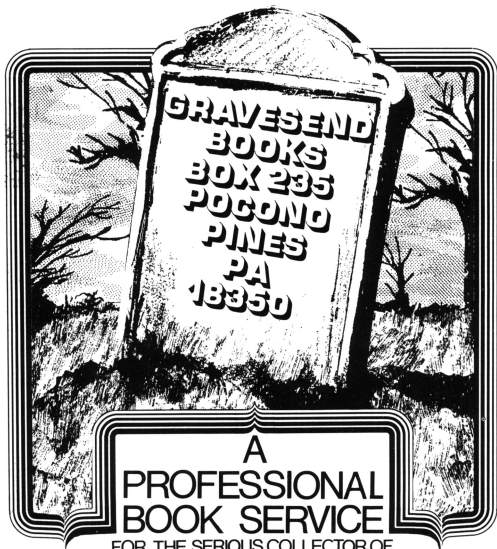


THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE





FOR THE SERIOUS COLLECTOR OF
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AND ANALYTICAL MATERIAL ON THE GENRE

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THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

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THE UNEASY CHAIR

Dear TADian,

The cover of this issue of *The Armchair Detective* suggests the subject of the lead articles—Mickey Spillane, one of the most successful and influential mystery writers of this century. Ignored or maligned by critics ever since he produced *I, the Jury*, he has outlasted them all. His work is still in print after thirty years, a sign of popular success that remains indisputable. While he may not appeal to the taste of all mystery readers (but then, name an author who does), it is an injustice to fail to recognize the fact that he was once the most widely read author in the literary history of the United States, and that he nearly single-handedly kept alive the tradition of detective fiction in the United States during the late 1940's and early 1950's.

* * * * *

We are giving serious consideration to the initiation of a new service for readers of TAD. Beginning with the next issue, which we *guarantee* will be published in January, we would like to make the following offer: any book advertised in TAD will be available from our new "Book Service" department. It is obvious that, if you are near a major bookstore, or especially one of the specialty stores featuring mysteries, you may simply stop in and pick up a copy of an advertised title. If, however, the books are inaccessible in any of the usual channels, you will be able to order it through the mail from TAD.

What do you think? Let's hear from you. If response is positive, we'll outline the full plan in the next issue. If it is negative, we'll just drop it. As most of you know, I also run a specialized mystery bookshop and would fill orders through it.

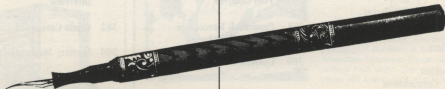
* * * * *

If you are a little surprised to be getting this issue of TAD so soon on the heels of the previous issue, imagine how surprised we are! This should get us back on schedule and we will make every effort to remain on it. This will assist contributors to know their deadlines and will give advertisers more precise ideas about when their advertisements will appear. Furthermore, it will give subscribers some vague idea about when to expect their issues to turn up in the mailbox. The next issue (Vol. 13, No. 1) should be in your hands by the end of January, and then every three months at regular intervals. Okay, that's the plan, now let's see what happens. I guarantee you that we'll do our best to fulfill these goals.

And thank you, again and again, for your patient understanding of our problems during the past year. For every nasty letter or telephone call there were a dozen sympathetic ones, and it would be impossible to fully describe our sense of elation when we received "thank you" letters or words of encouragement. Many loyal TADians have encouraged friends to become subscribers, or given a subscription as a gift. This is a blessing for us. The huge price hike that went into effect more than a year ago has helped alleviate some of the steady flow of red ink—enough so that there is a chance (though we won't know for sure until the end of the year) that we may break even for the year. This is both heartening and necessary for the continued publication of this journal. I don't think I'm being overly optimistic by saying that its future seems assured, now and for the succeeding year, if things continue as positively as they have been. Thank you all.

Mysteriously yours,

Otto Penzler
Otto Penzler



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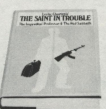
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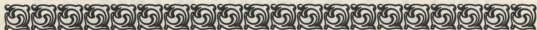
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Just a Writer Working for a Buck

By Michael Barson



It may be hard to feel sorry for a guy who's sold over a hundred million books worldwide, acted in films and top television series like *Columbo*, appeared in several commercials as a spokesman for beer, and been written up in *People* magazine—but, doggone it, I'm beginning to feel sorry for Mickey Spillane. The man simply gets no respect. What's worse, he gets derision.

Ever since his career began back in 1948 with the publication of his sensational—and violent—*I, the Jury*, Mickey Spillane has been the target of an unending series of attacks upon his writing ability, sanity, personality, appearance, and so on and on. Okay, his style is easily parodied (sometimes, unintentionally, by himself); his membership in the Jehovah's Witnesses religious sect qualifies him as something of a fanatic; his "Hey, Doll" machismo has badly dated; he dresses (according to his wife) like Rudi of Poland; and he sometimes gets carried away a bit with graphic (some would say loving) descriptions of mayhem and gore in his novels. Is that any reason not to let your sister marry him?

Malcolm Cowley . . . John Cawelti . . . George Grella . . . Christopher La Farge: These are just a few of the critics who have taken Spillane to task over the years for real or imagined offenses. Cowley's famous diatribe in the 11 February 1952 *New Republic* entitled "Sex Murder Incorporated" psychoanalyzed Spillane's most famous creation, private detective Mike Hammer, as "a dangerous paranoiac" with "strong homosexual tendencies" which, because he suppresses them, "drive him into acts of violence." Cowley concluded by suggesting that Mike Hammer's sadistic behavior might well be a contributing factor to the rise in violent crimes in real life. The title of Christopher La Farge's 1953 *Saturday Review* piece, "Mickey Spillane and His Bloody Hammer," pretty much spoke for itself; the response from readers (to judge from a subsequent letters page) was in whole-hearted support of

La Farge's indictment of "the Spillane menace." Even literary critic George Grella, who had the advantage of perspective in his classic 1970 essay "Murder and the Mean Streets," introduced Spillane as "the man who represents the perversion of the American detective novel," whose hero "has descended to the bully, the sadist, the voyeur, no longer a hero at all, but merely a villain who claims the right always to be right."

None of the above statements is totally inaccurate; but there is something in the viciousness of their tone that is repelling, even more repelling than the viciousness of Mike Hammer.

What is there about Mickey Spillane that sets people off so? The man himself has few pretensions: in a 1972 interview in *Gallery* magazine he described himself as "the chewing gum of American literature." Maybe . . . but no one gets mad at chewing gum, except when it's stuck to one's shoes. Have critics been stepping in wads of Spillane paperbacks?

What's even more unjust is the neglect, if not outright disrespect, shown Spillane by the mystery-fan community. True, Spillane possessed little of the craftsmanship of a Sayers or a Christie in plotting his work; and his characterization was neither as deft as James Cain's, as compassionate as Raymond Chandler's, nor as economical as Dashiell Hammett's. But neither are those writers' styles as powerful, as vivid, as passionate as Spillane's. His vision of the world may be obsessive and paranoid—perhaps even insane—but Spillane's madness is inspired to the extent that he believes in those warped visions. (His best work, his first seven novels, have dated less than his later, more sophisticated work precisely because of the conviction with which he created them.) Max Allan Collins understood this, to judge by the remarks he made in the July 1978 *TAD*; Michael Avallone also understood, when he named *I, the Jury* as the fourth most important hard-

boiled detective novel *ever* in a recent issue of *Xenophile*.

But for every Collins and Avallone there are fifty fans of the genre who would sooner write off Spillane as a fascist sickie than read one of those raw, early works to discover the impact they yet contain. Politics are important when it comes to judging politicians, but I doubt whether we are justified in mocking Spillane just because he never adhered to the fashionable liberalism of Chandler. It is more than a little ironic that Spillane's most immediate influence, Carroll John Daly, has suffered an even more severe case of neglect since his days of headlining *Black Mask* and *Dime Detective*. Spillane, at least, remains visible via his media appearances (however disappointing they might be) just as his work remains in print (*I, the Jury* had gone through 77 printings the last time I looked)—but the consensus opinion that his work, for all its sales, isn't worth a damn bothers me a lot. More, I'm certain, than it bothers Spillane, whose attitude has always been "Let's Hope It Gets Lousy Reviews."

* * * * *

I wasn't feeling sorry for Mickey Spillane when I flew out to his Murrell's Inlet beach house to interview him in the spring of 1976. Far from it; I was in awe of the man. A graduate student who was writing his thesis on "The Apocalyptic Vision of Mickey Spillane," I was still in a state of shock from his having invited me to come down in person when I wrote to him requesting a phone interview. His physical characteristics did nothing to diminish that awe: a barrel chest big enough for two men; bright Irish eyes; and the Spillane trademark, an iron-grey crew-cut. I had brought a six-pack of Pabst's Blue Ribbon beer with me, acting on the advice of a local shopkeeper, but I could have saved the two dollars: his refrigerator was loaded to the gills with the stuff. A token six-pack of Miller's Lite, the beer for which Spillane shills on TV, lay neglected in a corner.

There was little doubt from the first who was going to control that interview. Although I had meticulously prepared eight pages of expert, "tough" questions ("How about that charge Malcolm Cowley made about Mike Hammer's being a repressed homosexual?"), Spillane had enough years of experience being interviewed to know when to talk and when to play dumb ("Malcolm who?"). When I wanted to talk about Mike Hammer's politics, Spillane gave me his sales figures. When I wanted to hear about his war experiences, Spillane ran off a skein of anecdotes about Hollywood. When I asked about the effect joining the Jehovah's Witnesses had upon the content of his later books, Spillane told me about the famous people who were fans of his. When I asked about sales, Spillane gave me politics. And so it went.

I learned very quickly that I had been kidding myself by expecting to pin down Spillane on areas that other interviewers had tried, and failed, to obtain straight answers. It is one thing to phrase a question about Mike Hammer's misogynistic treatment of women while one is sitting in Bowling Green, Ohio, and quite another to

deliver it face-to-face. Spillane treated any question that made him uncomfortable either as a joke or an irrelevancy, and I simply lacked the confidence in myself to repeat them more than a couple of times. Thus, the truth about Spillane's war experiences (which may or may not have a bearing upon Mike Hammer's war-traumatized behavior in the early books, particularly *One Lonely Night*) remain unanswered, as do most of the other really juicy lines of inquiry I tried to develop.

For all that I failed, though, the interview was not a total loss. Spillane talked into the tape recorder for more than five hours over a two-day period, and while much of what he said was a reprise from earlier interviews, a significant amount was (as far as I know) fresh, virgin information. Because Spillane and I drank pretty much non-stop for the two days (he won) I was obliged to edit down the 206 pages of transcript fairly heavily to get something even vaguely coherent. (The original tapes and transcript are available in the Bowling Green University library archives.) Not on the tapes are several interesting anecdotes that Spillane didn't want printed, including the plot to a horror novel he had been writing, as well as several hours of Spillane's energetic attempts to convert me to the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses. (I found their belief that the world was due for imminent, fiery destruction useful in analyzing some of Mike Hammer's more outre visions, cf. *Kiss Me, Deadly*.) But I did preserve Spillane's marvelously obscene recitation of "The Raven," as well as a spirited (and very inebriated) rendition of his favorite poem, "Gunga Din."

* * * * *

What this all adds up to is this: Spillane may no longer have his creative juices flowing, may no longer be a force on the mystery scene, may only be a shell of a former self that came close to being an authentically outrageous American hero. Okay: his day has come and gone.

But let's not pretend his day never was. Can't we take a moment off from our lionizing of the acerbic Chandler and the pitying Macdonald (Ross, that is) to allow that Spillane, more than any other writer in his field, managed to confront the dark side of the American psyche? This is the other side to idealism and humanism, and it is not pretty to look at: but it's there. Spillane never treated this darkness with irony, probably never understood the madness it implied, but with the early Mike Hammer he gave us a view of the nastier side of ourselves that is no less true for being disgusting and horrifying. America the beautiful is also America the hateful.

Maybe that's what bothers so many people so much about the work of Mickey Spillane. Writing directly from his subconscious, Spillane showed us an ugliness, an insanity that is repelling: The shock of recognition.

In the interview which follows, I = interviewer, S = Mickey Spillane, and square brackets contain information supplied by the interviewer.

I: You were starting to tell me how unexpectedly *I, the Jury* took off.

S: It wasn't unexpected for me. It was turned in to E.P. Dutton and I got a \$1,000 advance for the book, which was almost unheard of at the time.

I: You had completed it?

S: Oh, yeah, sure—I'd never turn in anything with two chapters and a resume. I'd feel silly. In fact, it was the shortest book I ever wrote. Rosco Fawcett had a great deal of confidence in it and told them [Signet] to put out a million or a million and a half copies. Somebody in the hierarchy there didn't bother doing it—they only put out a couple hundred thousand—and it went so quickly. There was no advertising on the book, it was all word of mouth. And the guys that didn't do the job right took an awful beating, they lost their bonuses and everything else, from what I understand. Now, my book had been rejected by seven publishers.

I: *I, the Jury*?

S: *I, the Jury*. It finally got to the right hands and every one of the seven who rejected that book wanted to cut their throats later. They thought I was a crass young writer—vulgar. However, the public took it. And I didn't write down to the public. I was only writing down to the editors. The editors aren't as smart as the public; if they were, they would have bought the book. Do you want to know who Mike Hammer really is? Back in 1946 I was going to put out a comic book called "Mike Danger." Here's the cover from it.

I: Why didn't you show me this when I had some film in my camera?

S: Comic books fall apart and I took Mike Danger and made him into Mike Hammer. There it is.

I: Who is this artist here? Sahle?

S: That was Harry Sahle, he's dead now.

I: Who was going to publish this, hopefully?

S: We were.

I: You had your own comic book company?

S: We were all set to go.

I: A lot of independents came out right after the war.

S: But most of their sales were to the military, like Navy bases. And they hadn't taken up redistribution and things were falling apart fast. So we had just started the western and love comics, which caught on big right after that, and I turned "Mike Danger" into *I, the Jury*. Took me nine days.

I: Nine days . . . that was time well spent!

S: Guys would come in, they'd sit there and thumb my pages. "Hey, listen to this," and they'd all listen. They're really hopping around, reading my sex scenes out loud to each other.

I: "Mike Danger, Private Eye."

S: Wouldn't he make a good Mike Hammer?

I: Yeah . . . but not as good as you.

S: There was a great book . . . the second book I wrote, but they rejected it.

I: *My Gun Is Quick*?

S: No, this was *The Twisted Thing*. It was the second book I ever wrote but it didn't get published for 18 years. *The Twisted Thing* was a true story, but I turned it in and they said it was too fictitious. Then about six months later *Life* did a story about this kid, the history of his life. Now they want the book back but I said no, forget it, because under my contract I could now sell that book to anyone. Oh, they wanted that book bad—so I held it over their heads for 18 years. And when they got it they paid dearly for it.

I: Well, that answers one of the questions I was going to ask you, about the three-year gap between *I, the Jury* and *My Gun Is Quick*. I don't know if this is true or not; it said on the back of one of your books that you used to pound out 10,000 words a night when you were in the right mood.

S: It's easy to do. I still do it. It only takes me two weeks to write a book.

I: Is it true you write the endings first?

S: Sure, I always do. The reason you do the ending first, you know where you're going but you don't know how you're going to get there. Getting there is part of the fun of writing, if there is any fun in it. In a mystery story, the book is all going to be recapitulation anyway except the tail end. So you have your synopsis practically written for you. Now when I get to the end I'll change it a little bit—whatever happens might necessitate a change—but essentially the thing will go right on to the end. It's handy because by the time you get all worn out writing a book, you put a nice fresh ending on it.

I: Here's another quote I dug up: "If it needs to be revised it isn't worth writing in the first place." You don't do any revisions?

S: Yep—I've always said that and I'll say it again. You're not going to get any better.

I: You never find a certain section that reads a little slow or . . .

S: No, no—you're not going to get any better. Ayn Rand told me she studies over words and puts them together. I say, you can study over them, it's still going to be exactly like you thought of it in the first place. Your mind works in a definite way. The only time I've ever had to change anything was in *One Lonely Night*. There's a scene at the end where Mike's got a machine gun spraying and he kills eighty guys. My editors thought that was too much bloodshed so they made me cut that down to forty.

I: Yeah, I can see that—that's good taste!



Victor Saville signs Mickey Spillane to his first motion picture contract.

S: Yeah, good taste: "Don't kill eighty, only kill forty." Jeez.

I: What made you start this Mike Hammer type of character?

S: When I started the Mike Hammer thing everybody was fresh out of the war. I knew what the people wanted. They didn't want wishy-washy heroes. Guys out there, they had seen violence, real violence. You've got a pretty horny bunch during the war, too. A little more sex in a story wasn't going to bother them.

I: So you were writing *I, the Jury* for guys like yourself who were just back from the war.

S: Yeah, and there were a lot of them. I knew what was going to happen. What do you think Mike Hammer looks like?

I: Well... I think of him looking a lot like you, except...

S: I tell you, I never described him once.

I: Now, wait a minute—you did, too! Except he's bigger than you...

S: He's always eye-to-eye with anybody, no matter what size the guy is. But I've never given a physical description of Mike Hammer at any time. I've described the girls or the adversary, but I've never described the hero. I've never described Tiger Mann, either. This is one of the things you don't have to do... because a hero should be a figment of your imagination. This is a state of mind. These funny things come up once in a while. You see, people don't remember a book by the story. They remember an inci-

dent. They remember the strip-tease scene in *I, the Jury*—“He turned and she opened her nightgown and he thought, ‘My beautiful blonde had a brunette base.’”

I: A lot of nightgowns get opened in your stories, but I think that scene was from *My Gun Is Quick*.

S: Is that it? Yeah. "... a brunette base"—well, maybe she was showing the roots of the hair on her head, see. I always recognize the fact that reading is as much visual as it is mental. That's why all this stuff [of Mike thinking] is in italics. My illustration of a well-paced story is like sexual intercourse. Get right up to the climax and, Bing! ... cut it off right there.

I: With a lot of little climaxes along the way.

S: Yeah, you've got to give them a breather. But your pacing has got to be just so. A mystery story has got to be one of the hardest to write. You are interweaving people's lives, exposing little things here and there. I like to keep the reader baffled, try to fake him out. It's more fun. The guy says, "I know who did it." Yeah—but how are you going to get him? Now what? There are little tricks that a guy can play. When I'm teaching, I show how to do this very simply.

I: You show them how to do it in their own style, though.

S: Yeah, sure. Never try to imitate anybody. I can't even imitate myself. You know what gets me, people will start taking off and they'll say, "Now what do you think the writer thought about when he was writing?"—I wasn't thinking about anything, I was writing a story. I was

thinking, I'll be glad when this day's work is over. You don't sit down and seriously consider everything.

