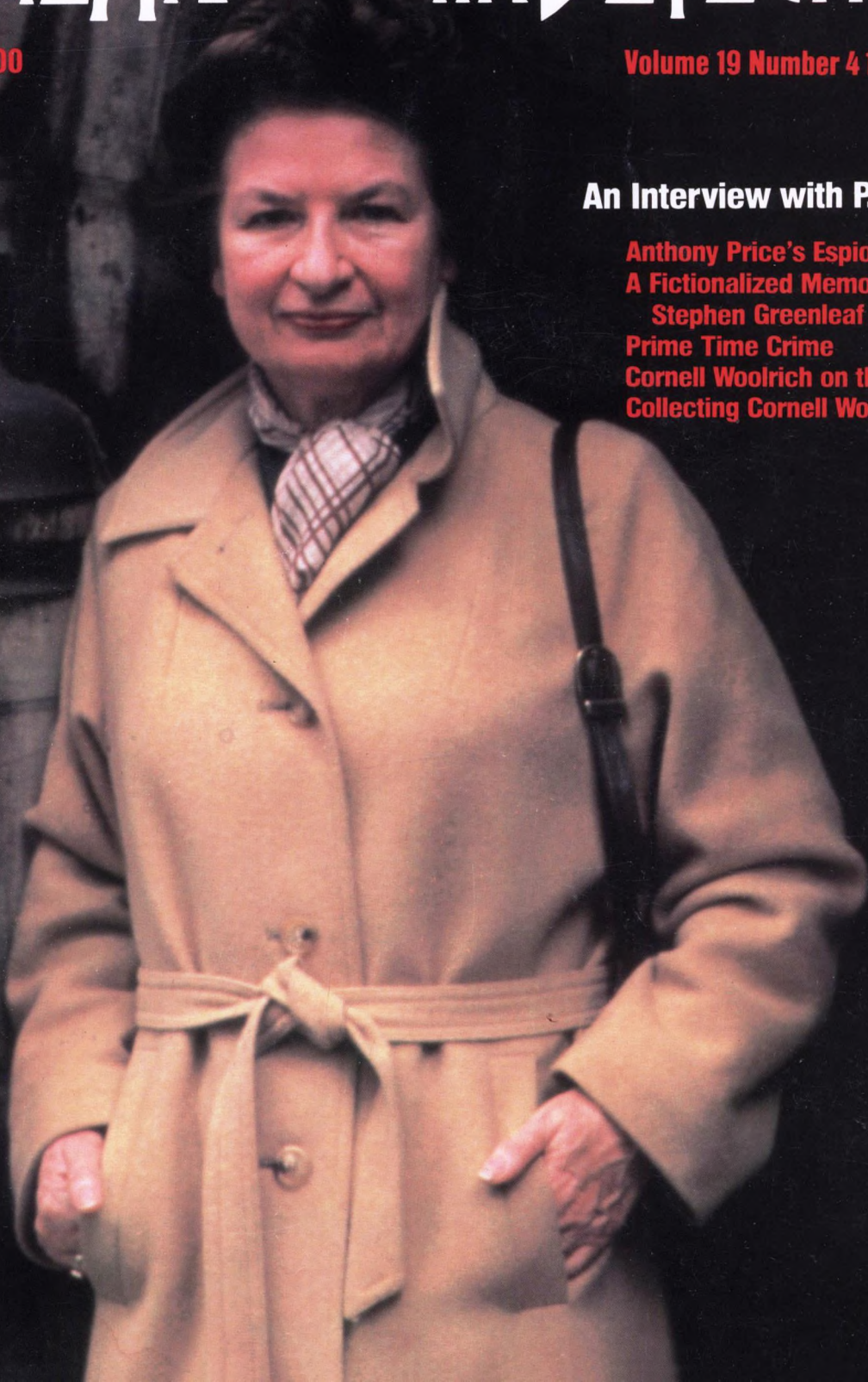

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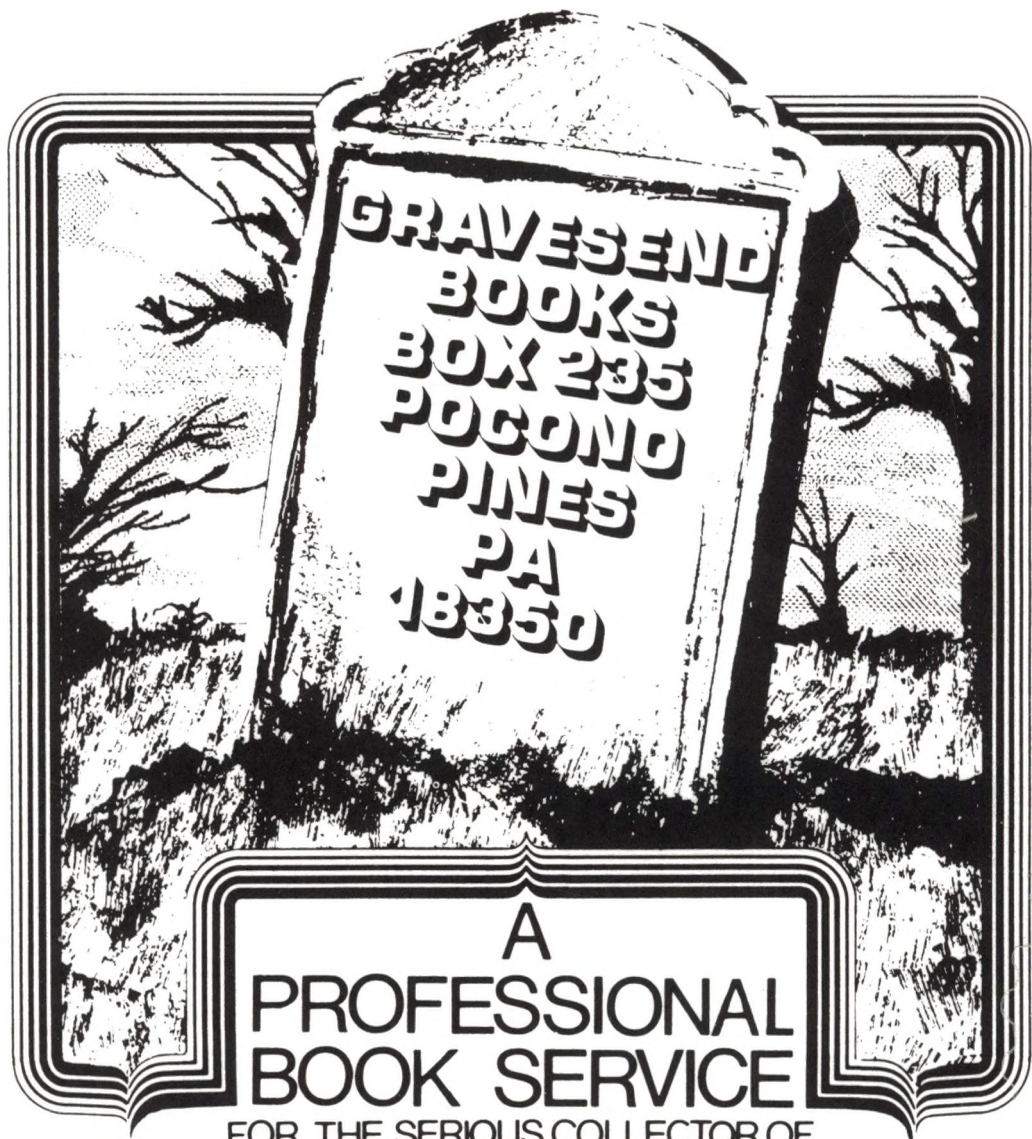
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Volume 19 Number 4 1986

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THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE®

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The Uneasy Chair

by Michael Seidman

Dear TADian:

Some random thoughts about this, that, and the other thing, offered for your consideration:

■ A recent letter to TAD complained about our use of *s'* rather than *s's*, and Jack Tracy (who does a superior job as our manuscript editor) agreed. I don't; that's why the second *s* shows a propensity to disappear when I read manuscripts before they are sent for typesetting. (Sometimes I miss.) The *New York Times* refers to the decade past as *the 70's*; I refer to it as *the '70s*.

The question of what is proper, correct, right, or otherwise authorized is grist-milled regularly by William Safire, who does it marvelously, even if he is forced to write 70's by great gray edict. For myself, however, and thus for the manuscripts which pass through my hands, I insist that less is more, looks count, and that language, and all attendant to it, is fluid and changes. Read Chaucer, if you don't believe me.

■ At lunch recently (recent as this is written; months ago, now) with the editor of one of the finest magazines for writers in the country, the discussion turned to how seriously we all seem to be taking ourselves: writers, editors, critics. It is time, we decided, to temper things a bit and make certain that the vineyards in which we labor remain fun places to visit.

■ And speaking of critics (and reviewers; there is, after all, a difference), we are pleased with the quantity and quality of the reviews (and criticism) we've been receiving as submissions, and I hope that it continues at the same level. A question occurs, however. Not all the books sent for review are good. (With the number of titles being published, that is unavoidable.) We have printed pans. I think I would

prefer to avoid that in the future, unless there is some depth to the review and some point is made.

■ Points. Yes. There are reviewers who seem to delight in using their comments about a book to make political points. They feel that a book can be missed because it is sexist, anti-this or that or pro-this or that. I've pondered that approach for some time and find a growing distaste for it (undoubtedly, my political statement). I suppose a mention of the author's stand is not out of place, regardless of what that stand is. However, it does not invalidate the book as a story.

■ Several years ago, we pushed for the establishment of an award to be presented to mystery authors by the fans. Those who have registered for Bouchercon XVII by September 1 will have the opportunity to vote for the first annual Anthony Awards. Congratulations to Gail Larsen and the Bouchercon committee, and best wishes, mysterious and otherwise, to all of us to make the most of this opportunity.

■ Finally, I was going to comment on the statement made by the buyer for one of the major bookstore chains that he had been presented with 128 new mystery titles to consider for his paperback mystery section—in one month. Instead, I'll mention an editorial that appeared in *Science Fiction Chronicle*, calling to task a major sf editor for hinting that there might be a glut in that market. The editor was told to switch to mystery.

Best mysterious wishes.

Michael Seidman

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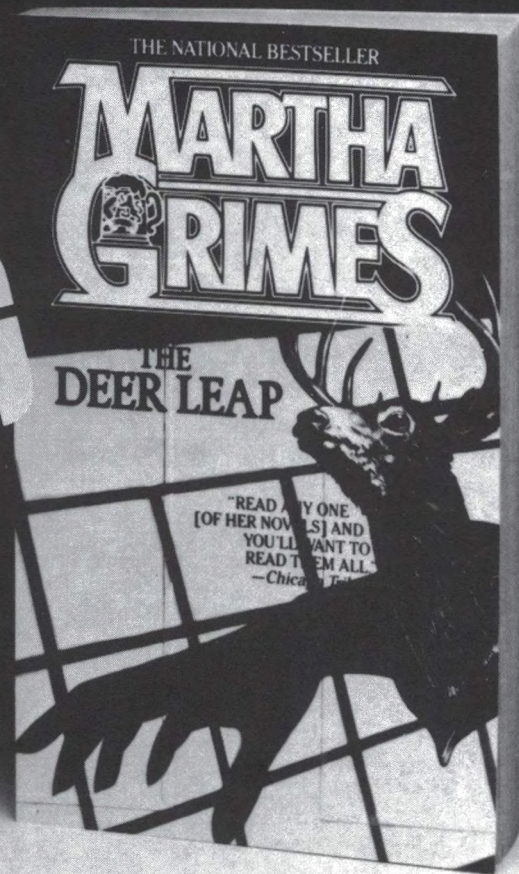
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An Interview with
P. D. James

A MIND TO WRITE

BY ROSEMARY HERBERT

"THE extraordinary thing" is a phrase used often by British detective novelist P. D. James. There are many extraordinary things to be said about this vibrant woman whose ageless, wrinkle-free face and warm personality belie the fact that she has in her life faced great personal tragedy and in her writing has explored convincingly the psychological motivations for murder.

In her publicity photographs, James appears to be serious, pensive, perhaps even a touch reserved or severe. Many interviews in the past focus on the difficulty she faced when her husband, a doctor, returned from World War II to remain seriously mentally ill throughout the remainder of his life. Before meeting her, it is easy to picture a determined, perhaps rather silent woman, working away for years as a high-level British civil servant, efficiently balancing a demanding career in criminal law with bringing up two daughters, while earnestly tapping away on her typewriter in the early mornings, turning out detective novels hailed without exception by critics as masterpieces in the genre. But a face-to-face meeting with this woman obliterates this impression almost entirely, and certainly immediately.

I have met James several times over a period of five years, both in her London home and in various parts of the United States. Whether she was serving cucumber sandwiches and tea in London or cheering for Yale at a Harvard-Yale football game, James is a woman of great warmth and casual grace. She was born in Oxford, England in 1920 and educated at Cambridge Girls High School. Her principal career was as a civil servant in administration at London's Home Office, work that was necessary to support her family. She has two daughters. In recent years, she has served as a magistrate in London and devotes the rest of her work time to writing and occasionally teaching. She resides in London in a Regency house that is bright and welcoming and well-ordered, much like her own personality.

In this interview, James tells us a bit about the child who always knew she would become a writer.

She also tells us about her detective novels featuring Adam Dalgleish and Cordelia Gray, as well as her work that departs from the detective story format: her thriller, her play, and her nonfiction study of a series of nineteenth-century crimes, *The Maul and The Pear Tree: The Ratcliffe Highway Murders 1811*. Written in collaboration with T. A. Critchley, the British police historian, this latest volume is published by The Mysterious Press and Warner Books in its first American edition. It was first published in England in 1971.

TAD: You have said that you knew from a very early age that you wanted to be a writer.

James: Yes. I think from an early age I was aware that I had what I suppose in common parlance is "a gift." I knew I had been granted a talent. I don't think I ever doubted that I could write. I mean, obviously, one *does* learn. One learns techniques. One develops—or hopes to develop. But I think I was aware that this was something I *could* do and the problem was going to be to make myself do it!

TAD: Do you have an image of yourself that would tell us what you were like as a girl?

James: Well, I think I had a very strong fantasy world from a very early age. I had numerous totally imaginary people who were very real to me to whom I talked and with whom I communicated. This was almost from early childhood. I told stories at a very early age; I used to tell them at night. We had one large nursery when we were very young, and I used to tell the stories at night to my sister and brother.

Rosemary Herbert is a Boston-based writer and photographer who specializes in articles related to the world of books. For articles that have appeared in PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, THE BOSTON REVIEW, THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, and other publications, she has traveled here and abroad to meet authors in their home surroundings.

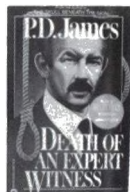
TAD: Were they mystery stories?

James: No. They were adventure stories.

TAD: Do you recall what you were like in terms of personality?

James: I seem to have been a curious mixture because I think I was popular and gregarious at school and yet at the same time very private.

TAD: That's an unusual balance to strike.



“I discovered that within the detective form I could write a novel that has moral ambiguity and psychological subtlety like a serious novel.”

James: I think it is. My mother was a very warm woman, a very emotional sort of person, entirely different from my father, and I can see in myself the traits that I've taken from each. My father was very intelligent but I think rather cold emotionally. But he had a sense of humor and a tremendous independence, and as I got older I valued more and more these qualities in him. I had a very close relationship with him.

TAD: Did you always see yourself as writing in the detective area?

James: No. But, by the time I came to settle down to write the first book, there was no particular internal discussion about what sort of book it would be. I knew I was going to attempt a detective story for my first novel.

TAD: Did this arise out of a love of detective fiction?

James: Well, I certainly read it for pleasure. And Dorothy L. Sayers was certainly a very potent influence upon my youth. I love construction of course in novels, and I wanted to write a well-constructed novel. And I also thought that a detective novel would have the best chance of being accepted for publication!

Of course, I later discovered that within the detective form I could write a novel that has a moral ambiguity and psychological subtlety like a serious novel. Writing within the constraints isn't in fact inhibiting; it's positively liberating! This is why I carry on.

TAD: What do you think is the value of detective fiction for today's reader?

James: I wouldn't in a very difficult world underestimate the element of relaxation and escape. This is not in any way to be disparaged. I think detective novels do provide vicarious excitement, and they do help to purge irrational guilt and fears, I think. They do distance the terrors of death in rather a paradoxical way; they provide the reassurance that there can be a solution and that solution can be arrived at by *human* ingenuity and *human* intelligence and *human* courage.

TAD: Detective fiction usually centers around death. Do you see yourself as a person who has always been sensitive to the fragility of life?

James: Yes. I think this is so. I think I was born with this sense of the extraordinary fragility of life and that every moment is lived really not under the shadow of death but in the *knowledge* that this is how it is going to *end*. So that death is in a sense an ever-present thought. It sounds a little morbid, but I don't see it at all as morbid because I think I'm really rather a happy person who was always aware of this. I think for some people detective fiction does help to exorcise this fear. It distances death, really. It almost takes its horror, part of it anyway, and throws it out the window. The reader knows that order will be restored out of disorder.

The world of the murder story is a paradoxically safe world. This was particularly true of the old cozies. They still have their charm. There was an ordered world with everyone moving according to hierarchy, with people knowing where they stand in the scheme of things and no one powerless, no one anonymous, everyone known, recognized, and valued.

TAD: Although your novels are far from cozy, they do show how very important individuals are to one another and the strong impact that people have on one another's lives.

James: Yes. The characters and their motivation are the most important part of the book to me. But I do

think that it's important that the plot should stand out, that the clues should be fair. The clues should be presented with cunning but also with essential fairness.

TAD: I'm interested in the question of guilt in the detective novel. Obviously, the cozy sought to establish the *fact* of guilt, the answer to the question "Whodunit?" But the cozy didn't pursue and develop the effects of guilt on the criminal or on anyone connected with the criminal. In much detective fiction today, the psychology of guilt is better explored. In writing your novels, what kind of thought do you give to the question of guilt?

James: I think I give it quite a lot of thought. My new novel is *about* guilt. I think guilt is a fascinating subject altogether, because to be human is to be guilty, whether the guilt is rational or not. I think perhaps the difference between the cozy detective story and the modern detective story—which may also be called the crime novel—is that the latter does turn its attention to this question of guilt. And of course in the crime novel you may not have much detection, you may *know* who the guilty person is, and your novel really is *about* the effect of that deed on the person and on his society. This also bears on the thinking of W. H. Auden, who saw the detective story as a kind of morality play.

TAD: Yes, the dialectic of guilt.

James: And of course in the cozies we had the satisfaction, I suppose, of feeling that whatever else we may be guilty about, we're not guilty of having slipped the dagger under Sir Gaspar's ribs in the library! I am sure that the attitude of the writer to guilt distinguishes the true crime novel from mere entertainment.

I think one could also say that the crime novel at its best is concerned with the limits of free will, because in this kind of novel you really feel in the end, "Well, how much choice do these people have?" This is the fascinating thing, that you are *trying* to work to an extent within the old-fashioned conventions but at the same time you are trying to write a book which has some claims to be regarded as a novel because it is psychologically true.

TAD: In the detective novel that Auden was writing about, an idyllic society was shattered by an appalling crime—usually murder—but eventually complete order is restored. This doesn't seem to be possible—or indeed desirable—in a novel like *Death of An Expert Witness*.

James: Oh, yes. The days of getting everybody together in the library at the end are no more. You must have the solution to the mystery, but I think in the modern detective story, although we discover who did it and why and how and when and so forth,

the effects of the crime are a great deal more disruptive than they were in the older mystery. It is *not* just a nice return to Eden. The modern detective story shows exactly how disruptive and contaminating murder can be and how no life in that society surrounding it is untouched by it.

TAD: What do you see as the chief difference between American and British detective fiction?

James: I think we're much more interested in the emotions that give rise to murder. It's malice domestic largely with us. I agree with Auden that the single body on the drawing-room floor is more horrifying and powerful than hundreds of bodies riddled with bullets down the mean streets. Strong emotion rather than strong action. That's basically the difference.

TAD: And yet you have never shied away from showing a graphic scene of death in fiction or nonfiction.

James: Yes. Absolutely. But it is generally an individual death.

TAD: Your latest book, *The Maul and the Pear Tree: The Ratcliffe Highway Murders 1811*, is a work of nonfiction and a collaboration. It was published in 1971 after you had established yourself as a fiction writer. How did you and T. A. Critchley decide to write this story together?



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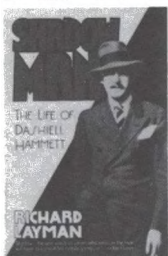
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James: We wrote it about sixteen years ago. I was then working in the Home Office, which as you know is the British equivalent of your Department of Justice, basically. Tom Crichtley was my boss. We were both working in the police department.

I had been reading, I think in the London Library, the *Newgate Calendar*, which of course is a description of notorious and horrible crimes, and there was a chapter on the Ratcliffe Highway crimes, with a picture of poor John Williams's body being paraded around Wapping after he had presumably committed suicide. I read the account, and it seemed to me that there was a great deal of doubt about this whole crime. And so I mentioned this to Tom Crichtley, and he said, "Did you realize that this was the crime which De Quincey wrote about in his famous essay 'Murder Considered as a Fine Art'?" "No, I didn't," I said. So I read that essay and said to him, "Well, it was an extraordinary account that De Quincey's written, but it seems to me that he's not got the facts right. There's a lot more behind this than one knows." So Crichtley said, "Well, let's send for the Home Office files. Let's see what we can find out."

Then it became absolutely fascinating, and we decided that we would write up the case and make a book of it. It really was a very interesting book to write. I think as a bit of social history it is interesting, and it certainly shows what a murder investigation was like in London in 1811, and also what policing was like.

TAD: The case was notable in part because of the population's reaction to it. It involved brutal murders that were pinned on a man who committed suicide before he could be brought to justice.

James: Of course, what was so extraordinary is that the murders had such an effect on public opinion that when Williams was found dead of course they paraded his body around the streets. What an *incredible* thing that was to do as late as 1811. I don't know another case in which this happened. It's a *certain* indication of how appalled the populace were.

I think we have a feeling that the East End of London was such a violent place in 1811 and murders were happening all the time. But obviously they were *not*. They were *not!* There was a great deal, no doubt, of mob violence, a great deal of thieving and a great deal of criminal behavior of one kind or another. But atrocious murder of this kind *was*, really, *rare*. And one can see this in the effect the crime had on the populace.

TAD: The book indicates that the spectacle of the crowd parading the body of the alleged murderer around the streets was even discussed in Parliament.

James: Yes, even Sheridan, the playwright, made a marvelous speech.

TAD: I was interested to learn that it was felt that capital punishment was a deterrent to serious crime, and it was believed that the more people who could view a hanging the better. The example was supposed to be made public both to deter people from committing crimes and to serve as a public retribution. Therefore, if a criminal succeeded in committing suicide he was cheating the public of its revenge.

James: Oh, yes. And of course suicide was regarded as a very great crime in itself. It was regarded as self-murder, and there were very strong theological objections to it in those days. So there were the two things: the man was a self-murderer, which made him wicked anyway, and he had cheated justice. He should have been publicly hanged to *mark* people's *abhorrence*.

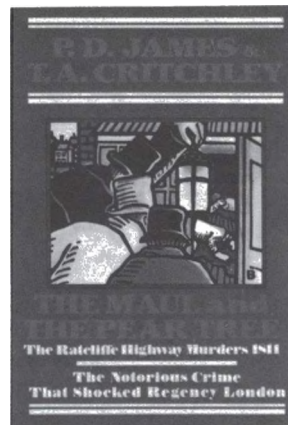
TAD: This notion is very interesting in the light of just why the murder story—true or fictional—is so

fascinating. Murder is of course the essential crime against society in the sense that the victim can no longer get retribution; so therefore society must do so for him.

James: Yes, absolutely. It's a crime for which you can *never, ever* make retribution to your victim. And with this particular crime people felt it was particularly abhorrent and dreadful because of the very nature of the victims. Here was poor Timothy Marr, a decent, hard-working little man with his wife and child, *brutally* done to death, not even safe in their own house. And over and over again there was the sense that there must be something absolutely rotten at the heart of the nation where such things could happen.

TAD: In studying this case, you learned about the poor state of forensic knowledge, the disorganized force of night watchmen who were the only law-

“What was so extraordinary is that the murders had such an effect on public opinion that when Williams was found dead they paraded the body around the streets.”



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enforcement people in the neighborhoods, the inefficient approach to investigation of a crime. What was it like to be a historical sleuth?

James: I found it was very interesting. It was surprising how much information we were able to get.

TAD: Did your own work in the police department give you any particular knowledge that helped you to investigate this historical crime that an average researcher might not have?

James: I don't think so, really. In the police department we weren't concerned with the investigation of crime. That's all done by the police themselves. We were really concerned with the administration of the police force. I think the fact that I'm a detective writer was very helpful, because I looked at the case from the point of view of the human side of the story. I looked at the personalities. I looked at the clues. I think I contributed mostly that and a lot of the more descriptive writing. Tom Critchley was

“How on earth do you tell a child that the reason he hasn't any grandparents or father is that the father was executed for their murder?”

probably the prime collector of information, the prime researcher.

TAD: I wondered if as a collaborator Mr. Critchley was a kindred spirit or if he had complementary differences.

James: I think complementary differences. He's much more a researcher and an academic writer. He writes very good prose indeed, and his book is the definitive history of the police in England and Wales. As a historian of the police he was very much at home with some of the problems of policing at that time.

TAD: Did you learn a lot about parts of London which you had previously rarely visited?

James: Yes. Yes. This part of London has changed almost more than any other part. The area was all dependent on what I think we called “that dark bloodstream of a river.”

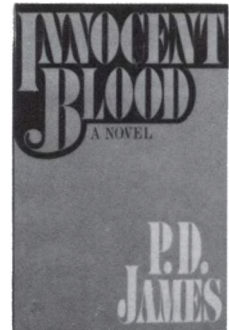
TAD: How did writing nonfiction seem similar to writing your novels?

James: It is a different kind of writing, but there are some things that are similar. I think it's terribly important in the detective story to create an atmosphere, tension, and mood. And of course, setting influences plot, and it even influences character. So the description of setting is vital in a novel, but it's also vital in a work like this.

TAD: I am interested to know why you decided to have the book reissued now and how it came about that The Mysterious Press is publishing it in conjunction with Warner?

James: I had felt up till now that it really was such an English story that it might not have much appeal to American readers. But Warner's asked for it, and as they are my paperback publishers I thought why not? It's been very well produced. And it's wonderful for my fellow writer to have a chance of publication in the States.

TAD: I understand that your next novel will be



published by Knopf in the autumn. This represents a change of publishers.

James: Yes. Scribner's continues to have my backlist. The new novel is set in London and features Adam Dalgleish. It's called *A Taste of Death*. They're very, very enthusiastic at Knopf. I just feel hopeful that the book will repay their confidence in it!

TAD: How do you decide which detective, Cordelia or Adam, will appear in each book?

James: It depends on what sort of plot comes to mind—whether it's suitable for her or whether it's suitable for a professional detective.

TAD: Whether or not it's a suitable job for a woman!

James: (Laughs)

TAD: One might think that if you had a plot idea, any detective writer could use it and apply his detective to it; but actually there are more subtleties to it than that, are there not?

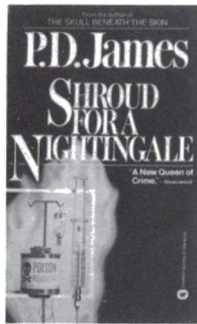
James: Yes. I suppose that there's something in what you say in that if you get a good idea for perhaps an

original form of murder you could say, "Well that's the central idea of the book, this original way of disposing of someone, and the detective is of secondary importance." But when you have a detective who's an amateur and one who's professional there are certain crimes that an amateur is less likely to be called into.

TAD: That's true.

James: And with Cordelia's work it's nearly always a crime that the police haven't recognized as such, or a situation in which the police wouldn't normally be involved. In the first [book featuring Cordelia] the police thought it was a suicide and she was called in by the boy's father to find out why. And then in the second one, Cordelia was guarding this actress on the island. So Cordelia got involved in crimes in which it was logical for an amateur to be called in.

It did not matter in the old cozy days. Of course, with Peter Wimsey, he worked closely with the



police. In fact, he used them just as his helots to do all the dull work! (*She smiles.*) But of course nowadays the readers are more sophisticated; they know that isn't so.

I think that in America the private eye has a bigger part to play. There are more of them and they're licensed and people probably use them more, for fairly serious crimes, but it doesn't happen here. I can't see private eyes getting much involved in murder here. So that's a constraint on it. There's immense scope for private eyes, but if you do have an obviously murdered body then the police are going to do the professional police work.

TAD: Have you ever considered using another sleuth besides Cordelia or Adam?

James: No, never.

TAD: *Innocent Blood* was a departure from the detective novels featuring Adam and Cordelia. How was the inspiration for it different for you?

James: With most of the Dagleish and Cordelia books I think the original inspiration that would spark off the novel has been a place and then has



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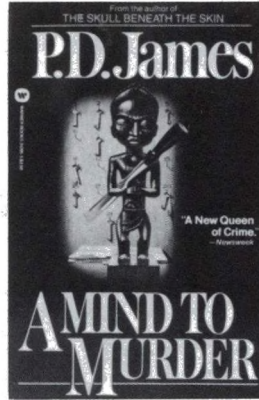
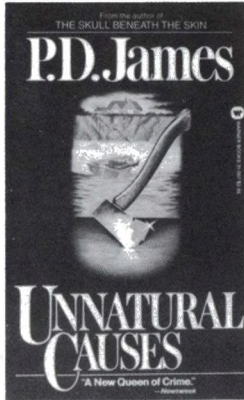
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come the characters and the detective and the plot. And although place was tremendously important in *Innocent Blood* because it's set in London and London is in a sense integral to the story, it wasn't a question of "I want to set a book in London," as it was for instance with *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* that "I wanted to set a book in Cambridge."



Instead, the inspiration for *Innocent Blood* derived from a combination of a piece of legislation and a real-life murder case. The Legislation for Children Act in 1975 gave eighteen-year-old adopted children in England and Wales the right to set out on the journey of exploring who their real parents were by having access to their birth certificates. And the murder was a case called The Raven case. It was a long time ago, about 25 years ago. There was a young man who had been to visit his newborn child in hospital and had murdered his parents-in-law on the way home. And at the time, all these years ago, when he was hanged, I thought, "What about the newborn baby? How on earth and at what age do you tell a child that the reason why he has not got any grandparents and hasn't got a father is that the father was executed for their murder? Do you change your name? Or do you even go so far as to have him adopted? So when the Children Act was passed, those two ideas came together. And I thought, "Suppose somebody began this journey of exploration who had fantasized a very satisfactory background and then discovered something as horrific as that?" So that was an entirely different inspiration from visiting a place and feeling, "I want to set a book here."

TAD: In what ways was this book similar to your other work?

James: I think it shows the influence of the detective story in that it is a book which does in fact have clues—clues to personality, clues to events that have happened.

TAD: Another departure from detective fiction is your play.

James: Yes. It is called *A Private Treason*. It's very difficult to describe what's in a play because there are so many complex interactions. But basically it is about a 36-year-old very intelligent woman who's got a senior job in the civil service and falls in love with a very much younger man. It's concerned with the conflict between somebody who has always lived by the mind and somebody who lives totally by the emotions.

I think it was a somewhat over-literary play. It was probably an unfashionable play (*She smiles*) in that everyone spoke literate English. It was a well-crafted play. And I think it was a novelist's play.

TAD: But the theatre was filled every night.

James: Oh, yes. It ran for five weeks in Watford in April 1985. This is a place just north of London where plays are tried out. It had Susanna York in the lead role.

TAD: Is the play a mystery story?

James: No, but there is a crime within it, although it is not a mystery story as such.

TAD: Will the play be performed in the foreseeable future on the London stage or elsewhere?

James: There are no plans to produce it. I would wish to polish it more, first, but I'm not certain I will take the time to do so.

TAD: To bring us back to you as a person and a writer, I would like to ask: having lived a life that, as it turned out, was at times a difficult one, would you have wished to have had an easy life?

James: Well, it's dishonest to say "no" because I think we all live our lives trying to minimize our pain and maximize our happiness. But I think as a writer it's better to face a degree of trauma. Someone said if you want to be a writer you should have as much trauma in your early years as you can bear without breaking. I think something in me believes that, yes.

TAD: Do you feel that the goodness in people ultimately prevails over the inevitable rougher sides of human nature?

James: I hope it can. I like to think it can. I suppose we all need to believe that love is stronger than death, that the human spirit is indestructible, can surmount almost anything that fate can throw against it. But part of me believes that personal tragedy and in particular physical pain can break anybody. There is, I suppose, in my own personality a dichotomy between the optimism which is part of my nature—probably just a physical thing—and this knowledge of just how dark and dreadful life can be for many people.

Many of my books are—well, they're to do with death—but they're also to do with love, different aspects of human love. □



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In *Watteau's Shepherds*, Leroy Panek writes: "[C]onsider these items: there was an Irishman, a kangaroo, and a Rolls Royce locked in a deserted ballroom in Croydon. Two things can be made out of these disparate elements, a joke and a detective story."¹ Panek is right, of course, but he stops too soon. A third thing can be made of Panek's disparate elements: an espionage novel by British author Anthony Price.

A Royal Air Force Dakota missing for 23 years; Heinrich Schliemann's collection, containing the gold of Homer's Troy; and the Red Army plot against Stalin in 1937 yield *The Labyrinth Makers*. The gold of the Spanish Republic sent for safekeeping to Russia in October of 1936; the mysterious death of General Krivitsky, the one-time chief of Soviet Military Intelligence in Western Europe, who defected—and who died under mysterious circumstances in 1941; and battles, both real and imaginary, of the English Civil War of 1642–46 equal *War Game*.

At Price's best, such pieces of history are what set him apart from other spy novelists. In novels such as *The Labyrinth Makers* and *Other Paths to Glory*, Price constructs an intricate, triple-bluff espionage plot, integrates it with an equally perplexing one involving an archaeological and/or historical mystery, and provides a single solution for both problems. In *Other Paths to Glory*, for example, not until Paul Mitchell learns what happened to the 29th Battalion of the Rifles when they attacked Bouillet Wood during the Battle of the Somme in 1916 can he identify and counter the threat posed to a secret summit meeting scheduled for a chateau in the same Bouillet Wood 58 years later.

But while readers and reviewers are certainly entitled to like or dislike both the nature and the complexity of Price's plots, and his preference for intellectual rather than physical action, discussion of his novels has too often been limited to just these issues. Understanding Price's work involves far more than simply quibbling about whether or not plots are too labyrinthine, whether they should involve more apocalyptic threats to national security, and whether they would be improved by the inclusion of more sex or violence.

Though he is working in a genre the most basic premise of which is that both "our" side and "their" side boast intelligence services peopled, almost from top to bottom, with high-order geniuses graced with more than Machiavellian subtlety and ingenuity, Price is attempting to inject a certain amount of realism into his fiction. As Price sees it:

Life itself is labyrinthine. The different ways in which people see each other, and in which actions and motives are interpreted, sometimes correctly, often incorrectly or only partially correctly, and the pull of different interests, objectives and interests, make it so. And... also make it endlessly fascinating.²

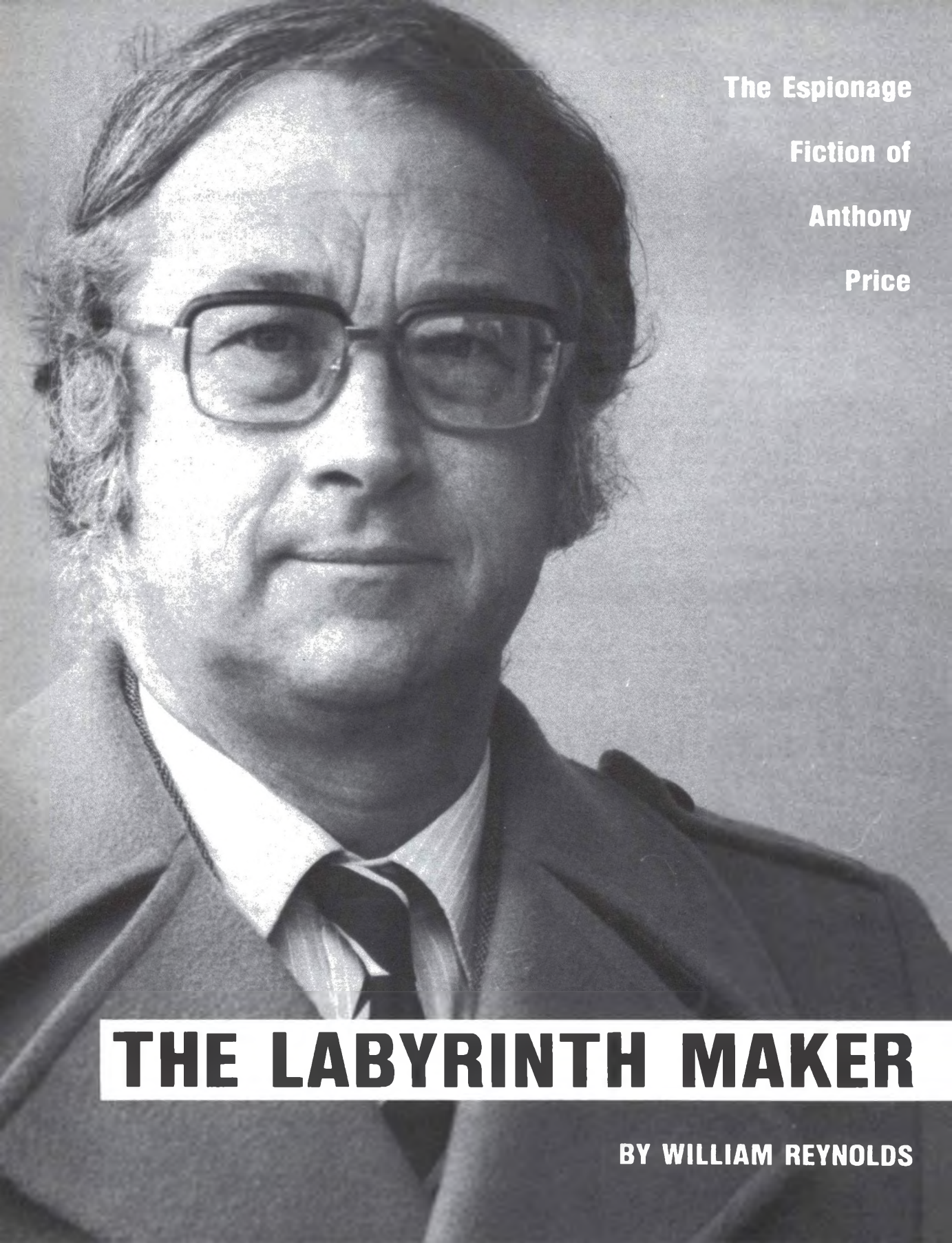
In the course of fourteen novels spread over a fourteen-year period, Price has constructed what I have called a "very personal vision": first of Dr. David Audley, the focal figure of most of the novels; second, of the way British history could (perhaps should) have proceeded at the end of World War II; third, of the moral dimension of the world which he has created and the characters he has placed in it. The remainder of this essay will examine these three topics and conclude with some speculations about the future direction(s) of Price's series.

Price acknowledges that when he wrote *The Labyrinth Makers* in 1970, a second novel (much less an average of almost a novel per year for a decade and a half) was as much a hope as a certainty.³ But from the beginning, Price establishes Audley as a round character, providing far more detail than is necessary about Audley's earlier career as a Middle East expert and about the world of a purely imaginary but super-secret Department of British Intelligence.

We learn from *The Labyrinth Makers* that Audley has been kicked out of his job as forecaster and thrown into field work (and field work involving not Arab-Israeli but Russian matters) because he has angered his superiors with his arrogance. Subsequent novels reveal more about Audley—bits and pieces in the novels in which he shares the lead role with such characters as Squadron Leader Hugh Roskill (*The Alamut Ambush*), Colonel Jack Butler (*Colonel Butler's Wolf*), C.I.A. agent Mosby Sheldon (*Our Man in Camelot*), and military historian Paul Mitchell (*Other Paths to Glory*); more comprehensively in *The '44 Vintage*, *The Hour of the Donkey*, and (especially) *Soldier No More*.

Set in the closing phase of World War II, *The '44 Vintage* serves as a prequel to the earlier novels, tracing Audley's first contact with the Intelligence Service, as well as his first dealings with Frederick Clinton, who has appeared in earlier novels as Audley's superior, and with Jack Butler, who, after working with Audley throughout the earlier novels, succeeds Clinton as Chief between the events of *Tomorrow's Ghost* and those related in *The Old Vengeful*. But much of *The '44 Vintage* becomes fully comprehensible only in light of further revelations in *The Hour of the Donkey* and *Soldier No More*; and *Soldier No More* shifts Audley's story into a far larger framework involving not just a few individuals but an entire country.

Soldier No More is Price's answer (or, I suspect, part of Price's answer) to a question that must have exerted a strong pull upon him both as a serious student of history and as a writer of espionage fiction. The question goes something like this: If, at or near the end of World War II, a person or persons in British Intelligence had realized that the Soviet Union would soon be an enemy and not an ally, what



The Espionage

Fiction of

Anthony

Price

THE LABYRINTH MAKER

BY WILLIAM REYNOLDS

action would that person (or those persons) have taken to insure that post-war British Intelligence was not harboring Russian spies?

The plot of *Soldier No More*, set in 1957 shortly after the events of Suez and Hungary, is vintage Price: impossible to summarize briefly without leaving out several key strands or entire sub-plots. For most of the novel, Audley plays a secondary role, with attention focused instead on Captain David Roche, a KGB mole working in British Intelligence. Until the last chapter, Roche seems to be an agent of the Chief of British Intelligence, Sir Eustace Avery, seeking to recruit Audley for Sir Eustace's recently-established but very powerful Research and Development Group.

Only in the last few pages does Price reveal that Audley, who broke with British Intelligence in 1946 following a big row over an undisclosed issue, has "put things together differently after Cambridge" (where he was graduated with First Class Honours in 1949) and asked Clinton to take him back.


Clinton, who fills Price's slot as the man with a vision of the true nature of the future of the Anglo-Russian relationship, will not accept Audley:


He said the bad times were coming, and the service was compromised . . . "[L]et me tuck you [Audley] away for a rainy day" was how . . . [Clinton] put it, for when he needed me, when the time was ripe. So he . . . laid everything on after that—how I should refuse [the British] in public [when they tried to recruit Audley in 1949], and how they'd stick the Russians [who tried to recruit Audley after his

public rejection of the British] on to me, to make matters worse, so they'd be sure I was fed up with both sides. . . . So I became a sort of "sleeper in reverse" . . . on a private feudal arrangement between them and me, with nothing in writing —they spread the word and I went to ground, to wait the bugle-call.

Price's solution is a good example of what one might call "the bitten bite" as the blind overconfidence of post-war British Intelligence is replaced with a clear perception of what the future holds and bold plans about how to confront it. The treason of men like Philby, Burgess, and Maclean still weighs heavily upon the British soul. New books about them appear almost yearly; in *October Men*, Audley's supposed defection is compared to theirs; John Le Carré's masterful *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* owes much to Philby's story; and in *Colonel Butler's Wolf*, Price himself had gone Le Carré and Reality one better by positing a Russian plan to murder young Britons and replace them with Russian agents who would attend British universities, join the Civil Service, rise to positions of power, and serve the Soviet cause.

On one level, Price is simply giving the British credit for enough intelligence to do to others as others have done to them (and at the same time engaging in wish-fulfillment on a national level). But—again like Le Carré, who in Bill Haydon examines the reactions of a man "born to Empire"

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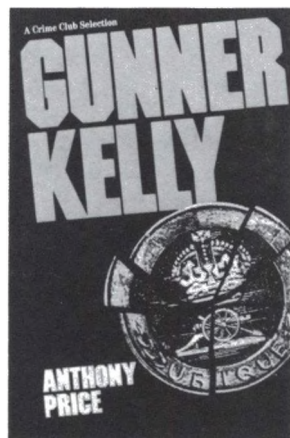


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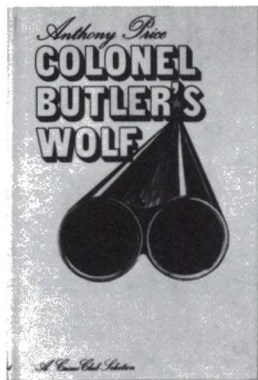


unable to accept Britain's second-division status in the post-World War II world—Price is examining basic questions about human motivation and the choice between good and evil.

To ask his questions, Price—in the tradition of such writers as Ambler and Greene—makes full use of the conventions of the espionage novel. Recruiting agents is a problem all authors of such fiction must address, either by taking as a given the existence of an organization to furnish characters or by detailing the path which leads a particular individual into MI5, the CIA, or whatever. At its most hackneyed, this second method shows the metamorphosis of an

innocent civilian into an agent as a result of an apparently inexplicable plot against him or those dear to him.

Or authors can do both—as Price does. His version of British Intelligence is capable of producing any number of drivers, electronics experts, and tough guys—plus cooks and bottle-washers, should the need arise. Nothing too interesting here—except for the way that a few of these spear-carriers take on more life than was intended and in later novels come in for the full Pricean analysis of motives. For it is the “recruitment problem” to which Price returns again and again.



According to Price, an England at war has almost no trouble obtaining intelligence agents—the spirit of service is abroad in the land, so those suited to serving their country with their brains are easily drawn in for the duration, or at worst dragooned in when offered the choice between intelligence work, jail, or a suicide position like forward observer for an artillery battery.

An England at peace, or an England involved in a “cold war,” has different problems. A civil liberties-conscious intellectual is hardly likely to disengage him- or herself from Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament rallies in order to search for Soviet “moles.” The best and brightest of the Oxbridge graduates have more lucrative alternatives. How, then, is the very real and—in the world of Price’s novels—very intelligent Soviet threat to be countered? Why would someone choose to do Intelligence work?

For once, looking at David Audley isn’t enough. The crucial stage has simply not yet been described. We know from *The '44 Vintage* that Second Lieutenant David Audley was transferred from the South Wessex Dragoons to a mission that can vaguely be termed “Intelligence-related.” We know that he broke with Intelligence in 1946 but changed his mind about “things” by 1949. But we have not yet been told exactly what Audley changed his mind about (or why he changed it); and until Price gets around to telling us, it’s useless to speculate about what combination of patriotism, pride, boredom, and sheer love of

what Kipling called “the Great Game” of Intelligence motivated Audley.

At first glance, Price’s other characters don’t seem to present either very appealing or very significant reasons for serving in Intelligence. In *The Alamut Ambush*, Hugh Roskill says, “[I]f I’d been born in 1920 I should have flown a Spitfire in 1940—unless I’d been born in Germany. In which case I should have flown a Messerschmitt 109.” Frances Fitzgibbon, who appears briefly in *Our Man in Camelot* and serves as the center of interest in *Tomorrow’s Ghost*, was recruited after her husband, a British army officer serving in Northern Ireland, was killed by the I.R.A.

In *Other Paths to Glory*, the plot of which is straight from the pulp factories, Paul Mitchell returns from a quiet day’s research in the Great War Documents Room of the British Commonwealth Institute for Military Studies to be thrown into a river by two strangers and to learn that both his mother and the police are convinced that he has attempted to commit suicide. After still more narrow escapes from violent death, Mitchell finds that he has been recruited for Intelligence work because of his Cambridge tutor’s report that he possesses “a wide streak of bloody-minded ruthlessness.”

No Knights of the Grail here, it would seem. But at the same time there is far more than the cynical “love and war... [are] about winning, not fair play” with which Price concludes *The Old Vengeful*. First off, there’s Paul Mitchell’s characterization of himself:

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"I'm in Crime Prevention, not Burglary—I'm in the Knavish Tricks Frustration Department."

Less facetiously, there's Audley's answer in *The Labyrinth Makers* to his future wife's question about what he does for a living. Quoting Kipling, one of his (and Price's) favorite authors, Audley remarks: "You can't generalise about—the People of the Hills. . . . 'Giants, trolls, kelpies, brownies, goblins, imps; wood, tree, mound and water spirits; heath-people, hill watchers, treasure-guards, good people, little people, pishogues, leprechauns, night riders. . . .' Im not a troll or a night rider, certainly. You might call me a hill-watcher."

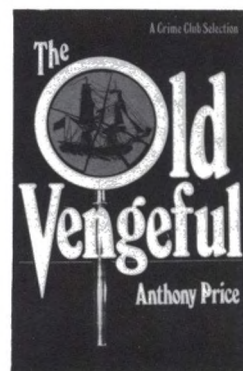
The point is not simply that Audley and his colleagues do not undertake offensive operations but instead react to trouble instigated by "the other side." Just as surely as there is a Russian counterpart to Audley, "our side" maintains a bureau whose job it is to perform dirty tricks only, as Price has Paul Mitchell wryly remark in *The Old Vengeful*, "on a much smaller scale due to our poverty."

The point is that, while Price does not compose long speeches about capital-letter abstractions like Democracy, the English Way of Life, or Western Culture, his novels and his characters steadfastly defend the value and importance of such things. What is espoused is not blind patriotism but reasoned (and traditional) principle.

Price's characters do not become James Bond-like

amoralists because of their work for R&D. They are bound by the same laws as other British citizens. In *The Old Vengeful*, Paul Mitchell kills three men—it is the only way he or anybody else can rescue Elizabeth Loftus from a sadist determined to torture her into telling something she does not know. The deaths are not swept under the carpet but must be investigated by Inspector Del Andrew of the Special Branch.

