterious Press, 16.95

MacDonald, John D.: **Barrier Island.** Knopf, 16.95

McLeave, Hugh: **Death Masque.** Walker, 14.95

Maxwell, A. E.: **The Frog and the Scorpion.** Doubleday, 16.95

Mitchell, Gladys: **Faintley Speaking.** St. Martin's, 14.95

Mitchell, James: **Sometimes You Could Die.** Hamish Hamilton, 18.95

Morriss, Will: **Timor Mortis.** Walker, 14.95

Muller, Marcia: **The Cavalier in White.** St. Martin's, 15.95

Ormerod, Roger: **Dead Ringer.** Scribner's, 13.95

Papazoglu, Orania: **Sanctity.** Crown, 16.95

Parker, Robert B.: **Taming a Sea Horse.** Delacorte, 15.95

Paul, Barbara: **But He Was Already Dead When I Got Here.** Scribner's, 13.95

Peters, Elizabeth: **Lion in the Valley.** Atheneum, 14.95

Philips, Judson: **Nightmare Time.** Dodd, 14.95

Posey, Carl A.: **Red Danube.** St. Martin's, 16.95

Price, Anthony: **Here Be Monsters.** Mysterious Press, 15.95

Pronzini, Bill: **Deadfall.** St. Martin's, 15.95

Pronzini, Bill and Martin H. Greenberg, eds.: **Great Modern Police Stories.** Walker, 14.95, 10.95 pa.

Reynolds, William J.: **Moving Targets.** St. Martin's, 16.95

Roosevelt, Elliott: **Murder at Holcaw Barony: An Eleanor Roosevelt Mystery.** St. Martin's, 15.95

Ross, Jonathan: **Burial Deferred.** St. Martin's, 12.95

Sherlock, John: **The Golden Mile.** Viking, 17.95

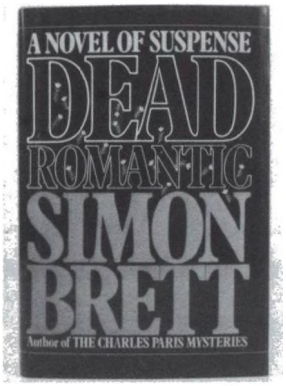
Smith, Charles Merrill: **Reverend Randolph and the Splendid Samaritan.** Putnam, 15.95

Smith, Evelyn E.: **Miss Melville Regrets.** Donald I. Fine, 17.95

Stephan, Leslie: **Murder Most Distressing.** St. Martin's, 12.95

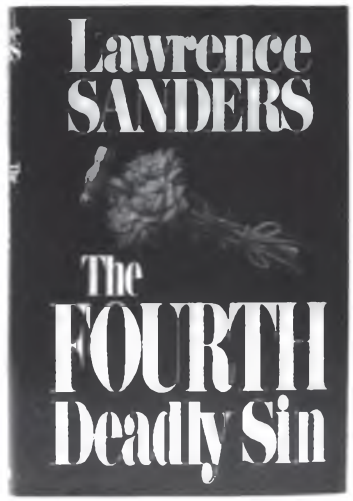
Stuart, Ian: **Pictures in the Dark.** Doubleday, 12.95

Tourney, Leonard: **The Bartholomew Fair Murders.** St. Martin's, 14.95
Truman, Margaret: **Murder in Georgetown.** Arbor, 16.95
Underwood, Michael: **Death at Deepwood Grange.** St. Martin's, 12.95
Upton, Robert: **Dead on the Stick.** Viking, 15.95
Van Etten, Teresa: **Dead Kachina Man.** Sunstone, 10.95
Vine, Barbara: **A Dark-Adapted Eye.** Bantam, 14.50
Wallace, Marilyn: **A Case of Loyalties.** St. Martin's, 13.95
Westlake, Donald E.: **Good Behavior.** Mysterious Press, 15.95
White, Teri: **Tightrope.** Mysterious Press, 15.95
Wiltse, David: **Home Again.** Macmillan, 16.95
Winslow, Pauline Glen: **Judgement Day.** St. Martin's, 15.95
Woods, Sara: **Nor Live So Long.** St. Martin's, 13.95