I: Not at 10,000 words a night, I know you don't!

S: You're projecting yourself, but you're not giving it deep serious consideration.

I: What do you think of other detective writers? What about Raymond Chandler?

S: He's one of my favorites, all this time. But he wrote one of the worst books in the world, too. I could never make any sense out of it—I think it was *Woman in the Window*.

I: No—*The High Window*. That is his worst one.

S: I read that and I said, wait a minute, now. I went back to the ending again and I still couldn't make sense out of it. I want to tell you how stupid the movie people are—when he wrote a book called *Farewell, My Lovely* they changed it to *Murder, My Sweet*.

I: With Dick Powell. I just saw it the other night on the late show.

S: Now one of the things he had in the book was this big guy [Moose Malloy], who was played by Mike Mazurski. He's got this crazy plaid jacket—but he was so big that instead of buttons it had golf balls. I went with a million other people to see this guy so big he had golf balls for buttons. But they didn't think that this was an important item. This was a very important little spot—it's like taking a .45 out of Mike Hammer's hand. They don't think these things out. When Darren McGavin did the [Mike Hammer] TV show, he carried a .38. I said, "Why did you give him the .38—why can't you give him the .45?" The guy says, "Well, his hand was too small." I said, "Oh, you clowns." These stupid schmucks out in California! I said, "When you go in the army do you think they're going to measure your hand to see how big a gun they're going to give you? Guns don't come in sizes like shoes!" That's what got me mad when they did [*Kiss Me, Deadly*]—they had him out in California, of all places, driving a white Jag. Never again will I let a Mike Hammer thing out of my hands, unless I'm going to direct that picture. I'll write it, I'll direct it, I'll produce it. Nobody else gets to say one word about it. And then I'll turn out a good picture.

I: You pretty much did just that on *The Girl Hunters*.

S: Well, no—we got involved there with so many silly things that should never have happened. We had to fight for our lives on that thing.

I: You made it in England, didn't you?

S: We shot the exteriors here and all the interiors there. We got mixed up with a bunch of Hollywood crooks. This is one of the reasons I don't have much to do with them out there. They tried to parlay my name into something, but if it wasn't for me we wouldn't have finished the picture. I went to my English publishers and got a bundle of loot from them to pay our hotel bill. Now this bunch

of Hollywood schmucks—they put up the initial money, but that's where they stopped. Then they tried to borrow against what they had done so far.

I: I remember the *Time* magazine review . . .

S: I got great reviews.

I: They talked about the "Spillane Method" of acting . . .

S: Takin' off my coat, puttin' on my coat. Takin' off my hat, puttin' on my hat. Well, I had fun.

I: How about the other movies they made from your books?

S: Oh, terrible. Terrible.

I: There was *I, the Jury* . . .

S: Biff Elliot took the part of Mike Hammer. Now Biff is my size and I'm not a tall guy, but that's okay—the camera can make you look tall. But he's from Boston and he's left-handed, which is kinda ridiculous for Mike Hammer. Now they had scenes in the picture—this was right after the war, and everybody was conscious about guns and ammunition—somebody shoots at Mike, and the bullet hits a stone wall. He reaches down and picks up the spent slug, which should have been flattened out like a quarter, and here it looks like they just took it out of the case. I know the first time I saw the picture, it had opened at Norfolk Naval Base, when the fleet was in. Biff runs into the scene, kicks things around, knocks a door down, runs upstairs, pushes a guy into a whole mess of dishes, and says, "I'm Mike Hammer." And there's this stunned hush from the audience. Then this little voice from Brooklyn says, "*That's Mike Hammer??*" I said, "I quit," I got up and walked out right there.

I: Was *The Girl Hunters* the first acting you've done?

S: No . . . the other big show I'd done was *Ring of Fear*. Clyde Beatty, Pat O'Brien, thousands of animals . . .

I: What kind of part did you play in that?

S: I played myself. They called me out there to help solve a crime. Clyde Beatty didn't want any publicity so he called me out and I took a friend along with me named Mike Hammer.

I: Who played Mike?

S: That was Jack Stang, an actual cop. Oh, he looks like it too, man. If this guy could have acted . . . he has a much tougher look than even Palance.

I: How would you pick to play Mike if they made another film?

S: I wouldn't let any of the other ones be filmed. I don't want them done.

I: How come?

S: I don't want to go back. Do a new one. Do *Cop Out*, do *Erection Set*. I've got a script for both of them. *The Erection Set* script is terrific. It follows the book almost exactly.

I: Would you act again? Or just do the screenplay?

S: I don't want to be in pictures. There's nothing there for me. It was fun when you did it once or twice.

I: How come everybody gets knocked off in your books?

S: Well, I like the hero to win. I don't care if he's a bad guy. I never changed my conception of what the hero should be. He's as bad as the crooks themselves. He's just as mean and nasty as he has to be. But this keeps him in a certain character—you can't lose sight of him. He doesn't get washed out with everybody else.

I: You like a happy ending.

S: Oh, man, a happy ending is a success story. A good, happy, satisfying ending is the best thing in the world—satisfying, it doesn't have to be happy. In *I, the Jury*, he kills the girl he loves, but it's satisfying because she's such a beast of a character. The whole characterization of Mike was that he set out to do something—to yourself be true, see. He was going to kill her even if her loved her—he looks behind him, sees the gun she's going to blow his brains out with while she's kissing him. But she figures, He's never seen me naked—this one thing will divert him long enough. That's why she said, "How could you?" To her, as a scientist, it was an impossible thing to have happened. And his answer totally expalms his character: "It was easy." That's the character I wanted to get across. See, I never intended to write a sequel to that book. That ended it right there. But, gee whiz, I had to write another . . . and another, and another . . .

I: If you've read a few Spillane books you can tell that the woman who's described as being so pure and lovely is actually—

S: Let me tell you a funny story. People say to me, "You're the guy that's always shooting women in the belly." And I say, "Mike only shot a woman in the belly once. Know why? Because he missed."

I: Let's face it—the women don't come off too well in your books.

S: You can always kill them off. If you're going to kill them off, kill a pretty one, they're better.

I: But in four of your first six Mike Hammer stories it's the woman who's the villain.

S: Well, they've got to be a man or a woman, don't they? You've only got a choice of two.

I: True.

S: *Vengeance Is Mine* was written with a purpose in mind. Because after shooting Charlotte, he could never kill a woman again. I had to get him over that thing, but it had to be a transitional stage so he could do it again if he wanted. I don't think he killed any women.

I: Mike Hammer gets really wrapped up in his killing—he gets that "kill-crazy lust."

S: Homicide and justifiable homicide are two different

things. Supposing somebody kills your kid, or rapes your wife. If you've got a gun, you'll kill. That man has got to be wiped out. The only choice is very simple—bang, he's dead.

I: But Mike seems to enjoy it so much.

S: Because he's always on a personal vengeance note. He's never had a paid case. Somebody is out there and deserves it. It's like hunting down a mad animal. I never put him out there to say he *likes* to kill. He *has* to kill.

I: So it takes a conscienceless man to deal with a conscienceless man.

S: Yes, yes. One whose conscience is trained so that he feels no remorse over killing. You see, whenever you lose conscience you are capable of doing things; you become a deadly person. The first thing they teach you in the army is loss of conscience by discipline. After a while they just kill ruthlessly, because that didn't represent a man out there, that was the enemy. That's all you're doing—target shooting against the enemy.

I: That reminds me of a quote from Race Williams: "My conscience is clear; I never shot anybody that didn't need to die."

S: Jeez, you bring up Race Williams. I had a bunch of his stuff I saved for years.

I: He sounded in a way like Mike Hammer. The words weren't the same but the ideology was.

S: I always liked the Race Williams stories so much. I used to say that's the kind of story that I'm going to write. I'll tell you an awful story about this. I wrote a fan letter to Carroll John Daly. A guy told me where he lived in California. And I told him how I really liked his books, his novels in *Dime Detective* and . . .

I: Black Mask.

S: They were great. I wrote to him and said, one of the things I've always wanted was to write the way you did. So his agent—it was a woman—gets my letter and starts a lawsuit against me saying that I had stolen all his material. My postman said, "What did you get into now, Spillane?" I said, "Wait a minute, I just wrote a fan letter!" So somebody got in touch with him. He got so mad, he said, "This is terrible!" It was the first fan letter he had gotten in about 25 years, on my big letterhead stationery, and he was so pleased. And she was trying to sue me. He fired her, Bing! just like that, and sent a letter back to my publisher. It was a total apology.

I: Why were your books so popular during the fifties? This was the height of the McCarthy thing, and people were so uptight about that . . .

S: I've never been a liberal. I think liberals should be called radicals. I'm ultraconservative in my way of thinking. I've no sympathy for liberals; I don't like people who are all for giving everything away. They give the shirt off somebody else's back . . . It's great to be a communist

if you're top communist. You've got all the best places to go, you don't have to pay for the things the government gives you. But that's only at the top, see. But the liberals are like that. "I'll give you the shirt off *his* back," is what they say. And I never bought that. I was always a very ardent, independent type of person.

I: You grew up during the depression?

S: Oh, yeah. We didn't know we had a depression. We made our own toys. We were pretty satisfied with what we had. When I was a little kid I used to hear my mother say to my father, "Jack, if we were only free and clear."

And I used to wonder, what did it mean? Because if it was that important I wanted to be free and clear. When I found out, I became free and clear. I don't owe any money.

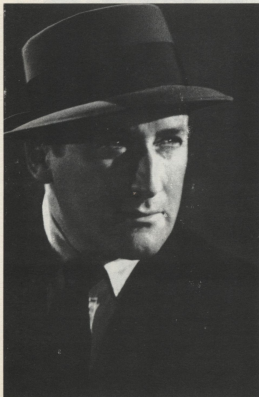
I: What do you think of these reviews I've collected?

S: People here say I write garbage. I see that—but it's good garbage. I'm going to tell you, one day somebody said, "Whatever happened to Mickey Spillane?" So I sent him a picture of me and this movie actress lying down on the sand dunes here at Myrtle Beach. I signed it, "Here I am, hard at work."



SPILLANE AND THE CRITICS

By R. Jeff Banks



Kingsley Amis in his second book-length essay of popular fiction criticism, *The James Bond Dossier* (1966),¹ offers one of the best arguments for serious attempts at criticism of "less than literary literature" yet penned. His justification for the study of Bond would serve as a fitting head-quotation for any serious approach to popular literature. He says it was his "conviction . . . that I would find them [Fleming's Bond novels and stories] to be just as complex and to have just as much in them as more ambitious kinds of fiction," and that same feeling—whatever the subject of our studies—prompts most of us most of the time in this field of scholarship. Amis goes on to say that he was right about Fleming's work and to present 125 pages, divided into 14 chapters, three appendices and a "Reference Guide," as proof.

He further admits that the first impetus toward his Bond research was a hostile reaction against the uniformly superficial and unfair critical notices of Fleming's character. A similar impulse is behind this discussion. Mickey Spillane, an author whose books began appearing six years before Fleming's and who has enjoyed even greater popularity, is also the more malign. It would be a pleasure to be able to report that Amis was as fair in his treatment of the favorite suspense writer of others as he pleads for them to be with his own, but such is not true. His final appendix is a defense of Bond and Fleming against charges of sadism, a curious passage of just over three pages. After pointing out correctly that the emphasis in Bond is more often on masochism, as Bond is the chief recipient of most of the nonfatal violence in his adventures (a point equally applicable to Spillane's heroes), Amis does admit two specific passages from Fleming as "sadistic." But he immediately acts to excuse this by contrasting them with two fairly lengthy quotations from the work of a better known writer.

Of course, the contrasted ("more sadistic") writer is Spillane, and the two passages are taken from his "first series" of seven books. In one, from *The Big Kill*, Mike Hammer thoroughly beats up two men in the restroom of a waterfront bar; in the other, from *Vengeance Is Mine*, he strikes a woman who is trying to seduce him. Both passages are presented without any retelling of mitigating circumstances from their background—in the first case, that the thugs who regularly operated as "muscle" for a loan shark had followed Hammer into the restroom for the express purpose of maiming him; in the second, that the woman was a big, tough (though she remains beautiful, as do all Hammer's women, Texas "gal" who liked her lovemaking rough.

Amis's only comment is that "the reader is—pressingly—invited to enjoy the infliction of cruelty by a character with whom he supposedly identifies." That much is certainly true, for reader identification with his heroes, intensified by the first person narration, is always an important component of Spillane's appeal. However, taken out of context (a situation that could have been remedied, at least in the case of the first quotation, by

simply quoting an additional dozen lines), these passages appear much worse than they are. Indeed the total novels, in which the quoted passages constitute brief episodes, justify Hammer's violence, even in more climactic (and more violent) scenes, more fully than Bond's usually is by the (implied) Nazi defense at Nuremberg of having been merely "following orders."

The Amis pattern is repeated with little variation in Spillane criticism. The critics confine their attention (with only a few and trivial exceptions) to the first seven books and to the exploits of only one of Spillane's heroes. Sixteen later books and a dozen other heroes go almost completely ignored. Even if we accept these limitations, we find that they often misread and, more often than not, contrive to present their quotations (when they bother with them at all) in the worst possible light.

Three years after Amis, John Cawelti in "The Spillane Phenomenon"² offered two quotations each from *I, the Jury*, *One Lonely Night* and *The Big Kill*. From his generalizations, he may be assumed to be unaware of most of Spillane's other twenty books.³ He dismisses Brett Helliday (his misspelling) and Richard S. Prather as unimaginative Spillane imitators, a label for which no reader really conversant with the work of all three men will need refutation.⁴ His assertion that "in Spillane novels . . . Mike Hammer is the main source of violence" is obviously wrong in several ways. At the time Cawelti's article was first published, Hammer had appeared in barely half of Spillane's published books (10 out of 19 in America, and two more non-Hammer books had been published in Great Britain), and even had Cawelti confined his generalization to "the Hammer series" he would still have been in error. Anyone willing to read and count pages can readily prove the statement's inaccuracy. Those unwilling to take that trouble should remember that (1) Although Hammer (almost) always talks tough, he rarely initiates physical violence.⁵ (2) When he fights, Hammer usually receives about as much violence as he dishes out.⁶ (3) Some other character usually initiates the violence in each book by committing a murder. *The Twisted Thing*, in which the murder follows a related kidnapping, and *The Snake*, in which the originating crime is attempted murder, are the only exceptions to the latter point.

Cawelti's statement that "Mike Hammer invariably [emphasis added] becomes involved in a case through a simple desire for revenge" cannot apply to the two exceptions above. Other Hammer books that the generalization does not fit are *The Girl Hunters*, in which he is recruited by the police and a federal counterspy agency to locate a missing person, and *One Lonely Night*, in which his original motivation is curiosity. Significantly, the latter book is one the critic quotes from; his misunderstanding of it is further pointed up by a summarizing statement that "the action . . . centers around the capture of Mike's secretary, Velda, by Communist agents. The story derives from Mike's violent desire to rescue

Velda and/or destroy her tormentors." That kidnapping and Mike's vengeance are confined to the last 20 pages, roughly 1/8 of the book; and they are effects, rather than causes, of his earlier activities.

Attribution of the death of villainess Marsha Lee in *The Big Kill* to Hammer seems deliberately unfair. The hero did not hold the gun which fired the fatal shot (coincidentally saving his life), nor did he request help, or even imagine that help could come in the way in which it did. The shooting is a fine example of coincidence—a technique seen more frequently in Spillane's work than in that of any other prominent writer of mystery except possibly Poe, and one that Spillane's detractors frequently mention as being overused. It is also an example of poetic justice, another favorite Spillane device. Finally, it is deliberate on the part of the author—little in any writer's work is not—but holding Hammer responsible is confusing the identities of author and narrator; this is only understandable, and still certainly remains inexcusable, if we assume that the critic has been confused by the first person narration.

With all of its indicated flaws, Cawelti's treatment of Spillane remains more fair and honest than that of most other critics. To demonstrate this we need only examine closely George Grella's "Murder and the Mean Streets"⁷ published originally (1970) the year after Cawelti's article. This essay has set the pattern for most of the academic criticism of twentieth century American detective fiction—unrestrained praise for Hammett, Chandler and Ross Macdonald, casual dismissal or denigration for other practitioners, omission of mention for most.

The fourth and final writer discussed by Grella, and held up to be all that is contemptible, is Spillane. Grella touches upon *Vengeance Is Mine*, using a capsule summary to support his charge that Hammer is homosexual, inferentially includes *I, the Jury* and *One Lonely Night*, and quotes only the familiar passage Amis and Cawelti had both previously used from *The Big Kill*.

This critic's transition from a hymn of praise for the Hammett-Chandler-Macdonald Trinity to a consideration of Spillane is a listing—rather redundant, as "the wit, the wisecrack [and] the repartee" are separate items—of eight things that (Grella claims) they do well and Spillane does not. Fourth item on the list is "rapid action," a quality certainly present in much of Hammett, intermittently in Chandler, almost never found in Macdonald, and omnipresent in Spillane.

Grella further charges that Hammer "kills the evil" woman "usually" in his adventures. However, unless we accept Cawelti's guilt-by-association approach, we find he only kills three major villainesses in eleven books, though on the side of fairness it should be admitted that he arranges (makes inevitable) the deaths of two others and several books do not include evil women. In connection with this, Grella was the first to diagnose Hammer's "pathological fear of women" as cause for his (serial) mass murder of them. Yet, the hero's persuasive rehabila-

tory work with prostitutes (especially) in *The Body Lovers*, his (uncharacteristic? not really!) tenderness with the frightened young client in *The Snake*, and his generally cheerful acceptance of women of all shapes-ages-sizes (excepting only those who dominate their husbands, such as the janitor's wife in *Kiss Me, Deadly*) plainly give the lie to the accusation.

Grella's statement that Hammer "is in no way a man of honor" goes much too far, even admitting that "honor" has a variety of definitions. Surely, the behavior of Hammer comes closer to the traditional meaning of the word than that of even the most consistently praised detective heroes. He always protects (or avenges) his friends and anyone endangered and seemingly unable to protect himself with whom he comes into contact, he respects womanhood and he is careful about giving promises because he feels bound to live up to them.

Ironically, Grella's final praise of the Trinity (in his penultimate paragraph) asserts sustained popularity as a test of excellence. Here he lists four other post 1930's hard-boiled writers as hardly worthy of notice. The unmistakable implication that they are relatively unpopular is a mistake. Two of the four, Halliday and Prather, are hardy perennial favorites with detective story readers, each boasting total sales in excess of those for Hammett, Chandler and Ross Macdonald combined. Spillane has outstripped the trio a couple of times over.