Audley, who calls himself "old-fashioned" in *The Labyrinth Makers*, captures the difference in *Colonel*

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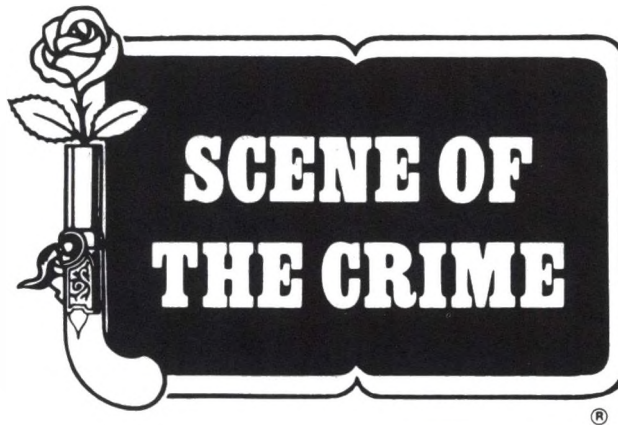
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Butler's Wolf: "I'd like to open up *our* file on the Hungarian Revolt—60,000 dead and God only knows how many maimed or deported, and more than half of them under 25, and tell... [Britain's young people] that was how the Communists settled *their* youth problems in the fifties. Not with a couple of elderly proctors...but with eight armoured divisions and two MVD special brigades —"

Still more significant are the personal codes by which Audley and his colleagues live. Audley can, at times, give the lie to my earlier remark that Price's novels contain no Knights of the Grail. Two pages before the end of *Soldier No More*, in which Audley's goal has been to trick the KGB into relinquishing its copies of a document supposedly entrusted to him by Etienne d'Auberon, Audley declares: "[I]f... [d'Auberon]'d given me those wretched papers of his I'd never have turned them over to Fred Clinton—not in a thousand years."

A more important touchstone is the attitude Price's characters have toward the violence which forms an inevitable part of the world in which they live. Audley, certainly, is no babe in the woods. In both *October Men* and *War Game*, he sends to their deaths criminals who are beyond the reach of ordinary justice. But, as Audley shows Sir Frederick Clinton, in *War Game*, his plots are different from terrorist/criminal/KGB murders:

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"I didn't kill...[Charlie Ratcliffe], Fred. He killed himself."

"But you knew he'd kill himself?"

"I hoped he would. And I did my best to ensure he did."

"But where's the difference?"

"The difference... the difference is that it was up to him. If he was willing to kill — then he died. If he wasn't — then he was home and dry. It was his choice."

Price's novels contain no Knights of the Grail

The morality seems, in Sir Frederick's words, "pretty shaky"; but Sir Frederick is not in the reader's privileged position of seeing that Audley acts not to insure that his mission will be counted a success but because of Ratcliffe's responsibility for the death of Henry Digby, a young policeman Audley promised to protect. And not until *Gunner Kelly* can even the most perceptive reader penetrate Audley's façade and hear Audley — overconfident of his ability to foresee the unforeseeable and prevent the unpreventable — accuse himself: "[E]very time I get it wrong, someone dies — like that young policeman died, and like lovely Frances died."

Nor does the more cynical Paul Mitchell react any differently. Though in *The Old Vengeful* he kills two men and wounds a third during his rescue of Elizabeth Loftus, Mitchell is still shaken when he learns that the wounded man has died. And Paul, too, blames himself for the death of Frances Fitzgibbon, telling Elizabeth: "I could stand the sight of her — any time. . . . So one day I looked at her. It was raining — and I was glad to see her . . . So I looked at her, Elizabeth, when I should have been looking somewhere else. . . . And that was a mistake, Elizabeth. And she died of my mistake. . . in the rain, in my arms, Elizabeth."

Price's characters are, then, typically human collections of contradictions, accepting both the laws which forbid them to carry weapons without special authorization and the respect for individual lives which underpins these laws, yet prepared to reject conventional morality when their consciences demand that they do so.

In fact, it is the opportunity to examine these collections of contradictions that seems to appeal most to Price and to make his "personal vision" most personal. If anything, Price may have created too

many intriguing characters to be able to do everything he would like to do with them. The Jack Butler vein may be worked out, but there remain Elizabeth Loftus, alone or with Paul Mitchell, who has fallen in love with her; Audley's wife Faith; Audley's former Latin teacher "Wimpy" Willis; and Inspector Del Andrew, to name only four characters of more than average promise — though one must hope that Price chooses someone more interesting than Oliver St. John Latimer (or constructs better plots than that of *Sion Crossing*, in which Latimer is featured).

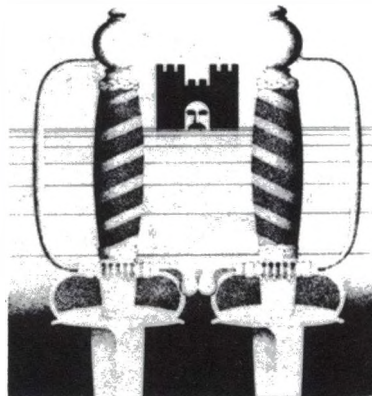
And always there is David Audley.

Given the chronology established in *The '44 Vintage*, Price will soon be faced with a problem, as Audley, born in 1925 or 1926, advances into his sixties, a bit old for even the project-director status he takes upon himself in *Gunner Kelly*. And Price has, I think, invested too much in Audley to relegate him permanently to the position of grey eminence which he fills in *Sion Crossing*.

The problem may, however, be more apparent than real. Since 1970, Audley has surely been involved in more than the one project per year which Price has recounted. And *The '44 Vintage*, *The Hour of the Donkey*, and *Soldier No More* have shown Price to be both adept at and interested in describing not just

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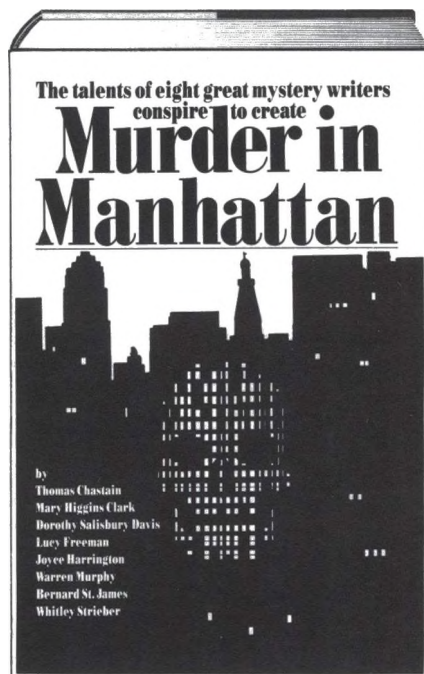
Audley as he is today but how and why he came to be this way.

I have already mentioned the questions surrounding Audley's break with British Intelligence in 1946 and his secret return in 1949. Moreover, in addition to describing Audley's emergence into a more active role in Intelligence, *The Labyrinth Makers* shows his emotional life entering a new, more positive phase — and leaves the reader wondering about the earlier one(s).

THEYDUNIT!

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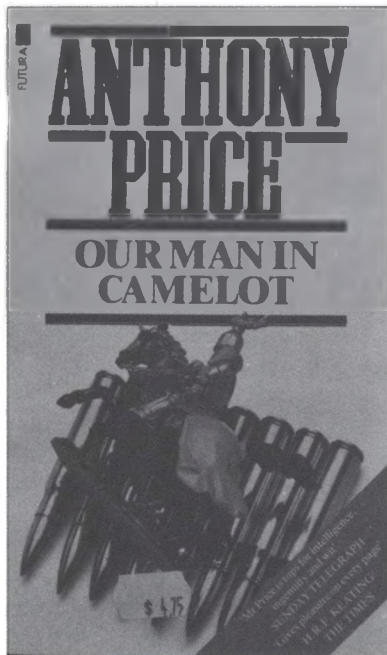
hard-boiled hit man about to learn that hitmen also die; an aging vaudeville comedienne who dies but not laughing; and a maniac artist with a magnetic manner.

The authors are the Adams Round Table—nothing less than a suspense counterpart to the humorists of the Algonquin Round Table. *Murder in Manhattan* is bound to be the mystery sensation of the year!

William  Morrow

But, in *The Hour of the Donkey* and *Soldier No More*, Price has introduced even more significant information and questions about Audley's youth. *The Hour of the Donkey*, the only one of Price's novels not published in the United States, provides an ingenious explanation for why the German Panzer divisions, advancing up the English Channel coast, halted on May 24, 1940 along the line of the Aa Canal and remained there while a total of 338,226 Allied soldiers were rescued in what still today is referred to as "The Miracle of Dunkirk." More than this, *The Hour of the Donkey* is an in-depth character study of David Audley's former Latin teacher, Captain William ("Wimpy") Willis, and Harry Bastable, acting captain of the Prince Regent's Own South Downs Fusiliers and former middle-class businessman of Eastbourne.

While *The Hour of the Donkey* received glowing reviews (as well it should have), it proved a puzzle to Price's regular readers. A sign of how far Price can push the boundaries of the genre, the novel still does not represent a clean break with the David Audley cycle, for the dominant figure of the first two chapters is David's father, Major Nigel Audley. Yet when the bifurcated plot returns to Audley's battalion at



Colebert-les-Deux-Ponts, readers are stunned to find Audley about to die and—apparently—raving, as with his last few breaths he begs Bastable to: "[T]ell Willis . . . My Boy, David—he knows my boy, David. . . . Not my son—not my son—but my boy, damn it."

In *Soldier No More*, Price clarifies Nigel's puzzling valedictory, yet leaves readers more curious than ever about the import of what he reveals. Long before the

two meet, David Roche receives a crash course on David Audley, interviewing Wimpy Willis and the Clarkes, Ada and Charlie, long-time retainers of the Audley family who play a major role in *October Men* and appear in most of the other novels, and visiting Audley's family home, a fifteenth-century masterpiece the expensive renovation of which Audley has lovingly undertaken.

Roche learns far more about Audley than he ever uses—or is given any opportunity to use—in the course of the novel. In fact, so irrelevant is Audley's biography to the plot of *Soldier No More* that Price must have included it simply because he considered it important in and of itself. Briefly put, David Audley's mother died when he was a baby; Willis, not Nigel, is David's father; Nigel kept David at arm's length, showing him no affection but keeping up paternal pretenses while throwing away the family money on horse races and wild parties and allowing the family house to rot away before his and David's eyes.

Here is a *Bildungsroman* crying out to be written: David Audley from 1938 (or from 1942 when he was conscripted, or from his affiliation with British Intelligence following the events described in *The '44 Vintage*) to 1946, when he left the Army, or David Audley from the conclusion of *Soldier No More* in 1957 to the start of *The Labyrinth Makers* in 1970. In the view of most critics, Price's most recent novels represent something of a falling off from the high standard he established earlier in his career. Perhaps a return to David Audley is what is necessary for him to express his personal vision most effectively.

Notes

1. Leroy L. Panek, *Watteau's Shepherds: The Detective Novel in Britain 1914-1940* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1979), pp. 14-15.
2. Letter received from Anthony Price, 5 April 1985.
3. Personal interview with Anthony Price, 29 May 1984.

All of Price's novels were originally published by Gollancz (U.K.) and by Doubleday and The Mysterious Press (U.S.). *The Hour of the Donkey* has not been published in the U.S. When two dates are given, the first indicates U.K. publication, the second U.S.

- The Labyrinth Makers* (1970, 1971)
- The Alamut Ambush* (1971, 1972)
- Colonel Butler's Wolf* (1972, 1973)
- October Men* (1973, 1974)
- Other Paths to Glory* (1974, 1975)
- Our Man in Camelot* (1975, 1976)
- War Game* (1976, 1977)
- The '44 Vintage* (1978)
- Tomorrow's Ghost* (1979)
- The Hour of the Donkey* (1980)
- Soldier No More* (1981, 1982)
- The Old Vengeful* (1982, 1983)
- Gunner Kelly* (1983, 1984)
- Sion Crossing* (1984, 1985)

□

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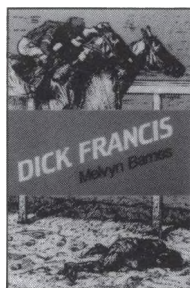
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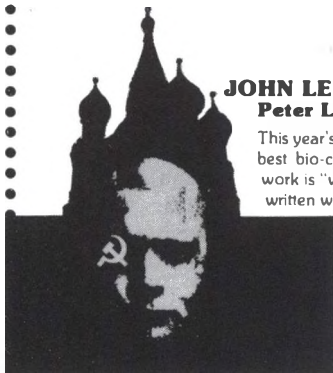
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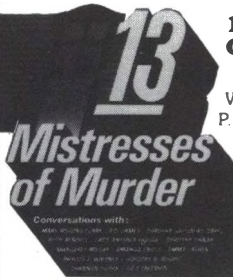
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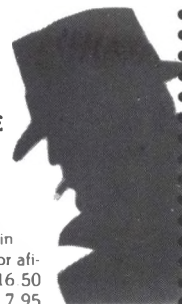
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AJH Reviews

by Allen J. Hubin

Short notes...

Hard Bargains (Macmillan, \$15.95), the second case for James Brady's Washington private eye John Rankin, is no typical P.I. story. Rankin is hired to see if any serious police interest remains in an unsolved 1977 murder. Rankin finds very little, the lady client says thank you and goodbye. Mysterious this will ever remain, but later Rankin spots his one-time client on a Washington street and follows her to the wealthy suburbs, where she lives a married life of plenty under another name. Ere not long, Rankin is in love, in danger of his life owing to the ministrations of the lady's monomaniacal husband, trying to win her freedom, looking for solid connections to the 1977 killing. So this is an affair of the heart, a satisfying tough-tender tale.

An amoral killer-for-hire is certainly unappetizing material, but Loren D. Estleman manages to get quite an absorbing second novel out of Detroit contract hit man Peter Macklin in **Roses Are Dead** (Mysterious Press, \$15.95). Here Macklin is going about his irregular duties when he discovers to his dismay that some very dedicated folks are bent on his death. He doesn't know why, he doesn't know who's behind it, he only knows that a series of paid assassins of considerable skill are set upon his trail.

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Consulting Editor

And, to complicate matters, his wife is suing for divorce and his teenaged son is deciding on a life-work (like father...). Grim stuff, but exceedingly well told.

John Gardner's **The Secret Generations** (Putnam, \$17.95) begins in 1909, with the death of the patriarch of the Railton family. As the years roll by, the Railtons become involved in intelligence work and spying, in tinderbox Ireland, in a Europe readying, then ready, for bloody World War II. Giles is head Railton, and head spymaster, working behind the scenes, drawing ever more of his family into covert operations. Gardner makes of this a long, intriguing novel, keeping the tangled plot afloat without high suspense, relying mostly on character and situation.

I think barrister Robert Forsythe's third appearance, **A Death for a Dancer** (St. Martin's, \$12.95) by "E. X. Giroux" (Doris Shannon), is the least engaging of the three, but it's certainly acceptable diversion. Forsythe is asked to look into the death of Katherine St. Croix, a con woman whose well-aged corpse is found in a Japanese temple on the estate of Amyas Dancer. Dancer is an eccentric chap with the money to indulge his fantasies, and his family members also have their peculiarities, one of which must extend to murder.

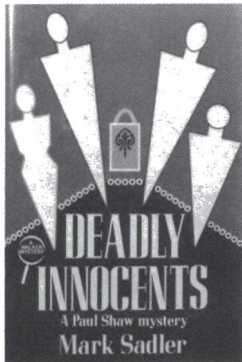
"John Greenwood" (John Buxton Hilton) brings back his expert/inexpert police inspector for a third time in **The Missing Mr. Mosley** (Walker, \$13.95). Hemp Valley is a backwater in England, relatively untouched by civilization, a place where eccentricity is normal. No wonder this is Inspector Mosley's territory, no wonder—like the postman who goes for a walk on his day off—the inspector vacations there. Hemp is where the collecting and selling of operational gallows is quite popular. Where a man courted a woman for eighteen years, married her, and they happily lived separately ever after. Where the woman in question could disappear, leaving disorder and bloodstains. And all of this with Mosley on leave. Most aggravating for Superintendent Grimshaw, who copes badly. Pleasant light comedy, this, though not so much fun as earlier tales, with the inspector largely offstage here.

Skinny of plot and credibility is **The Crystal Cat**, Velda Johnston's 28th suspense novel (Dodd Mead, \$14.95). Linda was born in Wessex, Connecticut, where one night her mother was murdered. Linda was then raised in New York by relatives, who never discussed what happened in Wessex. Years later, Linda marries a man from—of all places—Wessex, and so returns to that city, to find unknown evil threatening her new home, her marriage, her life. Who will tell Laura what really happened to her mother, and how can she combat a supernatural menace?

Unintentional sleuth John Waltz, marginally successful executive recruiter in Pittsburgh, makes his third appearance in **Murder in Cowboy Bronze** (Walker, \$14.95) by Claire McCormick. Here he's

visiting his mother in Phoenix, helping celebrate her engagement to American Indian artist Jefferson Horse. Naturally, murder intrudes: sculptor Cal Morefield is pounded to death with one of his own creations. Principal suspect and obvious innocent: Lily Manygoats, Morefield's mistress and an artist in her own right. Waltz—whose guesses can be perilously wrong—to the rescue. Pleasant entertainment.

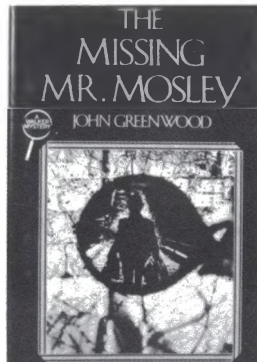
William Maner's *Deadly Nightshed* (Doubleday, \$12.95) is set in a small city in Virginia. Its



people are mostly folks not well met, and so when a murderer was unmasked I was unmoved. Cock-fighting may be illegal in those parts, but the sheriff—when not engaging in adultery or laid up with a bad back (not unrelated matters)—wouldn't miss a fight. The regular bloodletting at the Lynes farm leaves an unexpected byproduct: one corpse, well carved. The sheriff wants the case solved quickly for political reasons. His deputy, almost the only appealing character in the book, takes police work more seriously and follows trails of evidence despite the flailings of his master. I recommend giving *Nightshed* a pass.

"Mark Sadler" (a.k.a. "Michael Collins," "William Arden," "John Crowe," and Dennis Lynds) brings back his private eye Paul Shaw in *Deadly Innocents* (Walker, \$14.95). Shaw is not to me a particularly welcome character here, in this case of murder in a Los Angeles beset by summer heat and fires raging in its hills. Shaw's home and wife are in

New York, but the death of one of four defendants in a drug caper keeps him in the West, where he emits social-consciousness noises and rationalizations of his marital infidelity with equal facility and frequency. Inquiring into the one death, and into a series of sleazy news articles about the quartet, leads to assaults on Shaw's life, to an endangering acquaintance with a rich man who thinks wealth bestows on him the right to do as he pleases. The setting is well caught; you may like this better than I did.



Double Exposure (Scribner's, \$13.95) is the debut of Jim Stinson. He offers Stoney Winston, who dabbles on the edges of the film industry and here does a little freelance investigating. A girl is missing, as is a porn film in which she starred. Winston stirs around in the Hollywood sewer, turning up various crimes and a corpse or two. I think we can do without Stoney and his *milieu*.

I should mention two items of interest at least to Holmesians and more general followers of things Doylian.

One is the first book publication of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's defense of a young law student accused and convicted of anonymous letter-writing and the nocturnal butchering of farm animals. This is *The Story of Mr. George Edalji* (Grey House Books, 12A Lawrence St., London SW3 5NE; £15), edited and introduced by Richard and Molly Whittington-Egan. After Edalji was imprisoned (sentenced to a term of seven years), Doyle took up the argument for his innocence in a series of newspaper pieces in 1907, a portion of which appeared in pamphlet form in that year. All relevant Doyle material, including the article identifying, with evidences, the person Doyle believed actually guilty of the offenses, is included. This makes fascinating reading today, and the Whittington-Egan introduction is wise and helpful. The second item is that most competent of Holmesian quarterlies, *Baker Street Miscellanea* (Sciologist Press, P.O. Box 2579, Chicago, Ill.; \$7.50/year), to which I call occasional attention. The issue latest to hand, Autumn 1985 (#43), contains the bylines of Jon L. Lellenberg, Michael Harrison, and Michael Hardwick, among others, and has the valuable, as usual, section of "Sherlockian News and Reviews." Don't overlook this polished periodical. □

STEVEN C. BERNARD

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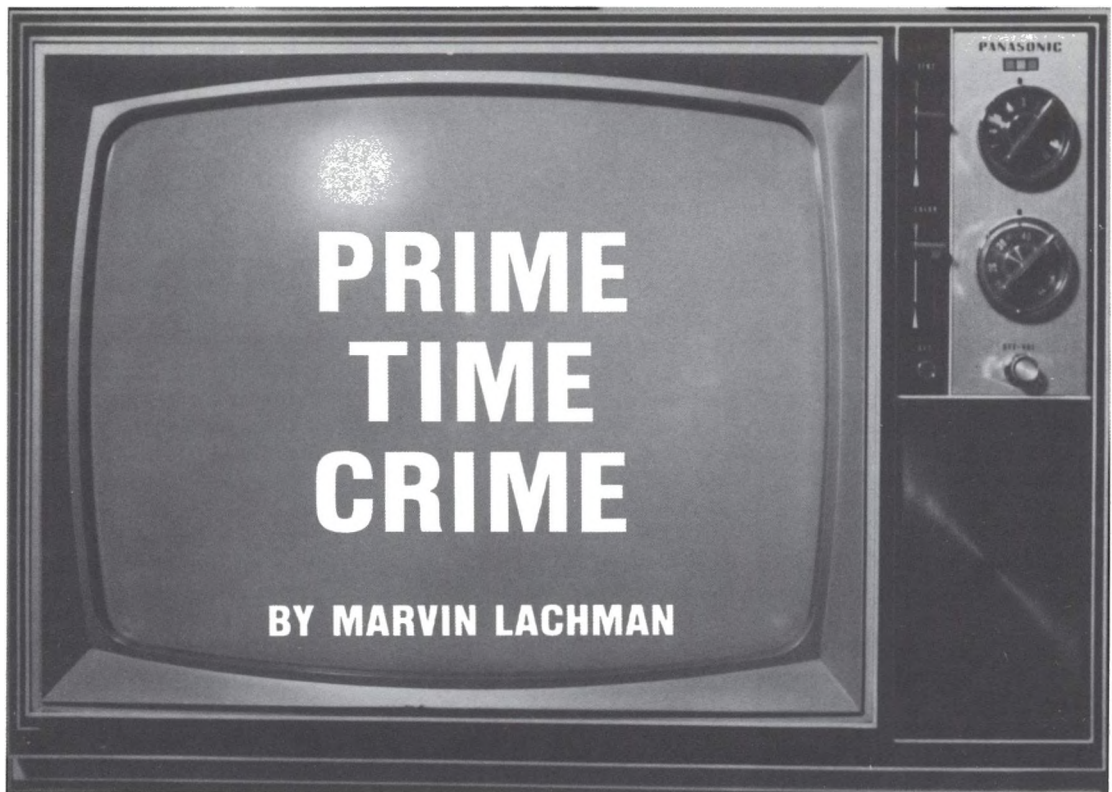
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Dramatizations of the Great Literary Detectives and Criminals for Television

MORE than seventeen years have passed since I did my original list, under the above title, for TAD 1:3 (April 1968). Since then, countless images have flickered on our television screens, and a surprisingly large number of them have been series characters from mystery novels and short stories. I have followed the advice of several long-time TAD readers and included the original list here, along with the corrected and updated material.

Not surprisingly, the continuing interest in Sherlock Holmes is demonstrated in the list below. There are also many lesser-known detectives, and the presence of these “forgotten” men and woman on our home screens can be attributed to British television, especially its anthology series *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*, as well as PBS’s British-derived *Mystery!*

As my list shows, television occasionally changes the names of detectives or eliminates them entirely—Baroness Orczy’s “The Old Man in the Corner,” for example. It also moves them around. Thus Rabbi Small and Christy Opara moved out to California, while Carolyn Weston’s team moved up from Santa

Monica to the streets of San Francisco. The Continental Op not only got a name (Hamilton Nash, which resembles Dashiell Hammett) but he operated on Long Island, not in San Francisco. Even Father Brown, in a 1979 TV film, was paradoxically shifted to New York City.

I realize that I have totally neglected dozens of detectives who were created for television. This includes my favorite character, Rumpole of the Bailey, whose books are based upon the series on *Mystery!* The reader who wants to know more about the characters who are solely television creations is advised to read Richard Meyers’s “TAD on TV” column as well as his Edgar-nominated book, *TV Detectives* (1981), published by A. S. Barnes & Co. I would also recommend a fine Ballantine trade paperback, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network TV Shows 1946–Present* by Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh. Bob Randisi, a writer not exactly unknown to these pages, has also written widely about detectives, mainly of the private variety, on television.

LEGEND

(S) = Series

(RS) = *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes*

(MYS) = *Mystery!*

(M) = Television Movie

(MT) = *Masterpiece Theatre*

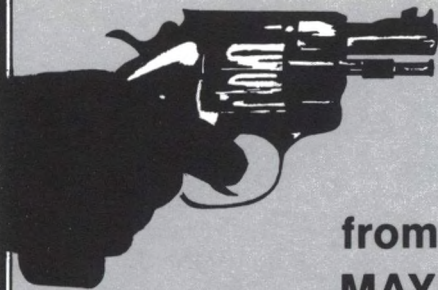
AUTHOR	SERIES CHARACTER	ACTOR / ACTRESS	SHOW TITLE AND FIRST YEAR
Michael Arlen	Gay Falcon	Charles McGraw	<i>The Falcon</i> (S) 1955
Clifford Ashdown	Romney Pringle	Donald Sinden	<i>The Assyrian Rejuvenator</i> (RS) c.1975
Robert Barr	Eugene Valmont	Charles Gray	<i>The Absent-Minded Coterie</i> (RS) c.1975
Earl Derr Biggers	Charlie Chan	J. Carrol Naish	<i>Charlie Chan</i> (S) 1957
		Keye Luke (voice)	<i>The Amazing Chan & The Chan Clan</i> (S) Cartoon 1972
		Ross Martin	<i>Happiness Is a Warm Clue</i> (M) 1975
Lawrence Blochman	Dr. Daniel Coffee Lt. Max Ritter Dr. Motilal Mookerji	Patrick O'Neill Chester Morris Cal Bellini	<i>Diagnosis: Unknown</i> (S) 1960
Guy Boothby	Simon Carne	Roy Dotrice	<i>The Duchess of Wiltshire's Diamonds</i> (RS) c.1975
Jack Boyle	Boston Blackie	Kent Taylor	<i>Boston Blackie</i> (S) 1952
Ernest Bramah	Max Carrados	Robert Stephens	<i>The Missing Witness Sensation</i> (RS) c.1975
Nick Carter	Nick Carter	Robert Conrad	<i>The Adventures of Nick Carter</i> (M) 1972
Raymond Chandler	Philip Marlowe	Dick Powell	"The Long Goodbye" (<i>Climax</i>) 1954
		Philip Carey	<i>The Adventures of Philip Marlowe</i> (S) 1959
		Powers Boothe Kathryn Leigh Scott	<i>Philip Marlowe, Private Eye</i> (S) 1983
Leslie Charteris	Simon Templar (The Saint)	Roger Moore	<i>The Saint</i> (S) 1967
		Ian Ogilvy	<i>The Return of The Saint</i> (S) 1979
G. K. Chesterton	Father Brown	Barnard Hughes	<i>Sanctuary of Fear</i> (M) 1979
		Kenneth More	<i>Father Brown</i> (MYS) 1982
Agatha Christie	Jane Marple	Gracie Fields	"A Murder Is Announced" (<i>Goodyear Playhouse</i>) 1956
	Hercule Poirot	Martin Gabel	Title? (<i>General Electric Theatre</i>) 1961
	Tommy Beresford Tuppence Beresford	James Warwick Francesca Annis	<i>Partners in Crime</i> (MYS) 1984
Wilkie Collins	Sergeant Cuff	John Welsh	<i>The Moonstone</i> (MT) 1973

AUTHOR	SERIES CHARACTER	ACTOR / ACTRESS	SHOW TITLE AND FIRST YEAR
George Harmon Coxe	Flash Casey	1. Richard Carlyle 2. Darren McGavin	<i>Crime Photographer</i> (S) 1951
	Kent Murdock	Simon Oakland	"Focus on Murder" (<i>Kraft Mystery Theatre</i>) 1958
John Creasey	John Mannering (The Baron)	Steve Forrest	<i>The Baron</i> (S) 1966
Carter Dickson	Colonel March	Boris Karloff	<i>Colonel March of Scotland Yard</i> (S) 1955
Franklin W. Dixon	Joe Hardy Frank Hardy Fenton Hardy	Shaun Cassidy Parker Stevenson Edmund Gilbert	<i>The Hardy Boys Mysteries</i> (S) 1977
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle	Sherlock Holmes Dr. Watson	Louis Hector William Podmore	<i>The Three Garridebs</i> NBC test 1937



Holmes Watson	Alan Napier Melville Cooper	"The Speckled Band" (<i>Story Theater</i>) 1949
Holmes Watson	John Longden Campbell Singer	<i>The Man Who Disappeared</i> (?) 1951
Holmes Watson	Alan Wheatley Raymond Francis	<i>Sherlock Holmes</i> (S) 1951
Holmes	Basil Rathbone	"The Adventure of the Black Baronet" (<i>Suspense</i>) 1953
NOTE: The above show was written by John Dickson Carr and Adrian Conan Doyle.		
Holmes Watson	Ronald Howard H. Marion Crawford	<i>Sherlock Holmes</i> (S) 1954
Holmes Watson	Douglas Wilmer Nigel Stock	<i>Sherlock Holmes</i> (S) British 1964
Holmes Watson	Peter Cushing Nigel Stock	<i>Sherlock Holmes</i> (S) British 1968
Holmes Watson Lestrade	Stewart Granger Bernard Fox Alan Calliou	<i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> (M) 1972

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AUTHOR	SERIES CHARACTER	ACTOR / ACTRESS	SHOW TITLE AND FIRST YEAR
	Sherman Holmes Joan "Doc" Watson	Larry Hagman Jenny O'Hara	<i>The Return of the World's Greatest Detective</i> (M) 1976
	Holmes Watson	John Cleese Arthur Lowe	<i>The Strange Case of the End of Civilization as We Know It</i> (London Weekend Television) 1977
	Holmes Watson Moriarty Irene Adler	Roger Moore Patrick Macnee John Huston Charlotte Rampling	<i>Sherlock Holmes in New York</i> (M) 1976
	Holmes Watson	Christopher Plummer Thorley Walters	<i>Silver Blaze</i> (M) 1976
	Holmes Watson	Keith McConnell Laurie Main	<i>The Treasure of Alpheus T. Winterborn</i> (CBS Children's Mystery Theatre) 1980
	Holmes Watson	Frank Langella Richard Woods	<i>Sherlock Holmes</i> (M) 1981
G. G. Fickling	Honey West	Anne Francis	<i>Honey West</i> (S) 1965
Thomas Flanagan	Major Tennente	Everett Sloane	"The Customs of the Country" (<i>Mystery Theatre</i>) 1957
Ian Fleming	James Bond	Barry Nelson	"Casino Royale" (<i>Climax</i>) 1954
Dick Francis	Sid Halley	Michael Gwilym	<i>The Racing Game</i> (MYS) 1980
Antonia Fraser	Jemima Shore	Maria Aitken	<i>Quiet as a Nun</i> (MYS) 1982
Nicholas Freeling	Van Der Valk	Barry Foster	<i>Van Der Valk</i> (S) British c.1975
Jacques Futrelle	The Thinking Machine (Prof. Augustus Van Dusen)	Claude Dauphin Douglas Wilmer	"The Problem of Cell 13" (<i>Kraft Mystery Theater</i>) 1962 <i>The Problem of Cell 13</i> (RS) c.1975 <i>The Superfluous Finger</i> (RS) 1975
Erle Stanley Gardner	Perry Mason Della Street Paul Drake Hamilton Burger Lt. Tragg Mason Street	Raymond Burr Barbara Hale William Hopper William Talman Ray Collins Monte Markham Sharon Acker	<i>Perry Mason</i> (S) 1957 <i>The New Adventures of Perry Mason</i> (S) 1973

AUTHOR	SERIES CHARACTER	ACTOR / ACTRESS	SHOW TITLE AND FIRST YEAR
	Drake Burger Tragg	Albert Stratton Harry Guardino Dane Clark	
	Doug Selby (The D.A.)	Jim Hutton	<i>They Call It Murder</i> (M) 1971
Brett Halliday	Mike Shayne Will Gentry Lucy Hamilton Tim Rourke	Richard Denning Herbert Rudley Patricia Donahue Jerry Paris	<i>Michael Shayne, Private Detective</i> (S) 1960
Donald Hamilton	Matt Helm	Tony Franciosa	<i>Matt Helm</i> (S) 1975
Dashiell Hammett	Nick Charles Nora Charles	Peter Lawford Phyllis Kirk	<i>The Thin Man</i> (S) 1957
	Nick Charles Nora Charles	Craig Stevens Jo Ann Pflug	<i>Nick and Nora</i> (M) 1975
	The Continental Op Effie Perrine	James Coburn Cloris Leachman	<i>The Dain Curse</i> (M) 1978 <i>Charlie Wild</i> (S) 1950
Heard, H. F.	Mr. Mycroft	Boris Karloff	<i>Sting of Death</i> (from <i>A Taste of Honey</i>) (?) 1955
William Hope Hodgson	Carnacki	Donald Pleasance	<i>The Horse of the Invisible</i> (RS) c.1975

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Roy Huggins	Stu Bailey	Efrem Zimbalist, Jr.	<i>77 Sunset Strip</i> (S) 1958
Fergus Hume	Hagar Stanley	Sara Kestleman	<i>The Mystery of the Amber Beads</i> (RS) c.1975
H. R. F. Keating	Inspector Ghote	Zia Mohyeddin	<i>Hunt the Peacock</i> (M) 1969
Carolyn Keene	Nancy Drew	1. Pamela Sue Martin 2. Janet Louise Johnson	<i>The Hardy Boys / Nancy Drew Mysteries</i> (S) 1977
Harry Kemelman	Rabbi David Small Chief Lanigan Small Lanigan	Stuart Margolin Art Carney Bruce Solomon Art Carney	<i>Friday the Rabbi Slept Late</i> (M) 1977 <i>Lanigan's Rabbi</i> (S) 1977
Baynard Kendrick	Mike Longstreet (changed from Duncan MacLain)	James Franciscus	<i>Longstreet</i> (S) 1971
John Le Carré	George Smiley	Alec Guinness	"Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy" (<i>Great Performances</i>) 1980
William LeQueux	William Drew (changed from Duckworth Drew)	Derek Jacobi	<i>The Secret of the Fox Hunt</i> (RS) c.1975

Stacey Keach



Frances and Richard Lockridge	Jerry North Pam North	Richard Denning Barbara Britten	<i>Mr. & Mrs. North</i> (S) 1952
Peter Lovesey	Sergeant Cribb Constable Thackeray	Alan Dobie William Simons	<i>Sergeant Cribb</i> (MYS) 1980
Ed McBain	Steve Carella Teddy Carella Meyer Meyer Bert Kling	Robert Lansing Gena Rowlands Norman Fell Ron Harper	<i>87th Precinct</i> (S) 1961
John D. MacDonald	Travis McGee Meyer	Sam Elliott Gene Evans	<i>The Empty Copper Sea</i> (M) 1983
Ross Macdonald	Rogers (later changed to Lew Archer)	Michael Rennie	"Epitaph for a Golden Girl" (based on <i>Find the Woman</i>) (<i>Pursuit</i>) 1959

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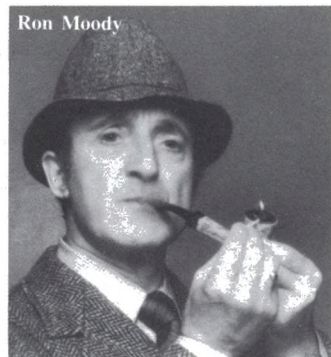
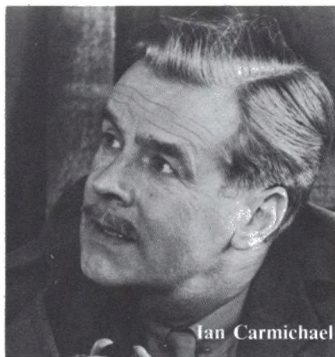
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	Lew Archer	Peter Graves	<i>The Underground Man</i> (M) 1974
		Brian Keith	<i>Archer</i> (S) 1975
Ngaio Marsh	Roderick Alleyn	George Baker	? (S) British?
L. T. Meade and Robert Eustace	Dixon Druce	John Fraser	<i>Madame Sara</i> (RS) c.1975
James Mitchell	Callan	Edward Woodward	? (S) British?
Arthur Morrison	Martin Hewitt	Peter Barkworth	1. <i>The Affair of the Tortoise</i> (RS) c.1975 2. <i>The Case of Laker, Absconded</i> (RS) c.1975
	Horace Dorrington	Peter Vaughan	1. <i>The Affair of the Avalanche Bicycle and Tyre Co. Ltd.</i> (RS) c.1975 2. <i>The Mirror of Portugal</i> (RS) c.1975
	Jonathan Pryde (changed from Hewitt)	Ronald Hines	<i>The Case of Dixon Torpedo</i> (RS) c.1975
Baroness Orczy	Lady Molly	Elvi Hale	<i>The Woman in the Big Hat</i> (RS) 1975
	Polly Burton NOTE: The Old Man in the Corner left out	Judy Geeson	<i>The Mysterious Death on the Underground Railway</i> (RS) 1975
Stuart Palmer	Hildegard Withers Inspector Piper	Eve Arden James Gregory	<i>A Very Missing Person</i> (M) c.1971
Hugh Pentecost	George Crowder	Royal Dano	<i>My Dear Uncle Sherlock</i> WABC-TV Short Story Special 1977
Ellery Queen	Ellery Queen	1. Richard Hart 2. Lee Bowman	<i>The Adventures of Ellery Queen</i> (S) 1950
		Hugh Marlowe	<i>The Adventures of Ellery Queen</i> (S) 1954
		1. George Nader 2. Lee Phillips	<i>Further Adventures of Ellery Queen</i> (S) 1958
	Ellery Inspector Richard Queen (changed to Ellery's uncle!)	Peter Lawford Harry Morgan	<i>Ellery Queen: Don't Look Behind You</i> (based on <i>Cat of Many Tails</i>) (M) 1971
	Sergeant Velie	William Zuckert	
	Ellery Inspector Queen Sergeant Velie	Jim Hutton David Wayne Tom Reese	<i>The Adventures of Ellery Queen</i> (S) 1975
Arthur B. Reeve	Craig Kennedy	Donald Woods	<i>Craig Kennedy, Criminologist</i> (S) 1952

AUTHOR	SERIES CHARACTER	ACTOR / ACTRESS	SHOW TITLE AND FIRST YEAR
Craig Rice	John J. Malone	Lee Tracy	<i>The Amazing Mr. Malone</i> (S) 1951
Sax Rohmer	Dr. Fu Manchu Nayland Smith Fu Manchu Smith	John Carradine Sir Cedric Hardwicke Glen Gordon Lester Matthews	Title? (pilot) 1950 <i>Dr. Fu Manchu</i> (S) 1956
"Sapper" (H. C. McNeill)	Bulldog Drummond	Robert Beatty	<i>Bulldog Drummond</i> (S) British?
Dorothy L. Sayers	Lord Peter Wimsey Bunter Inspector Parker	Ian Carmichael Glyn Houston Mark Eden	<i>Clouds of Witness</i> (MT) 1973 <i>The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club</i> (MT) 1974 <i>Murder Must Advertise</i> (MT) 1974 <i>The Nine Tailors</i> (MT) 1975 <i>The Five Red Herrings</i> (MT) 1976
Georges Simenon	Inspector Maigret	1. Basil Sydney 2. Rupert Davies	<i>Inspector Maigret</i> (S) British?



Mickey Spillane	Mike Hammer	Darren McGavin	<i>Mike Hammer, Detective</i> (S) 1958
		Kevin Dobson	<i>Margin for Murder</i> (M) 1981
	Hammer Velda	Stacy Keach Tanya Roberts	<i>Murder Me, Murder You</i> (M) 1983
	Hammer Velda	Stacy Keach Lindsay Bloom	<i>More Than Murder</i> (M) 1984 <i>Mike Hammer</i> (S) 1984
Rex Stout	Nero Wolfe Archie Goodwin Wolfe Archie	Robert Echois Gene Reynolds Thayer David Tom Mason	"The Art of Murder" <i>(Omnibus)</i> 1956 <i>The Doorbell Rang</i> (M) 1979

AUTHOR	SERIES CHARACTER	ACTOR / ACTRESS	SHOW TITLE AND FIRST YEAR
	Inspector Cramer	Biff McGuire	
	Wolfe	William Conrad	<i>Nero Wolfe</i> (S) 1981
	Archie	Lee Horsley	
	Cramer	Allan Miller	
	Fritz Brenner	George Voscovec	
	Theodore Horstmann	Robert Coote	
Ernest Tidyman	John Shaft	Richard Roundtree	<i>Shaft</i> (S) 1973
Dorothy Uhnak	Christie Opara	Donna Mills	<i>The Bait</i> (M) 1973
	Changed to Christie Love	Teresa Graves	<i>Get Christie Love</i> (S) 1974
Arthur Upfield	Inspector Napoleon Bonaparte	John Laurenson	<i>About Boney</i> (S) British 1974
Louis Joseph Vance	Michael Lanyard (The Lone Wolf)	Louis Hayward	<i>The Lone Wolf</i> (S) 1954
Robert Van Gulik	Judge Dee	Khigh Dhiegh	<i>Judge Dee and the Monastery Murders</i> (M) 1974
Edgar Wallace	Ben Manfred Tim Collier Jeff Ryder Ricco Poccari	Jack Hawkins Dan Dailey Richard Conte Vittorio de Sica	<i>The Four Just Men</i> (S) 1957
Colin Watson	Inspector Purbright	Anton Rogers	<i>Murder Most English</i> (S) c.1980
Carolyn Weston	Inspector Steve Keller Det. Lt. Mike Stone	Michael Douglas Karl Malden	<i>The Streets of San Francisco</i> (S) 1972
	NOTE: Names changed from characters in books called, respectively, Casey Kellog and Al Krug		
P. G. Wodehouse	Cyril Mulliner	John Alderton	"Strychnine in the Soup" (<i>Wodehouse Playhouse</i>) 1977
Dornford Yates	Richard Chandos Captain Mansel	Malcolm McDowell Michael Jayston	<i>She Fell Among Thieves</i> (MYS) 1980

Mystery authors themselves occasionally appear on television. I have seen interviews with P. D. James, Fredric Dannay, Rex Stout, Mickey Spillane, Isaac Asimov, and Carter Brown. In addition, I can think of at least three occasions on which actors have portrayed real-life authors on TV:

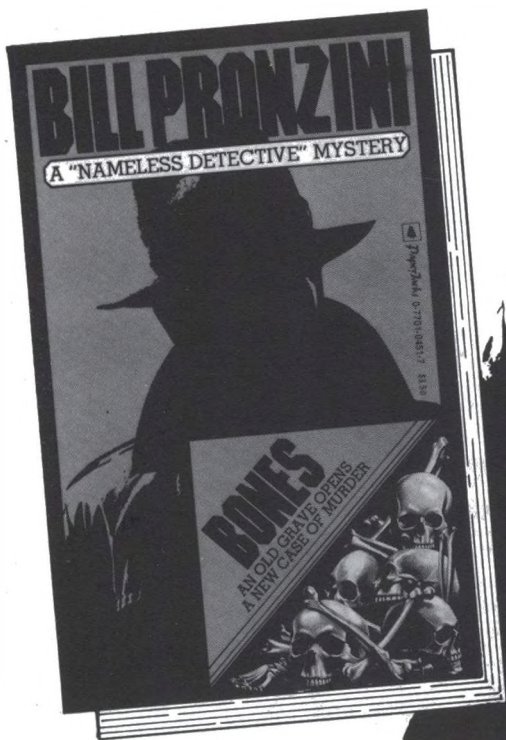
1. In 1957, Paul Birch played Erle Stanley Gardner in *Court of Last Resort*, the series based upon the work (and book) by Gardner about efforts to free people wrongly accused of crimes. Charles Meredith and Robert Harris played criminologists Dr. Le Moyne Snyder and Raymond Shindler, respectively.

2. Later that same year, on *Armstrong Circle Theater*, Claudette Colbert played Mary Roberts Rinehart in a drama, based on an incident in the author's life, in which she acts as a detective.

3. In 1973, *Masterpiece Theatre* showed "The Edwardians," one episode of which was based upon the case of George Edalji, a young British attorney of Indian parents who had been unjustly charged with the mutilation of horses. Nigel Davenport played Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who had in real life gone to Edalji's defense, and Maria Aitken was Doyle's second wife. □

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Cornell Woolrich on the Radio

BY FRANCIS M. NEVINS, JR.



THE SOUND OF SUSPENSE

CORNELL WOOLRICH was the greatest suspense writer that ever lived, but his fame and success were by no means limited to the media of the written word. Like few other writers before or since, he found his work welcomed by all three of the performance media—movies, radio, and TV—and was well paid by each.

The first major Hollywood movie based on Woolrich's suspense fiction was *Street of Chance* (1942), and it was shortly after that picture's release that the adaptability of not one but dozens of Woolrich titles was discovered by the entrepreneurs of dramatic radio. The author's financial records list his radio income as \$1,285 in 1943, \$2,850 in 1944, \$3,120 in 1945, \$6,872 in 1946, \$4,241 in 1947, \$3,600 in 1948, \$4,000 in 1949—when averaged together, enough for a single person to live on in modest comfort during those years. At the start of the 1950s, his income from radio dwindled as the golden age of that medium came to an end. But by then the various dramatic series that specialized in crime and suspense had broadcast dozens of plays

based on his novels and stories, including several that rank with the finest adaptations of Woolrich ever made in any medium.

SUSPENSE

It was fitting that Woolrich was introduced to the radio audience by the series that, more than any other, epitomized the best in the medium's crime dramas: *Suspense*. That classic anthology of shudders and thrills was broadcast over the CBS network from June 1942 until September 1962. Each of the men who were at different times in charge of the series had his own favorite writers whose stories he liked to use on the program. For William Spier, the first producer-director to leave his mark on *Suspense*, the ideal writer was Woolrich.

The fit between the kind of story Woolrich wrote and the kind of radio drama Spier wanted on the air was near perfect. "*Suspense*," writes media historian John Dunning, "dealt in life-or-death situations. That element was usually established within the first

few minutes. Then, through characterization and audio coloring, little touches were added to heighten the sensation of impending doom. That was what suspense was all about: the slow tightening of the knot." Or, in the words of the series host, The Man in Black (Joseph Kearns), describing what listeners should expect:

The thrill of the night-time. The hushed voice and the prowling step. The crime that is almost committed. The finger of suspicion, pointing perhaps at the wrong man. The stir of nerves at the ticking of the clock. The rescue that might be too late, or the murderer who might get away. . . . Mystery and intrigue and dangerous adventure. . . .

Spier's job was to live up to those promises week after week, and to help him he put together a superb team of collaborators, including director Ted Bliss, sound-effects expert Berne Surrey, composers Lucien Moraweck and Lud Gluskin, conductor Bernard Herrmann, and well-known mystery writers such as John Dickson Carr and Woolrich. Between 1943 and 1950, a total of 31 *Suspense* episodes (including reruns) were adapted from Woolrich novels or stories, and the best of these are among the finest radio dramas ever broadcast, a kind of *film noir* without images—except, of course, those in the listeners' imaginations, which are perhaps the most powerful images of all.

Just short of nine months after its debut, *Suspense* aired its first Woolrich-based drama, "The Night Reveals" (March 2, 1943), the source of which was the Woolrich tale of the same name. It was one of Woolrich's earliest variations on the oscillation theme, a superbly written slice of terror-in-the-everyday in which New York insurance adjuster Harry Jordan is faced with a mounting heap of circumstantial evidence that his wife is a compulsive pyromaniac. As adapted for *Suspense* by radio writer Sigmund Miller, the tale was considerably watered down from the original: Jordan narrates the play in first person, and at the climax, instead of executing his wife as in Woolrich's story, he is himself denounced by his wife as the firebug in the family, and we learn that his first-person narration has all along been a confession to the police. Ted Bliss directed Fredric March in a fine, low-key performance as Jordan, in which even Miller's closing monologue is underplayed to the hilt:

You can't blame anybody for liking fires. It's not their fault. Fires are beautiful to watch. So bright and clean. They burn up all the filth and dirt. They're magnificent to watch. Especially the big ones. The way the flames roar and crackle. Lighting up everything around you. The beautiful fires. The beautiful fires. . . .

Although lacking the power and tragedy of Woolrich's story, the radio drama was well above average in excitement, and proved so popular that it was repeated three more times on *Suspense* before the end of the decade.

Three and a half months later, the series presented "Last Night" (June 15, 1943), which was based on Woolrich's novelette "The Red Tide," but in an adaptation—perhaps by Woolrich himself, for no other writer is credited—that, like Sigmund Miller's version of "The Night Reveals," radically revised and softened the story for the mass audience. This is another variant on the oscillation theme: Jacqueline Blaine, co-owner of a failing dude ranch, begins to suspect that her husband Gil has killed a wealthy guest and stolen his bankroll. In the magazine version, Gil in fact is guilty, but in the radio adaptation he only looks guilty and the real murderer is someone else. Kent Smith and Margo starred as the Blaines, and Ted Bliss again directed. Whether or not Woolrich wrote the *Suspense* script himself, he seems to have fallen in love with the changes in the radio version, for that same year, when he revised "The Red Tide" for inclusion in his first story collection, *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes* (1943, as by William Irish), he took over both the radio play's title and its toned-down, although still quite suspenseful, plot.

"The White Rose Murders" (July 6, 1943) was based on one of Woolrich's lesser-known thrillers, "The Death Rose," a powerful if uneven tale which for some reason has never been included in an anthology or collection. Wealthy Ginny Trowbridge, in love with a working-class plainclothesman, tries to save her man's police career by meddling in his case, staking herself out as bait to trap the serial killer of women who leaves a white rose in the hand of each of his victims. The radio version, directed by Ted Bliss and with Maureen O'Hara as Ginny, is one of the most tautly agonizing of all the Woolrich-based *Suspense* dramas. Unlike the magazine story, the radio drama opens with an evocation, from the omniscient point of view, of the murderer at work:

He stood there waiting. He knew that presently they would come out of the second-rate dance hall, out into the dimly lit street. He listened a while, and smiled as the orchestra played *that tune* inside. And then they came out, the two girls. And still he waited. . . .

In the narrow alley that divided the dance hall from an ugly office building, he stood smiling. Just a little inside the alley, he stood stiffly against the wall, his head back, eyes closed, arms straight down, and in his left hand—a white rose. . . .

The girl is dead. Tenderly the figure straightens her hair, and gently places the limp body on the ground. Then he opens her clenched fist, and carefully, so that the thorns will not bruise her flesh, he places in her hand the white rosebud.