Paperback Books

Asimov, Isaac: **Banquets of the Black Widowers.** Fawcett Crest, 2.95
Barnard, Robert : **Out of the Blackout.** Dell, 3.50
Bingham, Stella: **Charters & Caldecott.** Penguin, 3.95
Brett, Simon: **Amateur Corpse.** Dell, 3.50
Caine, Hamilton T.: **Hollywood Heroes.** Berkley, 3.50
Crumley, James: **The Wrong Case.** Random/Vintage, 5.95
Davis, Ken: **Melting Point.** Fawcett Crest, 2.95
Fair, A. A.: **Bats Fly at Dusk.** Ballantine, 2.95
Francis, Dick: **Banker.** Ballantine, 4.50
Giroux, E. X.: **A Death for a Darling.** Ballantine, 2.95
Grady, James: **Runner in the Streets.** Pocket, 3.95
Green, Richard Lancelyn: **The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, after Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.** Penguin, 4.95
Greenwood, John: **Murder by Moonlight.** Bantam, 2.95
Grimes, Martha: **Help the Poor Struggler.** Dell, 3.50
Halleran, Tucker: **A Cool, Clear Death.** St. Martin's, 3.50



Heyer, Georgette: **Footsteps in the Dark.** Berkly, 2.95
Hill, Reginald: **Exit Lines.** Signet, 3.50
Janice, J. A.: **Injustice for All.** Avon, 2.95
Kellerman, Jonathan: **When the Bough Breaks.** NAL, 3.95
Kelley, Patrick A.: **Slightly Lethal.** Avon, 2.95
McBain, Ed: **Eight Black Horses.** Avon, 3.95
McBain, Ed: **The Mugger.** Avon, 3.50
MacInnes, Helen: **Friends and Lovers.** Ballantine, 3.95
Moody, Susan: **Penny Black.** Gold Medal, 2.95
Morrell, David: **The Fraternity of the Stone.** Ballantine, 4.50
Nash, Robert Jay: **The Mafia Diaries.** Dell, 3.50
Parker, Robert B.: **A Catskill Eagle.** Dell, 3.95
Peters, Ellis: **Dead Man's Ransom.** Fawcett, 2.95
Philbin, Tom: **Under Cover.** Gold Medal, 2.95
Prescott, Casey: **Asset in Black.** Avon, 3.95
Price, Anthony: **Sion Crossing.** Mysterious Press, 3.95
Roosevelt, Elliott: **The Hyde Park Murder.** Avon, 3.50
Sanders, Lawrence: **The Fourth Deadly Sin.** Berkley, 4.50
Scotti, R. A.: **The Kiss of Judas.** Fawcett, 3.95
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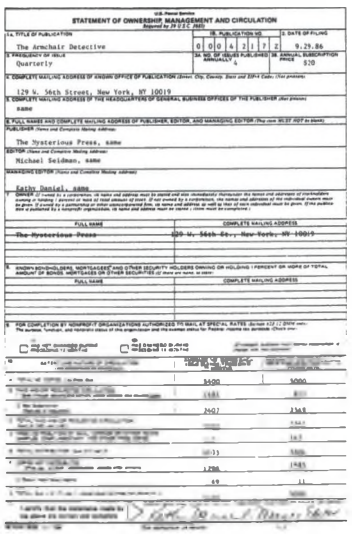