Here we might also take notice of Cawelti's final words on Spillane—a suggestion that James Bond and Matt Helm are more popular heroes than Hammer. It is undeniable that Fleming's Bond books did outsell the Hammer books during the 1960's, but there is no reason to believe that they continue to do so, nor that they ever achieved higher total sales in the United States than books published earlier or contemporarily by Spillane. Donald Hamilton's Helm books have consistently sold more slowly than Spillane's Hammer books.

In 1973, Judith Fetterley delivered a consciously feminist paper at the Popular Culture Association national meeting.⁸ In "Beauty as the Beast: Fantasy and Fear in *I, the Jury*" she used several quotations, of varying length, and echoed various sentiments found in Cawelti and Grella. The published version begins inauspiciously by misreading the cover blurbs on the book under study. *I, the Jury* has sold a respectably unique 6 million plus copies, not the "over 50,000,000" she quotes. The latter figure was a reference to the total sales of all Spillane's books. She proceeds to an anachronism (*Playboy* put seven years before its time) in her second paragraph, but all this is preparatory to getting down to serious business.

In six lengthy paragraphs, beginning with Ms. Fetterley's third, Charlotte Manning's careful catering to Mike Hammer's every whim is reported in great detail. This is necessary to the sex role and sex fantasy theories that are the paper's main freight. In fact, it is so prominently presented because it is the essential—and perhaps the most obviously understandable—support for the theories.

However, there is another explanation for all of Charlotte's behavior which requires much less tortured reasoning and theorizing: playing up to the detective hero is the best way the villainous woman can keep abreast (the pun is in the eye or ear of the beholder) of his murder investigation.

Ms. Fetterley pays less attention to Mary Bellemey's sexual pursuit of Hammer, though she manages to suggest that the hero's response is part and parcel of his (deviant, or at least reprehensible) attitude towards women. This phase of the story is presented by narrator Hammer as essentially an obstacle to his handling of the case. Certainly, it is at least that, and if that involves a Freudian slip, then Spillane is in good company. Hammett in *The Maltese Falcon*, et al., Chandler, right from his beginning with *The Big Sleep*, indeed, any hard-boiled detective novelist with female characters in his book (even Macdonald, at times), puts an identical interpretation on similar behavior—whether Mary's nymphomania is matched by their women or not.

A year behind Ms. Fetterley, John Reilly read his paper, "Classic and Hard-Boiled Detective Fiction"⁹ to the Popular Culture Association. The present writer has no quibble with the aim of that paper, having borrowed its ideas shamelessly for use in his own teaching of detective fiction. The use of Spillane as an example of the violent extreme among detective writers is fortunate (though some later writers who have achieved great notoriety, Don Pendleton, for example, are more tirelessly and spectacularly violent) as the article emphasizes common characteristics of mysteries. The effect of this is to put Spillane in the position of one of the hard-boiled writers, rather than insisting upon the traditional "sex and sadism" designation.

However, all generalizations about both author and character seem based upon acquaintance only with *I, the Jury*. It is the only Spillane book mentioned by title, or whose plot details are (even partially) described. Many of the generalizations about Hammer hold true for all or most of the subsequent ten books, for the swift and immense success of the first book announced the value of its formula, one that Spillane was too canny to modify greatly. But some of what Reilly says is true only of that first book, and (at least) one statement is questionable even on a careful reading of *I, the Jury*. "Continuously felt dislike of women and nonwhite people [is] deeply structured into his [Hammer's] personality," is perhaps the worst misjudgment. The only woman in the book that Hammer dislikes is the one revealed as a murderer. For Hammer, as for Sam Spade, that identification outweighs the sexual one. The randy Bellemey twin is a distraction, but one that Hammer can usually laugh at. His attitude towards Velda, evident in most of the eleven books about him, and towards female victims such as Myrna in *I, the Jury* (and Greta Service and others in *The Body Lovers* and Sue Devon in *The Snake*) is not that of a man who dislikes women.

As for "nonwhite people," the only substantial black characters in the Hammer saga appear in *I, the Jury*. There they are treated in ways no longer regarded as proper, whether as the Stepin Fetchit-Mantan Morland cliché (most evident in Charlotte's maid Kathy and other servants) or as a deadly menace like the two he fights in a Harlem tavern—though a Chester Himes or an Ernest Tidyman can portray black characters in a similar light without fear of criticism—they are "wrongly pictured," Spillane sensed the wrongness more quickly than many other writers¹⁰ and abandoned cliché treatment of blacks in the remaining Hammer books, excepting a couple of phrases in *The Twisted Thing*.

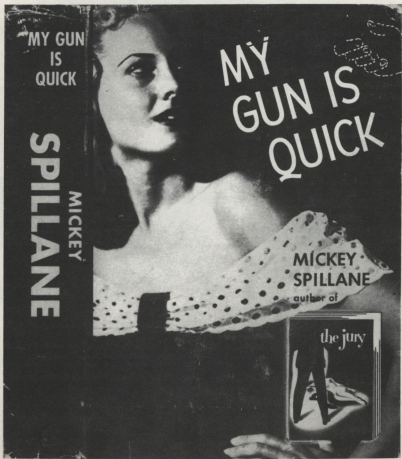
What of the non-Hammer books? He did use a black cliché in *The Long Wait*, but in his latest book (*The Last Cop Out*, 1973), the hero's best friend is a very favorably presented black. The less important Tiger Mann series does boast one Arab villain, but there are many more sympathetically presented Arabs in the same book.¹¹

Similarly, *The Delta Factor* takes place primarily in a fictitious Caribbean country. The dictator, his toadies and army are villainous, but the hero (Morgan) has the most positive imaginable attitude towards the "down-trodden (and equally nonwhite) masses"—especially those who are trying to throw off the oppressive yoke.

The present writer does feel strong personal objections to the assertion that those of us who like Spillane are "unbothered" by "authoritarian daydreams," but is willing to admit that Reilly may be right. Again, we are dealing with definition, but this time compounded by long-distance psychoanalyzing of millions of readers, not just a single author.

Finally, for the purposes of this analysis, Kay Weibel published "Mickey Spillane as a Fifties Phenomenon."¹² She quoted from five of his books: *Vengeance is Mine* three times (one a repetition from Amis), *I, the Jury* twice (and this first novel does not belong to the decade of her title), *The Long Wait* (the only quotation selected

Dust jacket of Mickey Spillane's second book.



by any of these critics from a non-Hammer book), *Kiss Me, Deadly* and *One Lonely Night*. She is also the only critic to admit in print that Spillane published books after the first seven, though she does this only peripher-

ally through a tabular listing of titles and sales figures through 1965,¹³ plus mention of *The Girl Hunters* (Spillane's ninth book) in one short phrase of a rather long sentence.



Ms. Weibel's recognition of heroes other than Hammer and books published later than the early fifties is commendable. However, her treatment of what represents *terra incognita* to the other critics is no more careful nor correct than what they have established as a (pitiful) standard. For instance, she says that in *The Long Wait* "Johnny McBride manages to avoid involvement with the other sexy women." The context makes it plain that "involvement" is meant to convey "sexual relations." Thus, she either misread or missed reading Chapter 9, in which Venus (the friendly, independent local madam) finally makes good on her repeated offer to show Johnny "what a real woman's like, in style . . ."

Ms. Weibel does no better in her attempt to understand Spillane's presentation of Hammer. She says the author "implies" (with Hammer) that a man should seek his sexual conquests from among the lower classes, "since the women Mike has affairs with *always* [my emphasis] have questionable pasts and frequently are suspects in the crime he is investigating." It would be helpful to know what she means by "questionable pasts," and it must be pointed out that when Hammer does have an affair with a suspect it always means that he has (however temporarily or wrongly) eliminated that woman as a suspect.

Yet the most intriguing part of that statement is the critic's implied definition of class—one that no sociologist would recognize. Basing class standing on wealth or position, the usual ways of determining it, the "lower classes" charge quickly deflates to (what should be by now) familiar meaninglessness. A brief catalogue of Hammer's bedmates includes one of the Bellemys twins (a very wealthy heiress) in *I, the Jury*, Ethel Brighton (daughter of one of New York's wealthiest men) in *One Lonely Night*, Laura Knapp (rich widow of a prominent U.S. senator) in *The Girl Hunters*, Ellen Scobie (heiress to a successful breeder of racehorses) and Marsha Lee (retired movie queen) both in *The Big Kill*, Dulcie McInnes (senior fashion editor for a major magazine chain) in *The Body Lovers*, and Renee Talmadge (executive secretary to a wealthy industrialist) in *Survival Zero*. That sampling of the Four Hundred is balanced against one prostitute in *My Gun Is Quick*, a favorite Spillane cliché being the reformation of a "bad" woman through (sometimes sexual) contact with a "good" man. Notably, one of the two other prostitutes prominent in the same book proved to be the granddaughter of the wealthiest character in the book.

Cawelti is surely the source of Ms. Weibel's (already disproven) statement that "the villains of Spillane's novels inevitably [my emphasis] prove to be women." The statistics on this are six villainesses in eleven Hammer novels, three in nine non-Hammer novels (all in the Tiger Mann series), and one in seven among the shorter works published in book form in this country—frequent enough to show that the author is aware of the possibilities residing in villainous females, but "inevitable" is certainly too strong a word.

Spillane's public response to the critics is a sneer. Considering the average of their accuracy (scholarly carefulness), this is hardly surprising, but they have touched him enough to elicit at least two responses in his fiction. The judge who had wanted to strip Hammer of his gun and license before the beginning of *One Lonely Night* and to whom Hammer seemed to feel his actions in the book were an answer is an obvious figure for those (supported by early, unkind newspaper reviewers) who had denied Spillane MWA membership. (What better figure for a critic than a judge?) And if Hammer, in his first adventure, was jury and executioner, he was also (implicitly) judge, thus Spillane's "peers" (other mystery writers) "judged" him in denying their fellowship. In proving to himself that he (Hammer—who is more fully than ever before or since a figure for his creator in this book) is doing the right thing, Hammer frequently addresses his justifications to the imaginary presence of the judge. This book also offers the fullest statement of Hammer's (and Spillane's) political thought. Some of the critics read the book, but the author's vigorous counterattack was obscured for them by his easy-to-disagree-with politics.

Later, they probably didn't read his non-Hammer, and latest-but-one, book *The Erection Set*. Perhaps his unclad second wife on the cover was enough to discourage any who may have seen it. At least, none of them have mentioned the book, and that is unfortunate because Spillane seems to be responding to such of Cawelti's ideas



Poster for the movie of Spillane's first book.

as "rhythm" and "violence as sex." Fairly early, the hero Dogeron Kelly spends most of a chapter (and Spillane continues to write long chapters) lecturing to Lee Shay (a World War II buddy) and Shay's girlfriend on the connection between sex and violence. (Remember the old "Sex and Sadism" label created especially for Spillane?) The presentation serves as a cogently argued defense of Spillane's practice as a writer.

Notes

1. *New Maps of Hell* (1960), a genuinely seminal study of science fiction, was the first.
2. *The University of Chicago Magazine*, 61 (Mar./Apr. 1969), 19-24, was the original publication. The reprint, *Journal of Popular Culture*, 3 (Summer 1969), 9-22, is more readily accessible to most of us. The article was also included as a chapter in Caweltz's *The Six-Gun Mystique*. Someone besides myself is apparently fond of the "Holliday" typo—it keeps reappearing.
3. Of course, five of Spillane's books, including *Survival Zero* (1970), the latest about Hammer, were published (in this country) too late for consideration in Caweltz's study.
4. Like many factual errors, there was a period (between 1948, when Halliday would have had time to start showing a Spillane influence—Prather did not begin publishing until 1950—and 1962, after which time any significant Spillane influence in either other writer would exist purely in the eye of the [not very attentive] reader) when it contained a grain of truth. Prather, when "under the influence," was the more imitative, and his "Spillane period" ended first. For both reasons, it makes sense to talk about him first. At the time he began, slavish imitation of Spillane was the safest and surest road to publication in the field of paperback originals. Which of his contemporaries as detective novelists did not begin in the same way? And who else Avalone, John MacDonald, Stephen Marlowe, and any others who have retained considerable popularity, he rapidly developed an individual style that was (in his case) both more light-hearted and more formula-bound than Spillane's. *The Case of the Vanishing Beauty* (1950), although indebted to the even more popular Perry Mason series for its title, *Dagger of Flesh* (1952), *Pattern for Murder* (1952), originally published under the pen name David Knight (and later heavily revised for issuance in 1958 as *The Scrambled Yeggs* under the author's real name), *Lie Down, Killer* (1952), *Ride a High Horse* (1953) and *Pattern for Panic* (1954) are all more like Spillane's early works than like Prather's after 1954. The series character Shell Scott, who appears in most of them, is more like Hammer than his later self. Two other 1954 books—*Always Leave 'Em Dying* and *Darling, It's Death*—are transitional, as is *The Scrambled Yeggs* despite extensive revision.

Halliday (the late Davis Dresser) was always a dependable weathervane in his three-score-plus Mike Shayne adventures. His work generally reflected many elements of whatever writer was currently most popular and respected (by the book-buying public) in the hard-boiled school in America. Yet it must be remembered that whomever he borrowed from in his work almost always was marked by a characteristic gentleness. Never prissy, like so many of those in the polite or "classic" school from whom he borrowed the gathering of suspects for the *denouement* (a scene that must have appeared in at least forty of the Shayne novels), he remains the most gentle of the very popular hard-boiled detective writers. As Spillane is very likely the least gentle, any contention that Halliday is merely an unoriginal Spillane imitator is too far wrong to be taken really seriously.

Mike Shayne was, at first, an obvious borrowing from Hammett. Spade-like in his first two adventures, he fell in love with his client (each time she was also a major suspect) and prided himself (as he did for many years to follow, on an off-and-on basis) in a conveniently and profitably bad repu-

tation. After his marriage to his two-time client, Phyllis Brighton, the pair played an uneasy Nick and Nora—unsuspected with a dash of the Lockridges' Mr. and Mrs. North. Following Phyllis' death, Shayne became a Spade again, finding his Effie (Lucy Hamilton) in his first adventure as a widower, *Michael Shayne's Long Chance* (1944), retaining her for about twenty years and well over thirty books. Halliday was obviously more comfortable with the secretary than the wife. (Perhaps, after all, Nora was the reason for much of Nickie's drinking. Pam was certainly responsible for most of Gerald North's tipping. Furthermore, this is a good place to mention that Lucy still appears in the "short novels" in each issue of *Mike Shayne's Mystery Magazine*, which has frozen Shayne into his most Hammettish image. However, it is such common knowledge that the Brett Halliday who writes those monthly adventures is not and never has been Dresser that one naturally assumes Caweltz referred to the books and not the magazine stories.)

When Spillane created Hammer in the late forties, secretary Velda owed much more to Lucy than to Hammett's (and Spade's) Effie Perrine. Yet Lucy, for all that she did become both tougher and more sophisticated through the years, remained always closer to Effie than to Velda. After Hammer became detective fiction's success story of the century, it was only natural that Halliday borrow from Spillane. He did so for more than a decade, with occasional returns to Hammett, and occasionally even Raymond Chandler, as his model. Finally, in the sixties, James Bond became the model (except for the nostalgically mild *Michael Shayne's 50th Case*, 1964). Lucy appeared no more, allowing the hero to ape Bond's sexual freedom (and remember, Dresser had written some pornography under the name Peter Shelley before he began the Shayne saga), and such other supporting characters as reporter Tim Rouke and Chiefs Gentry and Painter were well relegated to (usually) much less important roles. Most recently, Shayne has continued to have Bond's sexiness, a toughness that approaches Hammer's, and an up-to-date outlook that dates both major role models. Of course, he has not quite become a Crockett, but then he has never really Spade, Charles, Hammer or Bond, either.

It is also worth noting that the decade of the fifties, the period of Spillane's greatest popularity and influence (on Halliday as well as others) was also the period of peak prolificacy for Halliday, seeing him publish 18 Shayne novels. Though he tried mightily (and Shayne did change), the tougher-than Spade hero was a difficult one for Halliday to write about. This probably explains why he began more frequently using a formula that minimized Shayne's presence, a formula somewhat like that Doyle evolved for the later Holmes novels. Since the overpowering presence of Hammer is so central to the appeal of the 11 books about him, those Shayne novels in which his appearance is delayed and reader interest focused part-time on other characters can hardly be classed as repetitions of the Spillane formula, even when particular characters, scenes or situations are obviously borrowed.

One such book, *Target: Mike Shayne* (1959), has more than the usual number of killings (four), but hardly enough to be considered as violent as a Spillane book. Yet it is notable for being one of the dozen or more in which Shayne (this time talking to Peter Painter) duplicates Hammer's Chapter 1 speech, from *I, the Jury*, to Pat Chambers on the private detective's greater freedom of operation (as compared to that of policemen). Shayne, I believe, said this before Hammer, but a spot check of the pre-1947 Shayne books fails to locate the speech. However, this issue is not too important as the speech, though usually uttered more gently than by Hammer and less gently than by Shayne, was a standard one for private detectives in the pulps during the thirties (and possibly even earlier). Both writers were imitating these earlier models and not each other.

Another of these, *Murder in Haste* (1961), is memorable for a character, Albert Cole, who has considerably more than a surname in common with Richie Cole in Spillane's Hammer adventure *The Girl Hunters* (1962). Yet another, *Pay-Off in Blood* (1962), features a newsman, George Bayliss, whose

name is suspiciously similar to that of newsmen Bayliss Henry, an important character in *The Girl Hunters*. *Never Kill a Client* (1963) has a prominent female character, Mary Devon, who neatly anticipates Sue (and Sally) Devon in *Spillane's The Snake* (1964). In some of the books, then, the inspiration is clearly flowing from Halliday to Spillane.

Framed in Blood (1951), though lacking a main female villain and Spillane's spectacular beginning and ending, shows obvious indebtedness to *I, the Jury*. The hero's political motivation (though it is liberal, rather than conservative), the presence of one of Shayne's infrequent personal killings of a villain and the bewildering use of aliases in *When Dorinda Dances* (1951), are suspiciously similar to Spillane's *One Lonely Night*, published the same year. However, considering the closeness of the publication dates and the pervasiveness of political excitement near the end of the McCarthy era, these last two books are probably only coincidentally related.

On the other hand, *One Night with Nora* (1953), has perhaps the most exciting beginning of any Shayne novel, the guilty female and the (almost) fatal final scene—all reminiscent of *I, the Jury*. The much later *Murder Takes No Holiday* (1960) may have influenced Spillane's *The Delta Factor* (1967), with its Caribbean setting, concern with the drug trade and the hero's masquerade as a criminal. The shadowy figure of the animal-named dope trader, the Camel, returned in several Spillane books—there was the Cat, a sympathetic but still criminal cohort of the Deep One in *The Deep* (1961); Cat Fallon, a "good guy" for all his frequently operating outside the law, in *The Flyer* (1964, published in Great Britain only); the Snake, title character and one of several villains in the Hammer adventure of 1964; and the almost exact equivalent in *Fish in the By-Pass Control* (1966, Tiger Mann series). Also, it should be admitted that this book may have been influenced—in several minor but interesting ways—by Spillane's earlier *Kiss Me, Deadly* (1952).