If the radio play were not written by Woolrich—and, as with "Last Night," no other writer is credited—then its author's ability to capture the Woolrich mood and feel is nothing short of miraculous. Not only is "The White Rose Murders" better constructed than the magazine tale, but, with its *noir* implication that the world is full of lonely, twisted, potentially femicidal men, it is much more disturbing.

The next *Suspense* adaptation was something of a comedown. As recast by radio writer Robert L. Richards, "The Singing Walls" (September 2, 1943) was a loose and less than nerve-wracking version of Woolrich's novelette "C-Jag." Although never included in a collection, the story has been reprinted several times—under a variety of titles, the best known and most fitting being "Cocaine"—and was also the basis of a low-budget movie, *Fall Guy* (1947). As in several other Woolrich tales, the protagonist comes out of a blackout, caused by amnesia or drugs or hypnosis or whatever, with the ghastly sensation that he committed a murder while out of himself. Then he finds on his person objective evidence of the crime he imagined, and runs headlong through the nightscape, frantically trying to find out if he is innocent or guilty. The Richards adaptation keeps the bare bones of Woolrich's story but eliminates much of the anguish and most of the physical action at the climax, not to mention the cocaine aspects of the plot, for which Richards substituted a few Mickey Finns. Dane Clark starred as the young man on the run and Preston Foster as his cop brother-in-law. Ted Bliss once again directed.

The following month, William Spier both produced and directed "After-Dinner Story" (October 26, 1943), adapted by Richards from the Woolrich tale of the same name. Otto Kruger starred as the vengeful Hardecker, who, convinced that his son's apparent suicide while trapped in an elevator with four other men was actually a case of murder, invites the survivors of the incident to his home for a deadly dinner party and a round of psychological torture. Spier and Richards wanted, as did Woolrich himself, to leave it to us to decide whether the protagonist is a heroic avenger or a madman, but Kruger's performance is so icily controlled that we don't really have much of an option.

Fine as some of these earlier episodes were, my choice for the best Woolrich-based radio drama of all time is "The Black Curtain" (December 2, 1943), the source of which was Woolrich's powerful but badly flawed 1941 novel of the same title. After three and a half years' amnesia, Frank Townsend's memory is restored by a second blow on the head, but a phantom from his now-forgotten interim identity is out to destroy him, and soon, obsessed with the need to know who and what he was in the lost years, Townsend finds love, hate, and a murder charge waiting for him behind the curtain. *The Black Curtain* is surely one of the best suspense novels ever written on the theme of amnesia, but its climactic chapters are, to put it kindly, a disaster. In the movie version, *Street of Chance* (1942), director Jack Hively and screenwriter Garrett Fort vastly improved on the novel by making the murderer not a rather insignificant character as Woolrich did but instead fixing the guilt on Ruth (Claire Trevor), the woman who loved the protagonist in his alter ego. At the film's climax,

Trevor is accidentally shot while struggling with Burgess Meredith over a gun. The thirty-minute *Suspense* version, produced and directed by William Spier, is even better than the movie in its evocation of the bleak Woolrich world and in its climax: although it is still Ruth who killed Diedrich, her motivation is not greed as in the film but self-defense against attempted rape, and, instead of dying accidentally, she shoots herself in front of Townsend after making sure he will be cleared of the murder. Cary Grant gave a magnificent performance as Townsend, and Lurene Tuttle was superb as Ruth in this play, which was at once so different from the novel and so true to its dark spirit that I am almost convinced it was adapted by Woolrich himself. Grant's exit lines come close to summing up the essence of *noir*:

I tried to put it all behind me, to resume my life where it left off over three years ago. Sometimes when it gets towards evening I go along Tillary Street. Once in a while somebody, somebody I don't know, will say: "Hello, Danny." And I just say hello and walk on. I don't want to find out anything any more. I want it all to die away and be still.

And it will. All except Ruth. *Because somewhere behind that black curtain I was loved, and loved someone!* We must have known a love I'll never know again.

The following week, *Suspense* re-ran its first Woolrich-based drama, "The Night Reveals" (December 9, 1943), with the same Sigmund Miller script but with different actors. This time, Robert Young played the pyromaniac Jordan, and Margo, the female lead from "Last Night," was cast as Jordan's wife. With William Spier directing, Young let out all the stops and delivered the final monologue in a wild, maniacal style at the opposite end of the histrionic spectrum from Fredric March's reading for Ted Bliss earlier in the year.

Five weeks later, Spier produced and directed "Dime a Dance" (January 13, 1944), based on Woolrich's well-known and often-anthologized story of the same name. There are certain family resemblances between this tale and the later Woolrich thriller that had already been aired on *Suspense* as "The White Rose Murders": in this version, taxi dancer Ginger Allen stakes herself out as bait to catch the maniac who has been murdering dime-a-dance women (including Ginger's best buddy) and dancing with their corpses to the strains of "Poor Butterfly." The uncredited radio adapter reduced Woolrich's amazingly vivid female protagonist to a stick figure, but the extra plot twists he added to the story so as to punch up the excitement and add a surprise climax are not at all alien to the Woolrich spirit. Starring as Ginger was Lucille Ball.

It was almost eight months before *Suspense* broadcast another episode based on Woolrich, but that one was the finest of the year's radio dramas derived from Woolrich material. "The Black Path of Fear" (August 31, 1944), produced and directed by Spier, was an excellent rendition of the recently published

Woolrich novel of the same name. Brian Donlevy starred as Bill Scott, who has run away to Havana with an American gangster's wife but is followed by the vengeful husband, who kills the woman and frames her lover, leaving him a stranger in a strange land, menaced on all sides and fighting for his life. By eliminating the lengthy flashback sequences and the interminable pulpish climax with its dope dens and sinister Orientals and secret passages and hair's-breadth escapes, the uncredited adapter—Woolrich himself again?—pared away the story line to its essence and underscored the *noir* aspects, which were the novel's greatest strength.

That adapter should have given lessons to whom-ever scripted the next Woolrich-based *Suspense* episode. "You'll Never See Me Again" (September 14, 1944) came from the powerful Woolrich novelette of the same name, in which a recently married young woman has a silly argument with her husband, walks out of the marriage to go home to her mother and stepfather, and apparently vanishes into thin air somewhere along the way. Woolrich evoked the tension and anguish magnificently as the frantic Ed Bliss races against time to find his wife and convince the skeptical police that he has not already murdered her himself. The tension and anguish in the radio version are nil, thanks to an idiotic script which juggles the elements of Woolrich's plot so that Bliss turns out to be the bad guy. Joseph Cotten came across throughout his performance, not just at the end, as an unsympathetic lout.

Five weeks later, *Suspense* aired yet another silly rewrite of first-rate Woolrich material. As adapted by Robert L. Richards, "Eve" (October 19, 1944) took nothing from its nominal source, Woolrich's great novel *The Black Angel*, except the general framework of a wife's race against the clock to save her husband from the electric chair by proving that his girlfriend was murdered not by him but by some other man in her life. Like the haunted angel in Woolrich's novel, Eve Jeremy assumes a new identity and invades the life of the man she suspects; unlike Woolrich's protagonist, when Eve learns that the dashing and handsome Jerry Jordan is even wealthier than her movie-producer husband, she turns off the hidden tape recorder in her apartment and decides to let the executioner make her a widow so that she can run off with Jerry to Mexico City. All ends well as the misogynistic police lieutenant shows up in the nick of time and retrieves a second bugging device of his own, which indeed recorded Jerry's confession. Nancy Kelly played the title role. Although this episode seems not to exist on tape, an adaptation of the script into short-story form by Roby Wentz was published in the December 1946 issue of *Suspense Mystery Magazine*, a short-lived offshoot of the radio series. The story is wretchedly written and full of malapropisms ("Eve raised her large childlike blue eyes from the floor and looked at him"), but at least it

preserves for posterity the ridiculous alterations this episode made in one of Woolrich's most powerful novels.

The following month, *Suspense* recycled one of the previous year's weakest Woolrich-based dramas as well as the best in the history of the series. The repeat of "The Singing Walls" (November 2, 1944) starred Van Johnson in the original Dane Clark role, and in the rerun of "The Black Curtain" (November 30, 1944) Cary Grant re-enacted, although with just a shade less intensity than the first time, the part of Woolrich's amnesic protagonist.

Almost ten months later, and just a few weeks after the end of World War II, another Woolrich tale was adapted for *Suspense*, but with mixed results. "Library Book" (September 20, 1945) was based on Woolrich's "The Book That Squealed," which begins with pure detection and mutates into action-suspense as prim librarian Prudence Roberts investigates the mutilation of a library book and stumbles into a kidnapping plot and romance with a gruff cop. The uncredited radio adaptation eliminated much of the detection and all of the tension, turning a basically serious Woolrich story into a forgettable comedy redeemed by a few bright moments (such as the incident in which a boy checks out of the library an armful of Tarzan novels plus a copy of Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, which he thinks will help him make a walkie-talkie). Myrna Loy starred as Prudence.

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The year's second and final Woolrich-based episode was the much better "I Won't Take a Minute" (December 6, 1945), produced and directed by William Spier. Its source was Woolrich's nightmarish "Finger of Doom," one of his most powerful variations on the annihilation theme: a young man picks up his girlfriend at the end of the workday, waits for her outside a brownstone where she says her boss has asked her to drop off a package, and waits, and waits, until it becomes clear that not only has she vanished, she has vanished so completely that everyone who supposedly knew her swears she never existed. The uncredited script stayed quite faithful to Woolrich's story, although the ultimate explanation is updated so that, instead of pre-Pearl Harbor spies, the perpetrators turn out to be in a plot to create a new identity for a female Nazi war criminal. The only flaw in the drama is that Lee Bowman comes across as just too suave and controlled for the protagonist's *noir* predicament.

In the first full year of peace, *Suspense* aired a total of five dramas taken from Woolrich, but only two of these were new to the air. "The Black Path of Fear" (March 7, 1946) recycled the excellent 1944 radio adaptation of Woolrich's novel, with its *noir* qualities intensified thanks to Cary Grant's replacing Brian Donlevy in the leading part. Grant's suavity and almost-too-perfect good looks may have ruled him out as a protagonist of *noir* movies, but his performance here and in "The Black Curtain" prove that for *radio noir* he was ideal.

Perhaps the weakest of all of *Suspense's* Woolrich-based plays was "Post Mortem" (April 4, 1946), based on Woolrich's same-name tale about a recently remarried widow who discovers that a winning lottery ticket was hidden in the pocket of her first husband's burial suit. As Woolrich wrote it, the story was an uncomfortable mix of serious and grotesquely comic elements, but it was not improved by the *Suspense* adapter's decision to play the whole show for laughs. Agnes Moorehead starred.

Two weeks later, the series broadcast its third rendition of "The Night Reveals" (April 18, 1946), produced and directed as usual by Spier, with Keenan Wynn and Cathy Lewis as the pyromaniac Jordan and his long-suffering wife. Wynn gave by far the most lackluster performance of the three actors who starred in this drama over the years.

Late that summer came another recycled effort, "You'll Never See Me Again" (September 5, 1946), with Robert Young replacing the star of the 1944 original, Joseph Cotten. The silly script, however, defeated Young too.

The year's final *Suspense* drama based on Woolrich was also the best new episode derived from the author's work since 1945's "I Won't Take a Minute." "They Call Me Patrice" (December 12, 1946) was adapted from Woolrich's very long novelette of the

same title, originally published in *Today's Woman*. A woman with nothing to live for, and in flight from her sadistic husband, is injured in a train wreck. She wakes up in a hospital bed surrounded by luxuries because, as she eventually realizes, she has been wrongly identified as another woman, one who had had everything to live for but had died in the train disaster. She grasps what seems to be a heaven-sent new life, but in time it turns into a gift from the malevolent god who rules the Woolrich world. True to the 1940s slick-magazine ethos, the novelette ends with love and peace for the protagonists thanks to a perfectly timed confession from a character who had not even been mentioned till the dénouement. The radio version, produced and directed by Spier, ends on a different and darker note: Helen/Patrice shoots her blackmailing ex-husband on stage but confesses to the police when circumstantial evidence leads them to arrest the man she loves for the murder. Woolrich substituted an infinitely more *noir* conclusion when he expanded the novelette into the novel *I Married a Dead Man*. Susan Peters was excellent as the protagonist of the *Suspense* version.

During 1947, Woolrichphiles had to settle for a single *Suspense* drama rooted in the author's work. "You Take Ballistics" (March 13, 1947) was a fairly close adaptation of Woolrich's straightforward bullet-gimmicking story in which the police are stymied—for a while anyway—by a murderer who willingly confesses everything about the crime he committed except the killing itself. Woolrich's tale juxtaposes the simple plot with his real theme, the casual and blood-chilling sadism of every single cop in the story; in the radio version, the police brutality, although not completely eliminated, is drastically toned down. Starring as Lt. Ed Harvey was Howard da Silva.

In the ten months between "You Take Ballistics" and *Suspense's* next Woolrich-based drama, the series lost the sponsorship of Roma Wines, which went back to the first broadcast of "The Black Curtain" in December 1943, and dropped its traditional host, The Man in Black. Then, at the beginning of 1948, the series was expanded from thirty to sixty minutes, with well-known movie actor Robert Montgomery taking over as host. The new and longer format lasted only nineteen weeks, but four of the nineteen *Suspense* hours were based on Woolrich, and at least two of the four are classics.

As its first sixty-minute drama, the series offered "The Black Curtain" (January 3, 1948) in an expanded version of its magnificent half-hour adaptation of the Woolrich novel. This time, host Robert Montgomery played the amnesia-haunted Townsend, with Lurene Tuttle once again as Ruth. The cast included Cathy Lewis, Jeanette Nolan, Jack Kruschen, William Conrad, and *Suspense's* original Man in Black, Joseph Kearns. This hour-long version is

set during World War II, and some of the new story elements and characters owe more to Raymond Chandler than to Woolrich. But the uncredited adaptor (assuming it was not Woolrich himself) recycled verbatim much of the dialogue of the thirty-minute radio drama and caught the Woolrich tone perfectly in a great deal of the new matter, for instance in Montgomery's opening lines:

A man is born, he lives out his little life, and he dies. This is the one real break, I guess, that every man can count on, the one thing nobody can take away from him: to be born, just once, and to die, just once. Every man, that is, except Frank Townsend. Born with two strikes on him, died with two strikes on him, and then was born again with three strikes on him. Pushed back into life that day, on that street.

Despite a bit of padding here and there, the hour-long version of "The Black Curtain" is a marvelous specimen of Film Noir Sans Images and would provide excellent source material if anyone should ever remake Paramount's 1942 movie based on the Woolrich novel.

A scant three weeks later, the best of the sixty-minute Woolrich adaptations was followed by the worst. "Eve" (January 24, 1948), also referred to as "The Black Angel," was produced and directed as usual by William Spier and expanded from Robert L. Richards's 1944 *Suspense* play based on Woolrich's novel. The hour-long script was credited to Richards and someone hiding under the Sherlockian pseudonym of Sebastian Moriarty. The undynamic duo opened with a long, pointless monologue about apples (apples—Eve—get it?), started their tale earlier in the chain of events than had the half-hour script, ended it both later and differently, but did not improve the first Richards version by an iota. June Havoc played the title role, supported by Wally Mayer, Jack Wilde, Prince Michael Romanoff (as himself), Lurene Tuttle, and Jack Kruschen. With this sad misfire, William Spier's long involvement with the translation of Woolrich to radio came to an end. After three more episodes, he left the series.

Robert Montgomery temporarily replaced Spier as *Suspense's* producer, and newcomer Anton M. Leader took over as director, but Woolrich story material remained as popular as ever. Early on in their tenure, the new team presented a powerful sixty-minute drama entitled "Nightmare" (March 13, 1948), adapted by Alfred Palker from Woolrich's novelette "And So To Death." Like the earlier "C-Jag," which had been the basis of *Suspense's* "The Singing Walls," this Woolrich tale has to do with a man who comes out of a psychological fog to find on his person concrete evidence of the murder that until then he has thought was only a bad dream, and who frantically asks his police detective brother-in-law for help. The radio version captures the *noir* flavor of the

story just as successfully as did Maxwell Shane's movie version, *Nightmare* (1947), although the scripts are quite different in detail. Eddie Bracken starred as the Woolrich protagonist and William Conrad as his brother-in-law.

By the time of the nineteenth and last of the sixty-minute *Suspense* plays, Anton Leader had become the series' producer as well as director; and, like the show's first hour-long offering, its last too was based on Woolrich. "Deadline at Dawn" (May 15, 1948), as adapted by Irving Ravetch, stayed reasonably close to Woolrich's 1944 novel of the same name and avoided all resemblance to the bizarre movie version of 1946. Helen Walker and John Beal starred as Brickly and Quinn, the young

Cecil B. DeMille introduced "Phantom Lady" on "Lux Radio Theater" March 27, 1944.

couple from Glen Falls, Iowa who race the clock to clear themselves of a murder and catch the home-bound 6:00 A.M. bus out of New York. It was a workmanlike episode, emphasizing romance rather than the *noir* coloration of the novel, but does not rank with the series' finest Woolrich adaptations.

After "Deadline at Dawn," *Suspense* left the air for a two months' vacation, its first since the fall of 1942. It returned to CBS in the original thirty-minute format, with Tony Leader producing and directing, and under the sponsorship of Autolite spark plugs. The first new episode under this regime was aired on July 8, 1948, but the next episode taken from Woolrich was not heard till early the following year. "If the Dead Could Talk" (January 20, 1949) was based on Woolrich's story of the same name about the fatal love triangle among two men and a woman in a circus high-wire act. Dana Andrews starred as love's loser tempted to murder. The excellent adaptation by Larry Marcus kept little of the Woolrich story except for the basic situation and characters and the big-top climax, but the new material both improved on the original (which does not represent Woolrich at his best) and caught the *noir* tone and mood so well that, unless one is thoroughly familiar with Woolrich's tale, the radio play would probably sound like a literal rendition.

If I had to choose one short work of Woolrich for posterity to judge him by, it would be "Three O'Clock," which for my money is the most powerful suspense story he or anyone else ever wrote. Paul Stapp is bound and gagged in his own basement, unable to move or even to scream, while the time bomb he himself set but is now unable to reach ticks closer and closer to 3:00, when it will go off. And Woolrich makes us sit in that basement with him, counting the seconds. This unforgettable masterpiece

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of terror is one of the supreme classics of *noir* literature. "Three O'Clock" (March 10, 1949), as adapted by Walter Newman, was an almost unbearably powerful episode of *Suspense*, with Van Heflin giving a superb performance as Stapp. This is perhaps the most purely spine-freezing episode the series broadcast during the Autolite era, certainly the finest of its later dramas based on Woolrich. The episode ended with *Radio Mirror* magazine giving Leader an award that named *Suspense* the best program of its kind then on the air.

Six weeks later came a much tamer Woolrich-based play, "The Lie" (April 28, 1949), its source the not terribly exciting tale of the same name. The radio version by Herb Meadow starred Mickey Rooney as college punk Martin Delevan, who finds the dead body of his slut stepmother and, convinced that his beloved father has finally got fed up and killed her, rearranges the evidence so as to frame himself for the crime. Woolrich's story is a pale spinoff from his earlier and infinitely more powerful "The Corpse and the Kid," better known as "Boy with Body," which would have made a far better episode of *Suspense*.

At the end of May, the series broadcast for the fourth time "The Night Reveals" (May 26, 1949) in Sigmund Miller's 1943 adaptation. Fredric March reprised the role of pyromaniac Harry Jordan, with Jeanette Nolan as his wife.

The 1949-50 season brought several personnel changes to *Suspense*: William Spier came back as the series producer and Norman Macdonnell took over from Tony Leader as director. Woolrich was back too, and "Momentum" (October 27, 1949), based on the author's stark and doom-haunted "Murder Always Gathers Momentum," was one of the better late *Suspense* dramas taken from his chillers. Like the earlier "Dusk to Dawn" and the later "Marihuana," the Woolrich story deals with a terrified protagonist who, rightly or wrongly convinced that he is guilty of murder, runs headlong through the nightscape, usually to his death. Radio adapter E. Jack Neuman substituted first-person narration for the objective narrative of the story but lost very little of its terrifying power. Victor Mature and Lurene Tuttle starred as the trapped Richard and Pauline Payne.

Spier and Macdonnell were also responsible for the final *suspense* play based on Woolrich, "Angel Face" (May 18, 1950). The spoken credits claimed that this was "an original play written for radio by Cornell Woolrich," but in fact it was an adaptation of his well-known story "Face Work," and it is by no means certain that the adaptation was by Woolrich himself. In any event, it is a decent, straightforward rendition of the tale about a nightclub dancer who tries to get her kid brother out of the death house by entering the life of the gambler she thinks is guilty and enticing the truth out of him. Claire Trevor played the lead.

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MOLLE, ESCAPE AND OTHERS

Suspense presented more and better dramas adapted from the Woolrich canon than any other radio series, but it was far from the only program the story editors of which bought from that haunted man. A total of 25 Woolrich-based episodes (including reruns) were heard in less than five years on *Molle Mystery Theatre*, a durable if unspectacular series that debuted September 7, 1943 on the NBC network and bounced back and forth through changes in network, sponsorship, title, and format for the rest of the decade and well into the 1950s. The Woolrich novels and stories chosen by the *Molle* editors fell into three roughly equal categories: those that had already been adapted into radio plays for *Suspense*, those that would later be adapted for *Suspense*, and those whose only radio version was the one presented on *Molle*. Only four of the Woolrich-based *Molle* dramas survive on tape, in the form of Armed Forces Radio Service transcriptions, but three of the quartet fall into the last category.

The series' first episode derived from Woolrich seems to have been "Dreadful Memory" (November 30, 1943), although it is not clear on which of the author's stories this play was based. The earliest of the four surviving dramas is a thirty-minute version of "Deadline at Dawn" (January 30, 1945), which of course was also the basis of the 1946 movie and a sixty-minute *Suspense* play from 1948. Since the AFRS transcriptions cut out most of the spoken credits, it is impossible to identify the producer, director, adapter, or actors who worked on this lackluster and un compelling episode.

The much more effective "A Death Is Caused" (October 12, 1945) was adapted by J. B. Smith from Woolrich's nightmarishly riveting "Mind Over Murder." No cast names have survived, but the radio version captures much of the perverse power of the tale about an American woman in a tropical city who buys a hideous but non-poisonous (or is it?) snake and plants it where it will literally terrify her ophiophobe husband to death.

A week later, *Molle* presented "Leg Man" (October 19, 1945), based on the Woolrich tale in which low-level newshawk Clint Burgess is assigned to cover a barroom murder, becomes convinced that the police have arrested the wrong man, and endangers his own life in order to grab both the real killer and a promotion. It is a standard pulp action-detective

piece which almost anyone could have written, betraying the Woolrich touch only in the worst way, with an incredibly dumb plot unredeemed by *noir* overtones. The anonymous director, adapter, and players did the best they could with substandard material.

The last of the surviving *Molle* dramas based on Woolrich was "Two Men in a Furnished Room" (September 27, 1946), adapted by Paul Monash from the novelette "He Looked Like Murder." This is one of Woolrich's oscillation stories, in which the mounting evidence keeps pushing the narrator back and forth between believing and disbelieving that his roommate has brutally murdered his girlfriend. In the Woolrich version, an outsider is exposed at last as the killer but the friendship between the two main characters is destroyed. Monash rather cleverly reworked the plot so that the roommate under suspicion is also killed and the narrator turns out to be a double murderer. John Beal and Sam Wanmaker played the buddies.



Woolrich's stories could be heard on "Escape"—"Designed to free you from the four walls of today for a half hour of high adventure."

Between 1943 and 1948, *Molle* presented a large number of other episodes adapted from Woolrich material, including "Marihuana" (June 25, 1945), "I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes" (December 14, 1945), "Silent as the Grave" (August 9, 1946), "The Orphan Diamond" (March 7, 1947), "Chance" (July 18, 1947), and "The Earring" (March 5, 1948). The series even offered a few half-hour dramas based on full-length Woolrich novels that no other radio program had adapted, such as "Black Alibi" (October 11, 1946) and, with June Havoc in the lead, "The Bride Wore Black" (February 7, 1947). None of these plays seems to have survived.

When we come to another well-known anthology series, however, we are luckier. In the late '40s, the huge success of *Suspense* induced CBS to launch a companion program, *Escape*, which was produced, directed, scripted, sound-cued, and acted by *Suspense* veterans, but this time with the emphasis not on mystery and intrigue but rather on fantasy and high adventure. The series debuted on CBS on July 7,

1947 with a thirty-minute version of Kipling's *The Man Who Would Be King* and stayed on the air—although not continuously, and most of the time without a sponsor—until the end of the summer of 1954. The tone of the program is vividly illustrated by its introduction. “Tired of the everyday grind?” the announcer (first Paul Frees, later William Conrad) would ask us. “Ever dream of a life of romantic adventure? Want to get away from it all? We offer you—*Escape!*” Then would come a drum roll, merging into the theme from Mussorgsky’s “Night on Bald Mountain,” and the announcer would continue: “*Escape!* Designed to free you from the four walls of today for a half hour of high adventure!”

Thanks to first-rate casts (although without the Hollywood stars featured on *Suspense*) and excellent background music and sound effects, *Escape* was one of the best radio dramas during those frantic years in which the medium, felt its first competition from TV. Of the almost 200 episodes broadcast on the series, the vast majority were either original scripts or adaptations from the works of writers such as Kipling, Joseph Conrad, and H. G. Wells. Two, however, were based on stories by Woolrich, and fortunately both survive on tape.

“Papa Benjamin” (January 24, 1948) was produced and directed by William N. Robson, who would later take over the same jobs on *Suspense*, and was adapted by John Dunkel from Woolrich’s horror classic “Dark Melody of Madness.” An excellent jazz-and-vooodoo music score by Cy Feuer helped set the mood for the story of New Orleans bandleader Eddie Block and the curse put on him by a black *papaloi* for stealing his cult’s sacred chant. Frank Lovejoy starred as Block, with Luis Van Rooten as Papa Benjamin, Harry Bartell as the police commissioner, and Joan Banks as Block’s wife.

Fourteen months later, *Escape* offered the second and last of its Woolrich adaptations, “Finger of Doom” (March 19, 1949), based on Woolrich’s 1940 tale of the same name which had been presented on *Suspense* as “I Won’t Take a Minute” back in 1945. The *Escape* version, produced and directed by Norman Macdonnell and with Ivan Ditmars playing a fine background score of organ music, did an even better job than *Suspense* at presenting Woolrich’s story of the man whose fiancée walks into a building to drop off a package and is never seen again. The radio script was by John Brussell. Harry Bartell and Ed Begley played the terrified young man and the tough cop, and the case was rounded out by Joy Terry, Edgar Barrier, Louise Arthur, Peter Prauss, and Kay Miller.

Except for *Suspense*, only a handful of Woolrich-based dramas were heard on American radio after the pair broadcast on *Escape*. NBC’s *Radio City Playhouse* presented “Wardrobe Trunk” (April 4,

1949), an adaptation of Woolrich’s “Dilemma of the Dead Lady,” in which the protagonist stuffs the body of the woman he has killed on an ocean liner into the titular trunk, with the expected suspenseful consequences. The short-lived ABC series *Presenting Boris Karloff* broadcast dramas based on the Woolrich classics “Three O’Clock” (November 30, 1949) and “The Night Reveals” (December 13, 1949). Mutual’s *Murder by Experts* recycled *Molle*’s thirty-minute version of Woolrich’s “Nightmare” (February 19, 1951). And the same network’s *Nightmare* series a few years later gave us Peter Lorre as the child-murderer in the last American radio play taken from Woolrich, “If I Should Die Before I Wake” (August 25, 1954), which was based on the tale of the same name. But by then, of course, Woolrich was making so much money from the small-screen medium that had supplanted radio that he could hardly have missed the radio income.

MOVIES ON RADIO

In the years before the rise of original softcover fiction, sixty-minute radio adaptations of current movies were as common as paperback tie-in novelizations today. At least five of these hour-long adaptations of Woolrich-based pictures, and at least one such adaptation that ran a modest thirty minutes, were presented during the 1940s; and, even though very little of their original sources seem to have survived into these radio dramas, it is unfortunate that only one still exists on tape.

The first radio series to offer a dramatization of a Woolrich-based movie was the grand pioneer in this genre, *Lux Radio Theatre*. The program had debuted on NBC in October 1934, moved to CBS in July 1935, and began presenting nothing but audio versions of movies the following year. For most of the first half of its twenty-year duration, the series was hosted by none other than Cecil B. DeMille, and it was the immortal C. B. who introduced the *Lux* adaptation of “Phantom Lady” (March 27, 1944), based on the Universal film which in turn was based on Woolrich’s classic 1942 novel. Ella Raines and Alan Curtis were cast in their roles from the movie, with Brian Aherne taking over the Franchot Tone part of the mad killer.

Less than six months later, another anthology series offered a necessarily much different version of the same movie, based on the same Woolrich novel, on the same CBS network. *Screen Guild Theatre* differed from *Lux* in that its adaptations were a mere half-hour long and its Hollywood guest stars donated their salaries to the Motion Picture Relief Fund. Since 1942, the series had been heard on Monday evenings and sponsored by Lady Esther cosmetics.

The scriptwriters, and producer-director Bill Lawrence, deserve a moment of our retrospective pity, for they had to watch dozens of current movies each week and then figure out ways to cut them down to 22 minutes of air time without benefit of visuals. One of the pictures they saw in 1944 was *Phantom Lady*, and the *Screen Guild* adaptation was broadcast on September 11 of that year, with Ralph Bellamy and Louise Allbritton in the Franchot Tone and Ella Raines roles from the movie. In 1950, the *Screen Guild* series moved to ABC and was expanded to a sixty-minute format, but went off the air a year later.

After a bitter dispute with the radio performers' union, Cecil B. DeMille left the *Lux* show early in 1945. Late that year, veteran Warner Bros. movie director William Keighley became the series' regular host, and, about six months into his stint, Keighley introduced "Deadline at Dawn" (May 20, 1946), apparently the only radio adaptation of a Woolrich-based movie that survives on tape. Joan Blondell played the Susan Hayward part, with Paul Lukas and Bill Williams reprising their movie roles as the philosophic cabbie and the naïve sailor. The radio version closely followed RKO's movie, which itself had but the vaguest resemblance to Woolrich's 1944 novel.

During the hot months of 1946, the ABC network launched *Hour of Mystery*, a short-lived summer replacement series sponsored by U.S. Steel. A few of the program's thirteen episodes were adapted from unfiled novels—for example, a version of Erle Stanley Gardner's *The Case of the Lame Canary*, with Victor Jory as Perry Mason, and of one of Gardner's earliest books under the A. A. Fair pseudonym, *Turn On the Heat*, with Frank Sinatra as Donald Lam—but most were taken from novels that had fairly recently been made into movies. Two dramas of the latter sort came ultimately from Woolrich. "The Black Angel" (June 16, 1946) starred Geraldine Fitzgerald in an adaptation of the then current Universal movie based on Woolrich's powerful 1943 novel. And "Phantom Lady" (August 18, 1946), based on Universal's 1944 movie which had earlier been brought to radio on the *Lux* and *Screen Guild* series, starred Franchot Tone in a

reprise of his movie role, with Roger Pryor in the part of the condemned man portrayed by Alan Curtis on the screen.

The last known radio version of a Woolrich-based movie was heard on the less than spectacularly successful CBS series *This Is Hollywood*. "The Chase" (November 9, 1946) was based on the bizarre *film noir* of the same name, which had been very freely adapted from Woolrich's 1944 novel *The Black Path of Fear*. Michele Morgan repeated her part from the movie, with Robert Montgomery filling in for the picture's male star, Robert Cummings.

FADE TO SILENCE

Even after dramatic radio became extinct in the United States, Woolrich continued to make small change by licensing radio adaptations of his fiction in foreign countries. In 1958, for example, he was paid \$83.23 in royalties from a version of his 1948 novel *I Married a Dead Man* that was broadcast in France, Belgium, and Switzerland. In 1960, he received \$209.17 for French radio plays taken from his 1942 novel *Phantom Lady* and his 1943 novelette "Mind Over Murder," better known as "A Death Is Caused." In 1961, the French sent him checks totaling \$664.42 for dramas based on an unspecified number of his tales. His radio royalties for 1963 amounted to \$204.30, of which \$58.26 was for a French play based on his 1936 thriller "The Night I Died" and \$146.04 for the re-run of an earlier French radio drama taken from his first suspense novel, *The Bride Wore Black*. That drama was repeated in France one more time in 1964, netting Woolrich an additional \$53.05. Apparently, he made no more radio sales anywhere in the world after that year.

If dramatic radio ever comes back, there are close to two hundred Woolrich tales waiting to be adapted—some for the first time, some for the fourth or fifth—to that fascinating medium. But those plays will have to be very good indeed if they are to compete in our memories with the best Woolrich-based dramas of radio's golden age.

— With special thanks to William Hennessey,
William Nadel, and Ray Stanich

Cornell Woolrich as Adapted for U.S. and Radio: Chronology and Credits

Escape
(CBS, 1947-54)

"Papa Benjamin." Jan. 24, 1948. Produced and directed by William N. Robson. Adapted by John Dunkel from Woolrich's "Dark Melody of Madness" (*Dime Mystery*, July 1935; collected as "Papa Benjamin" in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, Lippincott, 1943, as by William Irish). With Frank Lovejoy, Luis Van Rooten, Harry Bartell, Joan Banks, William Conrad.

"Finger of Doom." March 19, 1949. Produced and directed by Norman Macdonnell. Adapted by John Brussell from Woolrich's "Finger of Doom" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, June 22, 1940; collected as "I Won't Take a Minute" in *The Ten Faces of Cornell Woolrich*, Simon & Schuster, 1965). With Harry Bartell, Ed Begley, Joy Terry, Edgar Barrier, Louise Arthur, Peter Prauss, Kay Miller.

Hour of Mystery
(ABC, 1946)

- "The Black Angel." June 16, 1946. Adapted from the movie *Black Angel* (Universal, 1946), which is based on Woolrich's novel *The Black Angel* (Doubleday, 1943). With Geraldine Fitzgerald.
- "Phantom Lady." Aug. 18, 1946. Adapted from the movie *Phantom Lady* (Universal, 1944), which is based on Woolrich's novel *Phantom Lady* (Lippincott, 1942, as by William Irish). With Franchot Tone, Roger Pryor.

Lux Radio Theatre
(NBC, 1934-35; CBS, 1935-54; NBC, 1954-55)

- "Phantom Lady." March 27, 1944. Adapted from the movie *Phantom Lady* (Universal, 1944), which is based on Woolrich's novel *Phantom Lady* (Lippincott, 1942, as by William Irish). With Brian Aherne, Ella Raines, Alan Curtis.
- "Deadline at Dawn." May 20, 1946. Adapted from the movie *Deadline at Dawn* (RKO, 1946), which is based on Woolrich's novel *Deadline at Dawn* (Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish). With Joan Blondell, Paul Lukas, Bill Williams, Gerald Mohr.

Molle Mystery Theatre
(NBC, 1943-44; Mutual, 1944-45; NBC, 1945-47
and (as *Mystery Theatre*) 1947-48; CBS, 1948-51)

- "Dreadful Memory." Nov. 30, 1943. Adapted from an unidentified Woolrich story.
- "The Death Rose." Sept. 26, 1944. Adapted from Woolrich's "The Death Rose" (*Baffling Detective Mysteries*, March 1943).
- "Nightmare." Nov. 28, 1944. Adapted from Woolrich's "And So to Death" (*Argosy*, March 1, 1941; collected as "Nightmare" in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, Lippincott, 1943, as by William Irish).
- "Deadline at Dawn." Jan. 30, 1945. Adapted from Woolrich's novel *Deadline at Dawn* (Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish). With Ann Loring, Larry Haines.
- "After-Dinner Story." March 20, 1945. Adapted from Woolrich's "After-Dinner Story" (*Black Mask*, Jan. 1938; collected in *After-Dinner Story*, Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish).
- "Marihuana." June 26, 1945. Adapted from Woolrich's "Marihuana" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, May 3, 1941; collected in *After-Dinner Story*, Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish).
- "A Death Is Caused." Oct. 12, 1945. Adapted by J. B. Smith from Woolrich's "Mind Over Murder" (*Dime Detective*, May 1943; collected as "A Death Is Caused" in *If I Should Die Before I Wake*, Avon, 1945, as by William Irish).
- "Leg Man." Oct. 19, 1945. Adapted from Woolrich's "Leg Man" (*Dime Detective*, Aug. 1943; collected in *The Dancing Detective*, Lippincott, 1946, as by William Irish).
- "Post Mortem." Nov. 23, 1945. Adapted from Woolrich's "Post Mortem" (*Black Mask*, April 1940; collected in *Rear Window and Four Short Novels*, Ballantine, 1984).
- "I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes." Dec. 14, 1945. Adapted from Woolrich's "I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, March 12, 1938; collected in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, Lippincott, 1943, as by William Irish).
- "Dime a Dance." Jan. 11, 1946. Adapted by F. Maytho from Woolrich's "Dime a Dance" (*Black Mask*, Feb.

1938; collected as "The Dancing Detective" in *The Dancing Detective*, Lippincott, 1946, as by William Irish).

- "The Mathematics of Murder." Feb. 1, 1946. Adapted from Woolrich's "What the Well Dressed Corpse Will Wear" (*Dime Detective*, March 1944; collected as "Fur Jacket" in *The Dancing Detective*, Lippincott, 1946, as by William Irish).
- "Last Night." Feb. 22, 1946. Adapted from Woolrich's "The Red Tide" (*Street & Smith's Detective Story*, Sept. 1940; heavily revised version collected as "Last Night" in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, Lippincott, 1943, as by William Irish).
- "Silent As the Grave." Aug. 9, 1946. Adapted from Woolrich's "Silent As the Grave" (*Mystery Book Magazine*, Nov. 1945; collected in *The Dancing Detective*, Lippincott, 1946, as by William Irish).
- "Nightmare." Aug. 30, 1946. Repeat of play first broadcast Nov. 28, 1944.
- "Two Men in a Furnished Room." Sept. 27, 1946. Adapted by Paul Monash from Woolrich's "He Looked Like Murder" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, Feb. 8, 1941; collected as "Two Fellows in a Furnished Room" in *The Dancing Detective*, Lippincott, 1946, as by William Irish). With John Beal, Sam Wanamaker.
- "Black Alibi." Oct. 11, 1946. Adapted from Woolrich's novel *Black Alibi* (Simon & Schuster, 1941).
- "Blackmail." Jan. 24, 1947. Adapted from Woolrich's "Face Work" (*Black Mask*, Oct. 1937; collected as "One Night in New York" in *Six Nights of Mystery*, Popular Library, 1950, as by William Irish).
- "The Bride Wore Black." Feb. 7, 1947. Adapted from Woolrich's novel *The Bride Wore Black* (Simon & Schuster, 1940). With June Havoc.
- "The Orphan Diamond." March 7, 1947. Adapted from

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- Woolrich's "Orphan Ice" (*Dime Detective*, Sept. 1942).
 "Dime a Dance." March 14, 1947. Repeat of play first broadcast Jan. 11, 1946.
 "Chance." July 18, 1947. Adapted from Woolrich's "Dormant Account" (*Black Mask*, May 1942; collected as "Chance" in *Borrowed Crime*, Avon, 1946, as by William Irish).
 "Silent As the Grave." Aug. 29, 1947. Repeat of play first broadcast Aug. 9, 1946.
 "The Earring." March 5, 1948. Adapted from Woolrich's "The Death Stone" (*Flynn's Detective Fiction*, formerly *Detective Fiction Weekly*, Feb. 1943; collected as "The Earring" in *Dead Man Blues*, Lippincott, 1947, as by William Irish).
 "Silent As the Grave." July 13, 1948. Repeat of play first broadcast Aug. 9, 1946.
 NOTE: The *Molle* episode "Angel Face," broadcast Oct. 5, 1945 and repeated Dec. 20, 1946, is an original script by Walter Wilson, unrelated to the Woolrich story often reprinted under that name.

Murder By Experts
 (Mutual, 1949-51)

- "Nightmare." Feb. 19, 1951. Adapted from Woolrich's "And So to Death" (*Argosy*, March 1, 1941; collected as "Nightmare" in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, Lippincott, 1943, as by William Irish).

Nightmare
 (Mutual, 1953-54)

- "If I Should Die Before I Wake." Aug. 25, 1954. Adapted from Woolrich's "If I Should Die Before I Wake" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, July 3, 1937; collected in *If I Should Die Before I Wake*, Avon, 1945, as by William Irish). With Peter Lorre.

Presenting Boris Karloff
 (ABC, 1949)

- "Three O'Clock." Nov. 30, 1949. Adapted from Woolrich's "Three O'Clock" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, Oct. 1, 1938; collected in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, Lippincott, 1943, as by William Irish).
 "The Night Reveals." Dec. 14, 1949. Adapted from Woolrich's "The Night Reveals" (*Story Magazine*, April 1936; collected in *After-Dinner Story*, Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish).

Radio City Playhouse
 (NBC, 1948-50)

- "Wardrobe Trunk." April 4, 1949. Adapted from Woolrich's "Dilemma of the Dead Lady" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, July 4, 1936; collected as "Wardrobe Trunk" in *The Blue Ribbon*, Lippincott, 1949, as by William Irish).

Screen Guild Theatre
 (CBS, 1939-48; NBC, 1948-50; ABC, 1950-51)

- "Phantom Lady." Sept. 11, 1944. Produced and directed by Bill Lawrence. Adapted from the movie *Phantom Lady* (Universal, 1944), which is based on Woolrich's novel *Phantom Lady* (Lippincott, 1942, as by William Irish). With Ralph Bellamy, Louise Allbritton.

Suspense
 (CBS, 1942-62)

- "The Night Reveals." March 2, 1943. Produced by William Spier. Directed by Ted Bliss. Adapted by Sigmund

Miller from Woolrich's "The Night Reveals" (*Story Magazine*, April 1936; collected in *After-Dinner Story*, Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish). With Fredric March.

- "Last Night." June 15, 1943. Produced by William Spier. Directed by Ted Bliss. Adapted from Woolrich's "The Red Tide" (*Street & Smith's Detective Story*, Sept. 1940; heavily revised version collected as "Last Night" in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, Lippincott, 1943, as by William Irish). With Margo, Kent Smith.

"The White Rose Murders." July 6, 1943. Produced by William Spier. Directed by Ted Bliss. Adapted from Woolrich's "The Death Rose" (*Baffling Detective Mysteries*, March 1943). With Maureen O'Hara.

"The Singing Walls." Sept. 2, 1943. Produced by William Spier. Directed by Ted Bliss. Adapted by Robert L. Richards from Woolrich's "C-Jag" (*Black Mask*, Oct. 1940). With Preston Foster, Dane Clark.

"After-Dinner Story." Oct. 26, 1943. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted by Robert L. Richards from Woolrich's "After-Dinner Story" (*Black Mask*, Jan. 1938; collected in *After-Dinner Story*, Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish). With Otto Kruger, Hans Conried, Bill Johnstone.

"The Black Curtain." Dec. 2, 1943. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's novel *The Black Curtain* (Simon & Schuster, 1941). With Cary Grant, Lurene Tuttle.

"The Night Reveals." Dec. 9, 1943. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted by Sigmund Miller from Woolrich's "The Night Reveals" (*Story Magazine*, April 1936; collected in *After-Dinner Story*, Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish). With Robert Young, Margo, Hans Conried, Joseph Kearns.

"Dime a Dance." Jan. 13, 1944. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's "Dime a Dance" (*Black Mask*, Feb. 1938; collected as "The Dancing Detective" in *The Dancing Detective*, Lippincott, 1946, as by William Irish). With Lucille Ball, Hans Conried.

"The Black Path of Fear." Aug. 31, 1944. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's novel *The Black Path of Fear* (Doubleday, 1944). With Brian Donlevy, Hans Conried.

"You'll Never See Me Again." Sept. 14, 1944. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's "You'll Never See Me Again" (*Street & Smith's Detective Story*, Nov. 1939; collection in *Nightwebs*, Harper & Row, 1971). With Joseph Cotten, Lurene Tuttle.

"Eve." Oct. 19, 1944. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted by Robert L. Richards from Woolrich's novel *The Black Angel* (Doubleday, 1943). With Nancy Kelly.

"The Singing Walls." Nov. 2, 1944. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted by Robert L. Richards from Woolrich's "C-Jag" (*Black Mask*, Oct. 1940). With Van Johnson.

"The Black Curtain." Nov. 30, 1944. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's novel *The Black Curtain* (Simon & Schuster, 1941). With Cary Grant.

"Library Book." Sept. 20, 1945. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's "The Book That Squealed" (*Street & Smith's Detective Story*, Aug. 1939; collected in *Angels of Darkness*, Mysterious Press, 1978). With Myrna Loy, Joseph Kearns, Wally Maher.

- "I Won't Take a Minute." Dec. 6, 1945. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's "Finger of Doom" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, June 22, 1940; collected as "I Won't Take a Minute" in *The Ten Faces of Cornell Woolrich*, Simon & Schuster, 1965). With Lee Bowman.
- "The Black Path of Fear." March 7, 1946. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's novel *The Black Path of Fear* (Doubleday, 1944). With Cary Grant.
- "Post Mortem." April 4, 1946. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's "Post Mortem" (*Black Mask*, April 1940; collected in *Rear Window and Four Short Novels*, Ballantine, 1984). With Agnes Moorehead, Joseph Kearns.
- "The Night Reveals." April 18, 1946. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted by Sigmund Miller from Woolrich's "The Night Reveals" (*Story Magazine*, April 1936; collected in *After-Dinner Story*, Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish). With Keenan Wynn, Cathy Lewis.
- "You'll Never See Me Again." Sept. 5, 1946. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's "You'll Never See Me Again" (*Street & Smith's Detective Story*, Nov. 1939; collected in *Nightwebs*, Harper & Row, 1971). With Robert Young.
- "They Call Me Patrice." Dec. 12, 1946. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's "They Call Me Patrice" (*Today's Woman*, April 1946; later adapted into the novel *I Married a Dead Man*, Lippincott, 1948, as by William Irish). With Susan Peters, Bill Johnstone, Joseph Kearns.
- "You Take Ballistics." March 13, 1947. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's "You Take Ballistics" (*Double Detective*, Jan. 1938; collected in *Dead Man Blues*, Lippincott, 1947, as by William Irish). With Howard da Silva, Jack Webb.



For William Spier, the first producer-director to leave his mark on "Suspense," the ideal writer was Woolrich.

NOTE: At this point, the series expanded from thirty to sixty minutes.

- "The Black Curtain." Jan. 3, 1948. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted from Woolrich's novel *The Black Curtain* (Simon & Schuster, 1941). With Robert Montgomery, Lurene Tuttle, Cathy Lewis, Jeanette Nolan, Jack Kruschen, William Conrad, Joseph Kearns, Jeff Chandler, Sidney Miller, Paul Frees, Conrad Binyon, Jerry Hausner, Harry Lang, Ira Griselle, Junius Matthews.
- "Eve." Jan. 24, 1948. Produced and directed by William Spier. Adapted by Robert L. Richards and Sebastian Moriarty from Woolrich's novel *The Black Angel* (Doubleday, 1943). With June Havoc, Bill Johnstone, Wally Maher, Jack Miles, Prince Michael Romanoff, Lurene Tuttle, Jack Kruschen, Dick Ryan, Frank Albertson, Alan Reed.
- "Nightmare." March 13, 1948. Produced by Robert Montgomery. Directed by Anton M. Leader. Adapted

by Alfred Palker from Woolrich's "And So to Death" (*Argosy*, March 1, 1941; collected as "Nightmare" in *If I Should Die Before I Wake*, Lippincott, 1943, as by William Irish). With Eddie Bracken, William Conrad, Bill Johnstone.

"Deadline at Dawn." May 15, 1948. Produced and directed by Anton M. Leader. Adapted by Irving Ravetch from Woolrich's novel *Deadline at Dawn* (Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish). With Helen Walker, John Beal, Bill Johnstone, Lillian Byer, Rye Billsbury, Edith Lackner, Buddy Grey.

NOTE: At this point, the series returned to a thirty-minute format.

"If the Dead Could Talk." Jan. 20, 1949. Produced and directed by Anton M. Leader. Adapted by Larry Marcus from Woolrich's "If the Dead Could Talk" (*Black Mask*, Feb. 1943; collected in *Dead Man Blues*, Lippincott, 1947, as by William Irish). With Dana Andrews, Ted de Corsia, Verna Felton.

"Three O'Clock." March 10, 1949. Produced and directed by Anton M. Leader. Adapted by Walter Newman from Woolrich's "Three O'Clock" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, Oct. 1, 1938; collected in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes*, Lippincott, 1943, as by William Irish). With Van Heflin, Ted de Corsia.

"The Lie." April 28, 1949. Produced and directed by Anton M. Leader. Adapted by Herb Meadow from Woolrich's "The Lie" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, Oct. 9, 1937, as by Chick Walsh; collected in *The Blue Ribbon*, Lippincott, 1949, as by William Irish). With Mickey Rooney, Bill Johnstone, Joseph Kearns.

"The Night Reveals." May 26, 1949. Produced and directed by Anton M. Leader. Adapted by Sigmund Miller from Woolrich's "The Night Reveals" (*Story Magazine*, April 1936; collected in *After-Dinner Story*, Lippincott, 1944, as by William Irish). With Fredric March, Jeanette Nolan.

"Momentum." Oct. 27, 1949. Produced by William Spier. Directed by Norman Macdonnell. Adapted by E. Jack Neuman from Woolrich's "Murder Always Gathers Momentum" (*Detective Fiction Weekly*, Dec. 14, 1940; collected as "Momentum" in *Somebody on the Phone*, Lippincott, 1950, as by William Irish). With Victor Mature, Lurene Tuttle.

"Angel Face." May 18, 1950. Produced by William Spier. Directed by Norman Macdonnell. Adapted from Woolrich's "Face Work" (*Black Mask*, Oct. 1937; collected as "One Night in New York" in *Six Nights of Mystery*, Popular Library, 1950, as by William Irish). With Claire Trevor, Joseph Kearns.