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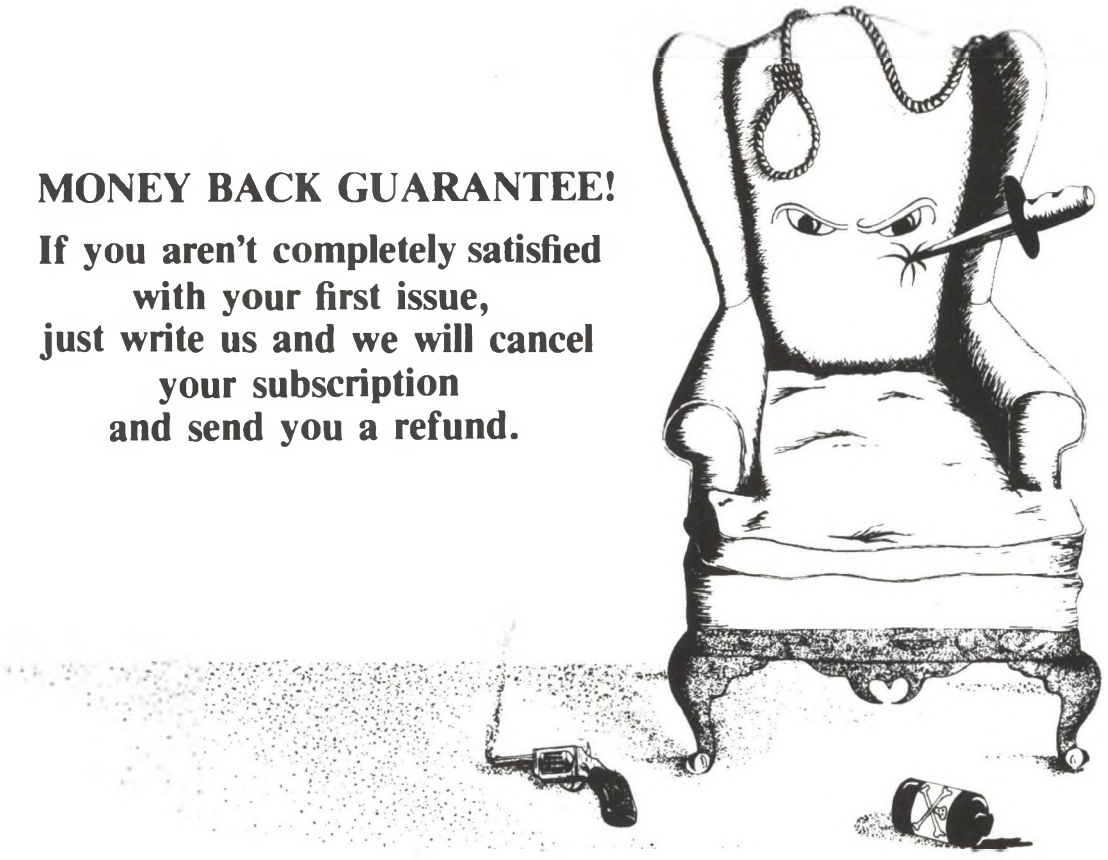

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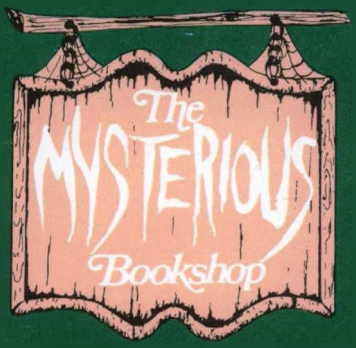

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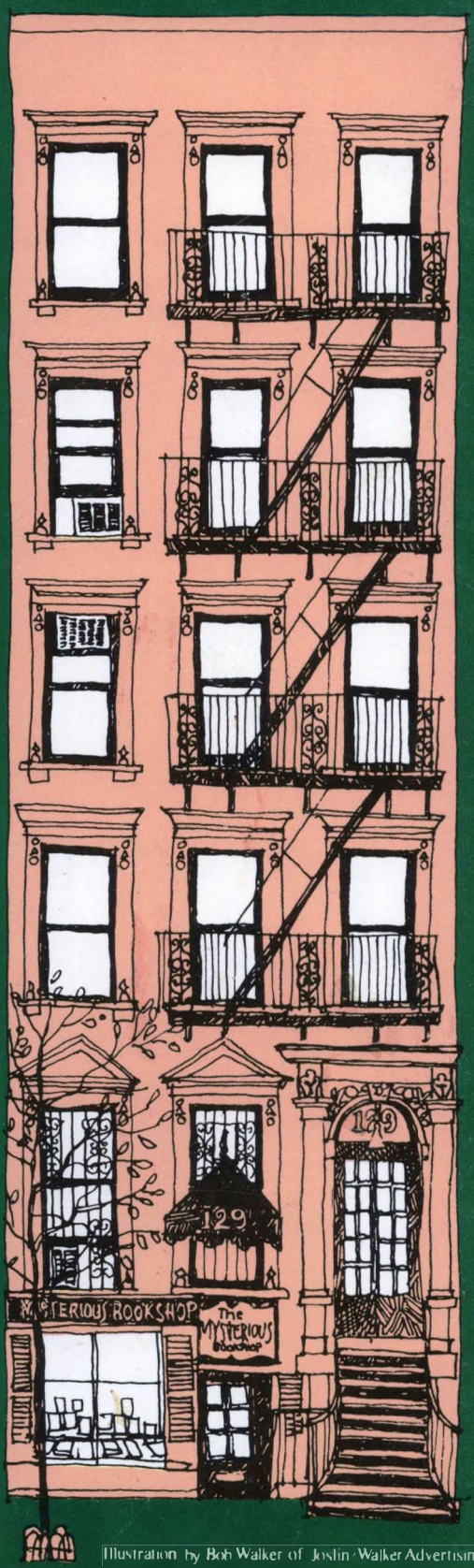

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