Halliday's *Stranger in Town* (1955) has much in common with Spillane's non-Hammer book *The Long Walk* (1951); the book even includes a brief discussion of Hammer by Shayne and a bar girl. However, Halliday's cognate book, *A Taste for Violence* (1949, early enough to carry no more Spillane germs than those which might have been contracted from *I, the Jury*) is a more likely source work, and it could be persuasively argued that for *Stranger in Town* Halliday provided his own inspiration.

The purpose of this rather long note is to demonstrate, as I have said elsewhere, that the Spillane-Halliday relationship is a complex one. One does not require an intimate knowledge of the hundred books written by the two men to understand the effect of the writers on each other—though the better the acquaintance with the more books the more intelligent can be the generalization. However, this should also make clear that a dilettantish approach will be woefully inadequate.

5. Hammer's sadism, like his sex, is more verbal than physical. For every time he tears open a thug's cheek (*The Twisted Thing*) or beats a reluctant witness (the hotel manager in *Kiss Me, Deadly*), he threatens a score of sadistic acts. The threats alone almost always get him what he wants. Of course, there are those who would call the threats themselves "violence," and we could easily debate semantics for too many pages. Barring that, page counting is invited.
6. Admittedly, Hammer always is able to walk (or crawl), as in *My-Gun Is Quick* and *Kiss Me, Deadly* away eventually, while his enemies often do not. Yet, it is only by showing Hammer hurt that Spillane can convince his readers that the tigers stalking the hero have teeth and are worthy of such a hero. In his dogged determination despite repeated beatings and gunshot wounds, Hammer more resembles the early Batman than any other well-known detective in books—except perhaps Prather's Shell Scott, whose formula calls for his being shot once in each book and who is still frequently beaten by thugs. Hammer absorbs whatever punishment the opposition can dish out, and in *Kiss Me, Deadly* this begins with running his car over a cliff with him in it, still managing to bounce back and overcome them in the end.

7. *Contemporaria*, 1 (Mar. 1970), 6-15, was the original publication. The reprint, *The Armchair Detective*, 5 (Nov. 1971), pp. unknown, may be the harder to obtain in this case. The subtitle, "The Hard-Boiled Detective Novel," indicates (with appropriate inaccuracy) that the article is a survey of the type.
8. Published in *Journal of Popular Culture*, 8 (Spr. 1975), 775-82.
9. Published in *The Armchair Detective*, 9 (Oct. 1976), 289-91; 334.
10. The milieu of 1947 included the firmly entrenched Amos & Andy (with more than a decade in first place) as the most popular show on radio, frankly and repetitively racist plots (with orientals as cliché as its blacks) in Charlie Chan (longest-running series of American-made detective films) and no more enlightened presentation in other B-movie detectives, Mantan Morland's stereotyped comic relief in a host of horror (and other) films, the almost as ubiquitous (and even better known) Stepin Fetchit, "nigger" joke books, stereotyped blacks (where they appeared at all) in comic books, comic strips and even (as has been demonstrated in *Journal of Popular Culture*) in "eight-page bibles."
11. Sarim Shey, power behind the throne in the small but oil-wealthy imaginary kingdom of Selachin in *The Death Dealers* (1965). As usual, a Soviet assassin is an even more dangerous figure behind Shey. Other characters from Selachin have predominantly sympathetic traits. Finally, as the reader will be well aware, Arabs are nonwhite only when it serves their political ends to be so.
12. In *Dimensions of Detective Fiction*, Larry N. Landrum, Pat Browne and Ray B. Browne, eds., 1976, pp. 114-23.
13. This was compiled from *70 Years of Best Sellers* (1967), by Alice P. Hackett.



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DAT'S Mike HAM-MUH?

an informal discussion of Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer,
as translated to movies, TV, and other popular media

By Max Collins

In the early 60's, on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*, Mickey Spillane—appearing to publicize the film version of *The Girl Hunters*, starring himself as Mike Hammer—described the previous screen incarnations of Hammer as “lousy.” He went on to tell of attending a neighborhood theater showing of *I, the Jury*, “introducing” Biff Elliot as Mike Hammer. When Elliot/Hammer rushes up the stairs of an apartment house, where the body of his dead friend Jack Williams has been found by the police, he grabs the nearest bystander roughly and says, “I’m Mike Hammer.” Then, according to Spillane, a patron stood up and pointed at the screen and said, incredulously, “DAT’S Mike HAM-MUH?” Spillane claims to have gotten up and walked out, never to see the rest of the film until a TV late show, years later.

Storyteller that he is, Spillane may be pulling our leg, as it's difficult to imagine him not at least sitting through that early showing of the *I, the Jury* film. But it is understandable that he (and some others) found Elliot unacceptable.

Spillane has described Mike Hammer as “a state of mind,” and the emphasis upon first-person narration extends to a number of the book titles, with their first-person pronouns. Seldom has a narrator been more effectively used by an author as a point of identification for readers. With sparse descriptions of Hammer (the detective occasionally describes himself as “big” and/or “ugly,” and that's the extent of it), Spillane has placed his readers directly in Hammer's point of view (and far

more effectively than in the subjective-camera film noir *Lady in the Lake!*).

So it is hardly surprising that Elliot (and others who followed him in the role, including Spillane himself) did not please many Hammer fans—who naturally imagined Hammer as tough-guy reflections of themselves (as is borne out by the biggest Mike Hammer fan of them all—Mickey Spillane—choosing to play Hammer on the screen himself).

I, the Jury (1953)—while burdened with a screenplay that turns the book's plot into incoherent nonsense, due partially to the early 50's necessity of censoring out drug references—is a moody, energetic film, and in some ways is the best of the Hammer adaptations. Elliot—smaller in stature than some viewers may have liked, but a bruiser nonetheless—brings a crude enthusiasm to the role, his effectiveness bolstered by his being an unknown, and his bullying tactics offset by his partial lack of size. A six-foot-three Hammer might've come across as a thug; Elliot's light-heavyweight look overcomes that problem.

The film is further aided by a Franz Waxman score that is among the best of private-eye film scores; voice-over, first-person narration that aids in recreating the mood of a Spillane novel; beautiful women, particularly Peggie Castle as Charlotte (whose finale striptease is reduced to removing a pair of gloves and her shoes, thanks to 50's censorship); and film noir atmosphere that has only improved with age. One of the nicest things about director/writer Harry Essex's mildly sexy, violent little



film is that it was made at the peak of Spillane's popularity and consequently reflects that early 50's era, of which the books were so much a part, in a way that none of the later films (even *Kiss Me Deadly*) can.

It should be mentioned that *I, the Jury* was filmed (and released) in 3-D; it is less gimmicky in that regard than most of its kind, but a few unintentionally funny moments (a sexy girl extending a backscratcher toward the camera) serve to remind us of the film's 3-D origins.

In addition to being the best Spillane film, the next Hammer adaptation, *Kiss Me Deadly* (1955, directed by Robert Aldrich, written by A.I. Bezzerides) is possibly the finest of all private eye films, *The Maltese Falcon* not excepted. *Kiss Me Deadly* (the film title is minus Spillane's characteristic punctuation: *Kiss Me, Deadly*) is a truly remarkable and frightening vision of mid-50's America, a quirky, cryptic examination of an era dominated by McCarthyism and the atom bomb.

Aldrich and Bezzerides made no secret of *Kiss Me Deadly* being an "anti-Spillane" film. The Hammer portrayed by Ralph Meeker is a self-proclaimed "stinker," whose L.A. firm is kept nicely afloat by divorce cases. Spillane's Hammer, of course, works in New York and spurns divorce work; but these and other changes are not simply sloppy scripting: they demonstrate that much of the film is purposely backwards, beginning with opening credits that roll *up*, from the bottom of the screen. Whereas even minor characters, in most cases, retain the names given them in the novel, Hammer's good friend, Captain Pat Chambers of Homicide, becomes the hostile Pat *Murphy* in the film; and Velda, never given a last name in Spillane, not only has one in the film (Wickman), her personality is radically different: the gun-toting dame who has her own "P.I. ticket" and a vengeance-oriented outlook second only to Hammer's becomes in the film Hammer's conscience, a sensitive, caring young woman whose hobby is ballet. Hammer himself has gone from an idealist to an opportunistic heel, as seen early on in the film, when Hammer/Meeker asks, "What's in it for me?"

Yet despite Aldrich and Bezzerides conceiving the film as a putdown of Spillane, *Kiss Me Deadly* evokes Spillane's (if not Mike Hammer's) bizarre vision of the universe as none of the other films do. The occasional but rapid and brutal scenes of violence, the constantly sexually available beautiful women, and the uneasy, vaguely psychotic atmosphere are pure Spillane. The major element of Spillane that is missing is Mike Hammer as first-person narrator: a few subjective camera shots early in the film are the only attempt at capturing that element (with the voiceover narration of *I, the Jury* noticeably absent). But this film has no intention of putting us in Hammer's shoes, of having us identify with him: it seeks to force the viewer to see Hammer from the outside, to see what Aldrich and Bezzerides feel is a dangerous moral outlook, and to see it from a point of view *other* than Hammer's.

Despite some major plot overhauling, many scenes remain intact from the novel, although most of the dialogue has been reshaped to make Hammer look worse; the



contents of various scenes have been reshaped as well; a wise-guy punk at a health club is roughed up deservingly by Hammer in the novel, whereas in the film the punk is replaced by a dignified old man, who is humiliated as well as terrorized by Hammer/Meeker; indeed Hammer spends much of the film roughing up the old and the helpless, with the classic example being the famous scene in which Hammer snaps in two a priceless Caruso record as he casually brutalizes yet another old man, a washed-up opera singer.

The Hammer of the film does have his strengths: though a bully, he is no coward; and he has a certain intelligence, born of curiosity and self-interest. But for the most part he represents the baser aspects of man in general, and America in particular; similarly the villain (Albert Dekker) seems to represent the nobler aspects of the species turned decadent, his dialogue littered with literary and mythological references, his manner oozing culture and intellectualism. It is the efforts of these two opposite types—the crude Hammer/Meeker, and the cultured Dekker—to find out "what's in it for me," that brings global destruction, figuratively and perhaps literally, in *Kiss Me Deadly*. Only Christina—the female Christ-figure "crucified" at the film's opening—whose poetry and love for art and classical music mean nothing to Hammer—suggests an alternative for apocalypse. She and Velda are the only small hopes for mankind that Aldrich and Bezzerides hold out.

Of all the films, *Kiss Me Deadly* has the strongest finish—a real Spillane ending, though considerably reworked. A hissing box containing some valuable but, of course, deadly radioactive substance is opened by Lily Carver, who is consumed by fire, followed by an explo-



Lobby posters for Spillane movies.





A scene from *The Girl Hunters*.

sion whose end-of-the-world implication is emphasized by a final glimpse of a mushroom cloud as the words *The End* fill the screen.

To say that the follow-up film, *My Gun Is Quick* (1957) was a letdown is certainly an understatement. The film is entertaining in a vapid, trashy way, with enough violence and beautiful women to give it some Spillane flavor. But Robert Bray's Hammer is probably the most standard (and ordinary) portrayal that this unique private eye has ever been subjected to. A promising opening (the first ten minutes are very close to the novel, including dialogue) soon disintegrates as Spillane's plot is discarded, and replaced with a tired reworking of *The Maltese Falcon* (right down to the Sam/Brigid renunciation scene). The ending is lacking in Spillane punch: after telling the *femme fatale* that he knows she's the culprit, Bray's Hammer tells the woman (portrayed by Whitney Blake) that he's turmin' her in. Period. This botched item is the work of two directors (George White and Phil Victor) and is the least of all Hammer-to-screen translations.

My Gun Is Quick concludes the run of Victor Saville-produced Spillane films (including the non-Hammer *The Long Wait*, 1954, starring Anthony Quinn). In the meantime Spillane appeared as himself in *Ring of Fear* (1954), a John Wayne-produced film wherein the Spillane-the-author character is clearly patterned upon Mike Hammer, as *Ring of Fear*'s showdown scene between Spillane and a psychopath-on-the-loose at a circus reveals. Mediocre scripting undermines the film, but Spillane comes off well

(and gives us a glimpse of what it might have been like to see Spillane playing a young Mike Hammer). The music in the film is another plus, and comes from an obscure Spillane-produced record album, *Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer Story* (also 1954).

The recent collection *The Great American Detective* states that Spillane never wrote a Mike Hammer short story (hence Hammer's absence in that collection). The truth is that a Mike Hammer short story—"Tonight, My Love"—does indeed exist, "written and told by Mickey Spillane" on the *Mike Hammer Story* album. The first side of the record is the story itself—a kind of hybrid between a radio show and a short story, with a jazz score by Stan Purdy (as stated above, the same score used in *Ring of Fear*); side two is strictly Hammer-inspired music (titles include: "Velda," "Oh, Mike!," "The Woman," and "The Mike Hammer Theme"). The album was also released on two separate 45 extended play records.

"Tonight, My Love" is an "origin story"—it tells of the first meeting between Mike Hammer and Velda. One of the reasons the story has never appeared in print may be Spillane's wish to remove it from the official Hammer canon, as its recounting of Velda's past is seriously at odds with the past created for Velda in the Mike Hammer "comeback" novel, *The Girl Hunters*. The story itself is rather slight, but hearing Spillane as Hammer, combined with Purdy's ever-present and effective jazz backgrounds, is a unique experience, capturing the first-person mood of the novels more accurately than any of the films.



A scene from *The Girl Hunters*.

A second record album, *Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer*, is the soundtrack of the 1958 syndicated TV show, arranged and conducted by Skip Martin, composed by Dave Kahn and Melvyn Lenard. Spillane contributed liner notes to the album, in which he professes to "get a jolt from this collection of Hammer themes," and certainly the haunting signature tune, "Riff Blues," is one of the most memorable of all private eye themes.

And that theme, playing behind shots of Darren McGavin as Hammer, wandering through the skyscraper canyons of Manhattan, is justification enough for the TV series. But it had its merits beyond just a memorable signature tune: McGavin's Hammer, while better-natured than Spillane's, is certainly a more acceptable screen

Hammer in terms of accuracy than Bray or Meeker. The major problems are McGavin's size—unlike Elliot, who is not huge, but has the look of a boxer about him, the McGavin Hammer is simply not enough of a brute to be the tough guy Mike Hammer is known to be; and the absence of Mike's secretary and partner, Velda, is a serious omission. (On the other hand, the series *did* include Pat Chambers, and this version of Hammer's relationship with his cop pal is very close to the novels.) Also irritating is the substitution of a .38 for Hammer's traditional .45; as Spillane commented at the time, it was like taking away Robin Hood's bow-and-arrow and giving him a slingshot. These flaws, added to the necessarily restrained elements of sex and violence (which

were present, just toned down) turn the series into just another tough (albeit good) private eye show of the Peter Gunn era.*

Far better was the Mike Hammer radio show of the early 50's, *That Hammer Guy*, a short-lived but excellent series with Larry Haines as Hammer. Both Velda and Pat Chambers were present, and the stories were fast-paced, violent, and sexy—very much in the Spillane manner. The first-person narration (always using the subjective: "You walk into Pat Chambers' office, at Homicide, and the sight you see brings you up short") captures the elusive Hammer "state of mind" in a way that only radio could.

During the same period a comic strip—*From the Files of Mike Hammer*—appeared (beginning in 1953 and running for about a year). The strip was written by Spillane and drawn by Ed Robbins, a crony of Spillane's from his comic book days. Robbins, as well as another of Spillane's comic book pals, Joe Gill, assisted on some of the daily strip scripts; the Sunday page writing was Spillane's alone. Though little-known, and unseen since its first newspaper appearances, *From the Files of Mike Hammer* is an excellent strip, recreating the flavor of the Spillane novels better than any of the screen versions (surpassing the radio version as well). The scratchy, moody art style of Robbins, with echoes of both Milton Caniff and Alex Raymond, nicely complements scripts that retain both Hammer's voiceover narration and solid, surprise endings. The strip is worthy of a complete reprinting, as it is one of the two comic-strip footnotes to tough-guy mystery fiction, the other being Hammett's collaboration with Alex Raymond, *Secret Agent X-9*.

And, finally, we come to Spillane himself as Mike Hammer in *The Girl Hunters*. It would be nice to be able to say that *The Girl Hunters* (Roy Rowland, 1963) is the best of the Spillane films, but in a list that includes *Kiss Me Deadly*, that would be difficult for any film. But it's fair to say it is at least as good as *I, the Jury*, with a script by Spillane himself that is a first-rate translation of the novel, with such insightful touches as the elimination of voiceover narration, except in moments when Mike is thinking about the past, waxing romantic about the missing Velda, or musing psychotically about what he plans to do to the bad guys—in other words, the material that Spillane would have used italics for, in the novel. The plot is hardly Spillane's strongest ("derivative drivel," a *Newsweek* film review said, going on to advise that "if one checks his brains at the popcorn counter, *The Girl Hunters* is outrageous good fun"), and the low-budget filming, shot primarily in Great Britain, slightly undercuts the proceedings, as does the nagging feeling that Hammer just doesn't work as effectively in James Bondian 1963 as he did back in the vintage years 1947-1953.

But Spillane himself, as Hammer, is perfect. The transformation from gutter-bum to trench-coated classic private eye is handled with humor and style (and in an echo of that Brooklyn patron's doubts about Buff Elliot, a dying FBI man looks at the scruffy, drunken Hammer and

says, "You're Mike Hammer?" to which Spillane/Hammer replies, "I been sick.")

Spillane in 1963 has a twinkle in his eye—an older, more mature writer, he has some tongue-in-cheek fun with his famous character ("I don't hit dames," Hammer says, "I kick 'em") and gives the definitive Mike Hammer

The Long Wait (1954) is the only one of the Victor Saville-produced quartet of Spillane movies to have been directed by Saville himself (unless the co-director of *My Gun Is Quick*, "Phil Victor," is a *nom de phème* of Saville's). The only non-Hammer novel of Spillane's early period (1947-53), *The Long Wait* may have been chosen as *I, the Jury*'s followup partially because it forestalled the problem of finding a satisfactory screen Mike Hammer (Elliot's version having been found wanting). Anthony Quinn is first-rate in the role of amnesiac Johnny McBride, who after two years has returned to Lyncastle in search of his identity, and to clear himself of a murder charge, an investigation he undertakes by examining the dark roots (literally) of the several blondes in the film, for reasons too foolish to explain.