NOTE: Several *Suspense* episodes sound from their titles like adaptations of Woolrich stories but are not. "No More Alice," broadcast March 14, 1946, is not based on Woolrich's "All at Once, No Alice." "Subway," broadcast Oct. 30, 1947, has no connection with the Woolrich story collected under that name. "The Day I Died," broadcast June 30, 1949, is not based on Woolrich's "The Night I died." And "Nightmare," broadcast Sept. 1, 1949, is unrelated to the Woolrich tale, best known by that name, which in fact was the basis of the sixty-minute *Suspense* episode of March 13, 1948.

This Is Hollywood
(CBS, 1946-47)

"The Chase." Nov. 9, 1946. Adapted from the movie *The Chase* (United Artists, 1946), which is based on Woolrich's novel *The Black Path of Fear* (Doubleday, 1944). With Michele Morgan, Robert Montgomery. □



CORNELL WOOLRICH

Collecting Mystery Fiction

by Otto Penzler

In attempting to rank the greatest suspense writers of the twentieth century, the battle is for second place. No one, whether the criteria are consistency, number of masterpieces, popular acclaim, critical respect, or influence on contemporaries, can be mentioned in the same breath with Cornell Woolrich.

Yes, his stories are filled with purple pulpy prose, so extreme in passion that they would be laughable in the hands of a less brilliant artist. Of course, they rely too heavily on coincidence; indeed, as the coincidences pile up in some of the stories, they begin to seem so unrealistic that they suggest, indelibly and purposefully, a universe without order or reason. Sure, the stories are illogical, contradictory, and implausible. What greater mark of an author's skill can there be than that none of those omnipresent elements detracts in any way from the telling of those narratives?

Woolrich's dark vision of the world (he has been called "the poet of midnight") is the single unifying force of his work. And, while that may be an inaccurate view of our universe, it is a very real context for all of Woolrich's characters. It is often possible to defend oneself against a plan of evil; it is impossible to be saved when the forces of random and illogical terror are at work.

Woolrich becomes more terrifying as the reader becomes more familiar with his work. When one has read a couple of dozen Agatha Christie detective novels, it makes sense to begin to suspect the least likely person. When one has read a couple of dozen Woolrich stories, it is apparent that the unbearable suspense may be relieved with a last-minute rescue or escape—or it may just as suddenly end with death and despair. Or, perhaps worst of all, it may not end at all, the grim dark night continuing forever with no sunrise.

While not much is known about Woolrich's life, it seems reasonable to surmise that, after the early years, there isn't very much to know. He spent a great number of his middle and late years in hotel rooms, locked in a love-hate relationship with his mother. He drank, it is strongly suspected that he took drugs, and he wrote. It is hard to conceive of a lonelier man; Woolrich dedicated books to his hotel room, his typewriter, and, most often, to no one at all.

Cornell George Hopley-Woolrich was born in 1903 and traveled extensively in Latin

America as a child. His father was an engineer whose job took him to a variety of countries, notably Mexico during the revolution in the second decade of this century. His mother did not care for the travel and often remained in New York, where she enjoyed a socialite life, of which her son was a small part, though he lived with her for long stretches. He was still an undergraduate at Columbia when an infection forced him to stay in bed, where he wrote *Cover Charge*, a well-received romantic novel. Heavily influenced by F. Scott Fitzgerald, he wrote several further novels of romance and society, worked in Hollywood, and sold short stories to popular magazines. When the Depression severely damaged his usual markets, he turned to mystery, crime, and suspense stories in the early 1930s, which he wrote predominantly until his late years, when he returned to writing romantic stories again, though often laced with elements of crime and suspense.

While his greatest short stories were brought out in the 1930s and 1940s, it is in the 1940s in which all of his greatest novels appeared. The first pure novel of suspense to appear under the Cornell Woolrich name is *The Bride Wore Black*, still a classic nearly a half century after it was written. In it are several Woolrich trademarks: the apparently senseless death of a loved one which ruins the lives of everyone involved, and the avenging angel. As a car roars past a church, a shot rings out, killing a bridegroom on the steps. His wife relentlessly pursues each of the people in the car, from the drunken driver to his passengers, with the intent of killing each of the men she believes responsible for her husband's murder. She, in turn, is pursued by the policeman who has made the connection among her murder victims, ending in a confrontation of bone-chilling irony.

Other novels with "Black" in the title followed, ending with *Rendezvous in Black*, in which Woolrich comes full circle with virtually the same plot with an added, horrible twist. Here a pretty girl is senselessly killed, and her fiancé avenges her death by tracking down all the people he believes responsible. But he does not kill any of them. He insinuates himself into their lives, learns the person each of them loves the most, and kills her, so that they will live in the same agonized world in which he does.

During this peak period of creativity,

Woolrich also began to write under the William Irish pseudonym, producing perhaps his most famous novel, *Phantom Lady*. Not long thereafter, he published the first of his two books under the last of his pseudonyms: *Night Has a Thousand Eyes* by George Hopley.

Much has been written about Woolrich's life and work by Francis M. Nevins, most notably in issues of *The Armchair Detective* and as introductions to numerous books, especially *Nightwebs*, *Angels of Darkness*, and the recent Ballantine series of paperback reissues of many of Woolrich's finest books. It would be redundant for me to offer plot synopses and critical analyses of the works, as Nevins has done it far more eloquently than I ever could. Indeed, I have seldom read equally perceptive criticism of any twentieth-century author, or more beautifully written tributes, than Nevins on Woolrich.

While many movies and television programs have been made from Woolrich's books and stories, he has not been especially well served in Hollywood. It is extraordinary to see the cinematic clarity of a Woolrich or Irish novel on the printed page become a shambles on the screen, even when executed by such undeniably expert filmmakers as François Truffaut, Harold Clurman, and Jacques Tourneur. Only Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* was a first-rate film, though it is more Hitchcock than Woolrich.

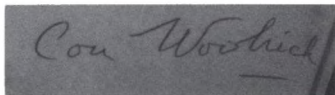
In *Phantom Lady*, for example, the entire plot of the novel hinges on the now familiar race with the clock as an innocent man is convicted of murder and sentenced to die. A girl who loves and believes him, and his best friend, attempt to find the real killer as the days slip away. On the last day, with each tick of the clock tightening the vise of fear and terror, the reader learns the shocking truth. In the film, less than half the story has transpired when we learn the true killer, thereby eliminating every vestige of suspense.

A comprehensive listing of film, radio and television adaptations will appear at the end of this article, in a later issue of TAD.

Because of the prolific output of Cornell Woolrich, the bibliography below will be concerned only with those books released under the Cornell Woolrich by-line. In the next issue, all the books produced as George Hopley and William Irish will be described.

Cover Charge

First Edition: New York, Boni &



Liveright, 1926. Dark green cloth, front cover printed with a dark red label, which is stamped with gold lettering, rule and border; spine is printed with a dark red label, which is stamped with gold lettering and two ornaments; the spine is also stamped in gold with the publisher's name and in blind with the publisher's logo; rear cover blank. Issued in a white dust wrapper printed in red, pinks, greens, and black with an art-deco style.

Note: A romantic novel of New York society night life, *Cover Charge* is an uncommon book and a very scarce dust wrapper. However, since it is not a suspense novel, it is of collector interest mainly for those who are Woolrich completists and those who collect first books by authors.

The copyright page does not indicate the first printing; the second printing is so stated.

Woolrich wrote a three-act play based on the novel which does not appear to have been produced. It was copyrighted in 1931 and renewed in 1959. The manuscript is in the rare book collection of Columbia University.

<i>Estimated</i>			
<i>retail value:</i>	<i>with d/w</i>	<i>without d/w</i>	
Very fine	\$750.00	\$50.00	
Fine	600.00	35.00	
Good	125.00	20.00	

Children of the Ritz

First Edition: New York, Boni & Liveright, 1927. Dark blue cloth, front cover and spine printed with green/aqua lettering and ornamental devices; spine also blind-stamped with the publisher's logo; rear cover blank; top edges of pages stained blue/green. Issued in brightly colored pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: *Children of the Ritz* was originally published as a serial in *College Humor* magazine in the issues of August, September, October, and November 1927. After book publication, it received a \$10,000 prize offered jointly by *College Humor* and First National Pictures, which produced a movie based on it in 1929.

Also an uncommon early book, the dust wrapper may be even scarcer than that on *Cover Charge* but, again, the book is primarily of interest only to Woolrich collectors, since it has no mystery elements.

The first printing is not so indicated on the copyright page.

<i>Estimated</i>			
<i>retail value:</i>	<i>with d/w</i>	<i>without d/w</i>	
Very fine	\$300.00	\$40.00	
Fine	250.00	30.00	
Good	100.00	20.00	

Times Square

First Edition: New York, Horace Liveright, 1929. Black cloth, front cover and spine stamped with white lettering, the front cover also having a decorated, reverse-silhouette border around the lettering; rear cover blank. Issued in a yellow dust wrapper (actually yellow paper, not white paper printed with yellow) printed in black, turquoise, and reddish-tan.

Note: *Times Square* was published originally as a serial in five parts in *Live Girl Stories* magazine in the issues of November and December 1928 and January, February, and March 1929 under the title *Hollywood Bound*.

Perhaps owing to the brittle fragility of the dust wrapper, experience suggests this to be an even scarcer one than those on either of the first two books. Since the white lettering on the book cover was stamped, copies almost invariably turn up with the lettering flaked away or heavily faded.

Another jazz age romantic novel, *Times Square* is only of modest collector interest to any but the Woolrich completist.

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

<i>Estimated</i>			
<i>retail value:</i>	<i>with d/w</i>	<i>without d/w</i>	
Very fine	\$300.00	\$40.00	
Fine	250.00	30.00	
Good	100.00	20.00	

A Young Man's Heart

First Edition: New York, Mason, 1930. Blue cloth, printed on front cover and spine with black lettering and decorative panels; rear cover blank; top edges of pages stained blue. Issued in a red, black, and white illustrated dust wrapper.

Note: Another uncommon title in a very scarce dust wrapper, released by a small publishing firm, *A Young Man's Heart* received reviews that compared Woolrich with Fitzgerald, but this romantic novel has

modest collector interest today.

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

<i>Estimated</i>			
<i>retail value:</i>	<i>with d/w</i>	<i>without d/w</i>	
Very fine	\$300.00	\$40.00	
Fine	250.00	30.00	
Good	100.00	20.00	

The Time of Her Life

First Edition: New York, Horace Liveright, (1931). Yellow cloth, printed on front cover and spine with black lettering, also with red rules on front cover; rear cover blank; top edges of pages stained red. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper (not seen).

Note: Although a Woolrich collector for more than twenty years, I have not yet seen a copy of *The Time of Her Life* in dust wrapper, but one does certainly exist, as it was the common practice of Liveright to issue books with dust wrappers.

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

<i>Estimated</i>			
<i>retail value:</i>	<i>with d/w</i>	<i>without d/w</i>	
Very fine	\$400.00	\$40.00	
Fine	325.00	30.00	
Good	125.00	20.00	

Manhattan Love Song

First Edition: New York, William Godwin, 1932. Blue cloth, printed with yellow lettering and small ornament on front cover and spine; rear cover blank. Issued in a printed dust wrapper (not seen).

Note: The rarest of Cornell Woolrich's books, published by a small and short-lived publishing firm. While the first two or three Woolrich titles are quite scarce in first edition, I have seen about ten copies for each copy of *Manhattan Love Song*. One copy was offered to me in a dust wrapper (the only recorded copy), but I was unable to buy it. Virtually all copies seen have been ex-library copies, with commensurate flaws. Frustratingly, it is the first of Woolrich's novels to have serious overtones of crime and suspense, so is (albeit peripherally) of interest to collectors of mystery fiction.

Godwin described itself as a publishing house specializing in romances for the lending-library market.

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

Estimated

retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$1,500.00	\$250.00
Fine	1,250.00	200.00
Good	500.00	100.00

The Bride Wore Black

First Edition: New York, Simon & Schuster, 1940. Blue cloth, stamped in gold on the front cover with S&S's "Inner Sanctum Mystery" logo; stamped on spine with gold lettering and two decorative rules; rear cover blank. Top edges of pages stained blue-gray. Issued in a white and black illustrated dust wrapper.

Note: The first Woolrich novel of pure suspense and a Haycraft-Queen Cornerstone title and a much-sought book. While the book is uncommon, the dust jacket is quite scarce, and thus prime copies are extremely valuable and difficult to locate.

The first printing is not so indicated on the copyright page; second printing copies are indicated quite clearly.

Estimated

retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$1,000.00	\$50.00
Fine	800.00	35.00
Good	200.00	20.00

The Black Curtain

First Edition: New York, Simon & Schuster, 1941. Red cloth, printed on the front cover and spine with white (logo on the front cover, lettering on the spine), the spine additionally printed with black decorative design; rear cover blank; top edges of pages stained dark gray. Issued in a largely black pictorial dust wrapper, with red, pink, and white.

Note: The second in Woolrich's famous series of "Black" novels and also a notoriously difficult dust wrapper to locate in fine condition.

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

A binding variant in gray cloth has been recorded. The book appears to be identical in all other respects, with no priority esta-

lished. While there is no significant difference in the value of these two variants, the red cloth is far more common than the gray.

Estimated

retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$500.00	\$50.00
Fine	400.00	35.00
Good	125.00	20.00



Black Alibi

First Edition: New York, Simon & Schuster, 1942. Black cloth, spine stamped in gold lettering and logo; front and rear covers blank; top edges of pages stained red. Issued in a primarily black and white pictorial dust wrapper, with some red.

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

Estimated

retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$450.00	\$50.00
Fine	350.00	35.00
Good	100.00	20.00

The Black Angel

First Edition: New York, Doubleday Crime Club, 1943. Black cloth, printed on front cover and spine with white publisher's logo and design, and with white lettering on spine; rear cover blank. Issued in black, white, and blue pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The fourth in Woolrich's "Black" series and the last genuinely difficult of the early Woolrich titles.

As with other titles in the Doubleday Crime Club imprints, this is not a book club in the usual sense of the term; it is merely the publisher's imprint, much like "Inner Sanctum Mystery" was the Simon & Schuster imprint for its line of mysteries.

As is true with all Doubleday Crime Club books (apparently infallibly so in its approximately sixty years of existence), the words "First Edition" appear on the copyright page of all first printing copies; the words are removed for second and subsequent printings, with no distinction among second, third, fourth, etc. printings.

Estimated

retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$400.00	\$40.00
Fine	325.00	30.00
Good	100.00	20.00

The Black Path of Fear

First Edition: New York, Doubleday Crime Club, 1944. Gray cloth, printed on

front cover and spine with black publisher's logo and design, and with black lettering on spine; rear cover blank. Issued in a black, white, and red pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The words "First Edition" must appear on the copyright page.

Estimated

retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$150.00	\$30.00
Fine	125.00	\$25.00
Good	50.00	12.50

Rendezvous in Black

First Edition: New York, Rinehart, (1948). Dark blue boards, spine printed with red lettering and designs; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a blue, black, and white pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The last of the "Black" series and perhaps the best.

The publisher's logo, an "R" in a circle, must appear on the copyright page.

Estimated

retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$125.00	\$30.00
Fine	100.00	20.00
Good	35.00	10.00



Savage Bride

First Edition: New York, Fawcett Gold Medal, 1950. Full color pictorial wrappers. Short story in *The Award Espionage Reader*, edited by Hans Stefan Santesson, 1965, under the title "Tokyo 1941."

Estimated

retail value:	
Very fine	\$35.00
Fine	25.00
Good	10.00

Note: A paperback original, Gold Medal #136. No price is printed on the cover, though it was published at 25¢.

Estimated

retail value:	
Very fine	\$45.00
Fine	35.00
Good	15.00

Nightmare

First Edition: New York, Dodd, Mead, (1956). Green boards, printed with yellow lettering on spine and with yellow publisher's logo on front cover and spine; rear cover blank. Issued in a primarily green pictorial dust wrapper, also printed with yellow, black, and white.

Note: The first collection of short stories under the Woolrich name, containing six

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stories, all previously published in magazines. The first edition is not so stated on the copyright page.

"I'll Take You Home, Kathleen," originally published as "One Last Night" in *Detective Story* magazine, May 1940

"Screen Test," originally published as "Preview of Death" in *Dime Detective* magazine, Nov. 15, 1934, and substantially revised for this collection.

"IOU," originally published as "I.O.U. — One Life" in *Double Detective* magazine, Nov. 1938.

"Three O'Clock," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Oct. 1, 1938. First book appearance was in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes* by William Irish, 1943.

"Nightmare," originally published as "And So to Death" in *Argosy* magazine, March 1, 1941. First book appearance was in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes* by William Irish, 1943.

"Bequest," originally published as "Implacable Bequest" in *Detective Tales* magazine, Sept. 1942



Estimated retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$100.00	\$30.00
Fine	75.00	25.00
Good	35.00	10.00

Violence

First Edition: New York, Dodd, Mead, (1958). Purple boards, printed on spine with black lettering and logo; black logo on front cover; rear cover blank. Issued in red, white, and black photographically illustrated dust wrapper.

Note: Another short-story collection, all of which had been previously published in magazines.

The first edition is not so indicated on copyright page.

"Don't Wait Up for Me Tonight," originally published as "Goodbye, New York" in *Story* magazine, Oct. 1937. First book appearance was in *The Story Pocket Book*, edited by Whit Burnett, 1944.

"Guillotine," originally published as "Men Must Die" in *Black Mask* magazine, Aug. 1939. First book appearance was in *Dead Man Blues* by William Irish, 1948.

"That New York Woman," originally published as "The Hopeless Defense of Mrs. Dellford" in *Dime Detective* magazine, Dec. 1942. The story was revised for *Manhunt* magazine, Jan.

1958, and published as "The Town Says Murder." This revised version is collected in *Violence*.

"Murder, Obliquely," originally published as "Death Escapes the Eye" in *The Shadow* magazine, April and May 1947 (and revised for book publication)

"The Moon of Montezuma," originally published in *Fantastic* magazine, Nov. and Dec. 1952. The first portion of the novelette was revised and published in *Violence*; the entire story was collected in *Beyond the Night*, 1959.

"The Corpse in the Statue of Liberty," originally published as "Red Liberty" in *Dime Detective* magazine, July 1, 1935; revised for book publication

Estimated retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$100.00	\$30.00
Fine	75.00	25.00
Good	35.00	10.00

Hotel Room

First Edition: New York, Random House, (1958). Brick colored cloth, printed on front cover with black oval, in which is stamped the publisher's logo and the numerals "923"; the spine is printed with a black keyhole design, gold lettering is stamped inside the keyhole and at the foot of the spine; rear cover blank; top edges of pages stained blue. Issued in a white, blue, red, yellow, and black pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: A collection of stories, only one of which had been previously published in



magazine form, connected by the theme of being set in the same hotel room from 1896 to 1957. It was dedicated to his mother.

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

Contents:

- "The Night of June 20th, 1896"
- "The Night of April 6th, 1917"
- "The Night of November 11th, 1918"
- "The Night of February 17th, 1924," originally published as "The Black Bargain" in *Justice* magazine, Jan. 1956
- "The Night of October 24th, 1929"
- "The Night of . . ."
- "The Night of September 30th, 1957"

Estimated retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$100.00	\$30.00
Fine	75.00	25.00
Good	35.00	10.00

Death Is My Dancing Partner

First Edition: New York, Pyramid, (1959). Full color pictorial wrappers.

Note: Woolrich's last, and worst, published novel. A paperback original, #G374, priced at 35¢.

Estimated retail value:

Very fine	\$35.00
Fine	25.00
Good	10.00

Beyond the Night

First Edition: New York, Avon, (1959). Full color pictorial wrappers.

Note: A collection of short stories more fantasy than mystery. All but one had been previously published in magazine form. A paperback original, #T-354, priced at 35¢.



Contents:

"The Moon of Montezuma," originally published in *Fantastic* magazine, Nov. and Dec. 1952 (the first half was abridged and published in *Violence*, 1958)

"Somebody's Clothes—Somebody's Life," originally published in *Fantasy-Science Fiction* magazine, Dec. 1958 (later revised and published in *The Dark Side of Love* as "Somebody Else's Life," 1965)

"The Lamp of Memory," originally published as "Guns, Gentlemen" in *Argosy* magazine, Dec. 18, 1937. First book appearance was in *The Fourth Mystery Companion*, edited by A. L. Furman, 1946, under the title "Twice-Trod Path."

"My Lips Destroy," originally published as "Vampire's Honeymoon" in *Horror Stories* magazine, August and Sept. 1939

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"The Number's Up," originally published in this volume

"Music from the Dark," originally published as "Dark Melody of Madness" in *Dime Mystery* magazine, July 1935. The first book appearance was in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes* by William Irish, 1943, as "Papa Benjamin."

Estimated
retail value:

Very fine	\$35.00
Fine	25.00
Good	10.00

The Doom Stone

First Edition: New York, Avon, (1960). Full color pictorial wrappers.

Note: Although apparently the last of Woolrich's novels to be published, it is actually a revision of a serial largely published in *Argosy* magazine under the title *The Eye of Doom*. Part One, published Jan. 14, 1939, was reprinted in *Short Stories* magazine, Dec. 1958, as "The Devil with the Sparkling Face." Part Two, published Jan. 21, 1939, was reprinted with a revised ending in *The Saint Mystery Magazine*, July 1962, as "Two Against the Terror." Part Three was published Jan. 28, 1939. Part Four of the *Argosy* serial was published Feb. 4, 1939, but this episode was dropped for the book version; an entirely new Part Four was written for it. This new Part Four was subsequently reprinted as an independent

The Ten Faces of Cornell Woolrich

First Edition: New York, Simon & Schuster, (1965). Red cloth, blind-stamped numeral "10" on front cover; spine printed with black lettering; rear cover blank; tops of pages stained dark gray. Issued in a white dust wrapper printed in red, black, and gold.

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

Note: Contains short stories, all of which had been previously published in magazines, as well as a new introduction by Ellery Queen.

Contents:

"One Drop of Blood," originally published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, April 1962. First book appearance was in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Mix*, 1963.

"Somebody on the Phone," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, July 31, 1937. First book appearance was in *Somebody on the Phone* by William Irish, 1950.

"Debt of Honor," originally published as "I.O.U. — One Life" in *Double Detective* magazine, Nov. 1938. First book appearance was in *Nightmare*, 1956.

"The Man Upstairs," originally published in *Mystery Book Magazine*, Aug. 1945. First book appearance was in *If I Should Die Before I Wake* by William Irish, 1945.

"The Most Exciting Show in Town," originally published as "Double Feature" in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, May 16, 1936

"The Night Reveals," originally published in *Story* magazine, April 1936. First book appearance was in *If I Should Die Before I Wake* by William Irish, 1945.

"Steps Going Up," originally published as "Men Must Die" in *Black Mask* magazine, Aug. 1939. First book appearance was in *Dead Man Blues* by William Irish, 1948, as "Guillotine."

"The Hummingbird Comes Home," originally published in *Pocket Detective* magazine, March 1937. First book appearance was in *Bluebeard's Seventh Wife* by William Irish, 1952.

"Adventures of a Fountain Pen," originally published as "Dipped in Blood" in *Detective Story* magazine, April 1945. First book appearance was in *Dead Man Blues* by William Irish, 1948, as "Fountain Pen."

"I Won't Take a Minute," originally published as "Finger of Doom" in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, June 22, 1940. First book appearance was in *Great American Detective Stories*, edited by Anthony Boucher, 1945.

Estimated

retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$75.00	\$25.00
Fine	60.00	20.00
Good	25.00	10.00

The Dark Side of Love

First Edition: New York, Walker, (1965). Red boards, printed with black lettering and logo on spine; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a black, white, red, and purple pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: Although a comparatively recent book, this is an exceptionally elusive title, most of the small print run apparently having been sold to libraries, as those few copies which come onto the market seem most frequently to be ex-library copies.

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

The Dark Side of Love is a collection of stories, two written especially for this volume, which are more concerned with love and loss than with murder and suspense.

Contents:

"Je t'Aime," originally published as "When Love Turns" in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, June 1964



"The Clean Fight," originally published in this volume

"The Idol with the Clay Bottom," originally published in this volume

"The Poker-Player's Wife," originally published in *The Saint Mystery*

Magazine, Oct. 1962, and revised for this volume

"Story to Be Whispered," originally published in *The Saint Magazine*, April 1963, with a different ending

"Somebody Else's Life," originally published as "Somebody's Clothes—Somebody's Life" in *Fantasy-Science Fiction* magazine, Dec. 1958. First book appearance was in *Beyond the Night*, 1959; it was revised for the present volume.

"I'm Ashamed," originally published in this volume

"Too Nice a Day to Die," originally published in *Bizarre* magazine, Jan. 1966 (virtually simultaneously with the publication of the present volume)

Estimated

retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$250.00	\$45.00
Fine	200.00	\$35.00
Good	65.00	\$17.50

Nightwebs

First Edition: New York, Harper & Row, (1971). Blue boards and cloth, front cover stamped with gold logo; spine stamped with gold lettering; rear cover blank. Issued in a full color pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: The biggest collection of Woolrich stories, edited by Francis M. Nevins, who also provided a superb introduction, afterwords to the stories, and a bibliographical checklist from which much of the above short-story information has been culled.

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

Many stories are collected here for the first time, though all but one were previously published in magazines.

Contents:

"Graves for the Living," originally published in *Dime Mystery* magazine, June 1937

"The Red Tide," originally published in *Detective Story* magazine, Sept. 1940. First book appearance was in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes* by William Irish, 1943, in a revised version, as "Last Night."

"The Corpse Next Door," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Jan. 23, 1937

"You'll Never See Me Again," originally published in *Detective Story* magazine, Nov. 1939. First book appearance was in the Dell 10¢ paperback series as by William Irish, 1950.

"Dusk to Dawn," originally published in *Black Mask* magazine, Dec. 1937

"Murder at the Automat," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, Aug. 1937

"Death in the Air," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Oct. 10, 1936

"Mamie 'n' Me," originally published in *All-American Fiction* magazine, May and June 1938

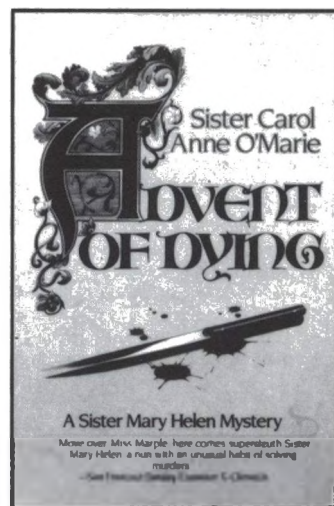
"The Screaming Laugh," originally published in *Clues Detective* magazine, Nov. 1938

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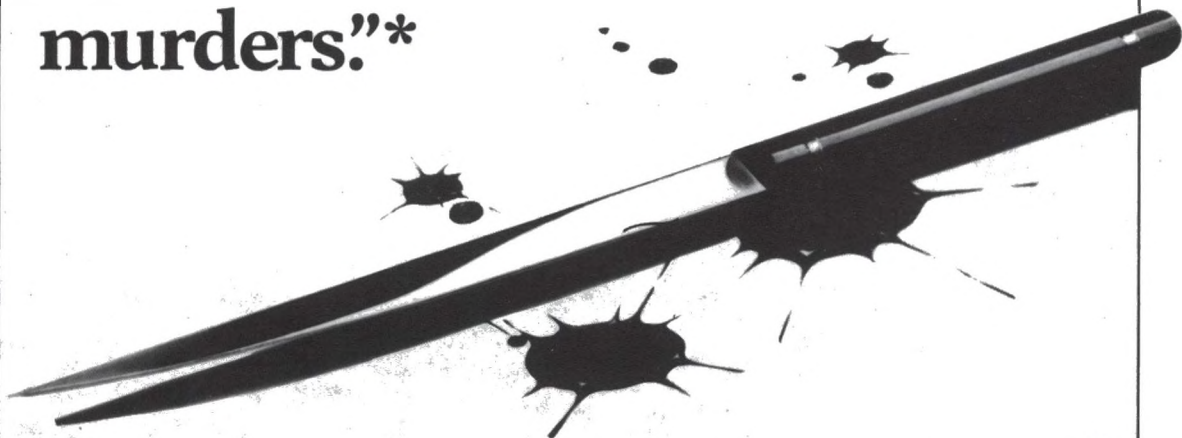
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Delacorte Press 

- "One and a Half Murders," originally published in *Black Book Detective* magazine, July 1936
- "Dead on Her Feet," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, Dec. 1935
- "One Night in Barcelona," originally published in *Mystery Book Magazine*, Autumn 1947
- "The Penny-a-Worder," originally published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, Sept. 1958
- "The Number's Up," originally published in *Beyond the Night*, 1959
- "Too Nice a Day to Die," originally published in *Bizarre* magazine, Jan. 1966. First book appearance was in *The Dark Side of Love*, 1965.
- "Life is Weird Sometimes," originally published in this volume

Estimated retail value:	with d/w	without d/w
Very fine	\$60.00	\$25.00
Fine	50.00	\$20.00
Good	25.00	\$15.00

Angels of Darkness

First Edition: New York, Mysterious Press, 1978. Red cloth, spine stamped with gold lettering and publisher's logo; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a white, black, and red dust wrapper.

Note: The first edition was published in an edition of 2,000 copies.

A limited edition of 250 copies, numbered and signed by Harlan Ellison, who wrote the introduction, was published simultaneously with the trade edition described above. It was issued in a slipcase, otherwise is identical in every way. In addition to the 250 copies offered for sale, 52 copies were produced for presentation to friends of the press and the authors (an afterword is also included, by Francis M. Nevins). The presentation copies were lettered A - Z and AA - ZZ.

All copies published have the words "First Edition" on the copyright page.

Angels of Darkness is a collection of stories, all of which had been previously published in magazines.

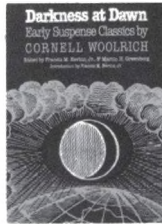
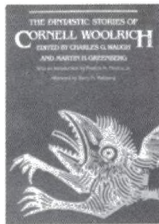
Contents:

- "Johnny on the Spot," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, May 2, 1936. First book appearance was in *Somebody on the Phone* by William Irish, 1950.
- "Waltz," originally published in *Double Detective* magazine, Nov. 1937
- "The Book that Squealed," originally published in *Detective Story* magazine, Aug. 1939. First book appearance was in *The Fourth Mystery Companion*, edited by A. L. Furman, 1946, as "Library Book."
- "Meet Me By the Mannequin," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, June 1940
- "Murder at Mother's Knee," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, Oct. 1941
- "Mind Over Murder," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, May 1943. First book appearance was in *If I Should Die Before I Wake* by William Irish, 1945.

"Death Escapes the Eye," originally published in *The Shadow* magazine, April and May 1947. First book edition, in a revised version, was in *Violence*, 1958.

"For the Rest of Her Life," originally published in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, May 1968. First book appearance was in *Ellery Queen's Murder Menu*, 1969.

Estimated retail value: Since the first edition is still available at the original published



price of \$10.00, no collector should settle for a lesser copy. The numbered copies, presumably all sold to collectors, should be available in as-new condition; current value is approximately \$50.00; lettered copies have recently come onto the market and are valued at approximately the same \$50.00.

The Fantastic Stories of Cornell Woolrich

First Edition: Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, (1981). Green cloth, printed on spine with black lettering and ornamental device; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a green and white pictorial dust wrapper.

Note: Edited by Charles G. Waugh and Martin H. Greenberg, with an introduction by the ubiquitous Woolrich scholar, Francis M. Nevins, and an afterword by Barry N. Malzberg.

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

A collection of mainly fantasy and adventure stories, several collected in book form for the first time.

Contents:

- "Kiss of the Cobra," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, May 1, 1935
- "Dark Melody of Madness," originally published in *Dime Mystery* magazine, July 1935. First book appearance was in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes* by William Irish, 1943, as "Papa Benjamin."
- "Speak to Me of Death," originally published in *Argosy* magazine, Feb. 27, 1937. Woolrich later expanded this story into the novel *Night Has a Thousand Eyes*, published as by George Hopley in 1948.
- "I'm Dangerous Tonight," originally published in *All-American Fiction* magazine, Nov. 1937
- "Guns, Gentlemen," originally published in *Argosy* magazine, Dec. 18, 1936. First book appearance was in *The Fourth Mystery Companion*, edited by A. L.

- Furman, 1946, as "Twice-Trod Path."
 "Jane Brown's Body," originally published in *All-American Fiction* magazine, March and April 1938
 "The Moon of Montezuma," originally published in *Fantastic* magazine, Nov. and Dec. 1952. First complete book appearance was in *Beyond the Night*, 1959.
 "Somebody's Clothes - Somebody's Life," originally published in *Fantasy-Science Fiction* magazine, Dec. 1958. First book appearance was in *Beyond the Night*, 1959.

Estimated retail value: As a book of such recent vintage, copies of the first edition should be acceptable to the collector only in very fine condition; value is approximately \$25.00.

Rear Window and Four Short Novels

First Edition: New York, Ballantine Books, (1984). Full color pictorial wrappers.

Note: A collection of five short novels, none making its first book appearance, though one is making its first appearance in a Cornell Woolrich collection.

A paperback original, Ballantine Books #30668.

This volume is part of a series of Woolrich reprints, numbering more than a dozen, each of which has an introduction by Francis M. Nevins.

Contents:

- "Rear Window," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, Feb. 1942, under the title "It Had To Be Murder." First book appearance was in *After-Dinner Story* by William Irish, 1944.



- "Post-Mortem," originally published in *Black Mask* magazine, April 1940. First book appearance was in *The Second Mystery Companion*, edited by A. L. Furman, 1944.
- "Three O'Clock," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Oct. 1, 1938. First book appearance was in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes* by William Irish, 1943.
- "Change of Murder," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Jan. 25, 1936. First book appearance was in *If I Should Die Before I Wake* by William Irish, 1945.
- "Momentum," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Dec. 14, 1940. First book appearance was in *Somebody on the Phone* by William Irish, 1950.

Estimated retail value: Although now out of print, as-new copies should still be readily available at less than \$5.00; collectors should not accept lesser copies.

Darkness at Dawn

First Edition: Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, (1985). Red and gray cloth, spine stamped with silver lettering; front and rear covers blank. Issued in black, red, and white dust wrapper.

Note: Edited by Francis M. Nevins and Martin H. Greenberg, with an introduction by Nevins.

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

A collection of early suspense stories, oddly reprinting two stories from the previous Southern Illinois University Press volume, among others. At the time of this writing, the book is in print.

Contents:

"Death Sits in the Dentist's Chair," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Aug. 4, 1934. First book appearance was in *Somebody on the Phone* by William Irish, 1950.

"Walls That Hear You," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Aug. 18, 1934.

"Preview of Death," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, Nov. 15, 1934. First book appearance was in *Nightmare*, 1954, as "Screen Test," which had been heavily revised for book publication. This is its first book publication in its original form.

"Murder in Wax," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, March 1, 1935.

"The Body Upstairs," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, April 1, 1935.

"Kiss of the Cobra," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, May 1, 1935. First book appearance was in *The Fantastic Stories of Cornell Woolrich*, 1981.

"Dark Melody of Madness," originally published in *Dime Mystery* magazine, July 1935. First book appearance was in *I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes* by William Irish, 1943, as "Papa Benjamin."

"Red Liberty," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, July 1, 1935. First book appearance was in *Violence*, 1958, as "The Corpse in the Statue of Liberty," in a revised version.

"The Corpse and the Kid," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, Sept. 1935. First book appearance was in *Somebody on the Phone* by William Irish, 1950, as "Boy with Body."

"Dead on Her Feet," originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, Dec., 1935. First book appearance was in *Nightwebs*, 1971.

"The Death of Me," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Dec. 7, 1935

"The Showboat Murders," originally published in *Detective Fiction Weekly* magazine, Dec. 14, 1935

"Hot Water," originally published in *Argosy* magazine, Dec. 28, 1935

Estimated retail value: Available at the published price of \$18.95.

Blind Date with Death

First Edition: New York, Carroll & Graf, (1985). Full color pictorial wrappers.

Note: A collection of stories, all originally published in *Dime Detective* magazine, most making their first book appearance. A paperback original.

Contents:

"Blind Date with Death," originally published June 1937

"The Living Lie Down with the Dead," originally published April 1936. First book appearance was in *The Arbor House Treasury of Detective and Mystery Stories from the Great Pulp*, edited by Bill Pronzini, 1983.

"Flowers from the Dead," originally published Sept. 1940

"The Riddle of the Redeemed Dips," originally published Nov. 1940

"The Case of the Maladroit Manicurist," originally published May 1941

"Crazy House," originally published June 1941

"If the Shoe Fits," originally published March 1943

"Leg Man," originally published Aug. 1943. First book appearance was in *The Dancing Detective* by William Irish, 1946.

Estimated retail value: Still in print and available at \$3.50.

Vampire's Honeymoon

First Edition: New York, Carroll & Graf, (1985). Full color printed wrappers.

Note: A collection of four short novels, one of which makes its first book appearance in its original form. A paperback original.

Contents:

"Vampire's Honeymoon," originally published in *Horror Stories* magazine, Aug. and Sept. 1939. First book appearance was in *Beyond the Night*, 1959, as "My Lips Destroy."

"Graves for the Living," originally published in *Dime Mystery* magazine, June 1937. First book appearance was in *Nightwebs*, 1971.

"I'm Dangerous Tonight," originally published in *All-American Fiction* magazine, Nov. 1937. First book appearance was in *The Fantastic Stories of Cornell Woolrich*, 1981.

"The Street of Jungle Death," originally published in *Strange Detective Mysteries* magazine, July 1939. Never previously collected, but the short novel was expanded to become *Black Alibi*, 1942.

Estimated retail value: Still in print and available at \$3.50.

Announced for publication in 1987 is a quintessential Woolrich novel, *Into the Night*, on which he worked, off and on, for many years. The manuscript lacked several pages, but the context clearly suggests what Woolrich intended, and the gaps are being filled by Lawrence Block, himself one of America's premier mystery writers.

In the next issue of TAD, the works written by Woolrich and published under the pseudonyms George Hopley and William Irish will be listed. □



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J'Accuse!

by William L. DeAndrea

"No, let them roll their own."

— Rex Stout
in answer to a question
about whether he would
like other authors to continue
his characters after his
death

That, to any serious Stout fan, is a well-known quote. It's in John McAleer's Edgar-winning biography of the man, for one thing. A Nero Wolfe expert worthy of the name ought to know it by heart, and a writer with any class, it seems to me, ought to honor it.

Nevertheless, there is a book out from Bantam, publisher of Stout's legitimate works, by somebody named Robert Goldsborough, entitled *Murder in E Flat*. It is supposed to be an adventure of Nero Wolfe, as told by Archie Goodwin. The jacket flap tells us that Goldsborough is an experienced journalist and "Nero Wolfe expert." He is no Rex Stout.

In itself, that is no sin. Only one writer in history was. The difference is, nobody has ripped off the fruit of Stout's genius before.

I know this publication is authorized by Stout's surviving relatives. Let us be kind and assume that this was done out of a sense of compassion for the fans who have had to go some eleven years since anything truly new about Wolfe and Archie appeared.

The compassion is misplaced. You do not aid a starving man by handing him a rubber pork chop. *Murder in E Flat* would have to be a transcendent masterpiece to justify ignoring a honorable man's wishes.

It is not a masterpiece.

Listen. The Nero Wolfe books were not great because of some inherent magnificence in the genes of fat Montenegrins, or wise guys from Ohio. The Nero Wolfe books are great because Rex Stout was great. Robert Goldsborough may have it in him to write mystery stories, but he is not Rex Stout. Nero Wolfe expert he may be, but then, the campuses of this country are lousy with Shakespeare experts, but you'd be hard-pressed to find a single Shakespeare.

I'm not saying you should buy this book and burn it page by page in the fireplace, the way Wolfe did with Webster's Third. I'm saying read it, if you must, from the library.

This is not a distinguished enterprise.

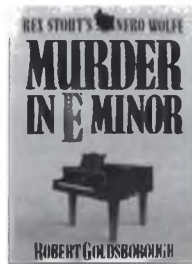
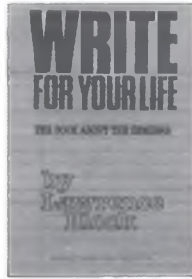
Pfui.

"A fear I have about this training is that people will think it's a lot of California crap that has nothing to do with writing." "Thank you."

— Lawrence Block

Lawrence Block is one of my favorite contemporary writers. For one thing, he is

one of the few writers I think could do a Nero Wolfe novel that wouldn't be a disgrace. He has also written some of the best advice for writers around, such as *Writing the Novel—Plot to Print* or *Telling Lies for Fun and Profit*, a collection of his monthly columns for *Writer's Digest* magazine. So, when I



learned that he was taking a year off from fiction-writing to prepare one of these one-day-at-a-motel seminars called "Write for Your Life," I figured it would really be something.

Now, Block has transferred the wisdom he and his associates impart in his seminars into a self-published book also called *Write for Your Life*.

It's something, all right. I finished this book with my tongue dry from my mouth hanging open. Lawrence Block says that it will help you to be a writer if you tell somebody everything you're afraid of about your writing, and get him to say "Thank you" after each item. That it might be a good idea to write nonsense for ten minutes a day. That chanting a mantra is one way to help your career. That convincing yourself (by repeating, or writing it down) that "I have everything I need to get everything I want" is a way to fame and fortune. And lots more. In the immortal words of Mark Twain, maybe so, I dunno.

I know that, if this is really the way Larry Block goes about creating Matt Scudder and Bernie Rhodenbarr stories, then God bless him. I bring the topic up at all because I know that practically everybody who ever read a mystery story has wanted to write one at one time or another, and most of them go looking for advice.

Now, Larry Block, as good as he is, has to be able to furnish advice worth a hundred dollars (which is what the seminar costs—half-price if you take it more than once) or ten dollars (which is what the book costs). I just kind of found myself surprised to find that this was it.

"The late bird doesn't deserve the worm, or some such disgusting thought."

— Ellery Queen

Let me be the last to say this. John Creasey was okay. Better than okay. A good, solid pro entertainer, eminently readable, with a credible and consistent worldview.

I had somehow formed the conclusion that nobody who wrote five hundred books could have written any decent ones, this despite a personal acquaintance with Isaac Asimov.

Of course, I haven't read all of Creasey yet (I've only been at this a few months), and probably won't, because a goodly number of those five hundred books are things like romances and Westerns. (Have you ever had any exposure to a British Western? It is to shudder.) I have, though, sampled the Baron, and the Toff, and Dr. Cellini, and Inspector West, and have yet to find a turkey.

Like everyone else, my favorites are the Commander Gideon books Creasey wrote under the name J. J. Marric. Stein & Day is featuring the Marric books heavily in their new mass-market paperback line, so the even-later-bird can see what I'm talking about. The characterizations are solid, and the people grow from book to book. The evocation of London, year by year, is beautifully done. The plots are true-to-life in ways rare to fiction. More than once, Gideon has arrived just after the nick of time. Sometimes, we learn all about crimes and characters that Gideon never encounters at all.

This is true even of the Gideon books John Creasey didn't write. Yes, a posthumous series continuation I approve of. (Not so hypocritical as you might think, by the way. I have no knowledge of Creasey's going on record against someone doing it, and his style is much more easily attainable than Stout's could ever be.)

I discovered the continuation in a book called *Gideon's Law*, a British import paperback that contains the funniest title page credit I have ever seen: by J. J. Marric as told by William Vivyan Butler. Not to him, by him. I don't know anything about Butler, except that he's doing justice to the creator and to the character.

This whole business of continuing a character after the death of the originator can be strange. Sometimes, a character is left to a

relative, like Edward Aarons leaving Sam Durrell to his son Will. Sometimes it's taken over by a friend, as when Gerald Fairlie took over Bulldog Drummond from Sapper. Most of the time, it's somebody hired to take over because there is still money to be made from the character.

Sometimes, the transition is seamless, as the Creasey-to-Butler move was. Sometimes, the series improves—Bulldog Drummond was better crafted and better written during the Fairlie era. Sometimes, as with John Gardner's James Bond stories, it's obvious that a better writer is at work, but the books just don't have whatever it was they had under the original that made them successful in the first place.

Some are so changed from the original model (Nick Carter springs to mind) that no comparison is possible. And most, like 99.7% of all Sherlock Holmes pastiches, are abominations.

Would I like somebody to carry on, say, Matt Cobb when I'm gone? Assuming, of course, that somebody perceived a market for him? I don't know. I *do* know that some portentous legal document would be executed before my demise to restrict for as long as legally possible the use of my character to a successor chosen by me personally.

There are some writers whom I think would do a fine job with Matt, such as Julie Smith, or Max Allan Collins, or Mark Schorr, but why the hell should they? They have their own approaches and their own

creations, as any first-rate writer would. So I guess the answer is no.

Orania and I spent Valentine's Day in romantic Stamford, Connecticut, doing a mystery weekend at the Stamford Plaza Hotel. Okay, it wasn't a cruise to Bermuda, but what the hell, it was five free meals and a chance to meet some colleagues.

The Plaza itself is one of the nicest super-modern hotels I've seen. It's built as a hollow square, with the center roofed over. The rooms are comfortable, and the food is good.

The mystery writers on the scene, in addition to Orania and me, were H. Paul Jeffers, author of *The Adventure of the Stalwart Companions* (one of the .3% of good Sherlockian pastiches) and other novels; Jerry Oster, who wrote the acclaimed *Sweet Justice*, William X. Kienzle, author of the Father Koessler mysteries, Rosemarie Santini, former writer of *All My Children* now writing mysteries, and Jim (Demon Dog) Ellroy, author of *Clandestine*, *Blood on the Moon*, and others. Waldenbooks was responsible for getting us there, and there really wasn't much for us to do except show up and sign books. I had it even easier, since neither of my publishers managed to get any of my books there on time. Sigh.

The approach was fun. They set it up as a Charlie Chan case (and they used the guy's name—possible legal problems?) concerning hidden gold, revenge, newspapers, etc. It was a theatrical-type story, with actors in character all weekend, and murders before

your eyes, as opposed to the reconstructive type featured by the people at Bogie's, who sponsored the other mystery cruise we did. On the whole, I like the reconstructive better. With a theatrical, if you happen to be cleaning your glasses when somebody bites the dust, that's that.

As for the mystery itself—well, let me put it this way. Before they revealed the solution, they made us all sign a form promising we would never tell anyone what it was. And I could understand it. If I ever constructed a solution that lame, I wouldn't want anyone to spread it around, either.

Still, everybody seemed to have a good time, which is all that matters.

Our writer of the quarter is Kay Nolte Smith, winner of the 1981 best first novel Edgar for *The Watcher*. Paperjacks, a new Canadian outfit that is moving into mysteries in a big way, has just issued another of her books, *Catching Fire*. It's about an actor/theatre manager squeezed between criminals and public opinion of the unionization of his theatre.

Kay Nolte Smith was once associated with Ayn Rand's *Objectivist* newsletter, and her libertarian views are still apparent in her novels, but dramatically, not dogmatically. She is a hell of a plotter, and a writer of depth and commitment who is not afraid of real, live ideas. If you are tired of the existential *angst* that seems to be *sine qua non* of the serious crime novel these days, give Kay Nolte Smith a try. □

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Crime Hunt

by T. M. McDade

Let us settle one point right from the start—there does exist in the minds of many people a special antipathy toward poisoners. Among the different modes of homicide, it is looked upon with disfavor by many who would readily spring to the defense of a man who bludgeons his wife to death, shoots his neighbor, chops up his paramour, or dynamites his business partner. There are those whose chauvinism is so strong as to repudiate the poisoner on patriotic grounds, as though his act represented a special kind of disloyalty or treason. Your true-born Anglo-Saxon will tell you this is the device of knaves and foreigners, and that no right-minded murderer would use such a cowardly weapon. He can even point to the law as supporting this thesis, for in many states murder by poison has been put in a special category, classing it with that quaint crime of murder by lying-in-wait and providing that it must be considered as murder in the first degree.

But then, I am sure that if a man is contemplating murder he is hardly concerned with cultivating popularity. And such a man who is doing some initial research might well be misled by a book with the highly suggestive title *Handbook for Poisoners* by Raymond T. Bond. He might think that this is a guide to the chemistry of toxicity, but he would be mistaken. In a long and fascinating introduction, Bond does give a fine history of the use of poisons, animal, vegetable, and mineral, but the remainder of the volume is a collection of short stories by famous mystery writers, which would hardly prove helpful to the serious reader.

First things first. How do you get your poison? Many a fine plan has failed in the initial stage for lack of consideration at this point. The record-books of the nineteenth century are replete with cases in which a man or woman with little patience and less imagination has dashed off to the local druggist, purchased some arsenic, mumbling something about rats, and was identified by the clerk 24 hours later, following the sudden demise of a friend or relative.

Here is what the prosecutor said to the jury in the case of John Hendrickson, charged with poisoning his wife:

"Turn we now to the prisoner's conduct the week previous to the death of his wife. Why is he about the city of Albany searching for the most deadly poisons? Why is he inquiring for prussic acid, which, gentlemen, next to aconite (the poison with which it is alleged that the deceased was murdered), is the most deadly of all known poisons? How does he learn the fatal properties of prussic acid, and what does he want with that article? Who is to be killed or cured? For whom or what is it wanted? Why is he found going into so many drug shops that week? What is the

urgent particular business? On Tuesday or Wednesday of the week preceding the death of his wife, the prisoner is found asking for prussic acid at Dr. Springstead's. On Saturday he is seen going into another drug store, and some time during the same week, a person answering exactly to the general appearance and dressed in a costume corresponding exactly with the ordinary apparel of the prisoner, buys of Mr. Burroughs, the druggist, an ounce of the tincture of aconite, the very kind of poison with which, it is charged in the indictment, the prisoner poisoned his wife."



He might, dear reader, be saying this about you. The ordinary instinct of self-preservation alone demands something better than this gross public shopping about for a few ounces of a badly needed poison.

It is true, of course, that our native chemical industry has made available at low cost a wide range of products which are adequately lethal, and sold under names which are not always indicative of a hazard to humans. Hardly a tool shed stands which does not contain a package or can of some preparation especially compounded to cope with such problems as mealy bugs, aphids, or minor vermin but the toxicity of which is ample for humans. One would think that the purchase of the ordinary commercial product would pass unnoticed, but even here success is hard to come by. One of the most recent uses of such a product appears in the law reports of the state of Delaware, which reports the confession of a Mrs. Richer, who, on May 23, 1960, served her husband some asparagus soup liberally seasoned with a commercial rodent killer called Cynogas, which she had purchased the week before. Mr. Richer did not survive, and Mrs. Richer, we fear, will be in no position to endorse the product she used.

Surely, there is nothing to be learned from the daily press, for what can it report except the failures of the inept? And the more ancient cases merely reflect the superstitions of a period which we now find antiquated.

"I first thought of murdering my husband in the summer of 1865" was how Mrs. Lena

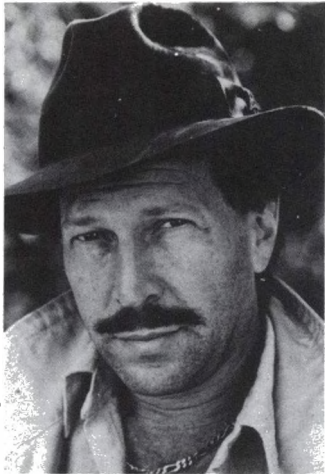
Miller of Clearfield County, Pennsylvania began her confession. "I first tried to poison him with tea made of laurel leaves and the filings of a brass buckle. Then with the quicksilver off the back of a looking glass. Then I gave him in two doses, out of a bottle of laudanum which I got from Dr. Potter for the cramp. Then some indigo. Then one day, going for the cows, I killed a small green grass snake, which I boiled and gave him in coffee. All these things were given either in tea or coffee, accordingly as one or the other was used at meals. None of them had the least effect on him—did not even make him sick. The time occupied in giving them all was about four weeks."

From such imaginative, if futile, potions, Mrs. Miller, losing patience, turned to that old family standby, arsenic, and, though even that took two weeks to bring her man down, he finally succumbed. Her provocation was his ill-treatment of her, but in that unenlightened era it was not sufficiently mitigating to keep her from being hanged.

Just how does one go about choosing a poison or other lethal substance? And, having chosen it, how to procure it under circumstances so that it cannot be traced? The vast kingdom of the vegetable world alone abounds in hundreds of plants and growths of rare beauty and potency, and were one tempted outside the vegetable kingdom, an extraordinary panorama of violent death by ingestion, inhalation, or inoculation sweeps into view. The inorganic and metallic poisons have been the chief resources of the poisoner: strychnine, antimony, potassium cyanide, and of course that old reliable, arsenic. After these, there are innumerable deleterious matters and creatures which, taken internally, have proved fatal to man—cantharides, ptomaines, and botulism, as well as injected poisons in the form of snake venom, hydrophobia, or the bites of toads, scorpions, or tarantulas. Beyond these, one moves off into the fog clouds of carbon monoxide and other deadly gases.

Fiction writers have already explored these domains and have described their potential with great ingenuity and entertainment. Exciting as it might be to provide a "Householder's Complete Guide to Poisons," good judgment suggests that we restrict ourselves to more modest fields. Certainly, there is no lack of poisons, but experience teaches us that there is more danger of discovery from the exotic and the bizarre, while the ordinary is safer and more reliable. As the basic problem is concealment of the source of the poison, why not grow your own in the privacy of your own garden?

My researches have revealed but one attempt to write of the poison garden. Geoffrey Grigson, in his book *Gardenage*,



Stefani Kong

"SMART, FUNNY, AND TOUGH" —Robert B. Parker

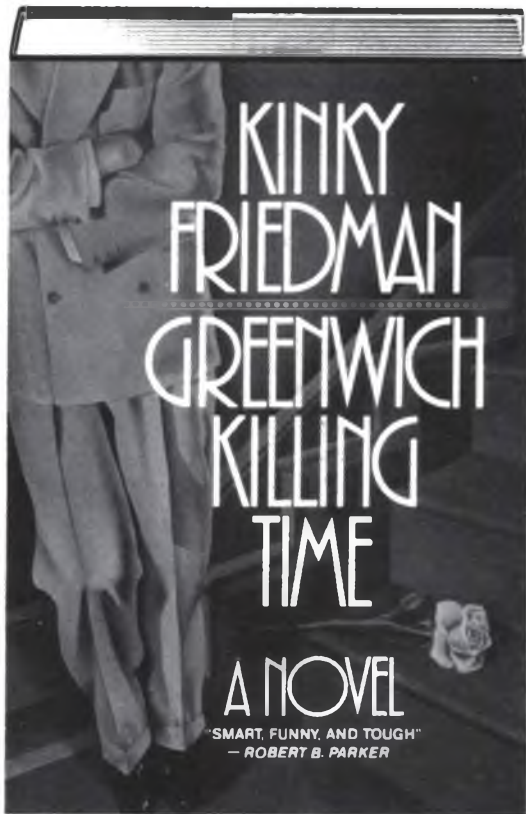
What do you get when a former country music singer living in modern-day Greenwich Village (who just happens to be named Kinky, and who happens to bear more than a passing resemblance to the author) turns private detective, and gets involved with a *Daily News* reporter, two tough cops, and a bunch of terrible murders with overtones of homosexuality, drugs, and doppelgangers? What you get is Kinky Friedman's sassy, suspenseful *Greenwich Killing Time*, "the toughest, hippest, funniest mystery in years" (Joel Siegel of *Good Morning America*).

"If Elmore Leonard lived in Texas, his name would be Kinky Friedman."
—DON IMUS
of WNBC Radio, New York City

"Brings Cain, Chandler, and Hammett all to mind, but the comparison is unfair. None of them was as savagely, brutally funny as Kinky Friedman's rules of the road for modern boys and girls."
—LUCIAN K. TRUSCOTT IV,
author of *Dress Gray*

"Kinky has segued from country music to big-city mayhem and you will be pleased to know his voice is as unbridled and exuberant in print as on stage."
—DAVID WESTHEIMER,
author of *Von Ryan's Express*

"Kinky, Mozart, Shakespeare— with what could I equal them?"
—JOSEPH HELLER
in *No Laughing Matter*



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MYSTERY, SUSPENSE & TRUE CRIME

has devoted a chapter to "The Toxicological Garden." Grigson feels a need to disavow any wish to poison his friends and neighbors. His reason for this dissertation? Because, he thinks, a poison garden would be curious. "It would be a reply to the mere chromatic hedonism of the flower garden." But Grigson touches but lightly on the subject. Any good home gardener can quickly acquire more knowledge than he is ready to dispense.

And, for the scholar, what delight in learning all the botanical names of the plants! How they roll from the tongue: *Kalmia latifolia*, *Cytisus laburnum*, *Gelsemium sempervirens*, *Majonia pubescens*, *Melianthus major*, and many more.

Surprisingly, the literature of homicide does not boast many cases of the felonious use of a plant. Scores of people did and still do die yearly from the accidental ingestion of a poisonous plant—children from eating laurel leaves, amateur mushroom pickers from dining on the fatal *Amanita phalloides*; even the humble rhubarb has felled the unwary housewife who has used the root. But those who have been charged in our courts with poisoning have invariably used the manufactured product, so addicted have we become to selecting the ready-made over the natural source. It is good, therefore, to be able to resurrect one case in which the plant itself was used.

On Mary Anne McConkey do we bestow the medal for one of the earliest recorded uses of the natural plant in a homicide. Here is the story of this Magellan of the herb-garden, who, a dozen years before Hendrickson, demonstrated the lethal quality of *Aconitum napellus*.

Richard McConkey, a weaver by trade, lived with his wife Mary Anne at Clones, County Monaghan, Ireland. Forty years of age, he was in good health, and it is reported that he was on tolerably amiable terms with his wife, who was younger than he by fifteen years. He was reported to be jealous, not without cause, for his wife was believed to be intimate with a neighbor. She herself had told a friend of her predilection for this man and had remarked that she would give her husband "a pill that would put him off the walk" before she eloped with her friend.

On July 31, 1840, the McConkeys were dining at home, if that is not too formal a word for their simple meal. Mrs. McConkey's father and a friend, Mary Johnston, were at the table with them. Mrs. McConkey had a pot boiling on the fire, from which she took a quantity of greens and placed them in a smaller pot. She had also fried some bacon and boiled some potatoes. She prepared the food on a separate table, with her back to the company, who could see nothing of what she was doing. Having made two plates of greens, she gave one to her father and the other to her husband, with some potatoes which she served from the boiler. On another plate, she placed some greens from the pot and gave them to Mary Johnston. She herself ate directly from the pot.

The meal was uneventful until, shortly before they were finished, Mary Johnston's father, a Mr. McMeighan, came in and

joined them at the table. McConkey, who had eaten the greater part of what had been served him, complained that the greens had "a wild, bad taste," for which his wife professed herself unable to account unless "a leaf had been boiled in them." She then added that they were the wildest and hardest greens that they had had that year and that she would give the remainder to the pigs. To this, her husband objected, telling her to give what he had left to Mr. McMeighan, remarking prophetically, as it turned out, that they would be a novelty to him. Mrs. McConkey protested that "there was dirt in them," but at length, reluctantly gave them to him. At the same time, she served him some from the pot out of which she had been eating, placing these greens alongside those from her husband's plate. Gallantly, Mr. McMeighan tried those from his host's plate first, and, finding no unpleasant taste, remarked that the trouble must be in Mr. McConkey's mouth. He then finished off those from the pot and in about two minutes felt a burning in his mouth and throat, followed by the sensation that his face was swelling.

At this point, the dinner party broke up with both McMeighan and McConkey in distress. Let us first follow the former in his discomfort. McMeighan went home, and before getting there he had trouble seeing. Arriving there, he fell into a stupor, and, about an hour after the meal, he was found by a neighbor, speechless and frothing at the mouth and nose. His hands and jaws were clenched, and he appeared as if dead. Thereafter, he vomited greatly and was very ill for two or three days, and the after-effects were so great that he did not resume his usual employment for five weeks.

McConkey himself, after a violent attack of nausea, retching, and vomiting, showed the same signs of lockjaw, with clenched hands and teeth. No doctor was called for him while he was alive. He perished three hours after the meal. A Dr. Hurst examined the body later and sent portions of it to the toxicologist, a Dr. Geoghegan, who, in view of the quickness of death after eating, suspected a metallic poison. This suspicion was supported by the discovery in the house of a bottle with a weak solution of corrosive sublimate. His tests, however, disclosed no such poison in the body; in fact, he was unable to detect any trace of poison!

Despite the failure to identify the poison, Mary Anne was arrested, indicted, and tried for the crime of murder. There were only six witnesses for the prosecution, including McMeighan, Mary Johnston, and the two doctors who were now convinced that the criminal agent was a vegetable poison; Geoghegan suspected monkshood. Though he related this conclusion to the symptoms, it is not unlikely that he was put on the track by a rumor which was prevalent among the peasantry of Clones that McConkey had been poisoned by blue rocket. The plant was well known in the neighborhood, and the toxicologist had taken pains to have it identified by these people. Two symptoms were also peculiar to the poison: the sensation of the swelling of the face and the

tingling of the skin. These had been reported by McMeighan.

Reporting the trial, the newspapers stressed the fact that there was no evidence that Mrs. McConkey had purchased poison, but her counsel did not call attention to the fact. Perhaps he knew that the prosecution had collected evidence of the presence of the plant in that area and the general knowledge of its poisonous nature. The jury found her guilty of murder, and she was sentenced to be hanged. Prior to her execution, the unfortunate woman admitted that she had poisoned her husband with the root of the blue rocket. A friend had given her some of the root, and she had first served some of it to him in tea, but how she made this concoction is not explained. The remainder she mixed with pepper and sprinkled over the greens eaten by her husband.

In the crown's preparation of its case, it learned some other interesting things about the plant. It was well known to those in the racing fraternity, being referred to simply as "the root." Horse traders and jockeys used it as a stimulant to make a horse appear lively when exhibiting it for sale. They made a mixture of the bruised root and ginger and put it under the horse's tail. This practice was known locally as "figging"; sometimes,

however, the dose was too strong and could actually paralyze the animal. Jockeys always carried a piece of the root in their waistcoat pockets as an indispensable item of their calling. Three months before his death McConkey himself had told of hearing a jockey who died from chewing it in mistake for a piece of ginger. Perhaps Mary Anne heard him tell the story, and it put ideas into her head. There was another story extant of a jockey's child who was poisoned by eating it, being used to finding ginger in his father's pocket and mistaking "the root" for the ginger.

Despite Mrs. McConkey's untimely end, the amateur poisoner need not be disheartened by this result. The case is unique in that the poison was not found in the analysis of the body, although modern methods might be more effective. In a modern suburban community, where horse-trading is a vanished art, blue rocket with its unusual properties is undoubtedly just another flower.

As far as we know, this is the only known murder involving this plant. Perhaps the sharp, biting flavor of blue rocket makes its detection by the intended victim too easy. Perhaps the simple difficulty of getting one's victim to chew on a root, as one might a carrot, was too much to expect from a victim

by way of co-operation. Nevertheless, if one is making a garden of fatal flowers, here is the first to put in, certified as a genuine killer — and striking in a bouquet.

We will not attempt in these few pages to list all the plants appropriate to a poison garden. Surely among our readers there will be one cultivator who has the wit, the knowledge of plants, and the time to compile "The Garden Book for Poisoners." Such a one will recognize that toxicity will not be the only test, that certain plants are indicated for certain victims. For example, if it is a wealthy, gouty uncle for whom the poison is intended, then *Colchicum autumnale* is his plant, or simple autumn crocus. As colchicum is still the preferred medication for gout, the supplementary dose will be unnoticed.

Other plants naturally suggest themselves. Count Bocarme dispatched the Countess with nicotine distilled from tobacco (*Nicotianum tabacum*); from Oriental poppies, one can easily obtain the juice of the unripe fruit of *Papaver somniferum*, which yields opium, while hemlock, which was used to kill Socrates, comes from *Conium maculatum*. Need we say more? Get in there and start digging. □

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TAD at the Movies

by Thomas Godfrey

By the time this column appears in print after an issue's hiatus, the winner of the 1985 screenplay Edgar will be known. To no one's surprise, it was Earl W. Wallace and William Kelley's work for *Witness*, which also won the Academy Award. There is an irony in this that bears notice, for what made *Witness* special was not the script or even the story, but what director Peter Weir and his cameraman did with it. Some of their romantic vision will stay with me long after the more conventional forms of *Out of Africa* (Academy Award for Best Picture) have faded into the background of accumulated film knowledge.

I can report, as a member of last year's Edgar selection committee for the film award, that *Witness* did not ride to victory on a wave of great admiration and enthusiasm, but floated ashore without fanfare as it was more buoyant than any of the competition.

It was not a great year for the written word in the mystery-suspense cinema, and it has not been since 1974, the year of *Chinatown*, *Don't Look Now*, and, if memory serves me, *Theatre of Blood*, that masterpiece of bloodied-tongue-in-cheek with Vincent Price and a crackerjack cast of British supporting players led by Robert Morley.

What does 1986 promise? Well there's *F/X*, which has been highly touted in the trades. *F/X* is the industry symbol for added effects, and also the name of a company owned by special-effects wizard Rollie Tyler, played by Bryan Brown (*Breaker Morant*).

The film opens with a massacre in a posh big-city restaurant—machine-gun blazing, mirrors exploding, bodies splattering, tanks full of live lobsters flowing over panicked diners like lava. The camera pulls back to show that it's all part of a movie staged by Tyler, the virtuoso of the splatter thriller. One of the actresses comments that special effects dominate human values in contemporary filmmaking, and we're off into a very convoluted tale of suspense as Tyler is hired by the government to stage a similar shooting to help them hide a mob informer who is about to testify.

Writers Robert T. Megginson and Gregory Fleeman have come up with a good, different plot idea and know enough to put in several different elements and lots of little twists and turns, but, as soon as they set things in motion, holes begin to form the size of Long Island. Credibility is badly and noticeably strained. By the ending, the writers seem to have thrown in the towel, tacking on some Rambo-esque finale that has Tyler penetrating a secured estate and eliminating a nest of bad guys singlehandedly.

The writers seem, in effect, to be saying that current mystery-suspensers are a pile of technical junk but that they can't do any better, something no one needs to spend five bucks to see.

The human aspects, such as they are, are supplied by Brian Dennehy's presence as the nonconformist cop on the case who can't seem to get along with any of the yes-men and also can't help being the only one at headquarters who can figure out what really is going on. It's a moldy, stale cliché, but Dennehy's hulking, warm presence almost redeems it.



Brown, on the other hand, is a more than competent leading man, but not actor enough to succeed with a part that is so pitifully patched together on paper. The rest of the cast ranges from adequate to untalented, with the exception of Mason Adams (late of TV's *Lou Grant*), who manages to seem professional as the government agent in charge of the case.

Given the possibilities of the original plot premise, it seems dimwitted of the writers to eliminate the chief villain by having him grab a machine gun smeared with crazy glue and stagger outside in front of a SWAT team whining this is all a mistake. I'm not sure director Robert Mandel does much to alleviate the pain of these awkward moments, and I was not assured that he or anyone else involved in this project learned you just can't coast for two hours on what was once a promising story idea.

Maybe it's not fair to single out Mandel and his writers for any more criticism. Judging from recent evidence, complex thrillers with any degree of plot sophistication and considered characterization are pretty much beyond the capabilities of most of today's emerging filmmakers.

Last year, we finished with *Clue*, undoubtedly the best movie based on a board game. Let's just hope it's the only film based on a board game. I think we can do without *Monopoly IV*, *Candy Land the Movie*, and other such epics this trend could start.

The writers of *Clue*, numbering the ubiquitous John Landis among them, have obviously played the game and have probably done as much with the concept as is humanly possible. All the familiar characters are there: Mrs. Peacock (Eileen Brennan) becomes a Senator's wife who is double-dealing, Miss Scarlet (Leslie Ann Warren reprising her tootsie from *Victor/Victoria*) runs a high-class bordello, Professor Plum (Christopher

Lloyd) is a nuclear scientist with some secrets of his own, Miss White (Madeline Kahn) is a much-married *femme fatale*, Mr. Green (Michael McKean) is a government official with some same-sex sexuality in his closet, Colonel Mustard (Martin Mull) becomes the American counterpart of Colonel Blimp, and Tim Curry (of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* immortality) has been fixed up with a new part, the butler and later investigator.

The weapons are all worked into the story, as are the rooms (and the two secret passages). The writers even remember to bring on Mr. Boddy, the mansion's owner and victim-to-be.

Further gimmickry has been added as the film now has three different endings which run in separate theaters (a problem, I would think, in small towns with one theater). For the record, ending A makes most sense for the mystery purist; ending C is most satisfyingly consistent with the frantic, campy tone of the project.

Curry stands out for his manic, energized playing of a physically demanding part, though the rest of the cast are all effective, considering that no one of them gets much of a chance to shine individually.

Some of the humor is genuinely funny. Much of it is just plain silly and sophomoric, like the running bit about the dog droppings that opens the film. Like the earlier *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* and *Murder By Death*, this is primarily a gimmick movie, and once the initial moments of recognition pass, the best part of the film is over. A curiosity then, primarily for fans of the game and the mystery-spoof.

And before that there was:

★ ★ **Charlie Chan in Rio** (1940) Sidney Toler, Victor Sen Yung, Victor Jory (D: Harry Lachtman)

It may look like someone took the sets of an old Carmen Miranda musical and tried to construct a Chan plot around them. Actually, the plot was borrowed, too, a reworking of *The Black Camel*. Certainly, the costumes must have cost more than the adaptation because it seldom gets much beyond a studious presentation of the basics. Most whodunit fans will figure out who got to the fugitive murderess posing as a Rio de Janeiro nightclub entertainer long before Chan does.

The pivotal device of having the victims smoke an herbal cigarette to be followed by a cup of coffee that combines to make a truth drug was probably incredible even then. Time has only made it quaint and ridiculous. Still, the production values were higher than they would be four years later, when the series moved to Monogram Studios on poverty row, and Toler's Chan is authoritative if lacking a little of Warner Oland's flair. Formula entertainment, but entertainment nonetheless. □

TAD on TV



by Richard Meyers

Loads of water has flowed under my bridge since last I wrote this column, leading to some tenuous opinions and definite attitudes — not just on certain series, but on the nature of television itself. Sounds heavy, huh? Well, yes and no. Whether I like it or not, and whether I'm aware of it or not, television shapes my life. And the line between fantasy and reality is getting thinner and thinner. I don't like it.

First, the fantasy. *The Equalizer* is total fantasy. The concept of a man advertising mercenary/vigilante services in newspaper classified sections lends itself to such chaos that the very idea is laughable. But now then — given that it is such an untenable notion, the actual execution is both laudable and goofy.

Think of the series as a violent chocolate-chip cookie. Some people like their cookies straight, some like them with nuts. *The Equalizer* has nuts; lots of them. A more quirky, eccentric show I can't remember. Number one, there's *The Equalizer* himself. Robert McCall, ex-Government operative, now nasty man for hire. On any other show (indeed, on several others), he'd be svelte, tanned, and sullen. Here, you call *The Equalizer* and you get a balding, overweight, fifty-year-old Englishman! Of course, casting Leo McKern would have put this program one step beyond. Instead, they have Edward Woodward, star of the movie *Breaker Morant* and well known on British shores for *Callan*, a long-running TV series about a moral assassin working for an amoral secret service.

He's just one plus on a show of several. Second, there is excellent location filming on the streets of New York (under extremely trying circumstances). Third, an exceptional musical score, written and performed by Stuart Copeland, the drummer of the rock group *The Police*.

Here's where those nuts come in. *The Equalizer* can't hold onto a producer, let alone most of the crew. The folks who created it moved on, the original executive producer, Michael Sloan (who may or may not be the Michael Sloane who was executive producer of *The Return of the Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and the abortive *Ninja* series, *The Master*), has moved on — making way for James McAdams, who may or may not have moved on himself by this time.

All this running around shows in the series, which is eclectic in script quality from week to week. Even so, it is always eminently watchable if just for Woodward alone. But thankfully he's not alone. In addition to a slew of exceptional actors serving as guest stars, two recurring characters are "Control," played by Robert Lansing, and an obnoxious, brown-nosing pretender to the secret-service throne, played by Saul Rubinek. But since the series is so difficult to produce and the

episodes are shown out of sequence (with a lot of reruns to fill the gaps), consistent viewing can create a distinct "outer limits" feel.

One week Rubinek will be there gumming up the works, second-guessing, humiliating, and intimidating Control, and the next week Lansing will be there as if Rubinek had never existed. But throughout there is Woodward, that photography, that music, and very challenging story ideas. So what if they don't always pay off their plots? I give them "A" for effort in a very derivative medium, and consider *The Equalizer* one of my favorite shows.



Speaking of derivative, there is *Stingray*, the latest sausage from the Stephen Cannell factory. Here are two TV cosmic truisms. One, volume breeds contempt, and two, it's easy to tell an original from a knockoff. I was defending Cannell for awhile. I thought he was taking time to consolidate his reputation by giving networks what they wanted, before he started forcing them to broadcast what he wanted. But consolidation time is over. Looks like he is never going back to such heartfelt efforts as *The Rockford Files* and *Tenspeed and Brownshoe* (yes, okay, I didn't

like the latter series, but at least it was heartfelt!).

Hard for me to believe that *Stingray* is heartfelt. It seems to be a strictly by-the-numbers creation, a combo of *Miami Vice*'s style with *The Equalizer*'s thrust. There's this mysterious dude, see, who rights wrongs for schmucky folks with the express understanding that they'll have to do him a favor someday. That way he's got a whole network of reluctant helpers who owe him one. Holy mackerel, he's a combination Godfather and Rotary Club!

The best thing about this familiar effort is Nick Mancuso, the actor called upon to play a combination Shadow and Baretta. Although svelte, tanned, and sullen, he pulls off the various accents he spews during *Stingray*'s ("call me 'Ray") undercover missions. Too cute for words, friends. Some people have trick knees, some shows have trick brains. This has been one of them.

Interesting. *The Equalizer* is on CBS opposite *Stingray* on NBC. Over on ABC at the same time is *Spenser: For Hire* (thusly titled to differentiate it from the short-lived teen sitcom *Spencer*). I've got to draw a line here. Now I'll step over it. I liked the *Spenser* I remember from the first Robert Parker novel *The Godwulf Manuscript*. The *Spenser* who cracked wise rather than lectured. The *Spenser* who took care of business rather than hobbled about on existential angst. The *Spenser* who had some vague connection with reality rather than the one who has the fates dropping life around him like dominoes (the *Perfect* girlfriend, the perfect best-brutal-black friend).

Okay, now that I've done the "angry letter bait," on to the review. *Spenser: For Hire* is a very well-done show. Robert Ulrich does a decent job as the title character, while Avery Brooks is terrific as Hawk (word from the Boston location was that "Brooks'll blow Ulrich off the screen!"). After seeing him, I

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have to admit I'd like to keep Spenser in the Parker books and center the show around Hawk. At least then the constant gunfights, fistfights, and carfights of the series would make more sense. I lived in Boston for three years; there are far more outdoor firefights in Boston Garden and on Beacon Hill in one episode of *Spenser: For Hire* than I ever saw.

At any rate, the bottom line is that this is the pontificating Spenser, the sullen, sensitive, lecturing Spenser. Oh, give me an overweight, balding Englishman anytime.

The smoke has cleared a bit. With several detective shows lying dead on Nielsen Hill, the only definite survivor is Jessica Fletcher of *Murder, She Wrote*. That gave creators Levinson, Link, and Peter Fisher some definite credibility. They utilized it to get *Blacke's Magic* on the air. At first glance, this is a combination of *Banacek* and David Copperfield magic specials. Hal Linden plays a retiring master magician who seeks to solve

seemingly impossible crimes. He is occasionally aided, occasionally hindered, and occasionally involved by his con man father, played by Harry Morgan (late of *M*A*S*H* fame).

Yes, definitely *Banacek* stuff, and there's nothing wrong with that — all *Banacek* needed was a less cool star (which George Peppard was at the time). Then what's wrong with *Blacke's Magic*? Something, something. . . . Maybe it is all just a little too cute, a little too practiced. Why does it have a rushed, pastel, bland look? The dialogue, the photography, the direction? Darned if I know. I watch it, I like it, but I can't shake the feeling that something is amiss.

Now, the reality. Why did the destruction of the space shuttle upset me so? Beside the human tragedy, the thing looked too much like an explosion out of *Star Wars* for my comfort. Reality isn't supposed to look like fantasy, damn it! I couldn't help but think

back to those dozens of spaceships disintegrating in the *Star Wars* trilogy and realized that "people" died in each of them. "People" die on TV every week. Then why does "reality-TV" insist on trying to equate the two?

The coverage of the tragedy was commendable. . . . on the day it happened. Overnight, the news media began to "wallow." Cameras, lights, and microphones had no business intruding on people's mourning. They had no real right to trample the lawns of Christa McAuliffe's home town. This isn't news. This is pandering, this is exploiting, this is trivializing reality until it looks, acts, and sounds just like fantasy.

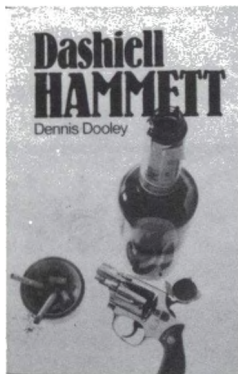
This is exclusively television's problem, and the medium's greatest threat to society. News cannot be entertainment if the line between fantasy and reality is to stay intact for future generations. □

What About Murder

by Jon L. Breen

• DOOLEY, Dennis. *Dashiell Hammett*. New York: Ungar, 1985. xv + 174 pp. Bibliography, index.

This capably written critical volume may seem rather superfluous, given all the other Hammett studies on the market. Its main distinguishing feature is its emphasis on the short stories, consideration of which fills about half the book. Though generally reliable, Dooley commits a few careless errors, including a reference to "Edward" Lockridge's Mr. and Mrs. North; an astonishing misstatement that Willard



Huntington Wright was killed in a 1933 car crash; and a claim that, in the film of *The Maltese Falcon*, Sam Spade tells secretary Effie that the falcon is "the stuff that dreams are made of." He actually makes the statement to Detective Tom Polhaus.

• HART, Anne. *The Life and Times of Miss Jane Marple*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1985. x + 161 pp. Illustrations, bibliography.

The author, a librarian at Memorial University of Newfoundland, presents an appropriately brief and charmingly written biography of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple, the most celebrated of little-old-lady sleuths. The approach is only semi-Sherlockian, a "creator" being mentioned in the first sentence though not referred to again. Content is biographical rather than critical, so don't look here to find out which Marple adventures are the best or least. Special features are a map of the village of St. Mary Mead, a bibliography of Marple books listing both hardcover and paperback editions, a short-story checklist identifying appearances in collections, a listing of motion picture and television adaptations, and a one-page list of secondary references. This is one of the less essential additions to the groaning shelf of Christie studies, but the fan will want to have it.

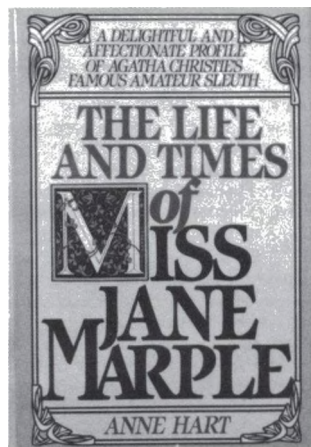
• LEWIS, Peter. *John Le Carré*. New York: Ungar, 1985. 228 pp. Bibliography, index.

The first book on George Smiley's creator is an excellent work of genuine literary criticism, offering a clear and careful cataloging of Le Carré's themes and attitudes, his techniques of plotting and character-building, his symbols and allusions. Not every reader will want or enjoy this deep a probing, but few who persevere will feel their time has been wasted. Lewis frequently quotes other critics' views tellingly. The book devotes a chapter to each of the novels through *The Little Drummer*

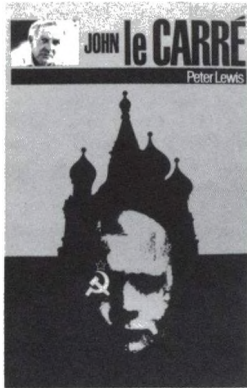
Girl (1983), with the exception of *The Naive and Sentimental Lover*, a non-mystery or spy novel that is accorded three pages of analysis.

• MCALEER, John. *Royal Decree: Conversations with Rex Stout*. Ashton, Maryland: Pontes Press, 1983. 74 pp.

Even in the 621 pages of his massive biography of Stout (see WAM #221), McAleer was not able to use all the material provided him by his subject in several years' worth of interviews. Thus, this diverting compilation of Q-and-A, divided into four



sections: "Stout on His Craft," "Stout on His Peers," "Nero and Archie," and "The Wolfe Corpus." The collection of explanations, opinions, and one-liners cannot fail to amuse and fascinate the loyal fan of the series.



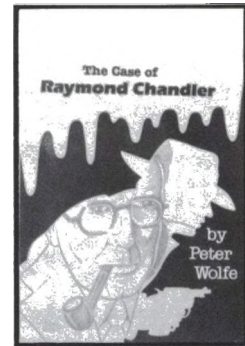
• **MENENDEZ, Albert.** *The Subject Is Murder: A Selective Subject Guide to Mystery Fiction.* New York: Garland, 1986. x + 332 pp. Index.

This very welcome subject guide includes 3,812 unannotated entries in 25 subject areas, including advertising, archaeology, art, circuses and carnivals, department stores, gardening, academia, the "high seas," religion, hotels and inns, "literary people," radio and TV, Christmas, music, politics, newspapers, bookshops and libraries, trains, medicine, sports, the supernatural, theatre, motion pictures, weddings and honeymoons,

and amnesia. Each chapter has a brief introduction, citing outstanding examples, series specialists, and sometimes printed sources of further information. Entries give the American place, publisher, and date, except for those books published only in Britain. An addendum cites newly published titles (through summer 1985) and older titles overlooked in the main list. A valuable added feature is an eight-page list of mystery-book dealers, most American but some British or Canadian. Finally, there is an author index.

Menendez knows the field well, and his book is for the most part both admirably up-to-date and thorough, including some wonderfully obscure titles bound to appeal to totally immersed mystery buffs. Most readers will be too grateful that this book exists at all to spend much time looking for errors and omissions.

On the debit side, however, Menendez has a tendency to refer to titles without their authors in his chapter introductions, forcing the reader to browse through long lists in order to find the author's name. If the book had a title index (which would be very nice), this tendency would merely be irritating. Without a title index, it can be maddening. In introducing the chapter on ecclesiastical mysteries, he lists some series characters without reference to their authors—an even worse offense, since it is impossible for the reader to find in this book whose character is who. Also regrettable is the author's decision to ignore the existence of pseudonyms, especially since some authors (e.g., John



Evans/Howard Browne, Anthony Boucher/H. H. Holmes) appear in the book under more than one name with no cross-references to inform the reader of their identity. The author index consistently omits co-authors (e.g., Frank L. Tedeschi, who collaborated with Barbara Ninde Byfield on *Solemn High Murder*, and Val Gielgud's sometime co-author Holt Marvell).

As to the selections, it is, as always, possible to nitpick. I think calling *The Moonstone* a gardening mystery because Sergeant Cuff's hobby was growing roses is stretching things a bit. A more likely choice would be Anthony Matthews's *Death Has Green Fingers* (Walker, 1971), published in England as by Lionel Black. William Peter Blatty's *Legion* is listed with the religious mysteries, but not its predecessor, *The*

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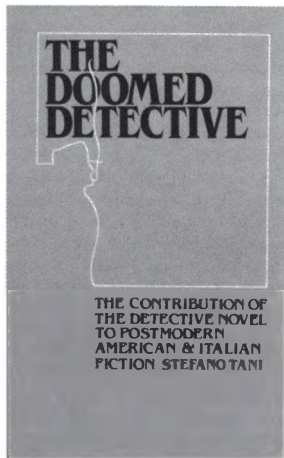
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Exorcist. Fletcher Knebel surely belongs enough to the mystery/detective genre for titles such as *Vanished* and *Night of Camp David* to make the political list. Helen McCloy is mentioned in the introduction to the chapter on medical mysteries, but none of her novels about psychiatrist-detective Basil Willing is listed in the chapter. In the supernatural chapter, there should be many more titles by John Dickson Carr, whose books are full of a supernatural aura (usually explained away), and Dennis Wheatley, who regularly dealt with real black magic and is represented here by only one title.



• SYMONS, Julian. **Dashiell Hammett**. (HB) Album Biographies) San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1985. xiii + 178 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index.

The first book-length Hammett study by a non-American critic is both extensively illustrated and, as would be expected from its author, beautifully written. Since Hammett's life has been treated in considerable detail by Richard Layman, William F. Nolan, and Diane Johnson, it's just as well that Symons's emphasis is more critical than biographical. Symons manages to discuss the novels *without* the tedious plot summaries that shackle some critical studies.

In comparing the novel and film versions of *The Maltese Falcon*, Symons gives John Huston's adaptation too little credit for staying true to Hammett in the censorious Hollywood of the early '40s. He states, "Wilmer is no longer Gutman's boy, Cairo is a primping popinjay but not an obvious homosexual" (p. 131). On the contrary, the nature of the trio can be read between the lines as surely as the heterosexual innuendo of Bogart and Bacall's racetrack dialogue in *The Big Sleep*.

• TANI, Stefano. **The Doomed Detective: The Contribution of the Detective Novel to Postmodern American and Italian Fiction**. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984. xvi + 183 pp. Bibliography, index.

Tani's subject is the "anti-detective novel," in which mainstream writers use the trappings of detective and mystery fiction but subvert it

through denying the reader the central feature of a detective novel: a comprehensive, logically achieved *solution*. Major works discussed include Leonardo Sciascia's *A ciascuno il suo*, John Gardner's *The Sunlight Dialogues*, Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa*, Sciascia's *Todo modo*, Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, William Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel*, Italo Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore*, and Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. The book is interesting and well written but not likely to appeal to the fan who values detective fiction for its own sake.

Sensing that Tani's statement that Mike Hammer "hates 'the Reds and the niggers' and his moral commitment is 'to mop them out of America'" (page 26) was probably unfair to Mickey Spillane, I asked Spillane specialist Max Allan Collins, who writes, "There is no basis in Spillane for the 'nigger' remark, and less for the 'Reds' than one might imagine. Mike Hammer is the friend of the underdog, of lower class losers, and if anything he has sympathy for members of any persecuted ethnic group. . . ."

"What *slight* basis Tani might have is a scene in *I, the Jury* in which Hammer beats up two black guys. However, they attack *him*—and he is visiting the black bar, where he is regularly a visitor, being on very friendly terms with the black owner/bartender. Some of the dialogue. . . is in a standard-for-the-time stereotypical dialect. Calling this racist shows a lack of understanding of historical context, and extrapolating from any of this that Hammer 'hates the niggers' is ludicrous.

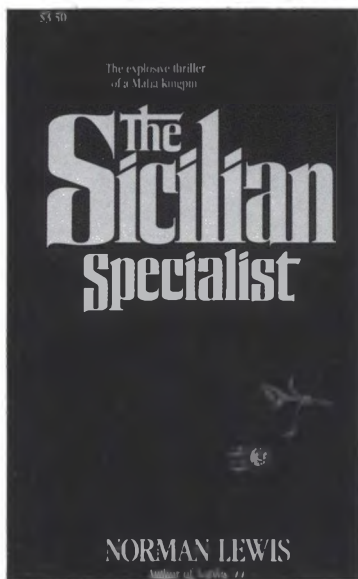
"In the early novels, only one is concerned with 'Reds': *One Lonely Night*; later on, *The Girl Hunters* and *Survival. . . Zero!*; in the latter, the mellowed Hammer seems in favor of detente!"

• WOLFE, Peter. **Something More Than Night: The Case of Raymond Chandler**. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1985. 242 pp.

The author of earlier studies of Hammett (see WAM #180) and Ross Macdonald (WAM #193) climaxes his consideration of the private eye novel's big three with one of the best critical volumes to date on Chandler. From the rat-a-tat biographical opening to the concluding appreciation of *Playback* (Chandler's "most misread and underrated work"), Wolfe's work is dense and sometimes difficult but ultimately rewarding. Among other delights, Wolfe presents a dissenting view on *Farewell, My Lovely*, which he believes too highly ranked both by Chandler and some of his critics; a fascinating catalogue of the contradictions of Chandler and Marlowe, e.g., their racial attitudes; a good chapter on Chandler's use of the tools and conventions of classical detective fiction; and an excellent consideration of Marlowe's first-person style.

Some readers will find Wolfe's attempt to psychoanalyze Chandler through his writing distasteful, and he occasionally makes some rather extreme assumptions—see, for example, page 17, on the Freudian significance of Chandler's use of firearms, and page 51, on his alleged homosexual leanings. □

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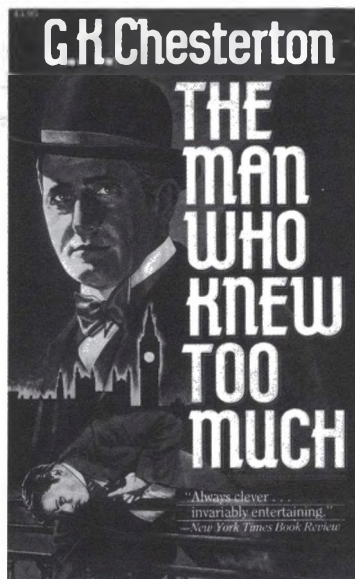
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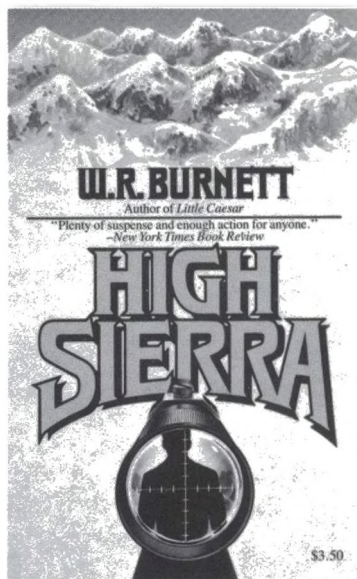
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ONE TO THREE

A Fictionalized Memoir

BY STEPHEN GREENLEAF

EDITOR'S NOTE: Wouldn't it be swell to be an author? Well, maybe the agonizing hours of solitude at the typewriter, trying to find the cleanest and purest way of saying the most complex thoughts, wouldn't be too much fun. Neither would the rejection slips, nor the paltry advances, nor the smart-alecky editor who thinks he knows more about what you meant to say than you do. It has its compensations. Like being a

famous person, finally treated with the deference and respect, if not outright adulation, that you always knew you deserved. And the glittering autograph parties thrown in your honor. What follows is an account of one autographing party. It is presented as a piece of fiction by one of the finest writers working today, but it is clearly a thinly disguised recounting of an actual experience. Very thinly disguised.

SHE had broken her promise, but she was a publicity director so it was to be expected, was no doubt required by her employer, was likely a point of pride. Still, he was upset, as much with himself for believing her as with her for betraying him. Every day for over a week he had gone to the little library near his home to scout the city newspapers, whose expanding litany of violence he usually avoided, but there had been no word of his appearance, no mention of his name, not in the advertisements for the store, not even in the book column, which surely would have noted the occasion had anyone bothered to reveal it. So it was certainly going to be an ordeal, worse than he had imagined at the time he had agreed to do it, which had been bad enough to tempt him to cancel a day after agreeing to appear. But perhaps it was fitting. Perhaps it was to be a penance, of the type endured by all but the most popular or unbending writers: the book signings, prose readings, writing classes, editing tasks, and book reviews, to say nothing of the bar-tendings, table-waitings, cab-drivings and other mundane digressions, undertaken by monetarily marginal authors to pay the way for words. He had figured to sell at least twenty books. Now, he was not so sure; he thought half that would be more like it.

"Slayton's is launching a Fall Fashion Campaign in October, Mr. Howell," the publicity woman had said when she called him three months previously, her words on the brink of rapture. "Our theme is 'Slayton's Detects the Clues to Fashion,' and we're going to be doing just *lots* of cute things. We're going to have a private detective in the store one day, and a psychic, and a policeman, and we all think it would be just really *neat* to have a mystery writer as our guest one day, too. With copies of your book to sign and stuff?" She'd paused at this point for him to say something appropriate, but since he was recoiling as usual from the prospect of a prolonged encounter with strangers he made no utterance and the woman dashed ahead. "I don't read mysteries myself, but people who do tell me yours are just *terrific*, Mr. Howell, so, well, would you be interested in coming to Slayton's in October? To help us out? It would be a big thrill for us. Really."

"Well, I'm afraid I'm not in a position to travel..."

"We'd be happy to pay your expenses, of course. Including a room at the Hyatt? Or other hotel of your choice, it's just that the Hyatt is so near our downtown store. And of course we'll do *oodles* to promote you and stuff. I'm told you have just *tons* of fans here in the city, so I'm sure the turnout will be terrific. Mr. Howell? Please?"

There were people in the city he knew but hadn't seen for years, and a pattern of solitude and self-absorption that needed breaking. "Okay," he said.

"Fantastic. Now, how do I go about getting some of your books?"

It was then that he first sensed disaster, his momentary vision of files of fans awaiting his smile and signature quickly erased by this blithe admission of commercial incompetence, at least regarding books. "Don't you have a book department?" His question had been imploring.

"Oh, no. Clothing and accessories only, Mr. Howell. Slayton's is not a department store."

"I see."

He saw, all right, better with each day he had looked in vain for his name to appear amidst the suitably intriguing copy and the mysteriously modish models that slinked off the multiple half-page Slayton's ads that had begun to appear in the city papers a week before his visit. Slayton's may have detected the clues to fashion, but no one was going to detect his presence in their store without the aid of bloodhounds or the FBI.

Hesitating beneath their splendid sign outside their splendid store, he took a deep breath, checked the set of his hair and necktie in the skewed reflection off the display window, and entered. She had told him she would be waiting at the east entrance, but there were as many entrances as compass points and he was so unfamiliar with the city he had no idea which way was east—in the thicket of skyscrapers and municipal art he retained only a desperate sense of which way was up. As far as he could tell, the only objects awaiting him beyond the revolving door were a sand urn and a stack of complimentary shopping bags and a cardboard poster stapled to an aluminum stand, listing the "Slayton's Schedule":

10:00–11:00 Base and Blush. Demonstration by Ariel Smith, Doty Field Representative.

12:00–1:00 Style Show. Furs by Dominick, New York and Paris. Jewels by Rudolph, New York and Amsterdam. Mezzanine. Admission by invitation.

1:00–3:00 Book Signing. Local author Stephen Howell. Escalator well, Lower Level.

Local. He lived three hundred miles away, at the bottom of the state, in a town that boasted no building higher than a four-story hotel that had recently slipped into receivership for want of patrons. If he were local he'd go home and call in sick. He sighed and moved into the store, past racks of fluffy sweaters and woolen slacks, past mannequins so perfect they were ominous, past salesclerks imperfect only in their purpose, until he spied the escalator and took it to his level, which was down.

One promise, at least, she had kept. Nestled beneath the ramp of moving steps, the publicity lady had re-created a Victorian library, complete with wing chairs, glass-fronted bookcase, mahogany writing-table, goose-necked reading lamp, Persian throw-rug, even a dictionary and a stand. It was by Agatha Christie out of Conan Doyle, cleverly staged, warmly attractive particularly in contrast to its high-tech surroundings, and entirely misleading as to

the nature of his work. Better a collapsed couch and metal desk and battered file cabinet with a bottle of booze in the bottom. Still, the furnishings were acceptable. The horror was that arrayed on the shelves of the bookcase were at least fifty copies of his latest book, more copies than he had ever seen in one place, more than he could sell should the publicity woman have proclaimed his presence in full-page ads and TV spots and sound trucks moving through the streets.

"Hi."

He started and looked around, conscious that he had been gaping, awestruck and intimidated, at the row-over-row of blue-green book spines bearing his name and a title imposed by his publisher over his strenuous objection.

The young woman smiling at him wore a white blouse and black skirt and a pale blue apron with the name of the store written on its breast in bold baroque script. She stood behind a table laden with sweets and cups and urns and napkins, her back to the wall around the corner from his designated station.

He answered her greeting with his own.

"Are those your books?" She gestured toward the well.

"Yep."

"What kind of books are they?"

"Mysteries. Whodunits. Hardboiled stuff, rampant

with sex and violence." He stopped himself with effort as he sensed she was taking him seriously.

"I don't read mysteries. Are you famous?" Her smile indicated she wouldn't hold it against him if he were.

"Not by a long shot."

He saw fifty copies of his book—more woman have proclaimed

She looked dubiously at the ranks of pristine spines. "Well, if you want coffee or pastry, here I am. Coffee's a quarter. The pastry depends."

"I'll take coffee. Black."

She aimed a spigot at a clear glass cup, placed the cup on a matching saucer and handed the set to him. "I'd give it to you, you know, seeing you're here for the store and all, but . . ."

"I understand. No problem." He fished out a quarter and gave it to her. "Do you have to stand on your feet all day?"

"Just till four. They figure most people don't drink coffee after four. They did a study on it." The fact amused them both.

She was cute. He wanted to talk with her further, wanted to delay his arrival on the set where some variety of public shame doubtlessly awaited him, but a hand touched his back. "There you are. I was afraid you'd gotten lost. But detectives don't *get* lost, do they?"

The gush was familiar. He turned and found his nemesis. "It's really a pleasure to meet you, Mr. Howell," she continued. "I'm Ruthann Russell. We spoke on the phone."

She smiled with every muscle in her face. She was dark and svelte, intense and vibrant, wore culottes and boots and a sweater with a strawberry woven into its front, smelled of something sharply sweet. She grasped his hand and pumped it.

"Nice to meet you." He considered complaining about the publicity failure, but decided merely to get it over with.

"I guess you came in a different door. I should have been more precise, I suppose. I'm really sorry . . ."

"It's not your fault. Detectives sometimes pretend they're lost even when they're not." He tried a grin

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but knew from her expression it had malfunctioned along with the joke.

She pulled him toward his post. He twisted to say goodbye to the coffee girl but she was busy presenting a croissant to a customer wearing eyeglasses the size of jar lids and a necklace made from teeth.

than he could sell should the publicity his presence in TV spots.

"I see you have coffee already. Do you need anything else? A pen or anything? Is the set all right? Do we need more chairs, do you think?" The words touched, the sentences were airtight.

"I have a pen. The set is fine. Where do they pay if they want a book?"

"Oh. There." She pointed. "Have them ask for Kay, at the perfume counter. She knows the merchandise codes and everything. Do you think we have enough books?"

He closed his eyes. "Plenty."

"I wonder what we do if there are some left over?" Retaliating, he told her he didn't know.

"Well, I have to go out to one of our suburban stores, we're demonstrating manicure kits. If you need anything, see Kay." She clasped her hands. "I just think this is so *fantastic*."

He made do with a shrug.

"Well, 'bye and everything, Mr. Howell. And thanks again for coming."

"My pleasure."

"Oh." She put a hand on his arm and lowered her voice. "I haven't read your book yet. But I'm going to. Really."

"Good."

"I just know it's going to be clever. I probably won't *ever* figure it out."

He made his usual response to comments about his work, which seemed invariably disappointing to his audience.

"Well, have a nice day."

"You, too."

Ruthann Russell trotted off. He looked at his watch. Only five minutes of his allotted sentence had been served.

He took a seat in the chair that faced the coffee corner, made room for his cup on the writing table

and tried for comfort. A lengthy minute passed. No one seemed to pay him any attention, no one seemed to have to walk his way except to visit a restroom. He looked around for something to deflect his thoughts and discovered that the wall opposite him was mirrored from floor to ceiling. On it, a line of shoppers ascended like angels in mufti, gazing down at him with the selfsame pity and puzzlement that saints direct at sinners. He looked quickly away, the duplication of his image an insult that even he surely did not merit.

A drop of sweat formed beneath his arm. He loosened his tie and unbuttoned his collar. The drop of sweat tiptoed down his ribs. His breathing rasped and he took a surreptitious whiff from his inhaler, then looked again at his surroundings, at anything but the mirror.

Celluloid posters of Bogart and Cagney adorned the walls, along with stylized question-marks, magnifying glasses, fingerprints, and other indicia of his art, the fashion theme reinforced *ad nauseam*. Some mannequins were masked, others wore fedoras with tilted brims. At least three were swathed in trenchcoats. He wondered about the psychic, wondered if she'd been psychic enough to stay away.

A television monitor caught his eye. He put on his glasses and squinted its image into focus. A line of women in striped leotards and pastel tights exercised to disco music and brief commands: "Heels. Toes.