Had this conceit been carried out with a lighter touch, *The Long Wait* could be viewed as a tongue-in-cheek, self-spoofing film; the Spillane-controlled *The Girl Hunters* manages to indulge in self-spoofery, without losing its hard edge. But *The Long Wait* is an erratic, self-conscious film, depending largely upon the integrity of Quinn the actor to keep it afloat. In a typical example of Saville's idea of depicting Spillane-style violence, Quinn/McBride is confronted by a reporter in the local library, where McBride is researching his own past; McBride shoves the reporter around far more than necessary, and only Quinn's ability to rise above a poorly written role keeps McBride from seeming a psychopathic bully.

This is not to say that *The Long Wait* is the fiasco *My Gun Is Quick* is: on the contrary, the film has many strikingly photographed scenes, in the film noir mode, and its several set pieces—the attempt by thugs to murder McBride at a quarry, at night; the violent finale in an expressionistically lit "abandoned power station," where *I, the Jury*'s Charlotte, Peggie Castle, strikes seductively victimized poses at the hands of a sadistic goon, awaiting McBride to attempt a rescue—are among the finest, most compelling moments in any Spillane film. But these and other individually well-handled scenes are adrift in a generally confused, often misjudged screen adaptation.

The final Spillane film to date, *The Delta Factor* (1970), is a low-budget affair uncertainly directed by seasoned pro Tay Garnett (*The Postman Always Rings Twice*), and co-produced by Spillane himself. Christopher George portrays Morgan, a modern-day pirate and perhaps the most appealing of Spillane's post-Hammer heroes, and Yvette Mimieux a CIA agent posing as Morgan's wife; both are fine, and the film has its moments—particularly Morgan's rescue of a political prisoner from an "impregnable" castle prison—but remains an undistinguished effort, clearly beset by budgetary and other production problems. (One of those problems was the death of Spillane's co-producer and friend, Bob Fellows, who had also produced *Ring of Fear* and *The Girl Hunters*; director Garnett says in his autobiography, *Light Your Torches and Pull Up Your Tights*, "*The Delta Factor* should have been buried with Bob . . . as a kindness to many people, including Mickey Spillane, I shall forgo a recital of most of the tragedies of that misbegotten film.") Garnett then goes on to describe an accident during the shooting of a climactic chase scene that put him in a wheelchair for the duration of *Factor*'s shooting.)



A scene from *The Girl Hunters*.



A scene from *The Girl Hunters*.

screen portrayal. But the twinkle in the latter-day Spillane's eye does not compare with the psychotic glint in the eye of Mike Hammer circa 1952. When in *The Girl Hunters*, Spillane/Hammer nails the bad guy's hand to the

floor, as a makeshift handcuff, it's an effective, grisly, blackly humorous moment. But back in *One Lonely Night*, an obsessed, God-directed Mike Hammer was shooting the arms off Commies with a tommy gun . . .

Of the Mike Hammer parodies and imitations in print and elsewhere (including several by *Pogo* cartoonist Walt Kelly), one is a standout, and deserves honorable mention as one of the best Spillane-related pieces of film ever made: the "Girl Hunt" ballet in the MGM musical *The Band Wagon* (Vincente Minelli, 1953). A "Rod Riley" thriller by "Mickey Starr" is acted out in an imaginative, loving parody, with Fred Astaire certainly the most offbeat Mike Hammer casting choice of them all.

Since the "Girl Hunt" ballet precedes Spillane's own *The Girl Hunters* by a number of years, I can't help but wonder if Mickey was tipping his hat to the compliment paid him in *The Band Wagon*.



Album cover for a rare Spillane recording.



Mickey Spillane Comic Strip

"Yeah, but tipped me off on the Larry James' identity... but the rest? I knew, the boss uncle, James Duncan, was the joker who manipulated the family fortune into a double shuffle and squared accounts with a cheif off his own watch, Janet no, she didn't starve... not in a 30-room 5th Avenue mansion with a guardian angel like Mrs. Carleton Voorhies."

ART BY PHOENIX PRODUCTIONS

JOHN LARRY, PLEASE, GO TELL HER I'M HERE.

MISS LARRY IS OCCUPIED, SIR. IF YOU'D LEAVE YOUR NAME I'LL TELL HER YOU CALLED.

I'LL HAVE TO ASK YOU TO... MMMH.

KNOCK OFF THE STONY STARE, CHUM - I'LL GET HER MYSELF!

Mickey Spillane
Ed Robbins

DO I KNOW YOU, YOUNG MAN? IF I DON'T, WHY ARE YOU HERE?

AND THERE WAS MY HALF-BOUNCED AS BEAUTIFUL AS EVER - WITH A ROAD BLOCK IN THE WAY, MRS. VOORHIES WERE GOING TO BE EASY AS THE BUTTER. SO...

IT'S NOT A SOCIAL CALL, MRS. VOORHIES. I'D LIKE A WORD WITH MISS LARRY.

I'M SURE YOU'RE NOT THE TYPE THAT JOHN ASSOCIATES WITH SOCIALLY... EVEN IF SHE DOES SING IN THAT HORRIBLE NIGHT CLUB. PLEASE LEAVE AT ONCE.

AW, RELAX, MRS. VOORHIES. IF YOU DON'T TELL ANYBODY I PROMISE I WON'T EITHER. THAT WAY WE BOTH KEEP OUR REPUTATIONS. THIS IS IMPORTANT...

I DIDN'T WANT TO CRASH THE PARTY, BUT I HAD TWO GOOD REASONS... SOMY OF THEM COULD GO IN THE MORGUE.

NOTHING CAN BE THIS IMPORTANT, YOUNG MAN, GET OUT AT ONCE. FROM HER OWN WEDDING, I'LL LEAVE AFTER I GET A FEW ANSWERS, NOT BEFORE.

Mickey Spillane
Ed Robbins

SHE LOOKED EVEN BETTER THAN TRISH. SHE HAD ON THE BOWERY - LONELY ANGEL... AND A GALE I MET FIGHTING A DEAD MAN'S POKERS. IT WAS ONE TIME I WISHED I WAS A PLAIN JOE OUT TO ROMANCE A BRASS HE LARDED...

I WANT TO TALK TO YOU PRIVATELY, MISS LARRY. WHERE'S A GOOD SPOT?

I LISTEN HERE.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, BRAD. FOLLOW ME, PLEASE.

PLEASE MAKE IT BRIEF, MR. DANHER. I HAVE TO RETURN TO THE GUESTS.

ROBBING THE DEAD, IMMEDIATELY. JOHN, OKAY, WE'VE BOTH BEEN DOUTE. LET'S GET DOWN TO BUSINESS. WHAT WERE YOU DOWN ON THE BOWERY? WHO WAS THE OLD DUCK WHO WAS KNOCKED OFF?

IT ISN'T BELIEVABLE... PERHAPS THAT'S WHY I RAN. I WAS ONLY TAKING A WALK. DOWN THERE - I OFTEN DO. SOMETHING ABOUT THE PLACE FASCINATES ME, AS FOR THAT POOR MAN, I HONESTLY DON'T...

YOU'RE NOT THE BOWERY? KEEP A CIVIL TYPE. LET SISTER, NOW TYPENBER IN YOUR IT STRAIGHT ON THE COPS, READ MISTER, GET WILL GET IT FROM YOU, OUT OF THIS HOUSE BEFORE YOU'RE TROWN OUT!

Ed Robbins
Mickey Spillane
ART BY PHOENIX PRODUCTIONS

YOU BETTER TELL YOUR FRIEND TO KNOCK IT OFF, KITTEN. THESE UPTOWN LADS GET HURT EASY.

BRAD - I'LL BE THROUGH IN A FEW MINUTES. PLEASE.

SURE, I NERDED 'EM... THERE WERE A LOT OF THINGS ABOUT HIM I DON'T GO FOR... ESPECIALLY THE WAY HE LOOKED AT MY MAM - GULLING.

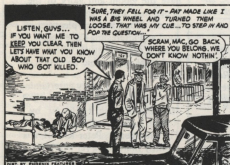
Mickey Spillane

MAYBE THAT'S WHY YOU STAND DOWN, HONEY. YOU WERE LOOKING FOR A REAL GUY.

DON'T JUST STAND THERE, JOAN. GET SOMEBODY IN HERE.

3-10





AJH REVIEWS

Short notes on the current crop:

Some of you will recall that Robert Adey included his first list of "impossible crime" stories in a letter to TAD in 1972 and asked for help in assembling a comprehensive bibliography of such fiction. The response was generous, and Bob Adey's magnificent work now lies before me: *Locked Room Murders and Other Impossible Crimes* (Ferret Fantasy, 27 Beechcroft Road, Upper Tooting, London SW17; 190 pp.; hardcover with dust jacket; \$20). This is no mere listing of short stories and novels, though an impressive 1280 titles are cited. Adey also gives publisher and date for each, identifies the "impossible" problem, names the detective and—in a separate section—gives the solution for each problem. And that's not all: there's a fine introduction, tracing the development of the subgenre and hitting the highpoints from the Victorians through the 1970's. Oh, I'm sure



Allen J. Hubin, Editor-in-Chief.

Photo: Robert Smull

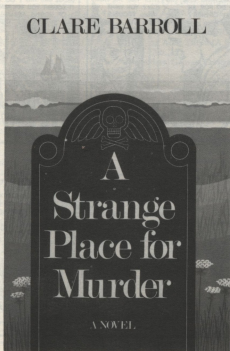
Bob has missed a few qualified titles, and doubtless he'll welcome suggestions for addition. But *Locked Room Murders* is so fine as it is that even at \$20 it should be on every criminous reference shelf.

Though called neither Gothic nor romantic suspense, Clare Barroll's *A Strange Place for Murder* (Scribner, \$8.95) is. Artist Lisa Thorne escapes New York and a persistent, wealthy

suitor for the locale of the title, Cape Cod. There she boards with Miss Elli, whose younger sister died not long before—and whose niece's body Lisa discovers bobbing among the rocks along the Cape. The niece's death is clearly murder, and Lisa begins to wonder about the sister. Two doctors seem to be involved in some grim fashion; naturally Lisa falls in love with one of them. So we have the gloom and glory of the September Cape, the terror of murder loose, and the pleasures of good and interesting Cape people. All in all, acceptable stuff, with a refreshingly non-Gothic revelation at the end.

An ironic and nicely entertaining paperback original debut—that's *A Midsummer Night's Murder* by Robert F. Baylus (Carlyle, \$1.95). The protagonist, Peter Kristol, is a recently minted lawyer who's worthy of a rematch. And the setting—Baltimore—could only have been rendered the way it is by someone who loved/hated living there for years. Kristol has just moved from a soft accounting job to chief counsel of the United Municipal Workers union. This normally docile union has called a strike, horrifying the city fathers, who regard the whole affair as a danger to the feathers in their political nests. One of the union's negotiating team—a one-eyed cop—is charged with killing one of the fathers, who had done some really spectacular feathering. And meantime, for reasons totally unclear to Kristol, his head is wanted on a serving tray by the owner of the local heroin franchise . . .

I haven't read Robin Cook's *Coma*, which sold 4,300,000 copies in soft and hard covers. But knowing of the success of *Coma* as a book and film, I perhaps expected too much of *Sphinx* (Putnam, \$10.95), which affected my pulses not at all. Erica Baron, American Jew and Egyptologist, realizes a lifelong dream when she visits the land of the pyramids in 1980. She's left behind a frustrated and persistent suitor, and in Cairo she quickly finds herself neck-deep in



an intrigue involving multiple murder, the illegal smuggling of antiquities, and ancient treasures newly appeared from some mysterious source. I think my problem lies with taking Erica seriously—she reminds me too much of a standard Gothic heroine. The Egyptian settings and background are well done, and a couple of plot twists will surprise.

Francis Jarre, newspaperman, was a minor runner for British Intelligence till he spent four years in a Warsaw prison. Now he's out, and finds that neither Fleet Street nor his former spymasters want anything to do with him. Fine repayment for his loyalty . . . And his wife, in the interim, has taken a lover and now wants out. Jarre turns bitter, then attentive, when an odd chap turns up with a proposition. This is in *Talk to Me About England* by Paul Ferris (Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, \$8.95), a nicely understated, quietly effective tale of the unglamorous side of espionage.

Bob Garland, a vice-president of Burlington Northern Railway, wrote a mystery novel as a hobby activity a couple of years ago. Now it appears as a paperback original from Manor Books as *Derfflinger* (\$1.75). I don't know how effectively this publisher distributes, but it does appear to stint on editors and proofreaders. The story is acceptable, with some flashes of originality and an intriguing premise, but it bears evidence of its apprentice state and of inattentive production. A New York computer company executive, in London to help sell a new account (the Bank of Britain), becomes intrigued by the research project of a recently deceased (by accident?) friend. One attraction is the man's fetching widow; other is the peculiarity of the data involved, which has to do with post-WWI salvage operations on a German fleet sunk in Scapa Flow. Soon everyone seems to be operating peculiarly, not to mention homicidally: the Admiralty, the Russian Embassy, the Bank, and a bunch of ancient citizens. Puzzling, indeed . . .

In the notion of vengeance—average citizen against the powerful forces of evil—lie the makings of many a highly suspenseful novel. But Roderick Grant's *A Private Vendetta* (Scribners, \$7.95) is not one of

them. This limp tale tells of a British executive whose younger brother, a soldier, was tortured and murdered on Cyprus by three brothers in payment for the attentions the soldier had paid a Cypriot woman. The executive, lusting for revenge, collaborates with the woman in exterminating the three. But, alas, the trio was part of a large family, and the fever of vengeance begins to flow in the other direction. No surprises here—the author describes his punches before he throws them.

Colonel Charles Russell has long been a part with violence and intrigue, and it's no surprise to find them following him into retirement from Britain's Security Executive in William Haggard's *The Poison People* (Walker, \$7.95). Russell is walking to his flat one day when narrowly missed by a falling body. He recognizes the corpse—a retired safecracker he once employed. A broken fifth-story window above proves to admit to the apartment of an Indian diplomat who traffics in drugs for his unofficial master. It develops that Sir

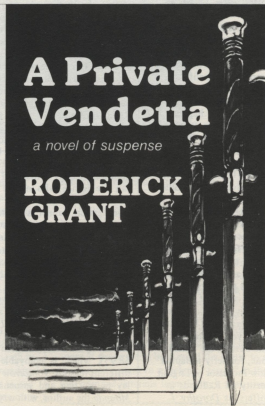
William Fenwick, wealthy and an old friend of Russell's, has lost a son to drugs and the falling safecracker affair is a part of his revenge scheme that came unglued. Russell feels vendetta is madness, but he's drawn in . . . Sound work by Haggard.

A further piece in the continuing flood of Sherlockiana is *The Case of the Invisible Thief* by Thomas Brace Haughey (Bethany, \$1.95), which may be overlooked by Holmesians because it operates from an explicitly Christian perspective and is sold as religious fiction. Here we meet goateed Geoffrey Weston, grandson of Mycroft Holmes, operating as Sleuths, Ltd. out of 31, Baker Street, bachelor quarters shared with John Taylor and equipped with an unlisted phone (no less!). Inspector Twigg brings Weston a neat little problem: someone has passed through the fenced and watched grounds of a private research establishment, penetrated its locked entrances, traversed its TV-monitored (and videotaped!) hallways, and stolen highly sensitive documents from a locked safe to

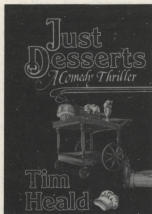
A Private Vendetta

a novel of suspense

RODERICK GRANT



which only the head scientist has access. Impossible crime, indeed! The author creates a heady and rather impressive array of science to explain all this, and tells his story in a lively fashion. But the English milieu is not very well done (too many Americanisms), and the Christian apologetics the story contains may put some readers off. I enjoyed the book. And now there's a second in the series: *The Case of the Frozen Scream* (Bethany, \$1.95).



To enjoy Tim Heald's "comedy thriller" *Just Deserts* (Scribners, \$7.95) it is necessary, I suspect, to understand cricket and to be a gourmet and vinophile. I qualify on neither ground, but I stuck with the story to the end in hope that something interesting might happen. Mostly, it didn't. Simon Bognor ostensibly investigates for Britain's Board of Trade. Actually he's sent out to bumble around in obscure intrigue matters. Here a noted chef has died, an apparent suicide. Since he seems to have run a bizarre sort of intelligence ring (among waiters!), Bognor's boss has dark suspicions and commissions Simon. From thence it's wine, food, and cricket, spiced with the odd corpse, as Bognor muddles among the agents of four countries from London to Acapulco to the cellars of France.

Bad things may come in threes, but the third biography of Dorothy Sayers in recent years is not bad; in fact it's the best of the bunch. Ralph E. Hone, formerly a Baptist pastor and now Professor of English at the University of Redlands in California, offers us *Dorothy L.*

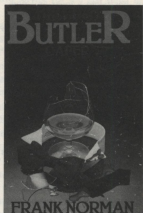
Sayers: A Literary Biography (Kent State, \$15.00). The particular strength of this study is in the illumination of Sayers' life that Hone draws from her writings. These are extensively quoted, both criminous work (in the long chapter entitled "As My Whimsey Takes Me") and noncrimous (the other three chapters). The result, for me, was a gratifying sense of knowing Sayers' life in balance.

This issue of TAD concentrates on the private investigator. Anyone wishing a regular diet of such material should know about *The Not So Private Eye*, a very agreeable quarterly fanzine edited and published by Andy Jaysnovitch (6 Dana Estates Drive, Parlin, N.J. 08859; \$1.25 per issue). Five issues have appeared thus far, and all are in print. The fifth offers such goodies as "Investigating Dan Turner" by Steve Lewis, "What Are Private Eyes?" by Mary Ann Grochowski, part three of "Bart Spicer's Carney Wilde" by Jim McCahery, several other short pieces, and a raft of reviews and letters.

The Nuclear Letters (Atheneum, \$8.95), the first novel by Graham Lancaster, executive of a British association of travel agents, is pleasant espionage fare with quite a good central gimmick. Sixty pounds of stolen fissionable plutonium 239 form the basis for international blackmail: periodically heads of major governments (including the Russian) receive one of the titular letters, its threat is sufficient that its instructions are followed, and world affairs are influenced again. But by whom, and toward what end? These questions occupy British and American intelligence, who involve London playboy-dentist Neil Janner in the investigation. Janner is wanted because of contacts with presumed Middle Eastern principals in the blackmail plot. At the center of the web looms the wealthy, reclusive, deadly albino, the Arab Ahmed al Hata . . .