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Circle. Kick. Shimmy back. And kick again." Despite the provocation, both their expressions and coiffeurs refused to budge. Not the flailing amateurs of Richard Simmons, these were well-drilled pros, already thin and fit, prancing to convince women to wear what they wore rather than do what they did. "Heels. Toes. Circle. Kick. Shimmy back. And kick again."

From time to time patrons stopped to watch the dancers, who had suddenly become erotic: Pout. Bump. Grind. And bump again. To their credit, the shoppers mostly shook their heads and laughed. When one of them caught him ogling the screen he was forced to look away and again his fleeing eyes found his mirror image and again he slumped at what he had allowed to be done to him and at the figure he cut now that he was middle-aged.

Surrounded by fashion, he was its opposite, wearing clothing bought a dozen years before, when he had held a job requiring a degree of personal display. Now that he worked at home when he worked at all he wore only jeans and sweatshirts, his coats and ties hauled out only for Christmas Eve and funerals. But perhaps he was becoming a celebrity. Perhaps he should detect a clue to fashion himself. Spotting a rack of sportcoats, he walked over and pulled at the tag attached to a handsome tweed. Three hundred and eighty dollars. More than his monthly mortgage; twice his last royalty statement. He dropped the tag and returned to the wing chair just in time to watch a beefy, well-wrapped matron

crush the cushion of the one across from his.

He sat down and greeted her. She nodded brusquely, frowned, glanced at the books on the table, picked one up, thumbed through it, put it back. "They selling books now?"

"I guess so."

"At that price I don't know who'd buy one."

"Me, either."

The woman grumbled again, then scratched her fuzzy chin, then crossed one stumpy ankle atop the other knee and removed a sensible shoe and massaged her foot. He watched her idly, listened to her sighs of relief, turned off thought until a voice that was saccharine and ubiquitous issued from above them. "Slayton's Shoppers, I'd like to direct your attention to the escalator well on the Lower Level, where our guest today is mystery writer Stephen Howell. Please stop by and greet this well-known local author, who will be autographing his book for you until three o'clock. And remember Slayton's special purchase of fashion lingerie, on sale now in the Shimmering Secrets nook on aisle fourteen, Main Floor. Thank you, Slayton's Shoppers."

As his hot face reddened the coffee girl peered around the corner and gave him the high sign, then glanced at her watch and laughed. "Only an hour and twenty minutes to go."

"Thanks."

"More coffee?"

He shook his head. The woman sitting next to him dropped her foot to the floor and got up without a word and lumbered off. On the TV screen the exercising beauties were trying to dislodge their breasts. The coffee girl peeked around the corner once again. "Sold any yet?"

"Nope."

"Really?"

"Really."

As embarrassed as he, she disappeared.

He settled into his chair. After a moment he pulled out his pen and the small notebook he carried with more optimism than reason. He had a short story to write, for an anthology, due in less than a month. He might as well make use of the ocean of time in which he drowned, and making notes would at least keep his eyes off the looming mirror and therefore off himself.

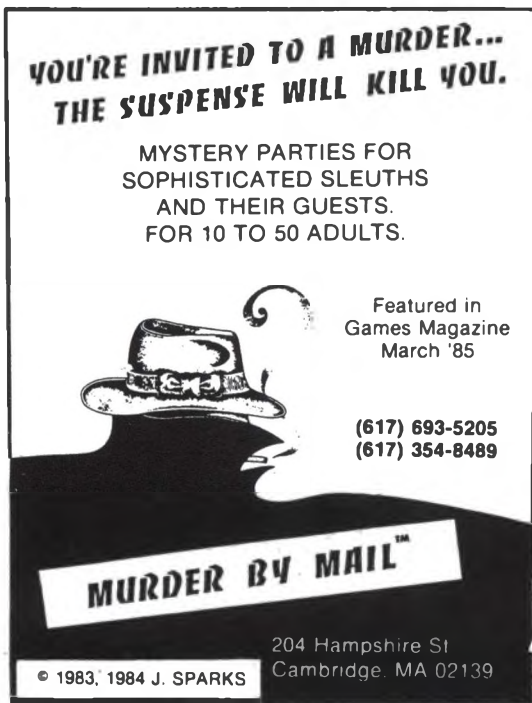
He thought perhaps a rural setting, in the range of mountains near where he lived, perhaps centered on one of the many cults that had settled there to take advantage of the weather and the miles of government lands on which they could grow crops from garlic to marijuana. Maybe a missing girl, parents worried, detective hired to find her. An over-used theme, but maybe he could do something different with it. Make the cult benign, rather than destructive. Make the girl. . .

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"Are you Stephen Howell?"

She stood directly in front of him, arms provocatively akimbo, hair askew, shod in cowboy boots and stuffed into Western jeans and a T-shirt tight enough to provoke her nipples.

He acknowledged his name. She put out a hand. He took it while still seated, feeling a cripple or a guru. "I'm a stewardess," she began, "and I, ah, just wanted to say I see lots of people reading your books on the plane. I kind of keep track, you know, and it looks like you're real popular down home."

Because her voice bore the charm and music of the country, he relaxed, knew he would not have to strike a pose. "That's nice to know," he said. "Where's home?"

"Houston."

His angled neck began to ache. Should he stand or ask her to sit? He opted for the latter, hoping that once seated she would stay.

She took the chair without hesitation and picked up a book from the table. "I don't like the cover much. What's it supposed to be, a man hanging from a noose or something?"

"Right."

"What're those shiny things at the bottom?"

"Dog tags."

"Vietnam, huh?"

"A veteran. Right."

She flipped over the book and frowned, then looked at him. "You're better looking than your picture."

"Thank you."

He looked at her face to see if anything crawled beneath the question, sarcasm or seduction or indifference. Apparently none of those, only truth as she saw it. He tried to think of the last time a woman had told him he was good-looking. He hadn't come up with an answer by the time he realized that wasn't precisely what she'd said.

"I haven't read any of your books," she said, blinking an apology. "Which one do you think I should start with?"

"Well, *Graven Image* was the first. Maybe that would be good. It kind of introduces the detective."

"What's his name?"

"Charles Evans Danner."

She nodded as though it meant something. "What's *Death Sled* about?"

He was amazed. She actually knew his early books. Which meant she actually must have seen people reading his work. He was elated, never himself having seen his books being read, or even sold, in airports.

"*Death Sled's* got a pretty good plot, I think. Kind of tricky. You might like it."

"How about this one?" She held up the one he had agreed to huckster.

"Oh, you don't want to start with that."

"Why not?"

"It costs fifteen bucks. No one in their right mind pays fifteen bucks for a detective novel. As my royalty statements prove conclusively."

Momentarily he considered giving the girl a book, a token of the cheer she would never know she'd brought him. But then he would have to go find Kay, and pay for it, and listen to her observe how few books he'd sold. Too easily, he suppressed his charity.

The girl was still looking at the book. "Well, you're a nice person, so I'd buy one if I could, but I can't, I got one more entry fee to pay."

He raised his brows. "Entry fee for what?"

"Rodeo."

"You're kidding."

She shook her head. "I'm a calf roper. Back home, when I'm between flights, I go out on the women's circuit. I'm in second place right now. There's one event to go. If I win, I win the championship."

"That's great. Have you got a horse?"

"Sure."

"What's his name?"

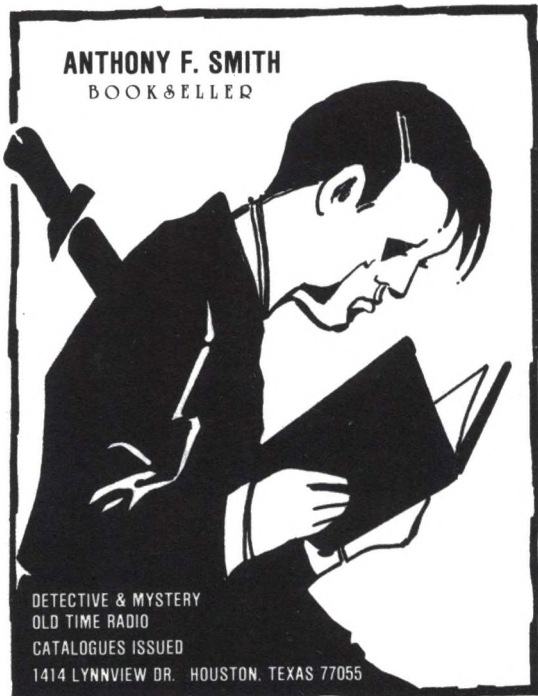
"Starsky."

"From Starsky and Hutch."

She shrugged. "I guess. I didn't name him."

"You must be a good roper."

"I got to get better." Her eyes narrowed, fierce with dark determination. "I'm going to a roping academy when I get back, to try to get my loop to lay out better."



"So you rope them, and throw them down, and tie them with those. . ."

"Pigging strings. Right."

"Just like on TV."

"Yep. I got the record at Austin. Eight seconds."

"Great. That's just great. I'm amazed. And impressed."

"Well, rodeo's like most things, I reckon. If you want to do it you can."

"Have you ever been hurt?"

"Not yet. Not bad, anyway. Been kicked a few times. One little heifer caught me right in the crotch. Give me a discharge that could clean your oven."

"Once a week. Lay over a night, then go back."

"Did you just get in?"

"Nope. Got a flight out at four." She looked at her watch. "Guess I better get back to the hotel and change." She raised a foot and inspected it. "Sure wish they'd let me wear boots in the air."

"Where are you staying?"

She named the hotel he had slept in the night before, the one he would have slept in a second night had the girl been laying over.

She stood up. "Well, I got a plane to catch. Hope you sell a whole bunch of books, Mr. Howell."

"Thanks."

None of the shoppers seemed to pay him any attention; no one seemed to have to walk his way except to visit a restroom.

He laughed as much at her candor as her metaphor. "How often do you come out here?" he asked.

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"Good. Say. What's your name? So if I'm ever around a rodeo I'll know who to cheer for."

"Really?"

"Sure. I mean, a book about a woman rodeo rider sounds kind of interesting. So maybe I'll do some research and come see you rope some day."

"Hey. That'd be great. I'm Vicki. Vicki Wilson. So maybe I'll be seeing you, Mr. Howell."

"I hope so."

"Me, too."

"And I hope you win the championship."

She waved and went away, leaving him giddy. Despite his girth and years she had seemed absorbed by him, had declared him attractive, had known his work, had been enchanting herself, had even implied, well, he didn't know what, exactly, but he chose to believe it was something he could dream about without restriction. He caught himself in the mirror once again, this time grinning like a simpleton.

Still soaring with importance, he looked down at his book. Something about it caught his eye, and quickly erased his mood. She hadn't known his work at all; she'd just read the old titles on the cover of the new one. "From the author of *Graven Image* and *Death Sled*." Another con. She was a stewardess, after all, trained to make men feel supreme when they were in fact despised. He gulped at his coffee, swallowing before he realized the dregs were as cold as women's hearts.

He sat alone, only his mirrored clone for company. Minutes lingered to spite him. From the women who

hurried past his post the clues to fashion seemed to be padded shoulders, elastic cuffs, miniskirts with tights, patent-leather pumps, ponytails emerging from the sides of heads. He swore at them silently, the women to whom none of the world's rules applied, wondered if they were ashamed of accumulating such pointless finery, such redundant baubles, then wondered at his own morality for suggesting they acquire an even less essential chattel.

No one was going to buy a book. He had known it all along, but now he even urged it. He laughed. It would make a great story, a suitably humiliating experience to relate to the people back home, especially to those convinced his life was halcyon and undeserving. To them the day would be his due, as it had become to him as well. Still, he had been tricked. Maybe he should steal some books, a dozen or so, dare them to come after him. He laughed again, and someone heard him.

"Are you Mister Howell?"

He admitted it. The man was sporty, sloppy, out of place in the precise plushness of the store.

"I enjoy your work."

"Thank you."

"I didn't know you were in town. Was it publicized?"

"I don't think so."

"I sure didn't see anything." The man glanced at the rows of unbought books and shifted uneasily. "I'd buy a book but I already own it. If I'd seen something in the paper I'd at least have brought it down for an autograph. I really do like your work. Hope you've sold a lot." He raised a brow.

"Some."

"They should advertise your stuff more. I mean your publisher. You're way better than Ludlum and those guys."

"Thanks, but I'm not sure advertising sells books."

"No? Then what does?"

"I don't know. I don't think anyone else does, either. Except maybe Ludlum and those guys."

The young man shrugged. "Well, I got to run; I just ducked in to go to the john." He walked away and then called back. "Take care. And keep writing. I'm waiting for the next one."

He sat back down, relieved that there had been if not a ton at least that one. Unbidden, the coffee girl brought a second cup but refused his quarter. "You should get *something* out of this," she said before returning to her tray, her expression now ecclesiastical. By the time he was finished with the coffee, more than half his time was up.

"Did you write that book?"

A couple this time, a very young man, a boy in fact, and an older woman, the latter Oriental, the former not. He stood and shook hands with the boy and bowed to the woman. He expected the boy to introduce himself and his companion but instead he

made an announcement: "I'm a writer myself."

"Really? What kind of things?"

The boy had heard and answered the question many times, though not enough to abhor it. "Modern fantasy. I write about animals, mostly. Jungle types. My stuff is kind of like children's stories, I guess, but it's really not. I mean, I deal with real fundamental issues, you know? Jealousy. Betrayal. Psychic slavery. Pollution."

"Fantasy's real popular right now, I hear."

"What's your stuff?"

"Detective stories."

"Yeah? Like who?"

"Oh, Chandler. Hammett. People like that. Only not as good."

"Yeah? Hammett. *The Maltese Falcon*, right?"

"Right."

"Yeah. Hey. You know what I do?" The boy's eyes glowed as though his face had become a game. The tiny woman stared at him in awe or incredulity.

"What?"

"I appeal to all five senses when I write. You know, feel, smell, see, hear, and, uh, whatever the other one is. What I do is, before I start to write something I go over to the spice cabinet—I've got this real extensive spice collection—and I pick one out. You know, like oregano or something, and I open it and smell it for

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about ten minutes and then I start to write. And I try to capture that smell in the story, you know? To engage the whole person? I do some real incredible things, sometimes."

"Sounds like quite a system."

"You do anything like that?"

He had known all along no one would buy a book; maybe he should steal some books and dare them to come after him.

"No, unless you count listening to music."

"What kind of music?"

"Chamber, mostly."

"Yeah? Like who?"

"Mozart. Beethoven. Haydn."

"Mozart. *The Theme from Elvira Madigan*, right?"

"I don't know."

The young man glanced down at his companion. Who could she possibly be? Lover? Servant? Svangali? Muse? He conducted a modern fantasy of his own.

"Well, I got to go. Maybe I'll read your book some day."

"Good. And good luck with your writing."

"Thanks. It's going real good right now. I just hope I can make enough money to get a word processor pretty soon. I've got all these ideas I got to get down. You use a computer?"

"Pen."

"Yeah?"

"Fountain, even."

The boy's interest shut down as though a wire were cut. "Well, I just hope I don't run out of time, that's all," the boy concluded heavily.

Or spice, he thought but didn't say. The couple walked away, the century's child followed by his still unexplained companion.

He picked up his notebook again, but another woman sat down beside him almost immediately, middle-aged and handsome, obviously thinking the

two of them occupied a decorator rest area. She pulled out a cigarette and match. As she looked for an ashtray she noticed the books, then turned and looked at the array on the shelves behind her. "Oh," she blurted. "I'm not supposed to be here, am I?" She stuffed the cigarette and match back into her purse and hurried off as though she wore a beeper.

He made more notes. The girls must be truly bad, the cult good, the changes wrought in the girl firmly for the better. Possible ending—the detective leaves her behind, tells the parents he couldn't find her, tells the guru to send her home when he thinks she's ready. He chewed the end of the pen, trying to sharpen the focus of the plot, to construct complexity that would mimic life.

"Hi," they said in unison, one blonde and pretty, the other dark and plain. "You're the author, right?" The dark one eyed him oddly.

"Right."

"Are you selling lots of books?"

"Not lots. What do you ladies do?"

"We work here."

"What department?"

The dark one pointed at the other. "She's on the floor. Sleepwear. I'm back in the caves. Data processing. How long are you going to be here?"

He looked at his watch. "Another half hour."

She looked at her watch, too. "Well, I have to go to lunch, but I may buy a book if I get back in time. My dad reads mysteries, I think. Mickey Spillane? That's what these are, aren't they?"

He nodded. "Detecting the Clues to Fashion."

They both smiled. "Dumb, huh."

He shrugged and glanced at the blonde to see if she was interested or bored. She gave no sign of being either, had found herself in the mirror and seemed impressed.

"Is there much money in writing mysteries?" the dark one asked, then laughed. "I shouldn't ask that, should I?"

He grinned. "A few writers make a lot—John D. MacDonald, Dick Francis, P. D. James—but the rest of us just plod along and hope for some kind of breakthrough. It's pretty much feast or famine."

"What kind of breakthrough?"

"I don't know. A movie, I guess. TV."

"Well, I hope you sell a lot of books today."

"Thanks."

"Did you hear your name over the PA?"

"Yep."

The blonde spoke. "Did you like that?"

"No."

"I didn't think you would. Well, 'bye."

"'Bye."

"'Bye."

They hurried off toward lunch. "Slayton's



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Shoppers, don't forget to greet our guest, Stephen Howell, the mystery writer, who is visiting us today in the escalator well on the Lower Level, near the coffee tray."

Please don't, he almost said. Please leave me the hell alone.

The coffee girl peeked his way again. "The home stretch. You going to make it?"

"If my food holds out. And if the cavalry comes over the hill."

"Do you do this very often?"

birthday next week. Would he enjoy this?"

"How old?"

"Nineteen."

"Is he, ah, sensitive?"

"My goodness. Do you mean gay?"

He reddened. "No, no, I mean, would he be offended by swear words or sex scenes or the like?"

She shrugged. "He's a normal young man, or so I'm told, so I assume the answer is no. Though perhaps a normal young man *should* be offended by such matters. What do you think?"

"I'm going to buy one," the woman said. He found himself trying to frighten her away. "Are you sure? They're expensive."

"No. Thank God."

She laughed and scooted back to her tray. He glanced at the mirror again. Who on earth would read a word that man had written? Who on earth would care what was on his mind?

A woman joined him in the mirror. She was old, seventy he guessed, but sprightly, alert, and amused. He turned to face her. She wore furs and carried packages wrapped in metallic paper, clearly a woman for whom the store existed. "Good afternoon, young man."

"Hello."

"May I sit down?"

"Certainly."

She arranged herself carefully, unhurried, unembarrassed, as though there were a single way to sit. "Are you the author of this book?"

"I'm afraid so."

"I heard the announcement."

"Yes."

They shared a smile. She looked at the shelves behind her. "Have you sold many?"

"No. Not many."

"Any?" Ifimps grew old, her look was impish.

Truth danced dangerously out of reach. "About as many as I expected."

She nodded. "I see. What kind of book?"

"Detective."

"A bit strange, isn't it? For here?"

"Store theme. 'Detecting the Clues to Fashion,' and all that."

"Ah."

"Ah."

She picked up the book. "I have a grandson with a

"I think not."

"Of course you do. Do you live in town?"

"No." He named his home.

"I haven't read anything up here about you. Or have I missed something?"

He shook his head. "The *Post* hasn't discovered me yet."

"Does that upset you?"

"No."

"Don't you want to sell books?"

"Sure, but in my experience appearing in the papers has little to do with it."

"Then what does?"

"I don't know."

"Some very poor books seem to be bestsellers these days."

"I would agree, except lots of people put my books in the same category."

"Why? Are they bad?"

"No, but they're genre. To some that means bad by definition. Or popular, which is even worse."

"I'm going to buy one," the woman said abruptly.

His heart jumped, as though she had made a threat. He had undergone a metamorphosis, was so committed to failure his peace of mind was dependent on the stock of books remaining undiminished. He found himself trying to frighten her away. "Are you sure? They're expensive."

"I'm not poor, Mr. Howell. Would you sign it? To Roger?"

"Sure, but you don't need to do me a favor or anything. I mean..."

"Nonsense. An autographed book is a wonderful gift. Would you? Please? Surely you're not going to refuse a sale, young man."

She shoved a volume toward him along with her heavy sarcasm. He took it with reluctance, knowing the story he had been framing in his mind, the one that precisely caught the day, would vanish with his autograph.

He took the book and wrote, 'To Roger, Happy Birthday.' And signed his name. The woman deserved a more original phrase, as doubtlessly did Roger, but he was too wounded to provide it. He returned the book.

"I think I'm going to buy another. This one is for Carolyn."

"Is that you?"

"Yes."

She reached back toward the shelf and took the nearest copy and gave it to him. He wrote, 'To Carolyn, who brightened my life one dark October day. With thanks and best wishes. Stephen Howell.' He handed it to her.

She read the inscription and smiled. "Thank you. I have one signed by Scott Fitzgerald. I knew him slightly. I'll put yours right beside it."

He had an urge to kiss her.

She stood up suddenly, gathered her packages and her books, and looked down at him. "I wish you well, young man."

"Thank you. You, too."

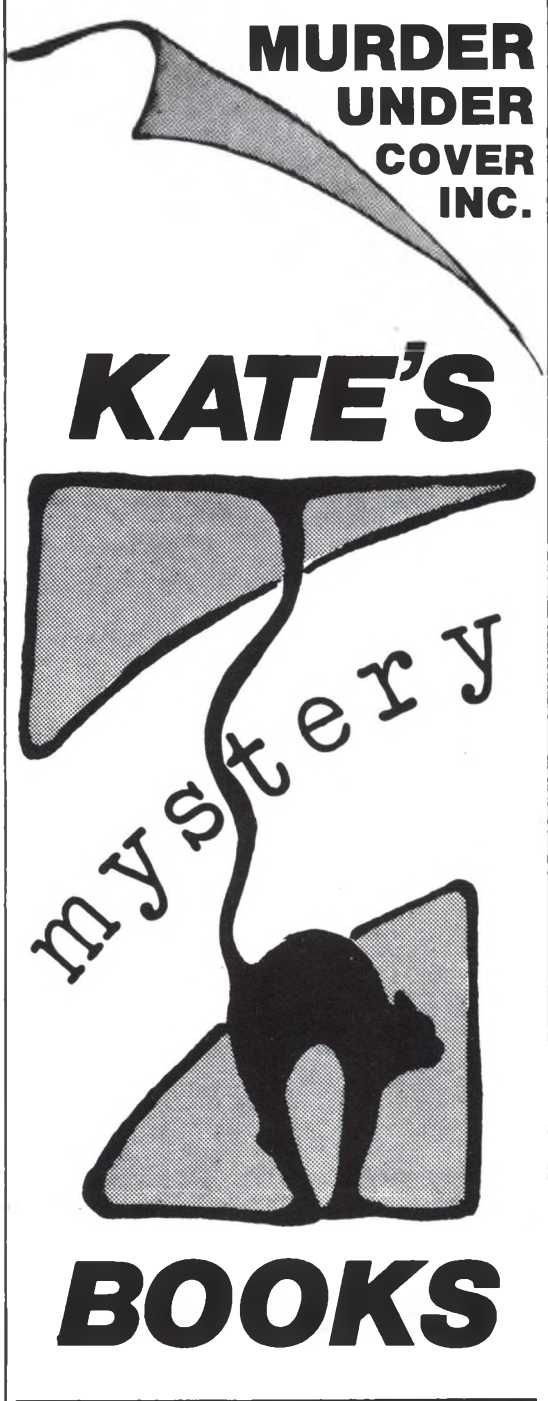
"Oh, I no longer need good wishes; I only need a quick and painless death." She grinned and years escaped her face. "But only when the time comes. Good day, Mr. Howell."

"Good day. And thanks."

She left the escalator well and, moments later, the store as well, her mink coat vanishing high atop the mirror across from him. Momentarily, he experienced a vague deflation, until he realized she had forgotten to pay for the books.

**She read the inscription and smiled.
"I have one signed by Scott Fitzgerald.
I'll put yours right beside it."**

He whistled a tune as he looked at his watch and confirmed that he could put away his notebook and his pen. Smiling at the world, he blew a kiss at the coffee girl and left the store himself, bearing that most coveted of gifts, the last thing he had expected the day to yield, a tale he could tell forever. □



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Book Reviews

General

Impersonal Attractions by Sarah Shankman. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. \$14.95

Impersonal Attractions is a gallant first try by Sarah Shankman in which two very modern women seek husbands and lovers in contemporary, swinging San Francisco. This "Cartland Romance" part of the story is upbeat, urban, and bright. There is a feeling of authenticity as our co-protagonists eat at a number of hip restaurants, sail the bay, imbibe at hot spots (or don't; one of our heroines is a reformed lush), and, somehow, also go about their work from time to time. (Actually, it's difficult to believe that they are the writers we are told they are. They certainly don't earn a living at it!) Unfortunately, the other part of the story, the serial murderer, never seems to mesh with the main business: the love search. There is no detection and precious little mystery anywhere in the book, and, despite quite graphic scenes of violence, the "mystery" element is contrived and obvious. Add to this several scenes that have nothing to do with either the romance or the crime, and you have a very unsuccessful mystery debut. Sarah Shankman does have a good ear, and the Yuppie dialogue bubbles along. That's just not enough to make *Impersonal Attractions* fly.

— Jay Kogan

The Gemini Man by Susan Kelly. New York: Walker, 1985. \$14.95

Liz Collins is a 33-year-old Cambridge,

Massachusetts apartment dweller and dog owner who finds the murdered, raped body of a neighbor. Therefore, Liz adds "amateur detective" to her résumé's entries of "freelance writer" and "ex-professor of English."

Liz has two things going for her in her new avocation: the detective-lieutenant on the case is her lover, and Jack Lingemann has no ethical concept about keeping police business to himself. He tells all. Liz follows up on this information. Fortunately, if after the fact, she receives a writing assignment which justifies her activities. As the murderer develops into a serial killer, Liz and Jack compare notes and psychoanalytical theories. Between their meetings, Liz lets the dog in and out and utters undelated expletives when her building's door is found ajar again.

The plot of *The Gemini Man* is familiar. No surprises here. The reader easily deduces who had a meany for a mommy. Liz has some trouble with this, but, then, she's a bit naive. Even as all about her violence is erupting, she never suspects the potential of personal danger. Ah, but then, she does have Jack's strong shoulder to lean on. . .

Liz Collins is unbelievable in her first outing as an amateur detective. And she is strapped in the seat of a vehicle locked in low gear.

— Pat Fickes

* * * * *

Epitaph for a Lobbyist by R. B. Dominic. Toronto: Paper Jacks, 1986. \$2.95

Originally published in 1974, *Epitaph for a Lobbyist* is the work of Martha Hennissart and Mary Jane Latsis, authors of the Emma Lathen series. This is a genteel mystery about murder and politics in Washington, D.C. Congressman Benton Safford (D-Ohio) must chair a Congressional hearing into the Knapp Affair. Shirley Knapp is a high-powered lobbyist for the oil industry. According to the *Washington Post*, she gave a \$50,000 bribe to somebody on a House subcommittee just before it voted down an anti-pollution bill which was unpopular with the oil interests. Which Congressman took the bribe?

After Mrs. Knapp is killed, the police come bumbling in and suspects begin to pile up. There is the nineteen-year-old daughter, Alison Knapp, who leaked the evidence of the bribe to the *Post*. Why does she take off for Europe? Knapp's secretary, Barbara Underwood, suspiciously tries to infiltrate Congressional offices, where she is looking for documents to filch. Knapp's boss, John Carrington, is a big shooter and smooth operator from Texas. He is made-to-order for the role of the Corruptor of Government. Is he behind it all? The three possibles among

the Congressmen who have voted against the bill posture and harumph the way we like to think politicians do. And, as if that were not suspicious enough, all three appear to have had urgent business someplace where there are no witnesses just at alibi time.

The narrative proceeds in a slow, stately manner which makes few demands on the reader. How does Ben Safford walk? He walks "cupping Elsie's elbow." How do characters speak their lines? The speak them "repressively," "pompously," or "snarlingly"; sometimes "emboldened with absolute certainty," and at other times while "cocking an ear." No cinematic tricks detract from the straightforward progress of the story. There is a bare minimum of violence. *Epitaph* is a nice, soothing whodunit without a forceful central character relentlessly tracking the killer. Indeed, part of the mystery to the reader is who is going to emerge as the sleuth, Safford or the victim's husband, Charlie?

Some reviewers of the original 1974 Doubleday edition thought that *Epitaph* gave readers an inside look at power brokering in Washington. In fact, the mystery never takes the reader into anything that could not be found in any posh drawing room during the Golden Age of detective fiction. For a work published during the Watergate period, the politics are pretty tame, reassuring even. Most everybody behaves rather well on the whole. Good manners, common sense, and restraint lead to a solution without any messy aftermath. Congress is vindicated. The system works.

— Robert Sandels

* * * * *

Ratings Are Murder by R. R. Irvine. New York: Walker, 1985. \$13.95

Bob Christopher is a compassionate investigative reporter on a Los Angeles TV station (ABN) where disaster means business, literally. If tornados touch down, or if torrential rains advance on the area, or if flooding occurs, Christopher is likely to ask, "Any houses threatened?" and the news director is just as likely to answer, "Not yet, but I have high hopes." Car wrecks, bombings, or air disasters rate similar responses. For Christopher, getting the news "live and in color" turns grisly and personal when the studio cleaning woman, Irma O'Donnell, is murdered on studio property after she has, in effect, fixated on Christopher, confusing him with St. Christopher, as the only one who can intercede for her and help her in her efforts to re-canonicalize that patron saint of travelers: "For a moment, he didn't know what she meant. Then he remembered that the Catholic church had withdrawn Christopher's

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sainthood sometime during the sixties. He couldn't recall why." Irma, a former actress fallen on hard times, confides that she has been routinely seeing visions of St. Christopher and has been "getting regular bonuses—from the station," and, after her death, Christopher is faced with a list of possible suspects as loony as the request that drew him into the case in the first place.

As likely suspects, the reader has the game-show host, Bill Bowzer, and the costumed participants of his *Wheeler-Dealers* program that follows the nightly news; then the technical building shift supervisor, Fat Jack; then the quirky tape editor who loves pornography, Bingo Bradford; Robin, a young up-and-up producer "so well dressed that she radiated ambition enough to kill a Geiger counter"; a shop steward named Kraut; even a runaway ambulance from the set of *Emergency Hospital*, which also films at Channel 3; Susan, an actress, "a blond, blue-eyed sex symbol to everyone addicted to afternoon television," whom Christopher relentlessly pursues and nearly beds—except that a family of raccoons in his attic decides to fall through the roof during his off-camera seduction scene; and the whole upper management that has been turned slightly crazy by "sweeps week," which is when "the rating services canvass the entire country three times a year," with the result that a ratings booklet "determines the price of the station's commercials for the next year." Ratings are indeed murder, and Chris-

topher's task is to determine what Irma knew about whom and when and why.

Ratings Are Murder deliberately reads as crazy as the *milieu* Irvine describes. From the moment the reader falls into the text, where costumed bandits and chickens, attempting to land spots on Bowzer's show, are threatening Christopher as he tries to get into the studio for his newscast, through the bizarre dealings with narcissistic and greedy television industry types, the reader is drawn into a soap opera plot involving impersonation of nuns ("Hell, watching the soaps could turn any brain to mush"), disaster-hungry TV crews, and executives who fear they will be shipped off to Pocatello. Christopher, as "the one man who never lets his on-camera ego get in the way of a story," is the man in the white hat, but, with so many suspects wearing so many different costumes, it is difficult to spot the murderer until the close, in part because of the *milieu* but in part because of Irvine's writing style, which is as slippery as the industry he spoofs.

—Susan L. Clark

• • • • •

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

A field investigator for CATCH, the Committee for Analysis of Tropospheric and Celestial Happenings, is sent to Fox Prairie, Minnesota to check on a UFO sighting. Is it a genuine find, justifying that information be forwarded to good old Prunella Watson, the

founder of CATCH, at her Boston headquarters? Or is it an elaborate hoax which leads to the murder of an arrogant member of the field investigation team? Of course, a murder does occur, and the result is an extensive investigation that takes our hero far beyond the simple arrival of a UFO.

J. J. (Joe for short) Jamison, the field investigator for CATCH, and his wife form a solid husband-and-wife team who are able to balance one another with skills, talents, and effective dialogue. Based in Minneapolis, Jamison pursues his work for CATCH as a sideline, but here it becomes a full-time pursuit. It's really a family effort, with lots of attention to detail, with its share of fun and amusement, and with the addition of some interesting supporting characters.

This book is L. A. Taylor's third effort using the friendly CATCH investigator. The first two were *Only Half a Hoax* and *Deadly Objectives*. I plan to seek them out. I'm hooked.

—Dustin A. Peters

• • • • •

Penny Ferry by Rick Boyer. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984. \$13.95

This is Rick Boyer's second Doc Adams book. Doc Adams is an oral surgeon from Concord, Massachusetts who just happens to get involved in murders. Thanks to him, New England is fast becoming the hottest mystery locale since Southern California.

Doc is an unabashed hedonist who likes fine food, good booze, and pretty women. His wife Mary keeps him in line where the pretty women are concerned. His brother-in-law, Boston police detective Joe Brindelli, helps him with his crime-solving.

This time, Doc and Joe go to see why an expensive piece of dental work was not delivered by the usually reliable Johnny Robinson. They find that the well-armed Johnny and his two attack dogs have been ambushed and murdered in a Johnny's apartment. The killer did not make a clean getaway, though. Two of the killer's fingers are found in the mouth of one of the attack dogs. Soon after, another corpse is found, this time in the chimney of an abandoned factory. The unidentified man is missing two fingers.

A check of Johnny's records shows that he was also supposed to deliver some documents concerning the Sacco and Vanzetti trial. The documents and the expensive dental work are both missing. The trail soon leads to the mob, politics, and Boston's history. Doc's investigation shows him that Sacco-Vanzetti is still affecting Boston, and that he and Mary are now in danger.

I found this to be an even better story than Boyer's Edgar-winning first Doc Adams novel, *Billingsgate Shoal*. The background on the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, and its effect even now on the city and people of Boston, was particularly interesting.

If I have any problem at all with the Doc Adams mysteries, it is a small one. He is

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bashed in the head and knocked out in both books. If there is any one convention in mysteries I have grown tired of, it's the hero being knocked out in every book, but this is a personal prejudice, and a small quibble at that. All in all, *Penny Ferry* is a satisfying mystery enriched with a strong sense of its locale.

—Ron Tatar

• • • • •
Monsieur Pamplemousse and the Secret Mission by Michael Bond. New York: Beaufort, 1986. \$13.95

Mysteries dealing with specialized subjects usually fall into one of two categories: those that educate the reader who is not knowledgeable in the subject and those that require the reader to already know something about the subject. This novel falls into the second category. Michael Bond's book, the second in the series, is labeled "a gastronomic mystery." Monsieur Pamplemousse is a critic for *Le Guide*, a French magazine dealing with the arts of cooking and eating. The reader who is unfamiliar with either gourmet cooking or the French language will probably not enjoy this story as much as those who are versed in these areas.

Monsieur Pamplemousse is given a mission by the Director of the magazine. The Director's aunt has asked that her hotel be given a mention in *Le Guide*. The trouble is that, according to all reports, the quality of the food is remarkably bad and the previous critic who was evaluating the hotel was charged with lewd behavior while staying there. So Pamplemousse and his bloodhound, Pomme Frites, set out to discover and correct the problem and save the Director from national embarrassment. What follows is a lighthearted story emphasizing the humor of the characters and situations rather than the elements of mystery.

I found the novel difficult to enjoy because of the constant use of culinary terms with which I am not familiar. Each time I came upon one of these terms, my concentration would break as I tried to learn from the context (often unsuccessfully) what it meant. The same was true of the constant use of French words. This was especially bothersome in the dialogue. It is a standard convention that when characters speak in a foreign language, the author indicates this and the reader understands that what he is reading is an English translation. What is not conventional is to have foreign words and phrases scattered throughout the conversation as though the speakers were using a pidgin language. I suppose this was done to give the reader the feeling of French culture, but for me it was distracting to the point of ruining whatever mood the narration had developed.

The reader who enjoys animals will be interested in the treatment of Pomme Frites, the bloodhound. Often when people watch dogs they can easily imagine them having human thoughts and motivations. Pomme Frites is given this sort of personality, and the reader is privy to the reasoning of the canine. His behavior is consistent with that of most pets, but the anthropomorphizing of his

"thoughts" may bother some readers.

In conclusion, the style of the book seems to be much more important than plot or characters in determining whether the reader will enjoy it. Instead of reading the last chapter to find out "whodunit," the reader should check out the first chapter to find out "whyreadit."

Jim Huntamer

• • • • •
Acrostic Mysteries by Henry Slesar. New York: Avon, 1985. \$4.95

This book has forty stories of the "minute mystery" type, leaving the solution to the reader, as usual. Unlike the traditional minute mystery, however, the reader is not left without further resources. For appended to each story is an acrostic puzzle, the solution of which provides the solution to the mystery. Thus one has the enjoyment of trying to figure out the mystery as well as solving the acrostic.

Anyone who has read many of the short mystery puzzles that have appeared in a number of publications is probably tired of seeing the same old clues in new guises. That is *not* the case here. The stories are new, and the clues, in general, are unlike those in previous puzzles of this type. The puzzles are generally more difficult (and some are probably impossible), but that is compensated for by the fact that the reader has another way of figuring them out.

The acrostic puzzles are not of great difficulty, although purists may object to some lowering of acrostical standards. (For the one reader who is not familiar with acrostics, let me explain that such a puzzle consists of a diagram of numbered squares to be filled in with letters. The letters are obtained by answering questions with words or phrases, each letter of which is placed on a short, numbered line segment. The letter on each line segment is placed in the square having the same number as its line segment. When completed, the diagram contains a message or quotation, and the first letters of the answers spell out another message—in this book, the title of the story to which the acrostic is appended.) The author did not use much esoterica in the question part of the puzzles. Further, the recurrence of certain words in each of the quotations as well as the fact that the quotations are colloquial rather than literary simplifies the solutions and makes them fun rather than work.

—Marvin P. Epstein

• • • • •
Intimate Kill by Margaret Yorke. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. \$12.95

Any convicted murderer re-entering society is going to face problems, but, when the felon is released by the fine hand of Margaret Yorke, the reader can be assured of a path strewn with emotional, psychological, and practical difficulties. Stephen Dawes has been convicted for the murder of his wife—motive, a pregnant mistress. When he is released on parole after serving ten years of a life sentence, he is a man searching—for his

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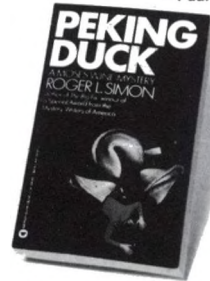
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former mistress, the child he has never seen, the true facts of the crime he claims he did not commit, and his own emotions.

Margaret Yorke is a master at the crafting of characters. The reader feels how it is to have lived confined, with every action controlled by others. Stephen Dawes leaves prison a tentative man who can barely look directly at a store clerk and who hesitantly begins his search. How will he react when he finds what he is searching for? Will he strangle his ex-mistress when he learns she has married, or will he kidnap his daughter? What really happened to Marcia Dawes ten years before, and what will happen when Dawes uncovers something he never anticipated? Both Stephen Dawes and the suspense develop into a very surprising ending.

Intimate Kill moves quietly but firmly ahead through small towns of the gentle English countryside. Written with skill compounded with grace, *Intimate Kill* is an absorbing tale of suspense.

—Lynda Painton

Cozy

Murder, She Wrote #3: Lovers and Other Killers by James Anderson. New York: Avon, 1986. \$2.95

The highly successful television series *Murder, She Wrote* capitalizes on the considerable talents of Angela Lansbury, who portrays mystery writer-sleuth Jessica Fletcher. To watch Lansbury is indeed a pleasure, and, obviously, to merely read a novelization of Jessica Fletcher's exploits is to lose many delicious moments of acting. Ardent fans of the show, however, will appreciate this novelization for its amplification of Mrs. Fletcher's feelings and thought processes.

The novel is based on two episodes: "Lovers and Other Killers" and "It's a Dog's Life." The stories are connected only by the fact that Jessica appears in them both; the plots are completely independent of each other. In "Lovers," the writer is a guest

lecturer at a university in Seattle, where she delivers a spirited monologue on the relevance of the mystery tale which is sure to endear her to every mystery reader's heart. She also, of course, becomes involved in a murder case. At one point during the investigation, she acts apparently irrationally by going to an abandoned warehouse to keep an appointment with an unknown person who has contacted her by phone. Her motivation, to the credit of author James Anderson, is explained in an interior monologue: "[But] for the first time she realized why the protagonist of a mystery story really couldn't be allowed to turn down such an invitation. It was a dare, a challenge. You could never afterward feel quite the same about someone who backed down. And you could never feel quite the same if you backed down."

This explanation of Jessica's motives supplies the reader with a knowledge of her character that would have only been possible on television through dialogue with another character or loathsome voice-over narration. Wisely, teleplay writer Peter S. Fischer opted for neither, relying instead on the viewer's willingness to ignore the character's seeming lack of good sense.

After successfully finding the murderer in the halls of academe, Mrs. Fletcher is off to Kentucky to visit a relative and get in a little fox-hunting. This story, based on a teleplay by Mark Giles and Linda Shank, is remarkable in its use of a beagle as an accessory to crime. The dog is crucial to the plot, and Jessica finds him quite useful in sniffing out the killer. In this story too, the reader is able to enter into Jessica's thoughts and to learn about her understandable qualms concerning the lack of concrete evidence against the person she is sure is the murderer.

It is such enhancement of Jessica Fletcher's character that makes this novelization more than a mere rehash of television plots. Nothing can replace Angela Lansbury's vitality, but, if a fan of the television series seeks more insight into the inner workings of Mrs. Fletcher's mind, then this book is a pleasant companion piece.

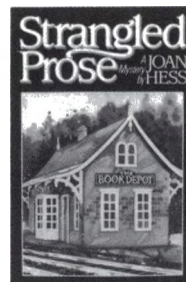
—Sheila Merritt

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Strangled Prose by Joan Hess. New York: St. Martin's, 1986. \$12.95

I came away from Joan Hess's novel *Strangled Prose* with mixed feelings about it.

It is a straightforward mystery told by the main character, Claire Malloy. Mrs. Malloy,



a college professor's widow, runs a bookstore in an old converted train depot in a small college town. The area of the country is not stated, but the book has a Midwestern feel to it.

Claire Malloy is persuaded, with some misgivings, to hold a book-signing party for Mildred Twiller, one of the faculty wives at the college, who as Azalea Twiligh writes romance novels known more for their sexual gymnastics than their literary merit.

The book *Professor of Passion* proves more than just fiction to certain members of the faculty, Claire included. During the party, one of the libeled parties bursts in and reads sections of it aloud. Several of the faculty guests see themselves through the thinly disguised characters in the book. In Claire's case, it is her late husband.

Mildred Twiller, alias Azalea, returns home after this unsettling experience and is later found strangled on her patio.

Claire Malloy, now a suspect, goes about clearing her own name while at the same time trying to find out who really did kill Mildred. She is aided and obstructed by Lieutenant Peter Rosen of the local police. The verbal brickbats fly between the two for the remaining three-quarters of the novel, right to the end and the capture of the murderer.

But there is a problem with the book. The witty and sarcastic comments by the characters sometimes get in the way of their personalities, which gives them a rather uniform appearance. Because of this, I found myself on occasion not caring if I found out whether Claire or anyone else killed Mildred. This is unfortunate when the story is written in the first person.

As a case in point, Britten Blake, one of the suspects and sometime love interest of Claire's, goes about quoting poetry and ends by giving the poet's birth and death dates. I also found Lieutenant Peter Rosen almost totally devoid of character. He seems to come in and out of the story as if on cue. He stands and takes Claire's insults, all the while smiling through a very good set of teeth.

Despite these problems, the book is well constructed and a good read. Hess's plotting

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cannot be faulted in this novel. The questions that I asked while reading, regarding plot, turn of events, and loose ends, were resolved at the end. If this is Hess's first venture into the mystery field, it is a good beginning.

—Gary A. Steffen

* * * * *

Fell of Dark by Reginald Hill. New York: Signet, 1986. \$2.95

This is an extremely unpleasant story of an innocent man who is unjustly, although understandably, accused of the rape and murder of two young women and who finds himself on the run with some vague intention of clearing his name and that of his friend. The book is replete with implausible and contrived circumstances and unsympathetic characters, which include the protagonist. More disturbing, however, is the overall misogyny that pervades the book. All the women characters are portrayed as bordering on nymphomania and all are inexplicably drawn to the central character, although he appears to have few redeeming or interesting characteristics. The women are also generally portrayed as bitchy, weak, or unnatural. Another disturbing element is the use of something as terrible and horrific as rape for its titillative and exploitative value. The story develops no new insights into the nature of the crime, and the author appears to have thrown it in merely for its own sake. Such a thoughtless and nonchalant treatment of the subject clearly shows the insensitivity and unconcern of the writer and trivializes the horrible reality of the crime. Aside from these elements, however, the book is rather interestingly written and moves at a good pace. Therefore, if the misogyny and the implausibility of the events and characters do not bother the reader, the book may be of some interest. For me, they presented insurmountable problems and left a depressing and unpleasant aftertaste.

—Lorrie K. Inagaki

* * * * *

The Case of the Missing Brontë by Robert Barnard. New York: Dell, 1986. \$3.50

It helps to have heard of the nineteenth-century Brontë sisters and their literary works when you read this engaging tale by Robert Barnard, but previous knowledge is not necessary to catch the sense of fun in the pages of *The Case of the Missing Brontë*.

Unexpected car trouble while returning from vacation lands C.I.D. Inspector Perry Trethowan and his wife Jan in a small village pub in Yorkshire. Settled in a quiet corner, the couple are accosted by a friendly retired schoolmistress who cheerfully relates her past history and problems. It seems that this good lady has inherited boxes of old family papers, including a closely written manuscript which may well be a lost novel of one of the Brontë sisters. Delighted by a perusal of one page of the manuscript, Trethowan advises Miss Wing to seek the advice of members of the English department at a nearby university. In doing so, Trethowan almost sends the lady to her death. When Miss Wing is severely

beaten and the manuscript stolen, Perry Trethowan takes up the trail of glory-seeking professors, avaricious scholars, and greedy American collectors.

The Case of the Missing Brontë is a giggler. It roars along, poking fun at everything from Midlands universities and loony librarians to cozy mysteries. Our hero navigates the plot with constant help from his wife Jan, who is forever phoning up with exactly the right clue. The action culminates in a rip-roaring, rough-and-tumble free-for-all involving five villains, an overflowing bath, and a handy staircase for falling down. Altogether an engaging and literate search for a missing manuscript which keeps the reader constantly amused.

—Lynda Painton

* * * * *

Bloody Instructions by Sara Woods. New York: Avon, 1986. \$2.95

Bloody Instructions, which introduces barrister Antony Maitland, is an extremely cerebral novel. There is little action after the murder occurs on page 6, and the courtroom sequence relies more on witty insights into the British judicial process than on dramatic tension. This is not a book of plot twists or exciting trial sequences that feature riveting testimony. It is, rather, a novel that relies heavily on characterization, scene-setting, and lots of dialogue.

The plentiful dialogue is sometimes quite amusing, especially between Antony and his lawyer uncle. More often than not, however, it has a labored quality which gives the

impression of plot padding. This impression is enhanced by the novel's very structure. Minimal time is spent on the actual murder. The bulk of the nearly two hundred pages dwells on Maitland's dialogues, while the requisite courtroom sequence is only sixteen pages in length. Clearly, author Sara Woods has chosen to de-emphasize dramatic potential in favor of creating a cozy English atmosphere.

The reader who prefers low-key atmosphere will find this Avon reprint of the 1962 novel pleasantly diverting. He who requires more vitality and venom should definitely look elsewhere.

—Sheila Merritt

Anthology

Sometimes They Bite by Lawrence Block. New York: Arbor House, 1983. \$14.50

Some authors handle short stories well but falter in novel-length works, and vice versa. This collection shows that Block handles both forms well.

The fan of Block's Bernie Rhodenbarr and Matthew Scudder will want to know that each appears in this collection. If you like Block's Martin Ehrengraff short stories, there are two here for you. Ehrengraff is a fascinating

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lawyer whose clients are always innocent. He never loses a case. How he does it is for you to decide.

The non-series stories are also well worth your consideration. They range from the mildly amusing to the chilling. There is one with a delightfully nasty solution to the problem of a terrorist. You will find a subtle little tale of macabre justice and a new twist on a psycho killer. The stories entertain and sometimes give you something to think about.

The collection contains eighteen stories. This is a good book for when you want to read a little before bedtime but not start a novel. The only problem I had was that I always read a couple more stories than I originally intended.

- Ron Tatar

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

Women sleuths have come a long way since the genteel amateurs such as Miss Marple, who just happen to be near the scene of the crime. Today's woman is a professional investigator licensed to carry a gun and expected to use it. The contrast is evident in this first volume of a new series of mystery novellas. Three of the novellas were written in the 1930s, with their heroines a society matron, a mystery writer, and a librarian, and the fourth story—set in 1985—features a modern female detective in the Lew Archer tradition who ponders life's small ironies as

she solves the mystery of her client—and herself.

So it is with Marcia Muller's San Francisco investigator Sharon McCone in "The Broken Men." Well known to Muller readers as the caring advocate protagonist in seven novels, McCone takes a job guarding two famous participants in a clown festival. She uncovers a homicide and a disappearance and eventually finds out the truth, particularly about "the shadow of a broken man" and more generally about the role of a clown—to make people take a look at their own foibles. Muller at her best!

Going backward in time to "The Toys of Death" by Margaret and G. D. H. Cole, the reader may be pleasantly amused by the style: "Good manners notwithstanding, Mrs. Warrender had much ado not to giggle at the exactitude with which Herdman's prophecy was fulfilled." Mrs. Warrender, a guest at an English seaside resort, must confront the puzzle of the murder of her host and the disappearance of his valued glass collection. The Coles were prolific writers who co-authored more than thirty "Golden Age" detective novels. They also published six volumes of short stories, in many of which the engaging Mrs. Warrender appears. If you like Agatha Christie, you'll like this.

Mignon Eberhart's "The Calico Dog" is a formal detective puzzler with clues skillfully scattered for the discerning reader. A wealthy but lonely Chicago widow has asked Susan Dare, the mystery writer, to help her determine which of two young men is her long lost son and heir. Susan perseveres and all the loose ends come together neatly at the

end. A delightful contribution by the timeless Eberhart.