Lawyer Tom Aragon served well as sleuth in Margaret Millar's effective 1976 novel *Ask for Me Tomorrow*. He reappears now in *The Murder of Miranda* (Random House, \$8.95), which is enjoyable for different reasons. *Tomorrow's* values lay in plotting and suspense; in *Miranda* the author, with wry humor

and poignancy, is probing a fascinating array of characters. There is Miranda herself, recently widowed at 52 and at loose financial and romantic ends; she's vulnerable. There's Mr. Van Eyck, whose retirement activity at the wealthy Penguin Beach Club in California (where most of the novel is set) is the penning of virulent anonymous letters. To almost everyone. There's Grady Keaton, virile life-guard. There's Henderson, Club Manager (a job with notoriously short tenure). There's 9-year-old Frederic Quinn, the terror of Southern California and menace of the Penguin. There's Admiral Young and his dotty daughters. There's fun!



I think Frank Norman means to parody the American private eye story and its British imitations in *The Dead Butler Caper* (St. Martin's, \$7.95). The book is amusing in spots, but not on the whole impressive; it lacks characters in whom we might have more than passing interest, and the plot winds down to an unconvincing finale. The investigator is Ed Nelson, with hard-boiled facade and soft-boiled innards, chronic lack of funds, and a penchant for finding corpses and alienating everyone. Mostly he messes about in divorce affairs, but here he is lured (by money) into investigating the murder of Sir Samford Peveril's butler. His client is Sir Samford's mistress, who originally wanted Ed to get evidence on Sir Samford's wife and her lover, who is also a full-time sponger and part-time blackmailer. And of course the Peveril family jewels, along with Sir Samford himself, have gone missing. You get the idea . . .



A terrorist attack on Jews in America, particularly aimed at the Strauss family—thus begins *The Jericho Commandment* (Crown, \$10.00) by James Patterson, whose *The Thomas Berryman Number* was an Edgar winner as best first mystery of 1976. David Strauss's loved ones are butchered, and from doctor concerned with healing he transforms into an anguished avenger. More of the terrorist plan unfolds: the principal target lies in the 1980 Moscow Olympics. And still there is a terrible final revelation to come . . . High suspense, effective and imaginative.

Like to sample a new author writing unabashedly in our field? I highly recommend the first novel by Frank Parrish, *Fire in the Barley* (Dodd, Mead, \$7.95). Its protagonist is Dan Mallett, who lives and supports his arthritic mother in England's West Country. The support comes through a judicious blend of odd jobs and poaching, spiced with—when the need arises and the victims are deserving—a spot of housebreaking. He was trained for banking, but he's a man of the land and countryside and couldn't abide office life. Here his mother's need for expensive surgery sends him out for second-story work, but his criminal plans are foiled by Agri-Security, whose protection racket has the area, its wealthy and its police, up in arms. Mallett is not

beloved of the police, and is instantly wanted. He takes to the fields, convinced he must prove the identity of the agri-villains to save himself. Mallett is a very engaging fellow; the story is lodged beautifully in its rural setting, and is one of the most readable debuts in recent memory.

Another volume in Arno Press's Literature of Mystery and Detection series is *Lost Sir Massingberd* by James Payn (from 1864). Despite plot appearance, this book—subtitled "A Romance of Real Life"—lies in our genre only through generosity of classification. Massingberd is a totally foul creature, depraving and despoiling with enthusiasm. Although he occupies a huge estate, it's entailed to a nephew, who has happily escaped the family taint. While Massingberd adds to the list of those who wish him dead, we wait for something to happen . . . There's a bit of suspense here, a useful look at 19th century England, but nothing much to really recommend the book.

Another batch of Raffles stories by Barry Perowne has been extracted from *EQMM* and *The Saint Magazine*, though curiously every single title has been changed. Eleven of these tales constitute *Raffles of the M.C.C.* (St. Martin's, \$8.95). I fear they are not much more than adequate and surely not the best of Perowne's

work, which is quite good. Raffles and Manders circulate in social and cricket circles in turn-of-the-century England, rescuing troubled maidens and sometimes breaking a law or two. But sparkle the stories have not.

The continuing saga of the Nazis: *The Ninth Car* by Anne Reed Rooth and James P. White (Putnam, \$8.95). Four Nazi officers, sensing the end coming, diverted the last car of a trainful of gold to a Swiss bank. Now their offspring have inherited; all must be present for any to collect. Two problems arise: one of the heirs, who has the necessary password, is trapped in East Berlin; and the head of Odessa is determined to get "his" gold back—all \$200 million worth. We particularly follow one of the heirs, young financier Stephen Rowe, whose need for money is desperate—his empire is in ruins as a result of the mental collapse of his partner. Pleasant diversion.

I find the central character in Joel Swerdlow's *Code Z* (Putnam, \$9.95) unconvincing—as perhaps he was even meant to be. Swerdlow posits that the President has the authority, during a national emergency, to step aside in favor of a specially trained crisis manager. Bombs placed aboard three airliners departing Washington's Dulles airport induce President Hutchkins to declare the emergency and hand over control to CIA-trained but curiously insubstantial Dan Horgan. Horgan has several tasks: get the planes down, find out what the point of the exercise is, and determine who's behind it. About all he has to work with is a one-word clue. Meanwhile we—but not Horgan—get occasional glimpses of the architect of the plot and hints about his position and connections. Good ideas here, not very well worked out and not so satisfying in denouement.

One final note. Consideration is being given by Cook & McDowell Publications to begin issuing a quarterly magazine of mystery fiction under the title *Skullduggery* beginning in January 1980. Anyone interested, from either the standpoint of writing or subscribing, should write Michael Cook (3318 Wimborg Ave., Evansville IN 47712) for further information.

—AJH



An Interview with Marc Olden



By Robert J. Randisi

Marc Olden is the author of some 28 books, including *The Harker File*, *The Narc* and *The Black Samurai* series, all published by New American Library since 1974. His latest novels are *The Informant*, also published by NAL, and *Poe Must Die!* from Charter Books.

The first *Black Samurai* novel was made into a film starring Jim Brown during the Bruce Lee/Martial Arts craze, and the third book in *The Harker File* series, *They've Killed Anna*, was nominated for an Edgar award by the Mystery Writers of America for Best Paperback novel of 1977.

Marc has an excellent background for writing a martial arts series like *The Black Samurai*, as he holds black belts in both judo and karate. Aside from his fictional work, Marc has written two nonfiction books, *Angela* and *Cocaine*, both for NAL.

Novels

The Black Samurai series—8 novels (NAL)

The Narc series (written as "Robert Hawkes")—10 novels (NAL)

The Harker File series—4 novels (NAL)

Wellingtons—1977 (NAL)

Poe Must Die!—1978 (Charter)

The Informant—1978 (NAL)

In the interview that follows, I = interviewer, O = Marc Olden.

I: When did you first start writing?

O: I've always wanted to write. I was a press agent for fifteen years. I was in "Shoovoo Biz"! God!

I: I saw the name "Marc Olden" in Earl Wilson's column once, but I didn't know if it was you.

O: Yeah, it was me. Earl is a friend of mine. For fifteen years I worked with actors, movies, nightclubs, restaurants, Broadway plays, authors, books. As a press agent I did a good deal of writing for the company, for the office press releases, and I loved to do that. I started out to be a very good press agent, and I was. After a while I wasn't so good, and the reason for that is you have to lie as a press agent and there is nothing that is going to weigh on you as heavily, after a while, as a lie. So when I started to tell the truth I started to become a bad press agent. Also, after a while I started not to care. I didn't care about the job and above all I didn't care about the clients. It was a question of their egos versus mine. In a case like that there's only one ego I'm interested in.

So I began writing articles for men's magazines around . . . 1970. Raunchy men's magazines, but some fairly good ones. I wrote about sixty articles all together. It didn't pay much, but the discipline was invaluable. On the basis of one of those articles for a women's magazine, a woman got in touch with me and asked me did I want to write about Angela Davis and I was terrified. I had never written a book in my life and the idea of writing one . . . was like lying down on a railroad track. But I figured if I said no I would be saying no out of fear and as a man who's been into karate and judo for 23 years, the last thing you do is give in to your fears. You can have them, and we all have them, but what you do is you just go on anyway, you push on anyway, be confident, live with it, you ignore it. So I said I can't refuse to write a book out of fear. I wrote *Angela*, which was critically successful. Financially, nothing.

After *Angela*, I was asked to do a book on cocaine. While researching *Cocaine*, meeting federal narcotics agents and New York cops, I got that idea of doing a series about narcs. I sold that idea to a publisher. I then got the idea of doing a series about karate, because this was the time of Bruce Lee. I picked a black hero not for any racial reasons, but I wanted a man who is invisible in society and most black people are. I can tell you from personal experience. Most white people see blacks and ignore them. I'm not saying there's hate or anything crazy, you just look through them. Then again, now that I think about it, this is what we do to everyone else anyway.

I wanted someone who was invisible, and I wanted someone who therefore had nothing to lose by being retained in another society. What I'm proud of with that series is that, even though he was a black hero, I had a nice white following, which meant I had done what I wanted to do, which is just to write a good adventure story and nothing else. I got calls from white guys, I got letters, guys came to New York, wanted to meet me for a drink, I met them. They tell me that it was the best martial arts series there ever was—and it's true. It is the very best of the martial arts series. Most of the plots were taken from real life. The first plot was based on an FBI case history where they had found a group of American terrorists who were going to destroy an American town in retaliation for My Lai. They wanted to bring the war home here to show Americans that if you do this to other people it can happen to you. The FBI got them before

they could do this. I forget at the time whether it was 50 people or 200 people, but these looney-tunes were going to go over there and just blow everybody away.

I: How did you get onto that?

O: There was mention of it—three lines—in a gossip column and on the basis of that I wrote the first Black Samurai. It's about a bunch of terrorists that plan to wipe out an American town. The best of the series was number four, which is about forced prostitution of teenage girls, which you just pull out of the newspaper. I did one called *The Warlock*, which is based on a German war criminal who becomes the leader of an occult group which is involved in the blackmail of politicians. There has been some talk about Hitler's interest in astrology and some of Goering's naughty habits, of which drugs was just one. That gave me the germ of an idea, plus a tremendous interest in the occult. But the series did not sell that well and they didn't do any more than eight, but it was made into a film.

I: With Jim Kelly.

O: Right, Jim Kelly. Originally Fred Williamson wanted to do it—

I: Was there any talk about your doing it yourself?

O: There was talk about my being in the movie, which I refused to do. Having worked with actors and producers I'd had enough. There was no way, no amount of money was going to get me in that movie. Though Fred Williamson's manager also manages Linda Lovelace. Had I sold it to Williamson, I might have met Linda Lovelace. In that case I might have broken down.

I was also offered the opportunity to write the script, which I refused to do. I hold with Raymond Chandler, perhaps my favorite writer, who said that the most mediocre novelist is better than the best screenwriter. I go with that.

I: I myself have spoken to a lot of people who ask, why don't you go to Hollywood?

O: It will kill you, but if you don't believe me, try it. I can tell you from fifteen years' experience, it will kill you. It'll finish your marriage, it will finish you as a writer, it will finish you as a man. What they do is create a lifestyle that strangles you, frightens you, terrifies you, but keeps you under their thumb. It's the only way they can dominate you, through this lifestyle, which is money, drugs, women, and an inordinate amount of bullshit. And once they dominate you that's the only game they're interested in. It's power, power based on fear and nothing else. Again, I base this on experience.

Everyone who has written for films and then gone on to be a novelist has told the world at large, give me books. Give me books. And the reason for that is the control. That's the name of the game, that's why we go into this business. To be in charge, to play God.

I: As far as the script for the film was concerned, did you have any say, any control?

O: No, and I didn't seek any. I knew they would do an atrocious job. I saw no treason to intrude. I saw no reason to involve myself. I would have been involved in this project for perhaps two years.

The thing that makes television so bad, and that makes most films so bad, is that it's a collaborative art. You have fifteen people saying, I want this in there, I want that in there. You have an actor, actress, producer, director, studio, network, the money man, somebody's girlfriend, somebody's boyfriend, somebody's talking dog, everybody wants some input into the script. Oddly enough they don't want to write so much as they want to have their own way. They want the power without the responsibility. And I am fiercely independent. I don't take well to direction at all. That's why I am into sports like karate and judo, which are loner sports—

I: One on one.

O: Right. No team sports. I have no use for them, no time for them. Totally disinterested. And that's one of the things about writing. That's one of the reasons I left publicity. I didn't want my boss's opinion, and I didn't want my client's opinion, either.

I: Poe Must Die! What made you decide to do that book?

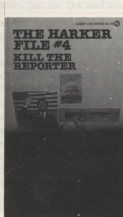
O: I wanted to write about Poe because he was the first detective. He was the first, and maybe he was the best. I wanted to do a horror detective story. I wanted to do something different, I wanted to do something in the occult. I would combine the two, and go back to the original. Now that's still not a plot, that's not your plot. But I knew I could find a plot, and when I constructed the plot, there would be pretty good characters there. Poe! Now Poe would definitely be the predominant figure, but in a sense that's a danger, because you become so obsessed by him that you ignore everyone else. I had to find an enemy worthy of Poe. For some reason it just came to me to do something about Poe and from that point I began to work on it, and I began to do research.

I: Had you read Poe prior to this?

O: Years ago, nothing recent. Yet he fascinated me, and the reason for that is, I like writers who have led messy lives. His life was a mess, Lord Byron's life was a mess, F. Scott Fitzgerald's life was a mess, Raymond Chandler. For some reason writers just seem to screw it up. Maybe it's that craziness that makes them writers. But Poe I knew was worth writing about. At the same time I had a problem because you've got to have a lot of action in the book. Poe could not physically do all of these things, no way could he do all these things. There had to be another character, and a man of action in those days was a boxer.

I: You open the book with Dickens.

O: Yeah, he's one of my favorite writers. I like him. He wrote about poverty, hunger, depression . . . my research



showed that the two had met once, when Dickens came to America. I had to get my boxer and Poe together. Dickens was the way.

I: You say you wanted Poe to be the dominant figure. I read the book and I think that the way it came off was that it was equal between Poe and Figg.

O: I know. What I should have added was that I wanted Poe to be the dominant figure but it did turn out even. What happens is that your characters assume lives of their own and after a while they tell you, "Back off, writer, I'm taking over!"

The first time I read that I said, bullshit. I'm the writer, nobody's going to tell me what to do, but sure enough, the more I began writing, the more I began to see the characters assume a life of their own, they begin to elbow other people off the pages, they begin to push you . . .

. . . Figg grew. Figg told me what to do. The danger there was that I would become so absorbed in him that I would forget the villain . . . I really had to work very hard to make Jonathan (the villain), at the least, terrifying, because unless that came off, there wouldn't be a story.

I: How long did it take you to finish this book, from the first day you thought you wanted to do something about Poe?

O: Let's see. I got the idea in the fall or late summer of 1976 . . . research, writing . . . finished the book February 1978.

I: Do you have a writing schedule?

O: I don't go by time, I go by amount of work that gets done. I try to get a certain number of pages a day. I'd say most of my work is done between twelve noon and six in the evening. I usually quit when it's time to go to karate practice, then I'll come back later and do some more, but I have to say most of it is done between twelve and six. The energy level is at its high then.

I: What do you read for pleasure?

O: American history—I'd say ninety percent of what I read is the truth—and medieval history. It's amazing the ideas you can get from history, because there isn't anything new. And the advantage of history is that you can see the beginning, the middle, and the end. You can see how it starts and how it ends and I think it's an advantage for writers to know that. Writers should read everything. Brassiere ads, sports page, you never know where an idea will come from.

I: Who are some of your favorite mystery writers?

O: Dashiell Hammett . . . lean, spare prose. Every word was dynamite. One of the finest writers in any field. I guess I'm particularly picky on the way mystery writers have been relegated to an inferior position. I'm sick of it, that mystery writers are considered substandard, if not subhuman, are barely readable, in no way to be considered the equal of the . . . regular writers, mainstream writers, whatever they're calling them these days.

The best writing in this country is being done by mystery writers. The most consistent good writing is being done by mystery writers, and I mean day in and day out, year in and year out. Mystery writers. But they are relegated to what are known as category authors by publishers. And this is to say they get no attention, no promotion, are not taken seriously, totally dismissed despite the fact that year in and year out people continue buying mysteries, and mystery readers are very loyal. They're very sharp and I don't think you can fool them—first of all, you can't fool them about good writing, they know it. Secondly, the various fields of expertise you find among them . . . their knowledge goes beyond whether or not the man has a good style. Their knowledge includes sports, literature, antiques, languages. They are bound to catch you.

They are tough, mystery readers, very, very tough. I am appalled and disgusted by the way publishers continue to low-rate them and low-rate mystery writers. I think it's a mistake because writers, and readers, of mysteries will be here long after some of these big novelists—I don't think Mario Puzo is going to outlive Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, or Edgar Allan Poe. Dashiell Hammett is a great writer, a craftsman, and none of these guys on the bestseller list can come close to him. No way! I don't know why there is this discrimination, I wish I could figure out why there is this discrimination against mystery writers. Do they think it's easy to write a mystery?

You know what's happening? Publishers want to have their cake and eat it too. Mystery is a naughty word, it's a category word. Somebody figures, well, there are mystery readers out there, so what publishers do is, they don't use the word "mystery" and they don't use "adventure." They will use the word "thriller" and the word "suspense." This allows them to have their cake and eat it, too. They can still say, well, it's not a mystery, it's a thriller. Now I read *Eye of the Needle*. Good book. Dorothy Uhnak made the bestseller list with *The Investigation*. They call

these books thrillers. I call them mysteries. When Ross Macdonald made the bestseller list some people started saying he wrote thrillers and suspense. The man writes mysteries, he's been writing them for years, that's all he writes. Every now and then you will look at the bestseller list and see mysteries, but the publishers call them thrillers and suspense novels.

I: Bob Ludlum writes mysteries, Jack Higgins has been writing them for years . . .

O: Damn right! But they (the publishers) will say that they are suspense writers. This is how they will categorize them. In all publishing, mystery is not considered an important category. Or rather, it isn't a category, category is a dirty word.

I resent it. I think it's ignorant. It's no consolation to writers who are starting, but these guys are going to outlive editors and publishers. They are going to outlive them.

When I say that Raymond Chandler is a good writer, my favorite writer, people hold their noses. But he is going to outlive Harold Robbins, James Michener . . . he's going to outlive them. He will.

I: Are there any others, beside Hammett and Chandler? Have you read James M. Cain?

O: No, I haven't, and I am remiss. I did read the first part of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and I couldn't put it down. I just kept on going. It was so good that I became envious of this man. I had to stop myself for resenting him for being that good. I am going to go back and read the whole thing.

Ironically, in Europe mystery writing is not put down. Mystery writers are not categorized as merely mystery writers. The reason for that is they tend to look at style. If the style is good then the man's a good writer. They are not interested in labeling. In England, mystery writing is respected. Mystery writers are respected authors, and I'm not just talking about Agatha Christie. In France mystery writers are respectable . . .