A humble, bespectacled librarian named Prudence is the detective heroine of "The Book That Squealed" by Cornell Woolrich. Her interest in a missing page of a returned library book leads her to an escapade with kidnappers and a likely future romance with a policeman. Another classic puzzler which, like many of Woolrich's other works, would make a good movie.

The editors of the "Academy Mystery Novellas" series plan two new releases "each season or two." Among the mystery sub-genres to be featured are Private Eyes, Locked Room Puzzles, Humor and Homicide, and Tales of Suspense. With *Women Sleuths*, their Volume I, they have a good start.

- Lois Claus

Retrospective

Death Has a Past by Anita Boutell. New York: Putnam, 1939.

Death Has a Past is a masterpiece of the first magnitude, beautifully conceived and perfectly executed. Boutell melds suspense, exquisite in its development and intensity, into an extremely fine novel of modern manners, and she performs this feat without losing the essentials of detective fiction. This novel ought to be reprinted forthwith. It would also make a great TV miniseries.

The story concerns a gathering of six aristocratic English females for a traditional old home week at their family's country estate. "Emily's Week," it is called, in honor of the recently deceased matriarch of the family. The annual event is to be continued, it seems, by the would-be new matriarch, who has inherited all the money. The others come to heel because of course they all are in desperate need for a variety of reasons. This situation gives the heiress a chance to get even for years of real and imagined slights, and it provides a magnificent setting for a murder. The question is, who intends to kill whom?

It is highly unusual for a reader not to feel personal anxiety given well-carried-out suspense, but in this book Boutell achieves devastating suspense without that extraneous element. She also successfully blends in the love affair of a delightful young couple which, as it turns out, is essential to the story. Unreservedly recommended.


- T. J. Shamon.

Nonfiction

The Life and Times of Miss Jane Marple by Anne Hart. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1985. 178 pp. \$13.95

Jane Marple, Agatha Christie's spinster sleuth, is the subject of an affectionate tribute by Anne Hart, a librarian at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Hart must have

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spent many long Arctic nights scrutinizing the twelve novels and twenty short stories in which the tall, thin old maid, over a span of forty years, solved baffling crime cases.

The Life and Times of Miss Jane Marple begins with a 1935 tour of the village of St. Mary Mead, 25 miles south of London. It is here that Miss Marple's wit and ingenuity were cultivated. The mystery of Miss Wetherby's missing gill of shrimps, the case of Miss Hartnell's stolen opal pin, the affair of the churchwarden's separate establishment all prepare Miss Marple well for the wave of murders, robberies, and embezzlements that are to engulf St. Mary Mead for decades. "Very nasty things go on in a village," she once states. "One has an opportunity of studying things there that one would never have in town." No matter how sensational or complex a case might be, no matter how far away, Miss Marple's invariable practice is to hark back to parallel iniquities and scandals of her village.

Despite Miss Marple's first appearance as a detective at the age of 65 or thereabouts (*The Murder at the Vicarage*, 1930), the author pieces together something of her Victorian childhood and girlhood from clues she occasionally drops in conversation. Long hours in the schoolroom, many dos and don'ts ("When I was a girl, Inspector, nobody ever mentioned the word stomach"), visits to Madame Tussaud's, a finishing school in Florence.

In Miss Marple's early adventures, "she had on black lace mittens, and a black lace cap surmounted the piled-up masses of her snowy hair" (*The Tuesday Club Murders*, 1933). Years later, apparently giving in to changing modes, she is described as "wearing an old-fashioned tweed coat and skirt, a couple of scarves and a small felt hat with a bird's wing" (*A Pocketful of Rye*, 1953).

Miss Marple is a founding member of the Tuesday Club, a group of six friends assembled to tackle unsolved crimes (a forerunner of Isaac Asimov's Black Widowers). They take turns recounting mysteries from their own experiences for the others to decipher. It is Miss Marple who will ramble away about maids and desserts and country dances until there is laid before them the solution.

The "biography" depicts the village lore of the 1930s—the rivalries, the idiosyncrasies, the caste systems, long summer afternoons with the ladies at their tea and gossip, the young people at their tennis parties, the maids and errand-boys courting at the back doors.

And, as Miss Marple solves the unlamented end of Colonel Protheroe, slain by unknown hands in the vicar's study (*The Murder at the Vicarage*, 1930), another unexpected homicide in *The Body in the Library* (1942), and the nasty poison pen letters of *The Moving Finger* (1942), we get to know her circle of friends and neighbors. Among them are the jolly, pouncing Miss Hartnell and the gushing Miss Wetherby; her advisor, Dr. Haydock; the energetic Inspector Slack; Colonel Melchett, Chief Constable of the county; Raymond West, her nephew, who writes bestselling novels; Sir Henry Clither-

ing, a retired Scotland Yard Commissioner; and Jane Helier, the beautiful, not very deft, stage actress.

Following World War II, Miss Marple continues her sleuthing career in the extraordinary case of blackmail and mayhem depicted in *A Murder is Announced* (1950). The following advertisement in the local *Gazette* causes a stir: "A murder is announced and will take place on Friday, October 29th at Little Paddocks at 6:30 p.m. Friends please accept this, the only invitation." Just as announced, at exactly 6:30 p.m. of that fateful day, the lights in the drawing room go out on an inquisitive assemblage of callers, the door crashes open, revolver shots ring out, and the lights go on to reveal an unknown—and dead—young man.

The 1950s prove a splendid time for exercising Miss Marple's deductive talents—*Murder with Mirrors* (1952), in which she visits an old schoolfriend and gets embroiled in the deadly events that take place in an establishment for the rehabilitation of young criminals; *A Pocketful of Rye* (1953), in which she clashes with the killer of a pathetic parlormaid; *What Mrs. McGillicuddy Saw* (1957), which begins with the strangling of a woman in the first-class carriage of a train. At the conclusion of the latter's gruesome adventure, a tired Miss Marple declares, "I am really very, very sorry that they have abolished capital punishment."

More intricate cases follow—*The Mirror Crack'd from Side to Side* (1962), *A Caribbean Mystery* (1964), *At Bertram's Hotel* (1965), and *Nemesis* (1971), in which, we are told, "Miss Marple ends her recorded

life as a detective with great style." It is also the case in which her efforts earn her, at long last, a handsome fee. These four books tell us about the difficulties and frustrations of old age, and about Miss Marple's ever-increasing frailty, but they conclude on a triumphant note of pleasures yet to come.

The Life and Times of Miss Jane Marple analyses in detail the appearance, attire, and personality traits of the resilient investigator. It even dwells on her hairstyles, bronchitis attacks, religion, and a number of the indignities of extreme old age. There is a chapter dedicated to a minute description of her home, another one dealing with her successive maids. The only ingredient missing for a total picture is a critique of the screen and television appearances of Miss Marple.

Anne Hart has proven to be quite a detective herself in weaving together scattered clues from the works of Agatha Christie. One hopes that she will next tackle the *persona* of Miss Christie's other celebrated sleuth—Hercule Poirot.

—Amnon Kabatchnik

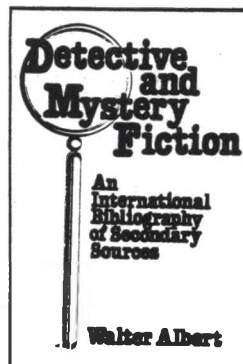
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Colin Wilson, the Bicameral Critic: Selected Shorter Writings edited by Howard F. Dosser. Salem, N.H.: Salem House, 1985. \$9.95

This is a selection of essays written by Wilson between 1960 and 1980, covering topics literary and/or philosophical. One gets nothing of Wilson the mystery writer, and there is little dealing strictly with the mystery genre, unless one argues that *Wuthering*



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--Kathleen L. Maio in *The Wilson Library Bulletin*

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Heights should be considered a Gothic. (And that essay deals more with Emily Bronte, really, just as the essay "Daniel Defoe and *Moll Flanders*" deals more with the author than the novel in the title.) The essay on Defoe may interest the reader who wants to know about crime in eighteenth-century London, while "Crimes of Freedom and Their Cure" deals in modern crime (which Wilson feels differs from earlier crime not so much in quantity but in motivation). Those interested in Wilson himself will find several autobiographical essays.

The book is an attractive paperback, though the typesetting is not faultless. The essays are thought-provoking and surprisingly readable even for a reviewer who has diligently ducked Heidegger, Nietzsche, Maslow, and the other thinkers frequently cited throughout the text. This argues writing skill of high caliber.

— Dan Crawford

• • • • •

The Medical Detectives, Volume II by Berton Roueche. New York: Washington Square Press, 1985. \$4.95

This is a collection of true stories from Berton Roueche's "Annals of Medicine" column in *The New Yorker*. They are printed here in chronological order, the first one a reprint from 1947, the last from 1984. A few

of the selections are followed by a brief author's note updating the information.

The reader who is familiar with Roueche's "medical procedurals" needs no introduction to this book: it is more of the same. For he who has not, the stories generally follow a pattern as follows: patient sees doctor and is diagnosed. Diagnosis proves incorrect. Medical detective work is required to find the real cause of the illness. Not all the stories in the collection follow this pattern exactly. Two articles, on placebos and on poison ivy, are primarily informational. Two more are chiefly horror stories: a nightmare encounter with amnesia and America's first case of killer smog.

But the remainder are detective stories, as indicated by the title of the collection, and calling them detective stories is more than just a nice analogy on the part of the publisher. Any sort of research could be termed detective work, but anyone familiar with the mystery *milieu* will find more than that to make one feel at home.

Readers of thrillers will find themselves caught up in "A Man from Mexico," as health inspectors work against time and public apathy to keep a smallpox epidemic from claiming six million potential victims in New York City. Those who prefer the private eye and slogging footwork through mean streets can go along in "A Pinch of Dust" as doctors roam the city to pick out the source of tetanus that seems to be specializing in heroin addicts (or they can read "The Fog" and dream they've gone back to Poisonville again). If a reader prefers police procedurals and long, dreary stints on the night desk down at the station, there is "The Most Delicate Thing in the World," in which the author sits in on an evening at a Poison Control Hotline.

There are, of course, obvious differences between these and the usual run of mystery stories. In only one selection does the culprit turn out to have been a human murderer. In all the rest, the villains are disease or infection, thieves and killers who cannot be imprisoned but who may be controlled. Victory is seldom complete, and, in one case, the culprit, though detected, goes free.

The book has some minor flaws. Was there a reason for including two tales of salmonellosis, and two of carbon monoxide poisoning? The duplicates are still interesting stories, but they do seem a bit redundant. And, as sometimes happens in the True Tales genre (it has been observed in the "true ghost story" field as well), one can become aware, if one reads half-a-dozen stories in one sitting, that all the speakers, regardless of background or education, talk the same way. (Of course, most of the characters with lengthy dialogue are doctors, and maybe they *do* all talk the same way.)

But these are slight imperfections, and they hardly mar the reading of a book which seems to live up to all the blurbs printed on the covers. The stories are engrossing. They are compelling. They rivet the interest and appeal to both the mystery fan and the hypochondriac lurking in every reader (I wonder if I don't have epidemic neuro-mysthenia; the symptoms are so delightfully

vague). And, most of all, they are marvelously humanizing, presenting the medical profession not as an almighty group of divine beings who nag you about your favorite foods, but as a dedicated, often harried, police force, tracking down the agents of death and debility that would otherwise prey on us at will.

— Dan Crawford

Espionage

The Double Man by William S. Cohen and Gary Hart. New York: Avon, 1986. \$3.95

Senators William S. Cohen and Gary Hart have written an impressive first novel. The plotting and characterization are deftly handled, and the ending is both surprising and satisfying.

The novel's hero is Tom Chandler, a Senator with Presidential ambitions. He is appointed to head a task force on terrorism which has been formed in response to an increase in terrorist activity, including the brutal murders of the Secretary of State's wife, daughter-in-law, and five-year-old grandchild. An anonymous tip linking the murders of the Secretary of State's family to the murder of an old Mafia man who once had contacts with the CIA eventually leads Chandler to suspect a connection among terrorism, an increase in drug traffic, the Mafia, the CIA, and the Kennedy assassination.

As Chandler begins to unravel the mystery, he places both his career and his life in jeopardy. The head of the CIA is spying on him, and he is threatened and beaten. He also begins to fall in love with Elaine Dunham, his beautiful, intelligent, and initially cold assistant, who has a secret of her own. During the course of his investigation, Chandler is periodically contacted by a mysterious man he calls Memory, who provides him with valuable, though often enigmatic, information, and warns him that there is "a snake in the tower," a reference to Auden's poem "The Double Man."

Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, KGB Colonel Cyril Metrinko, unbeknownst to his superiors, is waging a private war against the U.S. with terrorism as his weapon.

The Double Man is good enough to make the reader look forward to the next effort from Senators Cohen and Hart.

— David L. Myers

• • • • •

A Shroud for Aquarius by Max Allan Collins. New York: Walker, 1985. \$14.95

Collins is a scholar and self-professed fan of Mickey Spillane, but Spillane's contrivances rarely show up here. Instead, Collins's single-name protagonist, Mallory (a mystery writer, one of Collins's very few self-conscious touches), fits neatly into a '70s-derived sensitive-male role perhaps best typified by television's Jim Rockford. In fact, Collins's Mallory reminds me of no one so

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much as Rockford's occasional young-pup sidekick, Richie Brockelman (played by Dennis Dugan), mellowed and somewhat wiser in his thirties.

The action centers around the apparent suicide of a close childhood friend of Mallory's, Ginnie Mullens, and proceeds in a straightforward fashion from her death at the beginning of the novel. Ginnie is a woman with whom Mallory shared an intense, non-sexual relationship through their school years in Iowa during the '60s; picking up the threads of her life that led to death helps Mallory make sense of his own life. As Mallory pursues the possibility of murder, various figures from Ginnie's past emerge one by one to offer their alibis and betray their motives. The resolution is hardly surprising, but the steady pacing and Mallory's even-tempered observations and unpretentious eloquence propel the reader through. And it's a tidy package—no loose ends.

Though Collins's Mallory can trace his lineage back to the hardboiled dicks exemplified by Philip Marlowe and Mike Hammer, he more properly continues in a vein introduced by Ross Macdonald's Lew Archer, a vein pushed forward more recently by the adventures of Jim Rockford, Robert Parker's Spenser, and Stephen Greenleaf's John Marshall Tanner, among others. Perhaps "softboiled" may become the best term for this updated loner detective. Weaned on the '60s, he is a thoughtful, caring person able (more or less) to deal with his feelings—yet not so lost in himself that he cannot take action and solve a mystery. It's a fascinating development in the detective story, and the simple, affecting art of this novel guarantees that Collins is a writer worth watching.

— Jeff Pike

• • • • •
Swan Song by T. J. Binyon. New York: Tor, 1986. \$3.50

Vanya Morozov, a professor of English literature in Moscow, has lived the quiet life of an academic, until his old friend Alik, now a KGB man, casts him in the role of informer. Alik wants Vanya to find and talk to Lyuba Lebedva. Lyuba, who is both Vanya's and Alik's former lover, has become involved with a religious revival movement in the Vologda region. "All we need is some information about what's going on," Alik says, and he assures Vanya that Lyuba will be protected.

During his search for Lyuba, Vanya meets a seemingly flighty English novelist and a hardnosed American reporter. He also becomes re-acquainted with Tanya, another former lover who is now a famous movie director. Vanya eventually finds Lyuba (who has become "painfully gaunt" and calls Alik "an emissary of Antichrist"), and she arranges for him to meet Father Zakhar, a charismatic religious leader. Zakhar is plotting a return to the old days of Holy Russia. He tells Vanya: "Church and state will become one, the prophecies will have been fulfilled, and the glory that was *Rus* will return."

Vanya slowly comes to believe that he,

Lyuba, and Father Zakhar are "playing out a game which [is] only tangentially connected to some vaster and more dangerous struggle."

Of course, Vanya is right; there is a "vaster and more dangerous struggle." Unfortunately it's not very interesting. T. J. Binyon takes an intriguing premise and undercuts it with a slow-moving narrative. The characters are so one-dimensional that it is hard for the reader to care what happens to them. Since there is no empathy for the characters, the action scenes, which should crackle with excitement, are dull. And the book's portrayal of life in the Soviet Union, which could have been a real strong point, is no more revealing than ordinary newspaper and television accounts. *Swan Song* is a real disappointment.

— David L. Myers

• • • • •

The Murder Makers by John Rossiter. New York: Walker, 1985. \$2.95

Nothing distracts readers more, when they are reading a well-plotted mystery that involves fascinating characters, than horrendous grammatical mistakes of the sort I frequently find in mysteries I review—or choose not to review. When characters and plot are more stereotype and formula than original creations, and grammar errors loom on nearly every page, then I want to give the writer a good shaking and lynch the editor.

Such is the sad case of John Rossiter's *The Murder Makers*. The novel begins in a most promising manner, with an intriguing metaphor: "The sunlight ricocheted off the blue Mediterranean in sharp splinters." This is original, imaginative, and harsh enough to say much about the protagonist's view of the world. Yet the bulk of *The Murder Makers* is as disappointing as the first sentence is promising.

John Rossiter (a.k.a. Jonathan Ross, an ex-Detective Chief Superintendent who lives now in Wiltshire, England) fills the pages that follow with too many clichés: the wealthy playboy turned secret agent; the hush-hush government office ("Ministers can happily deny the existence of an office"); the seductive and mysterious blonde. Yes, the secret agent

is also a "long-retired Detective Inspector who inherited too much money to stay with the Flying Squad"—not a typical playboy. But Roger Tallis assumes such a role for this mission to entice the alluring blonde and so becomes a sort of James Bond, complete with superspy cynicism but without Bond's warmth or sense of humor.


Of the blonde, Ingrid Hansson, Roger himself observes that "She was so predictable I could have written the script for her." Alluring, Scandinavian (are all alluring blondes in thrillers Scandinavian?), fleeing a brutal husband, Ingrid makes a habit of beguiling gentlemen into smuggling drugs for her. She is seductive in a lost-lamb manner, the helpless and hapless female who uses men even as she all but begs them to use her.

Ingrid is not stupid, nor—even to my admittedly prejudiced eye—entirely without charm; but she is like so many other secretive, manipulative women who have appeared in thrillers for decades. Even the producers of the Bond movies have steered away from this type for several years now: it is passé, boring, predictable.

Even Rossiter's minor characters run to stereotype. The Americans, for example, are cardboard figures lacking depth who seem to have been drawn by someone who has spent little time with small-town Americans, mayors, sheriffs, or just plain folk. These are pigeonhole characterizations that make me impatient for, say, Dick Francis's deft two-sentence character sketches.


An ingenious plot complete with a neat little surprise ending might have redeemed *The Murder Makers*; indeed, a quote from the *Minneapolis Tribune* on the book's back and front covers promises such a twist. But for the reader familiar with this type of spy novel, these "surprises" are wholly expected, poorly presented, mundane, and trite: bread without jam—palatable, but hardly exciting.

Oh, all writers have their bad days. But Ross/Rossiter can do better, has done much better, writing that with which I surmise he is more comfortable. Jonathan Ross writes very well-plotted police procedurals in which, yes, the characters are a bit stereotypical. But—as



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in *Drop Dead* (1984), for example—Ross/Rossiter knows how to tell a good story full of that careful detail which makes a procedural engrossing. Ross writes best, apparently, when he knows well what he chooses as subject matter.

This does not, however, pardon whoever edited *The Murder Makers*. Yes, editors work with nasty deadlines looming; yes, an editor can usually let slide the manuscript of a writer whose books sell well; yes, grammar mistakes caught once a manuscript is in type are costly to correct; yes, mysteries are not “serious” literature and hence need not be grammatically perfect. But consider, please, these grammatical horrors:

“Walking down the gangway, the heat hit us like a slammed door . . .”

On the very same page:

“Knowing our destination, it would be a sound military tactic for him to get there first.”

Three pages later:

“She [Ingrid] smelt as discreetly and expensively as I had hoped.”

True, the words paint amusing pictures: heat walking down a gangplank, an it who knows where Roger and Ingrid are bound, sweet Ingrid sniffing the air in a most elegant manner. But these outrageously mismatched modifiers distract horribly from the story Rossiter struggles to tell. They make me want to throw the book across the room or—more productively—sentence the editor to a semester of freshman composition under a demon of a professor with a wicked red pen.

Such aberrations do crop up occasionally in all Ross/Rossiter books, but with much less frequency. This, I’m afraid, is editorial carelessness at its worst—and is inexcusable. Jonathan Ross deserves better. We readers deserve better.

— Mary Frances Grace

• • • • •

Skyripper by David Drake. New York: Tor, 1983. \$3.50

Skyripper is a military espionage thriller masquerading as science fiction. Its publisher has categorized it as science fiction and packaged it as such, but this reader was

surprised. Science-fiction fanatics and military espionage devotees will probably be disappointed, but others, such as myself, may find this hybrid an entertaining change.

Author David Drake fills this adventure with an interesting assortment of required characters and allows them to operate from gloriously exotic locations. Although generally well written, *Skyripper* seems a bit unbalanced, possibly due to its questionable categorization. The action moves smoothly between the slower stages and the fast-paced phases. Torture and mutilation are gratuitous. The sightseeing sequences are a refreshing semi-romantic interlude. I found some difficulty with dialogue early in the book which seemed uncomfortably choppy. This was corrected in later pages.

The Agent a.k.a. the stocky American a.k.a. the civilian a.k.a. Angelo Ceriani is Tom Kelly, a man with a shady past and a shaky future, assigned to oversee the defection of a Russian by the name of Vlasov, who may or may not have alien (otherworldly) connections. The plots twist and turn and return to twist again in a neatly paced tale. Kelly has a bright sense of humor and a grand sense of duty which leads him to the obligatory fling with the woman a.k.a. Anna a.k.a. Annamaria a.k.a. Mrs. Rufus Gordon a.k.a. the Ambassador’s wife. She is, of course, intelligently gorgeous or gorgeously intelligent and, of course, willing to give her all to Kelly and his work.

Skyripper, unfortunately, never quite gets off the ground.

— Ira Hale Blackman

• • • • •

Skorpion’s Death by David Brierley. New York: Summit, 1985. \$13.95

Any reader who hasn’t been running five miles a day on a regular basis may not last the course with Cody in her latest adventure. Cody is CIA-trained, tough, resourceful, has connections, and her talents are for sale as a freelancer. The reader could also benefit from having survival training, a degree in international politics, a pilot’s license, and a black belt.

Ruthless Cody, living in France, is not totally without heart, as her living

arrangements include a lover named Michel, who owns a bookshop. Also somewhere in her secret-agent background is a shadowy figure known only as PDS, a “fixer,” who recommends Cody’s expertise to a pregnant German lady whose pilot husband, Bertholt Borres, has gone missing. Cody has barely started to question Ella, the wife, when PDS phones with a cryptic warning that the husband may be running with dangerous company. Always thorough, Cody races off to PDS’s apartment for an in-depth briefing, only to find the building ablaze and PDS leaving feet first. Agent to the core, she also discovers that someone is also in her apartment—shades drawn and lights on—and she scurries to a hidey-hole, picks up her back-up fake passport, and heads for the nearest airport.

She departs for Tunisia and a town called Sfax, the last known address that Ella Borres has for her husband. Borres was a Luftwaffe pilot and suddenly quit to work for another organization, hinting at untold wealth but otherwise giving no details. When Cody arrives in Sfax, she dutifully checks hotels and finds the one Borres uses, but management confirms that there has been no occupancy for two weeks. Next stop is a local newspaper office, where she meets the owner and editor, Nortier, who is as well one half of the staff and totally blind. Nortier, a former pilot, is intrigued enough to take her to the airport to make inquiries of his friends there. One friend, the air controller, is able to tell them that Borres has bought a Skyvan, a cargo plane, and two weeks previously filed a flight plan and then dropped from sight. On the off chance that Borres may have been flying to Borg Mechaab, an army camp, Nortier calls a former friend, Colonel Mahrey, at the camp and, alarmed by their conversation, agrees to drive with Cody to the camp.

Before Cody and Nortier can get back to their car, a plane which is unloading passengers blows up and, in the resulting pandemonium, Cody recognizes one of the passengers who has escaped unharmed—her detested nemesis, Crevecoeur, Chief Inspector of the Sûreté Nationale. He, like PDS, tries to convince Cody to drop the entire matter and fly home, hinting at international intrigue. Cody considers this a waving red flag, and she and Nortier set off across the desert for the army camp. They are intercepted by soldiers and hauled off as prisoners to the camp, where they are alternately questioned by a bullying Major Fellah and a seriously ill man called Jafaar. Realizing that they have stumbled into a hornet’s nest, Cody calls up all her tricks but cannot convince the two men that she and Nortier are not spies. A mock execution follows, then torture with a scorpion, and the only bright spot is a glimpse of Borres arriving at the camp with his Skyvan.

At this point, ex-agent Cody decides it is time to depart, and, after some fantastic maneuvers, she and Nortier do indeed get out of prison and make their escape in Borres’s Skyvan with the intrepid Cody at the controls, although she has never piloted a plane before. With Nortier coaching, they


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manage to take off amid a hail of bullets only to crash-land fifteen minutes later when they run out of fuel. This is the point at which the survival courses pay off, as Cody not only has an injured blind companion—Nortier has apparently broken some ribs in the crash—but only fifteen litres of water and no food. They travel at night, and, on the fifth day of the ordeal, Nortier dies. Cody is finally rescued by nomads, and the rest of the complicated tale unfolds, including the finale of a desiccated Cody flying a helicopter to bring her and Crevecoeur to safety. This is definitely not a tale for the faint of heart or the unfit, and, while the political angles sometimes become a bit muzzy around the edges, the pace is non-stop, with Cody surviving to bring readers more derring-do in the future, it is to be hoped.

—Miriam L. Clark

Police Procedural

City of the Dead by Herbert Lieberman. New York: Avon, 1986. \$3.95

In this powerful, chilling novel, Lieberman has created a tense psychological drama the central character of which is Paul Konig, Chief Medical Examiner for the City of New York. Dominating his field in forensic pathology at the Manhattan morgue, he methodically analyzes the cadavers brought before him and identifies the cause of death. Lieberman's use of medical terminology and forensic science procedures shows a meticulous labor of research. Each post-mortem vibrates authentically as the victims arrive from every degree of existence and involve all different modes of accidental death, suicide, and murder.

Two parallel plots emerge to take shape in this suspense story. The first is the accidental discovery of a graveyard of decomposed human parts near the muddy bank of the East River. Somebody has clandestinely buried them there and disfigured them skillfully enough to make identification impossible. Inside the autopsy room, an odor of realism exudes from the pages as this grisly anatomical puzzle is pieced together by Paul and his staff in a desperate race to provide the NYPD with clues.

Heading the police investigation is Sergeant Flynn, a hardnosed cop who hunts persistently for any thread of evidence which will lead him to his prey. A special friendship fumes between Flynn and Paul Konig as they become linked in their determination to apprehend the murderer and prevent him from striking again.

The second plotline takes the form of your standard kidnapping. A small revolutionary group is holding Paul's runaway daughter for ransom. Working closely with Chief Detective Haggard of the Bureau of Identification, Paul hopes to bring her home quickly. All he endures is extreme mental torture and Haggard's empty promises as the search for her becomes nonproductive and painstakingly slow. The kidnapers are led by a clever leader who teases Paul with psychotic

telephone messages which increase his despair. When a police chase is bungled, Paul bears the burden of going after his daughter alone.

Connecting these events, yet certainly influencing them, are a million dollar ripoff scheme and a cover-up inside the tombs of the Medical Examiner's Building which threatens to turn into a political scandal and depose Paul as Chief Pathologist. With all these actions taking place, I became sympathetic and fascinated with Paul Konig's tough, serene personality as he battled against these pressures while controlling inner feelings of rage. His character grew steady but more complicated around this tension, showing a sensitive, overworked civil servant whose fight has only just begun. And a good fight it is.

Lieberman develops compelling, moody scenes and fabricates a cast of real human beings caught in explosive situations. His message is tough though his tale is smooth and brisk. He is a talented writer with a remarkable skill for spinning a fast-paced, provocative thriller.

—George Harvey

* * * * *

The Wabash Factor by E. V. Cunningham. New York: Delacorte, 1986. \$14.95

Howard Fast, a bestselling author of historical fiction, has written many crime novels—twenty-two, by my count. Fast, who chooses to be known as a mainstream novelist, has used the pseudonym E. V. Cunningham on most of his work in our genre. His recent crime novels feature Masao Masuto, a Japanese-American detective on the Beverly Hills police force. In *The Wabash Factor*, however, he drops the Masuto character and introduces Harry Golding, a detective with the NYPD.

The main story concerns a series of deaths, officially listed as natural or accidental, which Golding suspects are actually murders resulting from a plot to assassinate certain political figures. The case is a complex one, involving a large, sinister detective agency (the Wabash Protection Company), a mythical Latin American

country (Santa Marina), the theft of a Vermeer painting, cocaine traffic, and death squads.

Golding is an experienced and cautious detective. Sometimes he seems brilliant; sometimes, a bit obtuse. He's a mystery fan and, at one point, he remembers a story by Edgar Wallace and uses it to solve a small piece of the puzzle. I don't believe that Fast plans to make Golding a series hero.

The plot of *The Wabash Factor* combines standard mystery elements with police procedure and international intrigue. Fast ties it all together rather well, but the novel is not without flaws. The ethnic banter between the Jewish Golding and Fran, his Irish-Catholic wife, grows quite tiresome, and a long expository section in the middle of the book stops the action cold.

Fast has written an entertaining novel, somewhat longer than his other crime novels but not the blockbuster I think he was hoping to produce.

—John L. Apostolou

* * * * *

The Death Ceremony by James Melville. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. \$12.95

The Death Ceremony is the latest Superintendent Otani mystery set in modern-day Japan. James Melville writes

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with a special blend of rich characterization and psychological perception that dramatically contrasts the precision and orderliness of the traditional Japanese way of life with the modern trends that are persistently encroaching.

An invitation to a formal New Year tea ceremony, considered quite an honor, prompts Otani and his wife Hanae to journey to Kyoto on a pleasant Sunday afternoon. The festive atmosphere is disrupted when a sniper's bullet kills the Grand Master during the performance of the tea ceremony.

After the shooting, Otani is on delicate ground. As a temporary measure, he receives the Governor's consent to liaison with the Kyoto police during the emergency. He is limited, however, not being in his own home territory. During his cursory investigation, several questions arise. How did the marksman aim? The bullet came from outside an enclosed room. There was no source of light from within the room to produce shadows on the shoji paper walls. How could the sniper know the exact position of his target? Was the intended victim actually Sir Rodney Hurling, the British Ambassador? Or possibly his colorfully robed African colleague, the Ambassador of Ghana?

The seemingly blameless character of the murder victim and the uneasy political climate point to a failed attempt on the Ambassador's life. When it is discovered that Patrick Casey, an Irish national, was studying the tea ceremony under the dead Grand Master, suspicion is immediately focused in his direction.

Otani's key subordinates, Kimura and the highly disreputable Noguchi, do their share toward unraveling the mystery. The close relationship among the three men has always been a thorn in the side of fellow officer Sakamoto. Jealousy finally prompts the disgruntled public servant to request a transfer of duty. Fortuitously, he is welcomed with open arms by Superintendent Fujiwara—Otani's counterpart in Kyoto. Fujiwara is, coincidentally, also involved in the murder investigation, and, as events progress, Otani becomes convinced that evidence is being manipulated. It would be a grave matter, however, to accuse a man of

Fujiwara's seniority. It becomes vital, therefore, to secure some hard evidence if Otani is to proceed openly.

Meanwhile, Patrick Casey is arrested. Superintendent Otani fears that unscrupulous methods may be used to force a convenient "confession." Time is short. Otani accelerates the pace of his investigations and uncovers several complex interrelationships involving the murdered Grand Master, his wife, and Fujiwara. Is it ancient history or does it have a bearing on current events? That is the final question Otani must answer if he is to find a satisfactory solution to the case.

—Liz Tarpy

• • • • •
Filmi, Filmi, Inspector Ghote by H. R. F. Keating. Academy Chicago, 1976. \$4.95

As usual with the Ghote novels, the persevering, diminutive Inspector holds center stage himself while investigating murder in the Indian film industry. The victim is a popular star, and the suspects range from Indian-style groupies to the elite of the film world. Ghote is in a quandary when he realizes that, if the killer is one of the nation's movie idols, Ghote himself will be scorned and denounced for bringing him to justice. Yet, being Ghote, he cannot consider letting the criminal escape.

As depicted here, the current Indian film world is reminiscent of Hollywood's idolism of the 1930s. Stars have royalty status, and the rest of the country hangs on every bit of gossip about them. Gossip columnist Miss Officewalla, villain-star Ravi Kuma, ethereal sex-goddess Nilima, and director Ghosh are typical stereotypes. None of them ever comes to life, but they make their appearance, provide necessary clues and confusions, and then pass on their way. Keating achieves a bit of quiet humor in his portrayals. But undoubtedly Ghote is the real star and the only one the reader cares about.

The resolution of the crime is logical and acceptable, but not overly so. This is due mainly to the fact that so much focus has been on Ghote. A few clues are scattered around lightly, and they could conceivably lead to the killer. Yet, on the whole, the mystery takes a back seat to the movie world and Ghote's reactions to it.

PolPro —Fred Dueren

Murder on the Run by Medora Sale. New York: Paper Jacks, 1986. 240 pp. \$2.95

The book opens with a series of rape-homicides in Toronto. Except for a few street names and such, the story could have just as easily been set in any U.S. city. Detective Inspector John Sanders and his partner Sergeant Dubinsky have been assigned to the case. There is precious little to go on.

The homicide, and presumable rape, of a teacher from a local girls' school sends the Inspector down the path of police and political corruption, with a good dose of the mob thrown in. The Inspector solves this case by working some unusual informants and a few breaks.

The solution to the series of rape-homicides comes accidentally when one of the victims survives and can describe her attacker and the vehicle he uses.

The fact that the murder of the teacher was performed by a copycat killer is obvious to the reader. Anyone familiar with standard television or movie fare is well aware of the signs. The obviousness of the situation is enough. Inspector Sanders at the time thought the murderer did not fit the pattern but was not quite secure enough to state so.

The reader very early recognizes who her killer is, but the reason for the killing stays murky until the end. The abduction of the schoolgirl throws the police another bone to chew on. They in turn find it to be the easiest to chew, which leads to the general unraveling. The final reason for the murder is not at all a surprise to the reader.

The serial rapist, seen in brief flashes, usually planning, setting, or following an aborted attack is sketchily drawn. His basic character could be far more interesting and his potential danger to others that much greater, if his character were more fully developed. At least the reader could be distracted, even temporarily, and not jump to the correct conclusion so easily or early.

—S. S. Smith

• • • • •
A White Male Running by Martha G. Webb. New York: Walker, 1985. \$13.95

"I've got one running."

"Ten-four, North Car, you say you've got one on the ground?"

"That's affirmative. I've got a white male running north in the alley from this location."

—Police Radio conversation

This police radio call aptly sets the tone, as well as the title, for Martha G. Webb's second book. The action takes place in Farmer's Mound, Texas, a small city fifty mythical miles from Dallas. We can presume Farmer's Mound's a small city, since we are told that its police department has 47 employees.

A White Male Running is a police procedural in which several crimes are investigated simultaneously. Although the crimes at first appear unrelated, they are later shown to have a common thread: each relates to a vicious murder that took place years before the book's present-day timeframe. In this spectre-from-the-past sense, *A White Male Running* bears a striking—and

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favorable—resemblance to another Southern procedural, *Prey* by C. Terry Cline, Jr.

Although this book focuses on the prevention and solution of local crimes, the author develops several interesting subplots: one contrasting race relations in modern Farmer's Mound with those in the sleeper—and more bigoted—town of forty years earlier, one painting a somewhat bittersweet romance between the police captain's daughter and a former drug addict turned cop.

Modern crimes center around the drug trade, and some solid detective work is done in solving both these and the more distant horrors. Chance plays a part, too, as so often happens in police procedurals—and in real-life detection.

A White Male Running has all the makings of a series of books as enjoyable as the original. We want to hear more about: Captain Simons, as tolerant a cop or father as you're ever likely to find; his daughter, Melissa, who allows herself to be used as bait in a risky murder investigation; Lieutenant Smoky O'Donnell, an experienced officer whose family crises add to the tension of the job; Tommy Inman, the young man who gave up a life at the end of a hypodermic needle to prove himself as a policeman, and as Melissa's fiancé.

Martha G. Webb's flowing style and crisp dialogue (free, thank God, from corny "Texas" dialects and idioms) combine with sharply drawn characters and a well-timed storyline to keep these readers running—and eager for volume two.

—S. Jeffery Koch
Patricia M. Koch

• • • • •
The Missing Mr. Mosley by John Greenwood. New York: Walker, 1985. \$13.95

The Missing Mr. Mosley is the third Inspector Mosley mystery by John Greenwood, who is, according to his publisher, "the pseudonym of a British crime writer who has published numerous mysteries under his own name." Inspector Mosley's "patch" is Hemp Valley, a very rural area of England, populated by isolated farms and villages consisting of only a few houses.

The plot of this novel involves the disappearance of Janie Goodwin. Many years before, Janie and John William Cromwell were married after an eighteen-year courtship. Between the church and the reception, a quarrel arose between them and they never lived together, though they breakfast together three days a week. Now Janie has disappeared, her house is ransacked, and a bottle with hair and blood on it is found in the kitchen.

Detective-Superintendent Grimshaw, assisted by Sergeant Beamish, is in charge of the case. Since the disappearance has occurred in Mosley's "patch," Grimshaw wants Mosley to get involved in the case. Mosley, however, is on annual leave. Beamish finds Mosley in Hemp Valley itself, busy doing what he calls "neighboring," helping out the older members of the community and getting ready to leave for

Nairobi to see his sister. Though Mosley seems to know something, he refuses to help, insisting that he is on leave. Eventually, Grimshaw leads a countryside search for Janie Goodwin, during which a nine-year-old girl and a young woman also disappear.

Although there is a solution that satisfactorily answers all the questions posed by the mysterious disappearances, this is over-all an unsatisfactory book for several reasons. One of these, for this reader at least, is the fact that this is the *third* Inspector Mosley book. Not having read the previous books, I felt rather left out about the relationships among the several police officers in the story, Grimshaw and his superior, the Assistant Chief Constable, begin by being very disdainful of Mosley, yet Grimshaw keeps wanting him on the case. Obviously, this relationship is better developed in the earlier books, but the references to it here are not enough. Why is Mosley considered so exasperating, bumbling, and yet needed for the case? While the reasons are stated, it comes out much too flat. This needed to be developed more.

Another problem is with Inspector Mosley himself. The book is called *The Missing Mr. Mosley*, and that is exactly the problem: he is missing from most of the book. When he does infrequently appear, helping the older inhabitants of Hemp Valley and giving veiled hints to Sergeant Beamish about what is going on, he is always seen from another character's point of view. We are not privy to Mosley's thoughts, or his conclusions, and we thus feel very much out in the cold.

In fact, what the book is missing most of all is the detective as a central clearing house for all the facts and clues disclosed. The author gives us many points of view, and all the necessary information to solve the mystery, but it is tossed out by too many different people. Even these characters do not realize the significance of what they have seen—only the reader does. While there are fine portraits of many Hemp Valley eccentrics, the reader is too distanced from the story. Again, we needed Inspector Mosley, the titular "hero," to be there to be the center of our focus. Without this center, the story remains too distant and overall disappointing.

—Martin H. Friedenthath

Chain of Violence by Lesley Egan. New York: Doubleday, 1985. \$12.95

In this police procedural novel set in Glendale, California, Lesley Egan, who, as both Egan and Dell Shannon, is a practiced hand at this genre, dexterously weaves the various strands of plot, the main elements of which are: a bogus minister who eventually becomes involved in a manslaughter rap, a love-smitten soldier seeking revenge against the girl he feels rejected him, a pornographic-movie ring exploiting young people, an apologetic rapist, a hair-cutting thief who takes his samples and runs, a youth gang, a man killed in a jewelry-store robbery, the murder of a judge, an unidentified corpse, and several happenings, some treated in a more perfunctory fashion than others.


Amid their activities, the members of the department inveigh against permissive judges and a system that favors the criminal over the victim. A recurring motif throughout the book is whether or not romance will come into the life of woman detective Delia Riordin, whose main source of companionship is her pet parrot, Henry. This aspect, however, does not overly interfere with the main thrust of the narrative, which gathers momentum toward the conclusion, along with some interesting plot twists. Although the book lacks the grit of the Joseph Wambaugh books and the darker elements found in the Ed McBain series, it contains enough variety and moves swiftly enough to maintain the reader's interest.

—William Thomaier

Private Eye

Nervous Laughter by Earl W. Emerson. New York: Avon, 1986. \$2.95

Thomas Black is a former cop-turned-private-eye (does that sound familiar?) whose current case starts out unconventionally. He receives an anonymous note and \$500 in crisp bills as a retainer. All he has to do is "follow Mark Daniels and report on his movements." When Daniels is found shot and comatose in the company of a dead teenaged prostitute, Black's employer comes forward: it is Daniels's voluptuous second wife, Deanna, who thinks her husband might have been philandering after all but that there was probably a covert



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reason behind his wounding, which turns out to be fatal when Daniels never comes out of his coma. Is his assailant his older partner, Emmet Anderson, whom Deanna and her attentive minister/counselor, Reverend Sam Wheeler, highly suspect, or is it one of the violent Vietnamese whom Daniels hired at his dogfood factory, or is it perhaps the good reverend himself? And Deanna, for her part, had good reason to plug her hubby, for he beat her previously, as he had his first wife.

The mean streets this time are located in Seattle, down dockside and under bridge superstructures, but also on Queen Anne Hill, and the other standard hardboiled trappings include Deanna, a "pneumatic blonde" with minimal intelligence whom Black conventionally beds and falls in love with, as well as the adversary police detective (Detective Crum, indeed!), the rival private operative (one Seymore Teets), and the requisite number of "colorful characters and places": the streetwise Seattle prostitutes and druggers (that city gets, to my mind, an undeserved bad rap both for its weather and for its down-and-outers), the Galaxie Motor Court Inn, and the voyeuristic geezer with a panoramic view, lots of time, and a telescope (the used condoms he spies through his glass in the parking lot he calls "conundrums").

But add to this a seemingly liberated female and platonic side-kick who wears daring gold lamé dresses to parties and who has a running gag with Black: "Hey, Pancho"—"Hey, Cisco." That sidekick is savvy but vulnerable lawyer Kathy Birchfield, who plays a 1980s Ned Nickerson to Black's Nancy Drew. Black and Birchfield get imprisoned in meat lockers (get it? The Big Chill. . .) and remain resolutely platonic (so did Nancy and Ned), while Black runs determinedly after Deanna, whose "nervous laughter" ("she had a laugh that flowed like water sloshing in a wooden tub") captivates him. "Life is a bitch," Black opines, and that language speaks not just to our hero's assessment of his day-to-day existence but also to his attitude toward women. It's no coincidence that, when Black has to burgle Wheeler's house, he enters through a window directly into a hot tub: he sees

Wheeler's wife as sexually unattractive (Wheeler, after all, met her at a karate class) and yet is captivated by Deanna's tub-like laughter. For the hardboiled detective, life is encountering women in the course of investigations and seeing which make the blood boil.

Nervous Laughter, to my mind, is a real potboiler, saved by a few scenes, however, for the reader who enjoys that aspect of the hardboiled: the meat locker episode and escape, and, of course, the fights. If you like fights. For fights there are, from multiple knife-wielding Vietnamese against Black to chubby karate experts against Black. In what he culls from the Hammett and Chandler tradition, Emerson tailors his fights to what hardboiled dicks should be able to take. And take it Black does, with enough wounds in a day and a half to sideline a major league football team and probably the whole North American hockey league.

Would that this were openly a spoof. *Nervous Laughter* also employs the conventional racist and sexist narrative perspective of the classical hardboiled detective novel (but, because this is first-person narration, the view is Black's and not necessarily the author's) that brands women as bimbos or bitches or platonically unattainable (although obviously intellectually and professionally gifted) and recent immigrants as criminals. The real criminal, as the genre and this novel often prove, is to be sought closer to home. In the final analysis, as indicated by Black's frequent references to Classics Comics, *Nervous Laughter* is to vintage Chandler and Hammett as the Classics Comics redaction is to *Great Expectations*. Don't expect too much in this, Emerson's third detective novel.

—Susan L. Clark

* * * * *

A Swell Style of Murder by Rosemarie Santini. New York: St. Martin's, 1985. \$12.95

Billed as the *Thin Man* for the 1980s, **A Swell Style of Murder** features the husband and wife detective team of Rosie Caesare and Rick Ramsey. The couple resides in a chic loft in New York City's SoHo district,

Rick living the easy life on money left to him in a trust fund by his WASPish Connecticut family, and Rosie, an ambitious 33-year-old writer of Italian-American descent, struggling to get her next book on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

Jogging home from one of his daily visits to the health club, Rick stumbles across the severed hand of a young woman partially concealed under a pile of bricks. His reaction to finding the hand is a mixture of shock, panic, and a strong desire to air his belly out. Rosie is made of sterner stuff. She immediately links Rick's discovery with the newspaper account of a pair of Mafia-style killings and phones her literary agent to see if there's a book contract to be had in the story. The agent gives her the green light, and she plunges headlong into an investigation of the murders, dragging her reluctant hubby in with her.

Unfortunately, Rosie and Rick don't turn out to be very good detectives, and the mystery with which they and the reader are presented is almost nonexistent. Furthermore, Rick's characterization—and the characterizations of most of the men in the book—is a little hard to swallow. We are told that Rick's father was a U.S. Army Major, that Rick is an expert in karate, and that he was a college football hero. Given this sort of background, one does not expect Rick to be quite the simpering romantic that he turns out to be. The Mafia make up a large percentage of the other male characters in the story. If the behavior they exhibit here is in any way representative of real mobsters, Mario Puzo and the FBI have been pulling our collective legs for a lot of years.

On the plus side, the book is very sexy, and the character of Rosie is quite interesting. She has more dimensions to her than does Rick, and I found her interactions with Rick and her extended Italian-American family entertaining. One suspects that the author invested a fair amount of self in creating Rosie Caesare. Rosie and Rosemarie are similar names, both women are authors, both (apparently) have an Italian-American background, and, as we are told on the book jacket, they were both raised in SoHo.

While I cannot recommend *A Swell Style of Murder* to those who are interested in sinking their teeth into a good, solid murder mystery, the novel does work well as a romantic comedy-thriller.

—Mark Coggins

* * * * *

Die Again, Macready by Jack Livingston. New York: Signet Mystery, 1984. \$2.95

If you thought Longstreet had it tough being a blind detective, meet Joe Binney, a deaf P.I. But don't feel sorry for Joe—he copes very well with his deafness. In fact, his life is saved several times by the special devices he has rigged up to cope with his handicap. Also, his ability to lip-read will provide him with several important clues.

The story concerns a hot young actor, William Macready, whose past is unusual and whose "nut" or go-to-hell money has been stolen, possibly by his business

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manager. Said manager turns up dead, hanged in a sleazy hotel room, but by whose hand, and where is Macready's money? Now Macready is being pressured to take a role in a very important television series, important to a lot of people, but not necessarily to Macready. With his money missing, however, he may have to take the part. So he hires Joe to find the money, which involves beatings, arson, death, and the mob before Joe gets to the end of it.

Along the way, Joe meets various network people, the very important money man behind the program, Bill's agent, and the TV producer. Joe also has an affair with the program director's secretary and nearly loses his own secretary to Cupid. There is also a sub-plot about some mysterious corporation forcing people out of the slum buildings in Macready's neighborhood by any means, including arson, for profits and urban renewal. There are various plots, and they all trace back to Bill Macready one way or another. There is also an amusing little sidelight about how Joe collects his own past-due bills from slow-paying clients.

This is Jack Livingston's sequel to *A Piece of the Silence*, the first Joe Binney book, which was nominated by the Private Eye Writers of America for best hardcover P.I. novel of 1982. I missed that one, but, if this book is any sample, I'll be on the lookout for a copy. This was a very good read, a little confusing at the start as to who is who, but there are amusing anecdotes and interesting insights into the world of the actor, making it worthwhile to hang in till the finish. Joe Binney is a definite comer.

—Marietta Denniston

• • • • •

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

Thirteen-year-old Miranda Benson runs away from home. Mom hires Leo Haggerty, private investigator, to find her. Dad fires Leo. The next day, he rehires Leo to find her. Haggerty is beaten up. He beats up some folks himself. He and his Green Beret, medal-of-honor winner associate Arnie Kendall ("that pet gorilla," a cop calls Arnie) fight the sleaziest end of the porno industry to try and get Miranda back. Leo dickers with, and ultimately lies to, his sometime friend, police Lieutenant Frank Schaefer. Of course, things get complicated. The universe isn't terribly moral, isn't even decent. So Leo has to make his own moral decisions. He has to follow his own impulses. Along the way, Leo falls for feminist novelist Samantha Clayton ("Please don't call me Sam"), who falls back, but with reservations.

If these folks sound like Spenser, Hawk, Quirk, and Susan, consider yourself perceptive. It reads like them too. (I can't kick the feeling that Schutz read Parker's *Ceremony* eight or nine times while writing his book.) Only Parker is a far better writer than Schutz—and he's either got more self-control or an editor with a sharper pencil. Still, if you're going to imitate, why not imitate the best?

Schutz works some clever plot twists. He's got a feel for pacing. His characters are lively

and, where appropriate, likeable. He can sometimes turn a phrase: "The drive over was stifling, the dry heat baking me in my car. Meat loaf under steel, the special of the day."

But we've been through all this before. Consider the missing girl. Leo gets a year-old photograph and has it reworked by a friend to match a recent description (a clever idea, by the way):

"What he'd created out of my description and his own loneliness was haunting. A face of ravaged sparkle. Energy still danced in the eyes, but only there. That energy seemed to feed off her face, drawing it back into herself and then out through her eyes. She was thirteen and thirty, at the beginning and the end of her youth."

That's good description. And it proves

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ALL THE OLD
BARGAINS
BENJAMIN M. SCHUTZ



accurate. It's even well written. (I'm especially partial to the nearly oxymoronic "ravaged sparkle.") But it's nothing we haven't read a thousand times before. And it goes on too long.