I: Because of Simenon.

O: . . . and others. And particularly American mystery writers are very, very highly respected. They would sooner read an American mystery than a French one. They would resent most of the stuff that this country embraces under the term "bestseller." Who is writing better than Joe Gores? How many guys are better than Pronzini?

I: I am gratified to see guys like Le Carre, Jack Higgins, Ludlum, John D. MacDonald—who's always been one of my favorites—on the bestseller list.

O: They help the general cause of the mystery writer. They affect, to a certain extent, the attitude of editors and publishers, which are, in the main, Neanderthal. They think in terms of keeping their job, making a profit for the company, they think in terms of money. They say that the only writers they are interested in are the ones

who will make money. The writers that can make money, they say, give me all you've got.

I: How do you feel about agents?

O: I've got a good one, one of the best, but as a rule I don't like agents either. There isn't a writer who has been in this business for any length of time that has any interest, or respect, for anyone outside of the writer, because you realize that without these men you don't have a business, that they are the only ones who take an interest by taking the work you produce.

You (the writer) are the common enemy of the editor, publisher, and the agent.

My sympathy is one hundred percent on the side of the writer. May he be enriched as often as he can.

I: You had a four-book contract for the Harker series. On what basis did you receive that contract from NAL?

O: On the basis of having done *The Narc* and *Black Samurai* series for them. They asked me to do a series about an investigative reporter and I created Harker.

I: You had eight *Black Samurai* books published, and ten *Narcs*. What kind of a contract did you have for these series?

O: I got a contract for each book as I went along. They had the series, they bought the series, which means they could have done it as long as they wanted, but when the *Samurai* was not selling they decided to cancel both series.

I: When did you find out that you'd been nominated for an Edgar?

O: At karate practice. My girlfriend came down and said, "You've been nominated, you've been nominated." I said, "For what?" She said, "Look, look, look," and showed me the letter. I was stunned. My respect for mystery writers—well, let's face it, man, put me on record, if I haven't said it before, I think mystery writers are the best writers in this country. Originally I said, to be nominated is enough. Bullshit! To be nominated is enough for about thirty seconds, after that . . . winning—

I: That was the next question. Were you there that night?



O: Yeah, I was there that night.

I: How did you feel about not winning?

O: I lost half my stomach lining. How did I feel? Is this for public consumption or do you want the truth?

I: Give me both and I'll see which one is better—

O: There's only one life, you might as well tell the truth. The truth is I wanted to win, I was disappointed when I lost, I had guilt feelings for the winner, I thought maybe we should go back and recount this whole thing again, the usual human reaction, as opposed to people telling you, to be nominated was all that I wanted, and I felt very kindly towards the winner and I'm glad he won because he wrote a better book—oh yeah?



An Appreciation of ARCHIE GOODWIN

By Arden Knight



"Are you Nero Wolfe's Archie Goodwin?"

"No. I'm my Archie Goodwin. I'm Nero Wolfe's confidential assistant."¹

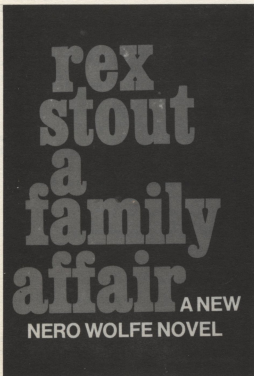
So Archie Goodwin represents himself in Rex Stout's *Too Many Clients*, one of the numerous Nero Wolfe novels penned by Stout in the more than forty years of revitalizing the same basic formula. Since Nero Wolfe and

Archie Goodwin were first introduced in *Fer-de-Lance*, published in 1934, the mystery reading public has been able to follow the adventures of the oversized, larger-than-life Nero Wolfe who solves murders in his office, study, or living room while the energetic Goodwin, the narrator of Stout's stories and Wolfe's legman, keeps the action fast-paced and highly entertaining. In fact, Archie Goodwin is much more than Wolfe's assistant; he is his own man as both he states and his creator Stout fully realized.

Archie Goodwin is in no sense the usual foil for the traditional master detective. Sherlock Holmes' Dr. Watson or Hercule Poirot's Captain Hastings follow the pattern originally set up by Poe's Dupin, who had a nameless but amazed assistant who marveled at Dupin's reasoning ability. The assistant often stands in the shadows to the superior detective, who has special quirks or noticeable features besides being a master of logic. Nero Wolfe himself well fits the eccentric detective fashion with his gourmet interests, love of orchids and beer, prodigious size, and ability to leap to the solution of a murder. However, Archie Goodwin is distinctive in his own right. He is no less interesting than Wolfe, and as a matter of fact provides Stout with the true thread that holds the Wolfe novels together.

Certainly a case can be made for viewing Goodwin as the essential protagonist of the Nero Wolfe novels. Goodwin is the narrator, of course, and it is through his eyes that Wolfe is viewed and admired, although it is obvious there is mutual admiration between the two detectives. The plot follows Goodwin in the Nero Wolfe mysteries, and there is as much emphasis put on Goodwin as on Wolfe. Indeed, perhaps more is on Goodwin.

An appreciation of Archie Goodwin becomes most obvious when it is realized that Stout's style is patterned around the narrator of the Nero Wolfe mysteries. Short, terse statements are commonly evident. Often in dialogue the speaker is identified only by manner, and Goodwin



appears both quick-witted and sophisticated. He frequently adds more than a little touch of humor and often jokes about matters that are "dead serious," such as when the waiter of a fashionable restaurant appears at the Wolfe home and claims that someone is trying to kill him in *A Family Affair*. Goodwin replies, "That won't do. Good waiters are scarce, and anyway you're not old enough to die." When the waiter counters with the obvious "death is not a joke," Goodwin continues, "Sure it is. It's life that's not a joke."²

Goodwin's flippant and often picturesque speech manner shows sophistication blended into a colloquial framework which allows for strong reader identification. In *Too Many Clients* Archie explains the fee to a prospective client. "I mentioned a hundred dollars an hour, but that's for routine. The shoe would have to fit the foot, with Mr. Wolfe doing the fitting and you the footing."³ Actually Goodwin recognizes himself as a very qualified detective in his own right. In *In the Best Families*, Goodwin explains, "I am not a dick strictly speaking. I am a private eye."⁴ Goodwin is interesting in his own way and for his own mannerisms. He is often the basis for subplots that run throughout the Stout novels. His girl friend Lily Rowan may or may not appear, but whereas Wolfe has little interest in women, Archie's adventures may be as intriguing as the solving of the murder. For example, in *Death of a Doxy* finding the murderer doesn't quite match the captivating relationship Archie has with Julie Jacquette.

It seems likely that readers would often identify more closely with Archie Goodwin rather than Nero Wolfe. There is a clear contrast between Goodwin and Wolfe. No doubt Wolfe's image with the mystery reading public is centered around the "fat man" idea, but when it is realized how Wolfe's lack of movement in the novels is held up to the energy created by Goodwin, the reader of the fast-paced Nero Wolfe mysteries should be convinced that it is Goodwin who is being used by Stout to keep the pace moving. True, Wolfe is always around at the conclusion to wrap up the case and deservedly get the credit. Yet the writing techniques of Rex Stout remain tied to Goodwin. Capable of violence on occasion, often in trouble with the police, having a keen interest in women, possessed of a seemingly total recall for conversations he has heard, Goodwin is also a very fine detective. He locates information and unravels mysteries himself, but never, it would seem, with the impact of Wolfe's explanation at the conclusion that solves the main murder case.

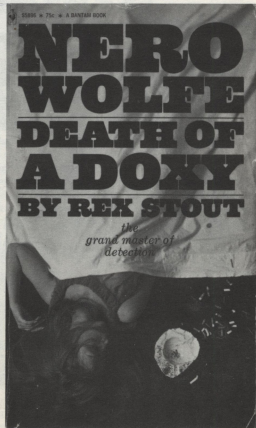
The technique being used by Stout is reminiscent of Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby*, whereby the narrator Nick Carraway may appear secondary to the highly intriguing Gatsby, who captures both the attention of the narrator and the reader who see Gatsby through Carraway's presentation. Of course, beneath the surface it is actually Carraway who is at the heart of *The Great Gatsby*. Nero Wolfe also captures the imagination of the reader though he seems somewhat bigger than life. Archie Goodwin stands in apparent quiet contrast to Wolfe, but

it should be understood that Goodwin is essential to his creator.

For a writer to follow the same basic pattern for writing mystery stories for over forty years, and having a most successful career at that, Stout has been able to keep to the traditional mystery formula by his characterization of Nero Wolfe as the master detective with his eccentricities. Archie Goodwin, however, is not traditional in the formula. There does not appear to be any other master detective who has such an important assistant. It is Goodwin more than Wolfe who allows Stout leeway for expansion, and it is Goodwin's character which provides the underlying thread that not only is the basis for various subplots but also acts as the showpiece for Stout's own personal style and wit.

Notes

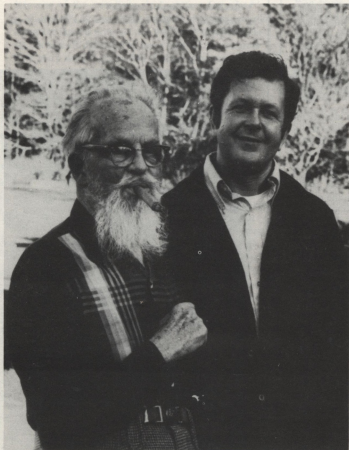
1. Rex Stout, *Too Many Clients* (New York: Bantam Books-Viking Press), 1960, p. 27.
2. Rex Stout, *A Family Affair* (New York: The Viking Press), 1975, p. 2.
3. Rex Stout, *Too Many Clients*, p. 4.
4. Rex Stout, *In the Best Families* (New York: Bantam Books-Viking Press), 1950, p. 56.



REX STOUT

Newsletter

By John McAleer



Rex Stout is the creator of America's best-loved private detective, Nero Wolfe. Prof. John McAleer won an Edgar Allan Poe Award from the Mystery Writers of America for his monumental book, *Rex Stout: A Biography* (Little, Brown).

On June 14 I had a long visit with Ruth Stout, last survivor among Rex Stout's eight brothers and sisters. On that day, Flag Day, Ruth was ninety-five, but she put in no time waving flags. She worked in her famous mulch garden instead. Last fall Ruth was found one morning unconscious in her garden and covered with dew. She apparently had fainted and lain there all night undiscovered, which is not surprising since she lives alone. After a hospital checkup she came home, none the worse for her experience. "I almost became part of my own mulch," she quipped. Ruth's latest book, her twelfth (she wrote the first when she was sixty-eight), is *Don't Forget to Smile Or How to Stay Sane and Fit Over Ninety*.

Jove editions of the Wolfe saga are appearing, one a month—*Black Orchids* (January); *Too Many Cooks* (February); *Over My Dead Body* (March); *The Rubber Band* (April); *Fer-de-Lance* (May); *The League of Frightened Men* (June); *The Red Box* (July); *Some Buried Caesar* (August). A handsome edition and a bargain at \$1.75 each.

From Clark Unger, Lakewood, Ohio: Nero Wolfe, like his author, is Stout Catches crooks, though he rarely goes out if he can't have his way, "Pful," he'll say And go up to his orchids and pout.

Patricia Dreyfus, who with Larry Brooks did a bang-up job editing issues 1 & 2 of the Wolfe Pack's *Gazette*, has resigned because of family obligations. Her replacement will be Bill De Andrea, this year's Edgar winner for Best First Novel (*Killed in the Ratings*). Bill, an unabashed admirer of Rex Stout, is a perfect choice.

The Wolfe Pack will give an annual Nero Wolfe Award (to be known as the Nero) to the author of the detective story written in English which best exemplifies the standards Rex Stout upheld. I am chairman of the award committee. Serving with me are Barbara Stout (Rex's daughter); Margaret Farrar, widow of John Farrar, who commissioned the first Nero Wolfe story; Robert Goldsborough, author of a book-length Nero Wolfe pastiche and editor of the Sunday magazine of the Chicago *Tribune*; Daniel Andriacco, who does the distinguished "Mysteries" feature for the Cincinnati *Post*; and Bill Crider, professor at Howard Payne College, Texas, whose Ph.D. thesis on Hammett, Chandler, and Macdonald is a classic. . . . To give the process a boost won't you send me your list of those novels which you think should be 1979 entries?

* * * * *

In *Where There's a Will*, June Hawthorne, one of the three remarkable Hawthorne sisters, is married to the U.S. Secretary of State, John Charles Dunn. *Where There's a Will* originally was published in *The American Magazine* as *Sisters in Trouble*. There Dunn is a U.S. senator!

* * * * *

An ardent Stout fan living in Czechoslovakia tells me Rex's books are out of print there and hard to get. That makes me feel guilty because he's sent me three second-hand Czech Stouts. I can't read Czech and keep thinking of the Czechs who could read them if they continued to circulate over there. I'm not sure they would circulate, however, since my benefactor says: "Please, be so very kind and don't send me copies of Rex Stout books, because that's very difficult to get for me. Several books which send [sic] to me by writers or publishers I don't get by the post." And we think we have troubles.

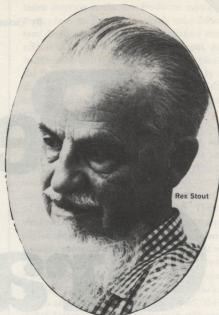
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The blurb on the jacket of Lucille Kallen's *Introducing C.B. Greenfield* (Crown, 1979) begins: "Not since Rex Stout gave Nero Wolfe his eyes and legs in the person of Archie Goodwin has a more eccentric detective been teamed with a more observant bloodhound. In place of Archie, there is a woman: Maggie Rome, an upper-middle-class Westchester lady. Her Nero Wolfe is C.B. Greenfield, editor and publisher of the small-town newspaper by which Maggie is employed." Want to check it out?

* * * * *

Do you have a mirror image of the ground floor plan of Wolfe's brownstone—office to the right instead of the left, etc.? If you do we'd like to hear about it and to know how you account for it. Don't be embarrassed. You share this quirk with several reliable readers—Larry Brooks, *Gazette* editor; Marion Wilcox, founder, twenty-four years ago, of the first NW fan club (Syracuse, N.Y.); Henry Morgan, doyen of American wits; and Ruth Stout, Rex's surviving sibling.

* * * * *



Rex once supplied me a list giving the ages of most of his characters. Here are the ages of the characters in *Death of a Doxy*: Isabel Kerr, 28; Avery Ballou, 56; Minna Ballou, 38; Barry Fleming, 34; Jill Hardy, 29; Theodore Gamm, 48; Julie Jaquette, 32. I'll send a Wolfe Pack T-shirt to the reader who comes closest to guessing the correct ages of the characters (regulars excepted) in *The Mother Hunt*.

* * * * *

Work on the book-length annotated bibliography of Rex Stout continues. In pursuit of this project I have collected 161 hardcover Stouts and 238 paperback editions—no two alike. My thanks to the many readers who have sent information to help along our efforts.

* * * * *

In 1975 Penguin put out (in England) a paperback which it called *The First Rex Stout Omnibus*. In 480 pages it presents *The Doorbell Rang*, *The Second Confession*, and *More Deaths Than One* (British title for *And Be a Villain*). A welcome volume but not the first Stout omnibus. Viking has published eight of them, and before that, in 1944, World published *The Nero Wolfe Omnibus*, an item so scarce Rex Stout not only did not own it, he did not remember ever having seen a copy. I have two "firsts"—one with a green cover, one with a blue cover. Anyone know which really came first? I don't.

* * * * *

When Barbara Stout was sixteen she told her father that she had decided to become a private eye. "Rex," she said, "was nonplussed." Although Barbara never followed through on this ambition, she did grow-up to be an eye-ful.

* * * * *

At one point in the Wolfe saga Archie says that his father's name was Titus. Can you recall where? Incidentally, Titus was the name of a Roman emperor brought to prominence by Nero. To confuse the issue further, Archie says later that his father's given name was James Arner. Or is the issue himself confused?

* * * * *

Paramount Studios, which holds the option to bring Nero Wolfe to television, is into some heavy negotiations with NBC on just that matter. Paramount's option runs out in April 1980 but results of the negotiations should be clear long before that. Orson Welles still is a good bet for the Wolfe role. Thayer David, who did the TV pilot (still not aired) dropped dead on a New York street last fall. You may remember him as the impresario who set up, and announced, the title match in *Rocky* (I).

* * * * *

Through the spring and summer the Wolfe Pack has sponsored a "Champagne for One" cocktail party and a "Murder is Corny" gathering at the Brooks Farm, outside of Washington, D.C. Plenty of corn and also a Wolfe beer-tasting event featuring forty different brands of beer. Those who want to join the Pack should write to: The Wolfe Pack, P.O. Box 822, Ansonia Station, N.Y., N.Y., 10023.

* * * * *

Your letters make this *Newsletter* possible. Keep writing to John McAleer, Mount Independence, 121 Follen Road, Lexington, Mass., 02173.

"That will be all, Archie."

* * * * *

By Victor L. Whitechurch

Peter Crane's Cigar



In the previous issue of TAD, a story from the rarest *Queen's Quorum* book published in the twentieth century featured Lingo Dan, one of the more reprehensible villains in memory. The following story is taken from another *Queen's Quorum* title that has a merited reputation for equal rarity, the nearly legendary collection about the first vegetarian detective, Thorpe Hazell, from Victor L. Whitechurch's *Thrilling Stories of the Railway*.

Of the fifteen stories in the book, nine are about this specialist in railway detection. The following tale, "Peter Crane's Cigars," is the first of the series and introduces Hazell.

Originally published in 1912 by Arthur C. Pearson in flexible paper boards, the book is virtually unfindable today and a true cornerstone in any collection of detectival rarities. Its author, Victor L. Whitechurch (1868-1933) was an Anglican churchman who wrote clerical romances and detective fiction. *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* is his first effort in the mystery field. In the last years of his life Canon Whitechurch published half a dozen detective novels as well as another elusive short-story collection, *The Adventures of Captain Ivan Korawitch* (1925), which contains more railway mysteries and a spy story.



A slight, delicate-looking man, with pale face and refined features, light red hair, and dreamy blue eyes.

Such is a brief description of Thorpe Hazell, book-collector and railway enthusiast, a gentleman of independent means, whose knowledge of book editions and bindings was only equalled by his grasp of railway details.

At least two railway companies habitually sought his expert advice in the bewildering task of altering their time tables, while from time to time he was consulted in cases where his special railway knowledge proved of immense service, and his private notebook of such "cases" would have provided much interesting copy to publishers.

He had one other peculiarity. He was a strong faddist on food and "physical culture." He carried vegetarianism to an extreme, and was continually practicing various "exercises" of the strangest description, much to the bewilderment of those who were not personally acquainted with his eccentricities.