Schutz often does. Sitting in a topless bar, Leo observes that it's "no different from Disneyland, it's just selling a different illusion." That's a dandy analogy. It tells us all we need to know. But it's followed by twelve and a half more lines (I counted) explaining and justifying the analogy. That's pointless. I'm not objecting to the moralizing/philosophizing. It's a part of the genre you like or you don't; I do. I am objecting to the self-indulgence or sloppy editing that lets Leo prattle on endlessly to no purpose.

Then there are the loose threads. There aren't many, but those that are left ought to have been snipped off by an editor: "Something jabbed at me from my memory but I couldn't grasp it," Leo thinks when he calls his client. I've finished the book. In the remaining pages, the recollection never returns and never seems pertinent.

All the Old Bargains is competent work, even if it is derivative, little more than an imitation Spenser book. And Schutz is a competent writer. With seasoning, he may become very good. There's a good chance I'll read the next Leo Haggerty. But I look forward to the next Spenser.

—Jeffrey M. Gamso

• • • • •

Hard Bargains by James Grady. New York: Macmillan, 1985. \$15.95

John Rankin breaks a rule of private detective conduct in the early chapters of *Hard Bargains*. He falls in love with his mysterious client. And soon, solving her mystery becomes more consuming than the case she brought him.

Rankin's personal involvement is set against a Washington, D.C. backdrop where little is as it seems. Most people, and most organizations, are false fronts.

A self-described "new wave" (white collar crime) detective introduced in the author's earlier *Runner in the Street*, Rankin's relationship with his client Cora McGregor draws him into a years-old murder investigation and international politics.

Writer Grady relies heavily on dialogue with only occasional relief, such as one (admittedly well-done) car chase. His

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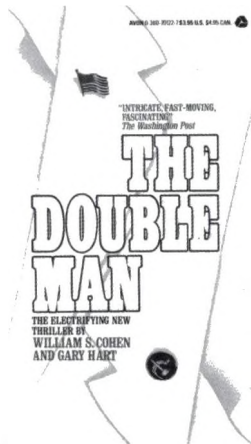


Yes, two years before *Murder Ink* and five years before *Scene of the Crime* opened, Tom & Enid Schantz were specializing in mystery fiction. We issue catalogs of rare and out of print books, publish *The Purloined Letter*, an annotated, almost monthly listing of the best (and worst) in new books, and put on incredible mystery weekends. Write, and when you're in Colorado come and have the crime of your life at

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descriptions of Washington hold some interest. But too many of his characters are wooden, McGregor never becomes that appealing to the reader, and one confrontation Rankin has with her husband rings particularly false.

The author's background as an investigative reporter and his awareness of his wife's profession (she's a real private detective) make for a reasonable re-creation of the profession. Rankin, as wrapped up as he



becomes with his female client, still has to work on other cases. And he tells all to his policeman friend—surely a comfortable switch on most private eye tales.

If Grady continues the Rankin books, he may do for Washington what Parker has done for Boston, Amos Walker for Detroit, Harry Stoner for Cincinnati—give a detective a clear identity with his city. This in itself is a relief from the over-abundance of California-set thrillers.

In this book, however, the writer draws his reader along only with a struggle. And while a major investigative direction in the book turns out to be false—perhaps in keeping with the overall Washington theme of phoinness—there's little justification for the ending, which simply lets the reader down with a thud.

— Bernard A. Drew

Thriller

Double Man by William S. Cohen and Gary Hart. New York: Avon, 1985. \$3.95

Double Man has the feel of a "Movie of the Week." Timely and written for quick consumption, it suggests more than it delivers.

The novel narrates the entrance of Senator Tom Chandler into the world of terrorism that threatens to spark a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Chandler heads a Senate investigating committee which, working against time and

increasing threats, uncovers thorny connections among the Soviets, the Mafia, drug dealers, and professional terrorists, with a thread of plot involving the Kennedy assassination. Most of the headline news of the last decade is here. There is even—shades of Woodward and Bernstein—a Deep Throat character.

The book's appeal lies in its insight into Capitol Hill and the intelligence community that the combined backgrounds of the authors provide. Commentary about and portrayals of the two Washington communities are sprinkled throughout the book but are more often satiric than insightful. In descriptions of characters, cultures, and ideas, one senses the author's loyalties.

These black-and-white portrayals of character and incident sap the tension upon which an espionage novel normally thrives. Though the authors avoid portraying Russians as evil and Americans as good, we can quickly tell who deserves our respect and who does not: there are no gray characters. In fact, an irritating technique is the authors' point of telling the reader, directly or through a character, what to think of another character long before we can judge his actions: "He did not know why, but there was something about Elaine Dunham that didn't ring true." "Behind the beard and still-broad grin, Chandler thought he detected a glint of implication." "Something told him she was going to be trouble for Chandler. Real trouble." Or how about: "In that instant, Natashin knew that Metrisko would someday destroy him." Many characters display this uncanny insight.

This habit of doing the thinking for the reader undermines the novel's attempt at tension, clumsy foreshadowing often giving the game away. The opening paragraph's description of a car leaving a Washington party is followed by a short description of a man standing "somewhat apart from the cluster," watching the disappearing car before producing a walkie-talkie and moving stealthily on. A commentary on terrorism gives little to the imagination, and the reader is hardly surprised when the car is attacked two pages later. Characters seem to continually miss seeing men that the authors note slipping in and out of shadows.

The writing style is serviceable but occasionally clumsy and clichéd. A description of the sky as "the color of a faded bruise" sounds like an entry in the *Bulwer-Lytton* contest for bad writing. One character is "tired to the very bone," and another's descent into a moral quagmire "had been a long and crooked trail." When exposition cannot be gracefully woven into the telling, characters and authors tell the reader directly. Readers familiar with the details of the Kennedy assassination will find themselves better informed than many of these Capitol Hill people, who need constant, detailed information that can go on for paragraphs.

In fact, between the numerous pages of background and third-person hints, not much is left to decipher. Two of the novel's main

mysteries, the identities of a man called Memory and the Double Man, are solvable midway through.

Characters are thin, and several go against their loyalties in inexplicable ways, refusing to co-operate up to a point and then suddenly yielding to pressure for reasons not always convincing. A major plot device, revolving around the supposed duplicity of a character whose decision to support an obviously manipulative man against loyalty to and love of another, does not ring true. Indeed, the character shifts loyalties later on, leaving the reader wondering what took so long.

In short, *Double Man* is a formulaic novel in which plotting is all. Not aiming for the subtlety of *Le Carré* or the character interactions of Charles McCarty, Cohen and Hart have mixed the currency of terrorism with a number of stock devices, love story and all. Terrorism is intriguing material for a novel, and its use as psychological manipulation could be strong subject matter. But there is no such insight or deep thought here; terrorism is simply a plot device.

The novel's open ending suggests a sequel. The authors might better have concentrated on a clean resolution, for there seems little compulsion to read further about these people.

— Jeff House

• • • • •
Otto's Boy by Walter Wager. New York: Tor Books, 1986. \$3.95

This is a suspense novel describing one man's plan for revenge against those whom he feels have debased the memory of his father and of the men with whom he fought during World War II. The weapon he uses to carry out his extortion/murder plot also has historical connotations.

His ego, which has been stroked and petted by his mother along with her "correct" version of history, has warped his own senses to such a degree that even mass murder cannot be wrong. For his victims are a true representation of the polyglot masses as a whole—something unclean.

Lieutenant David Bloom, of the New York police anti-terrorist squad, is handed the responsibility of catching the terrorists who, having killed once, will do so again if their demands are not met. Kill again the murderer does, but in the neighborhood where Lieutenant Blood lives. The FBI and the Army CID both help and hinder the lieutenant in his investigation. Other help comes in the form of a young, pretty psychiatrist from Galway, practicing in New York. The love interest develops slowly and does not interfere with the plot.

The method used by the murderer is evident to the reader at least a chapter before he is formally told, especially if he is well versed in historical facts. If one can suspend disbelief long enough to finish the tale, however, one will not be disappointed. The ending is typically New Yorkish.

— S. S. Smith

• • • • •
Coaster by George Foy. New York: Viking, 1986. \$16.95

George Foy's second novel is a combina-

tion sea, mystery, and adventure story. John Penrose is the captain of the British ship *Witch of Fraddam*, which carries cargo along the coasts of Britain and Europe. During a storm, the ship founders, having become unbalanced because of deliberate tampering with its cargo of coal. The insurance company, Lloyds of London, refuses to pay the thirteen million pounds due under its policy. Penrose asks his friend, news reporter Tim Harewood, to help him prove that some conspiracy by the insurance company is afoot. But Harewood dies shortly after he begins investigating. Was his death from natural causes, or was it murder? Penrose is determined to get to the bottom of it.

The captain's investigations take him to Amsterdam, Antwerp, the Caribbean island of Grand Tortuga, and various parts of England. Attempts are made on his life everywhere he goes.

His estranged wife Selina and her father, Sir Norman Courtenay, seem to be sympathetic toward helping him back on his feet. But is Sir Norman a good guy or a bad guy? Is Selina part of the plot to stop the insurance payment? How does everyone who attacks him know where he is going when he tells no one his travel plans? Why are *his* ship and *his* friends and family involved?

This is a strange book. It sets an uneven pace. Parts of the story are very hard to read. Some are quite boring, and others are so compelling that you cannot put it down. As Penrose's friends, allies, and enemies come and go, and as he is bashed, battered, and bruised time after time, the reader gives up trying to keep things straight. As a matter of fact, Foy's own words on page 224 describe it best: "Too much had happened too quick and hard to process fully."

The characterization is poor—we never really get to know any of the cast (and it is a large one) except for Penrose. Our interest is piqued as new characters are introduced, but then they fade away never to be heard from again. One character, Detective Inspector Karyl Radetsky, looks promising. We meet him early in the book and are told that he "was in his late forties. He had a pronounced stoop, meek eyes and a thin nose that flared regularly, as if he were smelling rubbish, or perhaps his own breath, which was bad." He pops pastilles into his mouth, as all British D.I.s are supposed to do, and dislikes "loose

ends like a Chopin prelude without its final chord." "Ah, here is a worthy cop!" we say to ourselves—but what a disappointment when he rarely appears again. This book also has the greatest number of poorly-shooting bad guys of any book in recent memory. They always miss!

What does not miss, however, is the comeuppance given to the insurance company. In these days of outrageous liability rates, it's great to see the policyholder come out on top for a change. After you finish this book, give it to your favorite insurance salesman. You'll feel good about it.

William A. Rothman

• • • • •

Moscow Rules by Robert Moss. New York: Pocket Books, 1985. \$3.95

Every tribe, group, or country has rules by which it exists. Some men make the rules while others follow them and yet others are subjected to them. But who are the men that change the rules, and what drives them to make the changes? Often we conceive of some noble or libertarian purpose for a change, a revolution of mind and spirit. Moss, however, paints a man's patient stalking to revenge his father's death as his catalyst for change. Not a change in himself, but a change in those who govern and their rules.

Moss feeds the reader with the emotions of fear, hate, love, lust, hurt, and passion through the character of General Sasha Probrzhensky. As you read *Moscow Rules*, you feel within yourself the tension which Sasha faces in his life as a Soviet military officer, as a citizen of the Soviet state, and as the lover of an American woman. The story begins with Sasha learning the truth about his father's death in battle, murdered by a Russian officer. Sasha discovers the identity of the officer and in his quest for revenge discovers much more. It is what the nation has become, as embodied in this man who killed his father, upon which Sasha ultimately seeks to take his vengeance. As in Moss's previous works, a much broader theme lies within the daring adventures of *Moscow Rules*.

Blending the historical conflicts of the Soviet government and people into the person of Sasha, Moss graphically paints a picture of

life in Russia that chills the reader both by the cold winds in the drab Russian streets and through the oppressive leadership in the Kremlin.

Moscow Rules grips the reader with a thrilling story of one man's passion for his people's need to have control over their own government and ultimately over their own lives. As you read *Moscow Rules*, you can envision yourself walking through the rainy streets of New York, battle-stricken Afghanistan, and the bleak streets of Moscow. The suspense builds as you rush to discover whether Sasha finds his prey and what his prey has become. Moss leaves you with the feeling that you have shared the daring adventure which Sasha has brought to *Moscow Rules*.

—Edwin C. Cogswell

• • • • •

A Domestic Affair by Martin Russell. New York: Walker, 1985. \$13.95

This is splendid story of suspense with a truly bombastic last paragraph. It begins low-key with divorced parents quarreling about his right to visit the children, and then gradually gains momentum until the explosion at the very end. Russell is keenly versed in the techniques of suspense and is very effective even if the water-in-the-storage-room scene is deemed a strain to credibility.

There is very little detection, although adequate explanation is provided for all issues. The reader is constantly shown both sides of this two-sided affair. He is able, therefore, to unravel most of the puzzles and mysteries before the author explains them—most of them, that is, except the big one at the end.

There is a goodly amount of melodrama diffused throughout the tale; surprisingly, though, it does not materially interfere here with the usual conventions of mystery writing.

One of the finest aspects of this book is the unpretentious, vigorous, and wholesome style of Russell's writing. This is my first Martin Russell novel. He writes much in the manner of Charlotte Armstrong, and *A Domestic Affair* is, I believe, qualitatively comparable to her suspense classic *A Dram of Poison*. I think I will try to run down another Russell novel.

—Robert W. Rossmiller

Dial N for Nonsense

by Louis Phillips

The Little Brown Book of Anecdotes, edited by Clifton Fadiman, contains a number of references to murders, thefts, smugglers, and even to some writers of detective fiction. Anecdotes are attributed to Erle Stanley Gardner, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Rex Stout, and more. Readers of *The*

Armchair Detective I think will be amused to learn why some of the early writings of Erle Stanley Gardner are so "wordy":

"In the early days of his career, Gardner churned out stories for pulp magazines at the rate of 200,000 words a month. As he was paid by the word, the length of the story was

more important to him than its quality, and he tended to draw the maximum potential from every incident. His villains, for example, were always killed by the last bullet in the gun. Gardner's editor once asked him why his heroes were always so careless with their first five shots. 'At three cents a word,'

replied Gardner, "every time I say *bang* in the story I get three cents. If you think I'm going to finish the gun battle while my hero has got fifteen cents' worth of unexploded ammunition in his gun, you're nuts."

In *The Little Brown Book of Anecdotes*, there is no source given for the above story. Can anyone help substantiate it?

* * * * *

Reference Library

The fan of Dashiell Hammett might be interested to note that the Fall 1985 issue of *The Centennial Review* (published by the College of Arts and Letters at Michigan State University) contains an article by Robert Shulman on "Dashiell Hammett's Social Vision." Shulman tells us that "Dashiell Hammett has suffered from a double stigma. He writes in a popular genre academics for the most part do not take seriously. And during the Cold War his politics were dangerous, and the most promising approach to his fiction was in disrepute. These conditions are changing. We are now in a position to develop the detailed criticism that intelligent evaluation of Hammett's work must be based on."

* * * * *

It's All Latin To Me

Have you ever wondered what some of the classic mystery titles might sound like if they were translated into Latin? Me neither. But Dr. Stanley Schechter, a classics scholar, kindly provides the following titles. Can you translate them?

1. *Caedes in curru ad regionem orientis cursus conficienti*
2. *Induta vestibus albis femina*
3. *Venator canis Baskervillarum*

4. *Filia temporis*
5. *Sponsa induta est veste pulla*

* * * * *

Answers:

1. *Murder on the Orient Express*
2. *The Woman in White*
3. *The Hound of Baskervilles*
4. *The Daughter of Time*
5. *The Bride Wore Black*

Great Moments in the History of Law for Cats

CAT MAY KILL A PIGEON ONCE, BRITISH COURT RULES

London, March 8, 1926. A British Cat has a right to kill pigeons—once—during its walk abroad, and get away with it, is the law of the land as confirmed by the Appellate Court today. Three judges handed down the decision after three King's Counsels had fought out for the last time a case arising from a claim for damages by a pigeon fancier against the owner of a cat which ate 13 of his birds.

Lord Justice Banks, with concurrence of Lord Justices Warrington and Atken, ruled that the owner of a domestic animal is not liable for any damage done by the animal unless he knows beforehand of its dangerous propensities.

"That is the origin of the saying, 'A dog is entitled to its first bite,'" said the Justice. "Until that first bite, it is protected by law. The same argument applies to a cat."

—New York *Herald Tribune*

* * * * *

On the A Train

Mystery Writer Arthur Train
Used his brain

To become Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Mass.

Say, isn't this clerihew a mess?

* * * * *

Do you know Ernest Tidyman?

That man gave me the shaft more than once.

* * * * *

Was Wrong Wrong or Was Wrong Right?

"The detective story has proved capable of high development and has become a definitive art."

—E. M. Wrong

* * * * *

One Plus One Plus One, Etc.

Here is a game you can play with friends or by yourself.

The object is to count words in the titles of published mystery books. You start with a one-word title, then think of a two-word title, then a three-word title, etc. How far can you go? What is the longest published mystery title? Here's a sample list:

- Balcony*
- Beach Girls*
- Big Gold Dream*
- Cats Don't Need Coffins*
- Catch Me If You Can*
- Charles Quarles, College Professor and Master Detective*
- She Sent Her Mother to the Scaffold*

* * * * *

Clerihew #4356784

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle said:
"My readers are hopping mad!
I killed off Holmes. Alas and alack!
Now I'll have to bring the bastard back." □

Letters

From Ben Fisher:

A response to Doug Greene concerning William Austin (*TAD* 19:1). Doug particularly wants bibliographical information. Well, so far as I know, the first hardcover appearance of "Peter Rugg" came in *The Entertaining and Marvellous Repository* (3 vols., Boston: Baker and Alexander, 1827). Also included were German tales, pieces on the Wandering Jew and the Flying Dutchman, and what were often not literally German, but "German" (or Gothic) tales. Thereafter, "Peter Rugg" became a favorite anthology selection. Probably its most recent appearance is in *200 Years of Great American Short Stories* edited by Martha Foley (New York: Galahad Books, 1975). It also appears in several anthologies of American folklore; it has been linked with Gothic tradition, folk writing, and, more recently (in *TAD*), with detective fiction. As Doug writes, it belongs more closely linked with *mystery* than with *detective* writing. I have written the article on

William Austin (1778-1841) that appears in E. F. Bleiler's *Supernatural Fiction Writers* (2 vols., New York: Scribner's, 1985). There I note, in addition to Austin's other features as named just above, his links with traditions of American humor of the Old Southwest. There is a bibliography.

Austin wrote several other stories, the best of them probably being "The Man with the Cloaks" in the *American Monthly Magazine* for January 1836. Involved in legal work for much of his life, Austin was a public figure of renown in Massachusetts. He wrote several nonfiction works—of a generally ponderous tone. His early stay in London provided him material for what amounts to a travel book, but it will never be a bestseller.

In connection with the humor context mentioned above, Austin figures several times into William Van O'Connor's *The Grotesque: An American Genre and Other Essays* (1962). That the Comet Press edition of "Peter Rugg" might give out misinformation (Austin's story



may have been America's first mystery bestseller, although somebody might well check the sales records for the much earlier novels, such as *Wieland*, which has been called the first locked-room story [1798], by Charles Brockden Brown). Just so, another mystery-horror novelette, Clemence Housman's *The Were-Wolf* (1896), is dogged by inaccurate information. Clemence was the sister, not the brother (as she is so often miscalled) of poet-professor A. E. Housman and the writer-graphic artist Laurence Housman. Incidentally, although C. B. Brown is often termed America's first Gothist, an inaccuracy may creep into literary history; William Dunlap brought out Gothic plays (*Fountainville Abbey*, *Ribbembont*, *Leicester*) in the mid-1790s, several years earlier than Brown's work.

From Newton Baird:

I received today a copy of an unattractive paperback entitled *Art in Crime Writing*, published at \$9.95, from a Kermit Hummel, Director, Scholarly and Reference Books Division, of St. Martin's Press. Enclosed were two letters, one a form letter, the other addressed to me. The latter stated that I was being offered, as a contributor of several essays to the second edition of *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, that book at half-price, \$35.00, instead of the publication price of \$70.00. The letter also stated that St. Martin's was "extremely proud to be the publisher of this new edition." They should be. It is a very attractive and valuable reference tool.

The other letter – the form letter – in effect said, whoops, we have just found out that some of you contributors have already bought the book at a 40% discount. (True. As a bookseller, that's what I did. Last fall.) They apologize, and so "to make amends I am sending you a complimentary copy of another publication of ours, *Art in Crime Writing*." This little paperback, with its very unattractive cover, is published at \$9.95.

Now, here's the important matter that was not mentioned in this correspondence: none of the contributors of essays to the second edition of *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers* has been paid for their contributions. When we agreed to write our essays in 1983, we were told we would be paid. The second edition was delayed. But it actually came out earlier than the first edition, which was delayed several years before it appeared. This second edition was delayed only one year. But we were paid for our contributions to the first edition, and promptly. And offered that edition at 50%.

St. Martin's, no matter what its rumored "cash-flow" problems, has treated me cavalierly. I cannot speak for the other contributors, nor for John Reilly, who is a very valuable and efficacious editor of the book. His part in this has been, as always, gentlemanly and helpful. But St. Martin's has delayed; it has been silent through the delays. It has not even acknowledged until now that it owed the contributors anything. This is reprehensible. I hope you will publish this, so that their "pride" in this publication will be qualified by the truth.

* * * * *

From Jane Gottschalk:

TAD 19:1 is another great issue, for which everyone involved should be lauded.

William L. DeAndrea's "J'Accuse" is bright, brash, breezy, and honest, as usual, and it prompts this jotting about *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers*, second edition. Even if he had to pay eighty bucks for the volume, at least he had the assurance that what he wrote was printed. He did note that in such a huge undertaking there are bound to be mistakes. I do not quite admit to a large ego, but I have my share of professional pride in accuracy. Previous associations with St. James of London had

been cordial, but something went amiss with the second edition. Anglo-American relations deteriorated. A minor contributor, I had been asked to update the entry for Ellis Peters; I did so, and sent the partial rewrite and update to John M. Reilly – who is a fine editor, I am certain that he sent it to London, and he does not deserve the headaches he has had with this edition.

When I received the copy I had ordered at a reduced rate (sorry, Bill, but that is one of the perks – and many of us have not yet been paid, even at a rate which probably amounts to two cents an hour), I found that the original entry had not been changed.

Should DeAndrea or any others use the volume as a reference for Ellis Peters, please insert the following:

In the next-to-the-last paragraph, after "None is mawkish or grossly stereotyped," add:

"In *Never Pick Up Hitchhikers*, the clean-cut hitchhiker, Willie Banks, twenty, innocently becomes involved in treacherous mischief and, emerging victorious, might join the police force.

"*Rainbow's End*, the probable end of the Felse series, comes full circle. George Felse is about fifty, a Superintendent, and the rainbow of the title is also the name of the murder victim. A precocious Bossie, going on thirteen, is almost run down by a car when he is returning from a music lesson, and he takes an active part in the detection. His confrontation with the whodunit is in a relic of a Benedictine abbey, the foundations of which are being explored. Felse arrives in time.

"A flourishing Benedictine Abbey in the turbulent twelfth century is the major setting for another favorite subject of Peters: history. Brother Cadfael, her second series detective, is involved in suspenseful nights in medieval Shropshire and Wales; his first chronicle is *A Morbid Taste for Bones*. Amiable and shrewd, Welsh-born Cadfael has crossed the world in the First Crusade and tarried as a sea captain along various coasts for ten years before becoming a Benedictine at the Abbey of St. Peter and Paul in Shrewsbury, where he uses his worldly knowledge as its herbalist. Early in the summer of 1138, the Civil War between King Stephen and claimant Empress Maude brings siege to Shrewsbury by the king in *One Corpse Too Many*. In this, Brother Cadfael meets Hugh Beringar, of whom he later says that they began as "rivals in trickery and ended as allies." Beringar becomes a deputy sheriff, a close friend, and part of the series. *The Virgin in Ice* also centers around the disorders of the war.

"*Monk's Hood*, for which Peters received a Silver Dagger award, concerns the wolfsbane of the title as well as the disguise Cadfael uses to help an adolescent. He has a more personal interest in this murder. He has developed an ointment from the poison for easing painful joints, and it has been used to kill; the victim is the husband of a woman to whom he was engaged before he left on the Crusade.

"The canonical hours of the divine office continue in the abbey, sometimes missed by Brother Cadfael, but interrupted only in *The Sanctuary Sparrow* when a young minstrel seeks asylum from an aroused mob. There are varied needs for Brother Cadfael's healing skills for body and for society. A merchant is killed at *St. Peter's Fair*; *The Leper of St. Giles* gives insight into leprosy and the answer to the murder of an elderly bridegroom before his marriage at the Abbey.

"Ellis Peters has been compared to Mary Stewart, but there are differences; except for *Death Mask*, she has no narrator character and no Gothic heroine. Peters's chase, escape, or confrontation action scenes are well developed, sometimes melodramatic, sometimes as body-punishing as in hardboiled thrillers, but always intriguing parts of plot and setting. In the Cadfael series, as in the Felse Series, she is on the side of the young and also of the oppressed. Exposing the status of women of that time, she creates women who are courageous and intelligent. With 'designed concealment' and suspense, Ellis Peters is a master storyteller."

* * * * *

From Patricia Donahue:

I am a devoted fan of the PBS series *Mystery!* which causes me to thank you for your wonderful article on Jeremy Brett a.k.a. Sherlock Holmes in your fall issue [TAD 19:4]. Rosemary Herbert did a marvelous job of interviewing and gave us rare insights into the development of a complex character. I believe that Brett's performance is the best Holmes I have ever seen. He plays the great detective as one who needs Watson. And as David Burke plays him, it is evident. Watson is a real person, not a buffoon. He is bright, warm, and very knowledgeable about his friend's foibles. The PBS series led me to re-read the original stories and confirmed my feeling that this series is the most faithful to the spirit of the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle stories. Thanks again for the wonderful interview!

* * * * *

From Newton Baird:

I have been collecting material to up-date my 1981 publication *A Key to Fredric Brown's Wonderland*, which has been out-of-print for almost five years. It will be a long time yet probably before I get this material organized in order to begin publishing it. However, there is one error in the book which has embarrassed me since I first spotted it. (It has probably been spotted since by every critical eye that perused the book.) There are a few other errors, but this one, well . . .

This error is on page 19, in the "Chronology" (of Fredric Brown), under 1965. It is in a statement regarding a script that Brown was to write for Roger Vadim, the film director. The entry ends: "Problems arose, Vadim died, and the project was never finished." This should have read: "Problems arose, Brown died, and the project was never finished."

A few people did write and make some angry remarks about this. And, since I don't care much for most of Vadim's films, I suppose I might have been trying subconsciously to kill him off early. But I don't think so. Honestly.

* * * * *

From William White:

During the past two or three years, acts of terrorism—such as hijacking airplanes and even Mediterranean cruise liners, dropping bombs and dynamite in airports, blowing up buildings in London and elsewhere, downing planes in the mid-Atlantic, and exploding cars and trucks outside entrances to buildings in Beirut—certainly seem to be on the increase. In many, if not most, of them, innocent people are killed or seriously wounded; and often the supposed perpetrators are from the Middle East—Muslims, Palestinians (PLO)—or (in England) the IRA (Irish Republican Army).

Whether it takes place on the *Achille Lauro* or in some Khadafy-targeted locale, one aspect seems always there: innocent bystanders suffer. And it has all become so bad that national leaders want to co-operate to make the world safe from terrorists. Thus we are led to believe, from reading newspapers and news magazines and listening to radio and TV, that terrorism was invented in the 1980s. It's not a new invention at all.

Back in 1913, Ernest Bramah, the creator of the blind detective Max Carrados, wrote a story, "The Mystery of the Signals," for a London weekly newspaper, *The News of the World*, which appeared on August 24 and 31, 1913. Retitled "The Knight's Cross Signal Problem," it was published in Bramah's *Max Carrados* (London: Methuen, 1914), pp. 25-65, and is included in E. F. Bleiler's edition of *Best Max Carrados Detective Stories* (New York: Dover, 1972), pp. 15-39. Central to the short story is an act of terrorism which occurred no less than 73 years ago, and, as E. F. Bleiler says, "Carrados's adventures, too, have a freshness to us that is probably greater than it was to his contemporaries." This is certainly true of "The Knight's Cross Signal Problem."

Even more pointedly, Julian Symons

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comments in *Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel: A History* (New York: Viking, 1985), pp. 79-80: "Unlike most crime writers, Bramah sometimes linked his stories to actual social events of the period. In 'The Knight's Cross Signal Problem' the young Indian Drishna responds to [Louis] Carlyle's [Bramah's 'eyes'] indignation about his terrorist act of causing a rail crash by asking: 'Do you realize, Mr. Carlyle, that you and your Government and your soldiers are responsible for the death of thousands of innocent men and women in my country every day?'"

The perpetrator of this act of terrorism, a young Indian from Bengal named Drishna, had caused a train accident on an English railway in which 27 were killed, more than forty injured, of which eight later died. This fictional re-enactment of a real-life 1913 event is so well told by Ernest Bramah that it could just as well be on the Orient Express in Greece or Italy in 1986.

"The Knight's Cross Signal Problem" makes as exciting, up-to-date reading in today's times of terrorism as it must have been for those who picked up their copies of *The News of the World* in England in 1913.

* * * * *

From Donald S. Davidson:

I can't tell you how disappointed I was to see that you have dropped "Classic Corner" in favor of more pages of Current Reviews. Your magazine was the only source of impossible-to-locate short stories which very few of us will ever own or expect to see reprinted. Unfortunately, short stories are never commercially viable, and their sources are becoming all too scarce.

Ironically, Chicago's largest fantasy and mystery outlet, Bob Weinberg, just dropped *Fantasy Review* because it went in too heavily for book reviews at the expense of general-interest material.

Are you next going to drop "Collecting Mystery Fiction"? The two sections are related.

Please reconsider your decision!

✓ *When we did our survey of readers some time ago, it was made abundantly clear to us that readers wanted more reviews. Over and over again, they asked for more reviews. What's a poor editor to do? At any rate, let us consider that "Classic Corner" is on hiatus, not cancelled.*

And I can assure you that the only way "Collecting Mystery Fiction" will disappear is through an act of supernatural happenstance.

—Michael

* * * * *

From Carl A. Melton:

I just received my first issue of TAD [19:2]. Being a nice day today, I spent the afternoon on the patio devouring every bit of it from cover to cover. It's a fabulous magazine. I enjoyed every bit of it.

The Checklist is great. I can now fill in a big gap in my reading list.

I agree with everything which Richard Meyers said in "TAD on TV." The shows I like are *Scarecrow* and *Mrs. King, Moon-*

lighting, and *Murder, She Wrote*, and Powers Booth is doing a great job as Philip Marlowe in HBO's *Philip Marlowe, Private Eye*.

The editors of TAD need to go over the magazine more carefully before they send it out. There are mistakes all over the place.

I was disappointed to read Judith Wanhala's letter about not renewing her subscription when I enjoyed my first issue. You have to admit that she is right. In viewing the titles of the back issue, I could see that 90% of the articles are about male writers. You did not answer her question at the end of the first paragraph:

Where are the women?

✓ *I'm glad you enjoy TAD, and appreciate hearing from you.*

As to the "mistakes" you found all over the place, it would be nice to know which and/or what you found in error. No matter, though; we will do our best to make the magazine as error-free as possible, even if that means copy-editing letters to the editor.

As to the location of the women. We did not respond in the last issue because, frankly, I thought it was beside the point. However, your reiteration of the matter leads me to assume that perhaps it should be addressed. So...

Unless an issue of THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE has been designed around a particular point or point of view, we pay little, if any, attention to such matters as the sex of the writer or the subject. If an article is good, and appeals to the mystery aficionado, we feel that is sufficient to warrant publication. Material is neither accepted nor rejected based on sex. Indeed, if that were a consideration in our deliberations, it would be sexism of the worst sort.

Our policy, now nineteen years old, is simply to read everything submitted to us and then to publish the best of what we have received. We do not commission any of our articles. It is up to you, as reader/contributors, to provide the material from which we choose.

Over those same years, TAD has been accused of being too hardboiled, too cozy, too male, too female, too this or too that. In every case, it simply reflects the interests of the readers interested in contributing. A magazine can do no more than reflect its readers' tastes.

—Michael

* * * * *

From Mary Morman:

If any of your readers are fans of Elizabeth Peters and Barbara Michaels, they may be interested in a newsletter that I publish two or three times a year. It's called, obviously, *The Friends of Elizabeth Peters Newsletter*, and free copies are available to anyone who sends me a SASE (and an interested letter?). Donations of stamps are also gratefully accepted. The newsletter contains reviews, articles, interviews, letters, and information on upcoming publications by our favorite author. To obtain your copy, send SASE to me at 1802 Sanford Road, Silver Spring, MD 20902. □

Minor Offenses

by Edward D. Hoch

John Lutz's recent Edgar Award for his short story "Ride the Lightning" in the January 1985 issue of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* not only paid tribute to a fine American mystery writer but also marked the first Edgar victory for AHMM. It's been thirty long and frustrating years for the magazine and its various editors—William Manners, G. F. Goster, Ernest M. Hutter, Eleanor Sullivan, and Cathleen Jordan—and we're happy to see an AHMM story win an Edgar at last. The story, an excellent one about Lutz's popular private eye Nudger, is symbolic of the magazine's receptiveness to this particularly American form of the detective story. Our congratulations to John and to Cathleen.



Speaking of the Edgar Awards, this column doesn't usually comment on recent novels, but there are two which might be of special interest to short-story readers. Lawrence Block's *When the Sacred Ginmill Closes* (Arbor House, \$16.95) is a novelization of his Edgar-winning 1984 short story "By the Dawn's Early Light," suitably expanded and with subplots added. The result is one of the best Matt Scudder novels, as successful in its own way as was the original story. The other recent novel is *Come Morning* by Joe Gores (The Mysterious Press, \$15.95). Though the plots and characters here are different, readers will find echoes of Joe's 1969 Edgar-winning short story "Goodbye, Pops" in the final chapters of this book.

There can be little doubt that the American private eye is staging a comeback. The last two Edgar Awards have gone to the private eye stories mentioned above, and about the time you read this the second anthology of the Private Eye Writers of America, *Down Mean Streets*, will be published by The Mysterious Press. Also notable is the fact

that a slick magazine as prestigious as *Redbook* has launched a series of short stories about Sue Grafton's private detective Kinsey Millhone, one of the best of the female eyes. Kinsey Millhone has already appeared in three successful Grafton novels, and her first short adventure, "She Didn't Come Home," was in *Redbook's* April issue. It's a very good mystery, surprising but solvable, with a particularly feminine clue. We'll be watching for more in *Redbook* soon.

While we're on the subject, the fourth issue of *The New Black Mask* continues the publication's improvement. The opening interview this time is with Loren D. Estleman, and it's followed by a new Amos Walker novelette, "Blond and Blue." Along with stories by George V. Higgins and myself, there are several by newer writers Joseph L. Koenig, Mark Coggins, David A. Bowman, and Mike Handley, as well as the conclusion of the Jim Thompson serial that's been appearing here.

Some credit for the growing interest in the American private eye must go to the Private Eye Writers of America, which has presented its Shamus Awards to the year's best novels and short stories at the last four annual Bouchercons. This year in Baltimore, where Bouchercon XVII will be held at the Sheraton Inner Harbor Hotel from October 10 to 12, PWA will have some competition. After years of discussion, mystery fandom will present its own awards, to be called the Anthonys in honor of Anthony Boucher. All nominating and voting will be by members of the convention, with awards for the best books, short stories, television shows, and films to be presented at the Awards Luncheon on Sunday, October 12. Along with the MWA Edgar, the PWA Shamus, the EQMM Readers Award, and the recently announced short story award by the Mystery Readers of America, this means there will be five



separate awards each year for the best mystery short story.

One of the best of recent anthologies is a Penguin Books original, *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, edited by Richard Lancelyn Green (\$4.95). These eleven stories, by authors ranging from Ronald A. Knox and Vincent Starrett to Adrian Conan Doyle and Julian Symons, present some memorable Holmes pastiches by amateurs and professionals alike. Both familiar and unknown stories are included, and the result is a delight for Holmes fans.

Eleanor Sullivan has edited *Ellery Queen's Blighted Dwellings* (Davis, \$3.50), a fine collection of 23 stories, mainly from EQMM. The locales of the title range from haunted houses to vanished apartments, rendered by EQMM regulars such as Ruth Rendell, George Baxt, Jack Ritchie, Joyce Harrington, and others, along with classic mysteries by Carr, Queen, and Simenon, and a pair of even older gems by Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Honoré de Balzac. You may want to read these on a sunny day in the park rather than alone at home.

The idea of a mystery anthology containing a detective for each letter of the alphabet might sound like too much of a gimmick, but it works quite well in *Detectives A to Z*, a hardcover volume edited by Frank D. McSherry, Jr., Martin H. Greenberg, and Charles G. Waugh (Bonanza, \$8.95). The sleuths range from Lew Archer to Sidney Zoom, and the 26 stories include a variety of types and lengths, with space even for Ellery Queen's memorable short novel "The Lamp of God."

Last year's winner of the EQMM Readers Award, Clark Howard, has another memorable story in that magazine's June issue. "The Last One To Cry" could well be remembered by readers when this year's voting time rolls around. □

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The Paperback Revolution

by Charles Shibuk

R. T. CAMPBELL (RUTHVEN TODD)

Some of John Dickson Carr's ingenuity hovers over *Unholy Dying* (1945) (Dover). It's set at a convention of geneticists and involves two cyanide murders that could have been committed by anyone. This novel introduces the eccentric botanist Professor John Stubbs, who bears more than a passing resemblance to Dr. Gideon Fell. Stubbs bellows, smokes like a chimney, guzzles copious quantities of beer, and drives less efficiently than Gervaise Fen. He also detects in the classical tradition.

JOHN DANIEL

Not many debut novels are issued in trade paperback format, but *Play Melancholy Baby* (Perseverance Press, 1986) is a happy exception. It's set in 1977 California, and its crime-fiction elements involve the murder of an unlikable piano player that's solved by another member of his profession—who also narrates.

Play Melancholy Baby is an ambitious work, but it's not an unqualified success. It is a fresh, well-written, and invigorating work that gives promise of even better things to come.

HOWARD ENGEL

The Ransom Game (1981) (Penguin) revolves around a long-missing \$500,000 used as the payoff in a successful kidnapping several years ago.

This is a competent but standard first-person private eye tale the only unusual feature of which is its Canadian setting. It's the third outing for Benny Cooperman, and easily superior to his debut novel—the over-praised *The Suicide Murders*. *The Ransom Game* is also surprisingly soft-boiled—almost to the point of gentility.

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

If you are interested in maximum dialogue (with minimal descriptions), a rapid storytelling pace, legal ingenuity, and courtroom pyrotechnics, you can't do better than try the work of this author.

The Case of the Shoplifter's Shoe (1938) (Ballantine) is average late-'30s Gardner, and involves a well-to-do, elderly lady who's the very obvious chief suspect in a murder case, and furthermore seems to be troubled by amnesia. Needless to say, her defense counsel is Perry Mason.

MICHAEL GILBERT

The Crack in the Teacup (1966) (Perennial) stars young, inexperienced solicitor Anthony Brydon, and deals with small-town corruption that ultimately leads to murder. This novel has received praise for its characterizations and surprise ending.

The Family Tomb (1969) (Perennial), originally published in England as *The Etruscan Net*, is set in Florence, and its protagonist, the British rare-book seller Robert Broke, finds himself mixed up in an intrigue of "tomb-robbing and the illegal sale of art objects."

This veteran author is one of our very best contemporary mystery writers, but he is not at the top of his form here. These two novels, however, will provide substantial satisfaction.

RICHARD LANCELYN GREEN (editor)

The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (Penguin, 1985) is the first major anthology of pastiches devoted to the Master since Ellery Queen's *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes* was issued in 1944. Eleven stories include efforts by Ronald Knox, Stuart Palmer, Julian Symons, and Adrian Conan Doyle, as well as Vincent Starrett's familiar and marvelous "The Unique Hamlet." Another story, Arthur Whitaker's "The Man Who Was Wanted," was once erroneously believed to have been an authentic but minor Doyle effort. The remaining five stories (and their authors) are completely unfamiliar to me. No doubt about it. The game is afoot.

PALMA HARCOURT

The fair sex is not usually conspicuous for its mastery of the current spy story.

Harcourt's *A Turn of Traitors* (1981) (Jove) involves the illegitimate son of a notorious British defector—terminally ill near Moscow—and his quest to recover his father's secret, which is of vital importance to British security. Straightforward, crystal-clear plotting, well-turned characterizations, and a rapid pace contribute to a very good performance in a currently overworked genre.

C. DALY KING

Obelists Fly High (1935) (Dover) starts with an epilogue wherein series character Michael Lord is nearly shot to death. A flashback tells the story of a famous surgeon racing via airplane to save the life of his influential brother—even though he himself is

threatened with murder. A final prologue resolves all problems.

King was perhaps the most erratic and enigmatic mystery writer in the genre. At his best (and that was very good indeed), he was not quite the equal of Carr, Queen, or Christie, but there were times when he came very close, as in *Obelists Fly High*—his best novel—a brilliant work written with the verve and assurance of a master.

KAY NOLTE SMITH

Catching Fire (1982) (PaperJacks) centers around an off-Broadway theatre which is an unwilling target for union organization of its dedicated (and mostly amateur) workers. It has good writing and pacing, an appealing narrative, and readability, but such sensational elements as opposing groups of gangsters, and threats of violence and murder, somehow just don't quite coalesce into a unified whole.

DOUGLAS TERMAN

It looks like World War III will soon be launched in 1962 as the Americans are about to discover that Russians have placed nuclear missiles in nearby Cuba in *Shell Game* (1985) (Pocket Books).

This is possibly the longest (530 pages of small type) novel reviewed in this column, and one wishes that it were more tightly constructed, with a narrower focus. There is enough action and violence, however, to satisfy the most demanding advocate of the suspense-thriller form.

HERBERT van THAL (editor)

The Mammoth Book of Great Detective Stories (Salem House, 1985) consists of *The First* (1976), *Second* (1977), *Third* (1978), and *Fourth* (1979) *Bedside Book of Great Detective Stories*.

It appears that great effort was taken to select stories both little-known and meritorious, and about a third of these 35 short works are unfamiliar to this columnist. The results are impressive.

Authors include Wilkie Collins, L. T. Meade, Arnold Bennett, P. D. James, June Thomson, John Wainwright, Sayers, Christie, Crofts, Simenon, Chandler, and a rare non-Saint story by Leslie Charteris.

(NOTE: Although his name appears on the front cover and the acknowledgements page, Julian Symons is unrepresented in this anthology.) □

Catalogue of Crime

by Jacques Barzun

5310 Lloyd Biggle, Jr.
The Quallsford Inheritance
St. Martin's 1985

A cut above the many book-length imitations of the Sherlock Holmes adventures, this tale omits Dr. Watson altogether and substi-

tutes a near alter-ego of the Master. The murders they investigate together result from the efforts of a decaying "squire family" to

recoup their fortunes and support the villagers around them. Some fair detection and a few strong characters repay the reading, which goes at a deliberate pace. Holmes has a few "moments," and the language is almost, but not quite, free of anachronisms. Connoisseurs may enjoy, and will respect, but will not rave.

S311 Peter Corris
The Dying Trade
McGraw-Hill (Australia) 1980

Evidently, Lew Archer—or is it Phil Marlowe?—has emigrated to the Antipodes or got himself reincarnated there as Clifford Hardy, who is the first-person narrator of this tough down-under caper. Blackmail, drugs, incest, revenge, police corruption, and the approved ways of bullying or tricking people into "talking" are all there. But where is Australia? The telling of the intricate plot is well managed, there is good writing, some wit, suspense, and surprise, a bit of sex, and much resentment against wealth, stylishness, and higher education. Who says our distant cousins have not caught on to the spirit of modern culture?



S312 Dick Francis
The Danger
Michael Joseph 1983

After a disappointing attempt at "psychology" and novel-writing in *Banker*, this admirable storyteller has returned to the genre of which he is a master. The danger here is kidnapping, and the hero heads a firm dedicated to preventing, or rather, overcoming it. This cryptic report is due to the necessity of concealing the nub of an original plot. Yes, there are horses: for the rest, go to the book and be gripped.

S313 John Gale
Spare Time for Murder
Macmillan 1961

Misidentification by the color and model of a motorcar is a new risk; it serves to create trouble for the elegant young man who arrives at an English pub to investigate, secretly, a factory suspected of bad behavior—or rather, its elderly owner and his beautiful girl assistant for technology are the suspects. The girl at once sleeps with the undercover (naturally!) agent, who proceeds to take violent steps on behalf of the Navy and puts an end to the treasonable acts. The dénouement is also violent but hardly a surprise. Although not original, the tale has style, and its atmosphere is free of the usual fake solemnity of espionage.

S314 P. D. James
"The Art of the Detective Novel"
Journal of the Royal Society of Arts
London, August 1984, pp. 637-49

Devotees of this distinguished author will want to look up her lecture on technique,

which is not the usual pap that crime writers dish out to general audiences. Mrs. James's judgments of other writers are also original, and a further pleasure is afforded by the report of the delightful discussion that ensued. Members and guests of the Royal Society are not shy and they know what they are talking about.

S315 Stuart M. Kaminsky
Red Chameleon
Scribner's 1985

This second tale about Inspector Porfiriy Petrovich Rostnikov (his first two names are from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*) is less satisfying than the first—not because it is less revealing about life in Moscow today, but because the subject lends itself to the unfortunate practice that crime-fiction writers fall into, of yanking at the heart-strings in order to make the reader feel. We feel sufficiently at the mere description of the fate of the modest Soviet citizen, especially when Jewish and poor. The same goes for the lower ranks of the bureaucracy, represented here by the Inspector. Everybody is afraid, put upon, suffering in one way or another—and stoical. Inside this organized oppression is a story within a story: an ancient betrayal at the heart of a contemporary murder. The telling is splendid, and the characters would not be easily forgotten even if the author did not harp on their torments.

S316 Richard M. Levine
Bad Blood (title from the rock song)
Random House 1982

Half fiction and half straight reporting, this able work reconstructs the murder by a teenaged girl of her adoptive parents in California. The motives that impelled Marlene Olive and her somewhat older boyfriend Chuck Riley to discuss the act, and that made her commit it, are convincingly set forth. Levine is a freelance journalist, but his is not a journalistic voice; he never forces the note, and when toward the end all the words and facts are documented by court records and interviews, we are ready to accept the whole as the excellent piece of "true crime" that it is.

S317 Thomas Patrick McMahon
The Issue of the Bishop's Blood
Doubleday 1972

A professional, small-time investigator named Peck is pressured by a Catholic bishop into finding out whether a woman who claims to have stigmata and to perform miracles is genuine. That is a very good *donnée*, but the working out is unconvincing, largely because of the striving for sensationalism. The author, a police magistrate not far from New York City, has also written *Jink* and *The Hubschmann Effect*.

S318 Thomas T. Noguchi (with Joseph DiMona)
Coroner at Large
Simon and Schuster 1985

Dr. Noguchi, who was Chief Medical Examiner of Los Angeles County, resigned

amid the controversy detailed in an earlier work entitled *Coroner*. "At large" in this new title means that the author discusses cases outside his one-time jurisdiction. His co-author no doubt provided the enveloping journalese lingo, but the technical descriptions and the reasoning stand out in clear, straight prose. The two most interesting subjects are the Jean Harris and the Jacobsen cases. In the first, Noguchi points out the prosecution's weakness: he believes that Mrs. Harris told the truth and was wrongly convicted. In the second, he speculates persuasively about the persons and events in the strange apartment house on East 84th Street, Manhattan, where Tupper was brutally murdered. Jack the Ripper is merely retold and rather vaguely discussed. The rest is bits and pieces, not without interest.

S319 Frank Parrish
Bait on the Hook
Dodd, Mead 1983

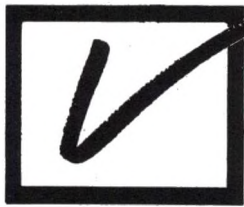
Dan Mallett is a Robin Hood in dungarees. Once a respectable bank clerk, he now prefers to live by doing odd jobs, chiefly agricultural, coupled with illegal tricks designed to take down the well-to-do and redress the wrongs of the poor and humble. In addition, though he is small and dapper—not a bruiser—Mallett is a Don Juan: while he and a babysitter are making love, a murder is committed, and he is badgered (not quite believably) into finding the culprit. This he does, not by ingenuity, but by going about and about. Mallett appears in several other, very similar, adventures.

S320 Patricia Roberts
Tender Prey
Doubleday 1983

Highly praised for its "psychology," this tale puts us inside the mind of a pathological killer who marries, kidnaps, kills a child, and is rather routinely tracked down by the police. The dreary consciousness of the "hero," filthy in contents and absurd in its self-righteousness, gives the pretty young woman author the opportunity to wallow in obscenities. Reading the book confirms the generality that studies of the abnormal mind are acceptable and interesting only when written by a good psychiatrist or a great novelist.

S321 Eric Wright
Smoke Detector
Scribner's 1984

We find Inspector Charlie Salter in his Toronto manor again, bothered this time by a case of arson that caused the death of a grubby second-hand dealer. Half the book is police procedure that takes us back to an old series of incidents involving a Japanese collection of artifacts. The other half deals with Charlie's domestic worries: his wife works and he resents the fact; his son reads pornography and he does not know what a father should do about it. Not bad storytelling, but no great thrills or surprises. The earlier *Night the Gods Smiled* was rather livelier. □



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by M.S. Cappadonna

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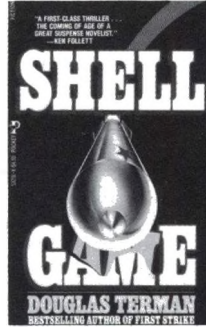
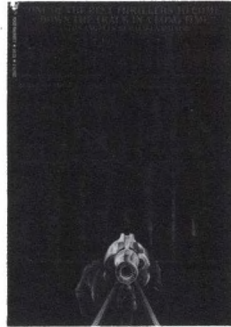
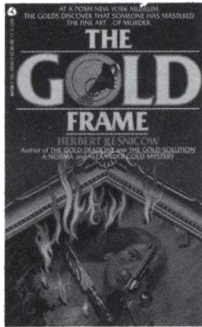
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