With this brief introduction of the man, it is proposed to set forth, for the first time, a selection of railway "cases" in which he played a more or less prominent part.

* * * * *

"I tell you I only paid fivepence each for them."

Harry Brett took the cigar from his customer's hand, looked critically at it, smelt it, and then shook his head decidedly.

"Can't be done!" he said, "must be a fake."

"Unroll it—you're welcome."

The young tobacconist broke the cigar in half, rubbed the leaves between his palms, and examined them carefully.

"Ye-es," he admitted, "it's right enough. Same leaf all through."

"What did I tell you?"

Harry Brett turned round, reached for a box on a shelf, took it down, and selected a cigar, which he compared with the fragments lying on his counter.

"Same brand," he said at length. "But I can't make it out at all. Now, I can't afford to sell these under sixpence each, or sevenpence from a broken box, and even then the profit's a mere nothing. You must have got these over the water, Mr. Wilson?"

"No, I didn't."

"You couldn't have bought 'em retail at the price."

"I did, though."

"What, at a shop?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"In this town."

"In Netherpton?"

"Exactly."

"By George! Who was it, Mr. Wilson?"

"Well, at Crane's, if you want to know. There's no secret about it."

Harry Brett brought down his fist on the counter with a bang that made the scales rattle.

The mention of Crane's name had evidently upset him.

"It's all very well," he said, "but I tell you it can't be done. Either Crane's a bigger fool than I took him for, or he means having you in the end, and is only running this sort of thing to advertise his business. Why, he hardly knows anything about the trade; he's only been in it six months. You're welcome to buy them, Mr. Wilson, of course. *I* can't do them at the price."

"Well," returned the customer, "I'm a bit of a judge of a weed, and if he begins palming off inferior stuff he won't impose on me. But till then I'll save my money and deal with him. But, as he makes no reduction in other goods, I'll take a tin of my usual mixture from you."

"Oh, go and get your baccy where you buy your cigars," exclaimed Harry Brett, who had been working himself up into quite a rage. "I don't hold with all this underselling business, nor with those who encourage it. Good morning, sir!"

Mr. Wilson smiled slightly at the young man's outburst of passion, shrugged his shoulders, and walked out of the shop.

Harry Brett leant on the counter with his elbows, gazing angrily at the fragments of the object which had upset him so much. He had been a tobacconist from his boyhood upwards, having begun to work in his father's shop ever since leaving school, and since his father's death, three years previously, he had come into the business. It was not a very large one, but it was well established, and had many old customers. And Harry himself had been calculating for some little time that there was profit enough out of the shop to support two, besides which he had a very distinct notion of the choice of a partner.

But for the last three months certain things had troubled him. His takings had grown distinctly less, and certain customers had become irregular. And it was a curious coincidence that these troubles had begun to date from the time when Peter Crane had opened a rival business in Netherton, with an announcement that during the first week he would give away a "tip-top cigar" with every quarter of a pound of tobacco purchased.

It was galling, inasmuch as this Peter Crane had nothing to recommend him. Netherton knew him as a ne'er-do-well, turning up every now and again at his widowed mother's, who kept a small confectionery shop in the town. He had cleared one window of this shop of its contents, and substituted the fragrant weed in its various forms, and, as often as not, his mother dispensed these goods, for there were intervals during which Peter Crane himself seemed to abandon his new trade.

"Well, Brett," said a quiet voice, suddenly, "you seemed wrapped in thought. What is puzzling you? Half a minute, please, before you answer. It is time for my midday exercise."

Brett looked up at Thorpe Hazell, who had entered without noise, and now stood before him twirling his arms rapidly round his head and then suddenly thrusting them out in front. Hazell lived at Netherton, but had a little bachelor flat in town, where he spent a good deal of his time. He was a regular customer of Brett, who knew his little eccentricity.

When he had finished Brett told him about the cigar and his suspicions. Hazell leant on the counter and listened attentively.

"I know this young Crane," he remarked, "and I'm afraid he doesn't bear the best of characters. Of course, this affects your trade?"

"It does, sir, to a certain extent."

"Do you suspect anything?"

"Well, sir, I hardly like to say. This particular brand of cigar can be picked up very cheaply in Holland or Belgium, and if they could be got over without the duty I could understand it."

"You think it's a question for the Revenue officials?"

"Oh, I'm not going to put them on his track," said Brett scornfully. "There's honor in trade as in other things. Besides which, if there were nothing in it I should pose as a spiteful sort of chap, and it would be all the worse for me."

"I see. You've excited my curiosity, Brett. Well, I want some cigarettes of the usual brand—thank you. If you hear anything about Crane's movements you might let me know. And, by the by, don't talk about the thing. Good morning."

On his way home he called in at Crane's shop. Here he made a trifling purchase. Mrs. Crane served him.

"H'm," he muttered to himself as he regained the street. "That collarette of hers was genuine Brussels lace. I wonder whether Brett's suspicions are correct. It may be a case worth investigating."

Netherton was about twenty-five miles from London, on the Mid-Southern and Eastern Railway, and Thorpe Hazell constantly ran up to town. On this particular evening he was due at a meeting at Kensington.

He had scarcely taken his seat in the train when a young man came in and sat opposite. Hazell glanced at him over his paper, and recognized him as Peter Crane. He remembered Brett's little difficulty for a moment, but dismissed the subject as he resumed his paper.

Now, when the train drew up at the London terminus of the Mid-Southern and Eastern Railway, Hazell did not hurry himself in the least. He was not due at Kensington just yet, so he determined to wait till the departure of the Continental train. There were many things to interest him. The type of engine running, the number of coaches—dozens of details that are only apparent to the enthusiast of railway matters.

He was standing on the platform, taking in these various things, when he suddenly caught sight of Crane going into the Continental booking-office. An impulse seized him, and a moment or two later he was standing close behind the tobacconist, overhearing him ask for a return ticket to Gantes. He began to be interested.

"Now," he reasoned to himself as he went out of the station and took a hansom, "there's evidently a bit of clever smuggling going on here. Let's think. A return ticket. *How* does he get the cigars through? How does he bring them back? Seems to me there's a chance of a railway mystery here. Of course, it may be on the boat, but I shouldn't think so. I'll have a look into this. There's any amount of frontier smuggling on Continental railways, I know. I once saw half a hundredweight of tobacco fixed under a passenger coach on the St. Gothard, and beautifully run through Chiasso. This may be well worth investigating."

Once having made up his mind, Hazell lost no time in making further inquiries as soon as he returned to Netherton, the result being that he ascertained that Crane had a regular date in the month for absenting himself from home.

And so it happened that the next time the latter took a return ticket to Gantes, Thorpe Hazell, disguised in a black wig, and looking very much like a commercial traveler, was already seated in the Continental train, booked through to the same destination. He had his eyes wide open, and had already taken in the fact that Crane's luggage consisted of a fair-sized brown Gladstone, and a very large black kit bag.

Hazell kept well out of Crane's way all the journey, for he knew very well that it was the return trip only that demanded careful scrutiny. So he snatched what sleep he could. They reached Gantes in the small hours of the morning, and Hazell noticed that Crane put the kit bag in the cloakroom, after which he proceeded to an adjacent hotel, a porter carrying his Gladstone.

Hazell, whose luggage was quite small, looked about him, noticed a hotel just opposite, rang up the sleepy night-porter, and took a front room, so that he could command the entrance of Crane's hotel. Instead of undressing, he opened his bag, changed into a tourist's

knickerbocker suit, and then lay down on his bed with a determination not to sleep more than a couple of hours.

At daybreak he was at his window, keeping careful watch. An hour or two passed, and then his patience was rewarded. Crane came out of the hotel, smoking a cigar and suspecting nothing.

The next minute Hazell was in the street, following his prey to the station. He lounged into the booking-office in time to hear Crane take a return ticket to Antburg.

Then he inquired of the booking clerk casually whether one could take a return to Antburg and come back the next day.

"No, monsieur, tickets are only available for one day."

He shrugged his shoulders lazily, for he never believed in taking too much trouble over anything. It was clear that Crane would be back in Gantes that day. The only thing was to find out whether he took his black bag with him. He did.

"Now," said Hazell to himself, as he went back to his hotel, "that young man is precious shrewd. It's pretty clear he's gone over to Antburg to get his goods—there isn't a better place in Northern Europe for getting them—probably out of bond, too. But why does he take this route? It's a roundabout way to get to Antburg. I know. He works the trick on the Mid-Southern and Eastern, and the other line won't do. It's well worth finding out, but I can't do anything yet."

He had his breakfast, strolled round the town, and finally came back to his room. He had jotted down the times of trains returning from Antburg.

Then he settled himself to perform a "nerve-strengthening" exercise, which consisted of lying down on the flat of his back and holding a tumbler of water, filled to the brim, over his head for ten minutes at a time, the object being not to spill a drop of it. He entirely abstracted himself from the object in hand, except at such times as Antburg trains were due, when he got up and carefully watched the street leading from the station.

In the afternoon Crane appeared once more and entered his hotel. Then Hazell paid his bill, went to the station, and waited for the train back to England. He was keen and alert now. If that black bag, which he surmised was in the cloakroom, contained cigars, he was particularly anxious to see how the Customs were evaded.

Exactly in accordance with his surmises, Peter Crane came down to the station in time for the afternoon boat train.

And this is what he did. He took the black bag out of the cloakroom and *registered it through to London*. That meant that until the bag reached London he could not possibly get at it, and then he would have to open it in the presence of the Customs' officials, through registered luggage being examined there, and not at Dovehaven. The brown bag, which appeared to be heavy, he took in the train with him.

Thorpe Hazell began to be mystified. Assuming the bag to be filled with cigars, he could see now way in which they could be brought through free of duty. He watched the luggage being taken on the boat at Ozende, but Crane was absolutely regardless, and had thrown himself on a saloon berth, and was sleeping almost immediately, his brown bag beside him.

At Dovehaven the examination of hand luggage took place, and Hazell had squeezed himself close beside Crane in order that he might see what was in the brown bag. There was nothing suspicious. It contained quite a pile of books and articles of clothing, a pink shirt being rather conspicuous.

As soon as the examination was over Crane turned to the porter who was carrying the bag. "Put that in the van," he said. "Label it for London. I shan't want it in the carriage with me."

Hazell, still wondering, now went up to the guard's van and watched the luggage being

put in, both of Crane's bags being among them. The guard himself was busily engaged helping the porters, as the boat was rather late, and he was anxious to get off.

"Now then, sir, are you going on? Take your seat, please. Right away!"

A shrill whistle, a wave of the green lamp, and the train was off, the next stop being the London terminus.

"Curious," said Hazell to himself as he took a packet of plasmon chocolate and a flask of milk out of his bag and proceeded to "dine." "Perhaps I'm wrong, after all. Ah!"—as a thought struck him—"well, we'll wait till we get to town."

A couple of hours later that night the train drew up at the London terminus, having, of course, run through Netherton without a stop. Behind the long barrier stood a number of Custom House officials waiting to examine the registered luggage before it was passed through. Hazell watched by the guard's van until Crane's two bags were deposited on the platform. Crane took charge of the brown one himself, and a porter followed him with the black one to the examination counter. Hazell stood a little behind, eagerly awaiting the result.

"Anything to declare, sir? Tobacco, scent, cigars?"

"No—nothing."

"Open your bag, please."

"Certainly."

He unlocked the large black bag and threw it open. Hazell bent forward. And he caught a glimpse of a pink shirt—and books.

The black bag contained the identical articles that he had seen in the brown bag at Dovehaven.

A solution struck him. Glancing round he saw a platform inspector whom he knew. Rushing up to him he exclaimed, in a whisper:

"Jarvis—I'm Mr. Hazell—look here."

"Lor', sir, I shouldn't have known you. I—"

"Hush. Don't let on, man. Quick; you see that fellow in the light overcoat doing up his bag? Get one of those officers to examine the brown bag by his side. Sharp!"

The next moment Jarvis was behind the counter and had spoken a word to the official. Crane had just strapped up his bag and was moving off. Hazell had darted away.

"Sir—one moment."

"What is it?"

"That other bag. I want to see it."

"It's not registered luggage. It was examined at Dovehaven. Here's the chalk mark on it."

"Never mind. Open it, please."

"Oh! very well," cried Crane with a laugh, laying it down on the counter and unstrapping it. "Here you are."

The official looked inside, his face burst into a smile.

"All right, sir!" he exclaimed, "that's soon settled."

Jarvis, who was standing by, smiled too. A minute later Hazell accosted him.

"Well," he asked, "what was inside that bag?"

"Nothing, sir. It was *empty!*"

"Empty was it? Oh! Please say nothing about this, Jarvis."

He went into the refreshment room, ordered a cup of coffee, lit a cigarette, and sat down to think it over. For once in his life he was completely baffled. It had seemed quite simple to him as he came up in the train, and he had thought that the opening of the brown portmanteau would prove the solution of the enigma. After a while a plan of action developed in his mind, and he went out of the refreshment room. Jarvis was still on the platform.

"Jarvis," he said, "I don't want it known that I came up by the boat train tonight."
"Very well, sir."

Jarvis knew of more than one railway mystery in which Thorpe Hazell had been involved, and was to be trusted.

"Thought you'd caught a bit of smuggling, sir?" he asked.

"Oh!" drawled Hazell. "I was a little suspicious, that was all. Capital run up tonight."

"Yes, sir. Bob Nobes is a good driver."

"Ah! The guard was smart with the luggage at Dovehaven."

"John Crane, sir? Yes. He's one of our best guards. Runs this train in regular shifts."
Hazell's eyes sparkled for a moment.

"You—er—didn't see what became of that young man?"

"Yes, sir. Got into the train on No. 2 platform."

"Ah, that's mine, I believe, to Netherton. Goodnight, Jarvis."

He got into the train, a smile of satisfaction on his face. He meant to master this little mystery.

* * * * *

A couple of days later he was buying cigarettes.

"Oh, by the way, Brett," he said, "I think I can promise you that your hated rival will shortly shut up shop."

"Indeed, sir! Well, I shouldn't be sorry. I've lost half my trade in cigars."

"Ah! Oh, I say, Brett, there's a fellow named John Crane—something on the line. Know him?"

"Peter's cousin, sir."

"I see. Well, keep your mouth shut, and let me know when Crane goes away from home. I think we might have quite a little bit of fun then."

Three or four weeks later Thorpe Hazell received a note from Brett. In answer to it he wrote:

"Come round to my house tomorrow at about 8 p.m. Bring a greatcoat."

The tobacconist duly turned up, and found Hazell in his study.

"Sit down, Brett. Have some toast and water. No? Well, then, take one of your own cigarettes."

"Thank you, sir."

"I ordered the dog-cart for 8:30," went on Hazell. "We have quite a drive before us. That's why I mentioned your greatcoat."

"What are we going to do, sir?"

"You'll see, all in good time."

They were soon bowling along the high road in the opposite direction from that of London. Hazell had the reins, and was not disposed to be communicative. After they had gone about seven or eight miles, Hazell turned down a by-road.

"You know where this leads, Brett?"

"Across Pinkney's Common, sir."

"Exactly."

Presently he said:

"There are the lights of the main line signals?"

"Yes, sir."

A couple of red lights stood out in the blackness of the sky.

"And there's the level crossing?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right. We'll put our lamps out."

He drew up to perform the operation.

“Good, and now we’re going to drive on the grass across the common. And don’t speak above a whisper, please.”

They drew nearer the line. On their left, where the road crossed the railway, the bright light of the gatekeeper’s box was discernible. Presently Hazell pulled up.

“We’ll tie the cob to this tree,” he whispered. “That’s right. We shan’t have long to wait.” “It’s a lonely place,” said Brett.

“Quite so. We don’t want to go close up to the line. This will do. It’s the up-train that we want.”

Wondering what was going to happen, Brett waited.

Presently Hazell said: “Here she comes. Those are her headlights. Now you watch what happens. Keep your eyes open.”

A white light above a green appeared in the distance, and grew brighter every moment. Then there was a roar as the approaching express bore down upon them. The train was running on a slight embankment, and they could see along its whole length.

“Look!” said Brett suddenly, “one of the doors is open—in the last carriage.”

“Exactly. The guard’s van, Brett. There he stands. Look out! Ah! There’s a pretty little smuggling dodge for you.”

As the train swept by they could distinctly see the guard silhouetted against the light in his van. He appeared to be leaning out of his door, holding some large and heavy object. The next moment he had dropped this on to the soft turf of the embankment. As the train rushed by the crossing, a green light appeared for a moment, held out of the guard’s van, and turned towards the rear of the train.

“Now,” exclaimed Hazell, “we’ll just wait and see what happens. First of all, we’ll get as close as we can to that package—ah!—here it is. A convenient bush to hide us, too. He’s coming, Brett!”

A man, carrying a lantern, came with a limping gait from the box at the level-crossing. Every now and then he paused, as if looking for something. Presently he gave a grunt of satisfaction as the light fell on a package lying on the grass.

He was just about to pick it up when Hazell stepped forward and said, very quietly:

“How much do you get for your share in this little transaction, my man?”

“Good Lord!” exclaimed the other, dropping his lantern in his fright. Hazell picked it up and turned it on him.

“Ah, you’ve a wooden leg, I see. No use to try to run. I suppose you were to keep this little lot till Crane came for them?”

“Don’t—don’t be hard on me, sir. I don’t know nothin’ about the contents—I—if you split to the company, sir, I’d lose my post.”

Hazell laughed.

“Answer my first question, man. How much do you get out of this?”

“Ten bob a time,” faltered the delinquent.

“Poor pay for the risk! How long has Crane been running thts?”

“Six or seven months, sir.”

“I see. Well, I’m afraid he won’t find this little lot tomorrow. You can tell him when he comes for them that we’ve forestalled him. I should advise you to get your half-sovereign out of him before you tell him. And you can also add that if he wants to get them again he’d better call at Somerset House. Goodnight—here’s your lantern.”

“I shall lose my post, sir.”

“Not this time. You may think yourself lucky, though. Here, Brett, give me a hand with this parcel.”

They carried the bundle, which was securely corded in thick American cloth, to the trap, and drove home. An hour or so later they were sitting in Hazell’s study.

"I think we're entitled to one each before I send them to the Customs," said Hazell, selecting a cigar. "Now, how much do you think he cleared out of this lot?"

Brett looked at the four dozen boxes.

"Well, sir, if he got them, as you say, at Antburg, I can pretty well guess the price he paid. He ought to have saved quite twenty-five pounds in duty—very likely more. Altogether, the run was worth at least fifty pounds. But how did you find it out, sir?"

Hazell told him of his journey to Gantes and of the Customs examination in London. "I own I was baffled for the moment," he said, "but, of course, I knew that he wouldn't have taken that journey to bring back an empty bag. Inquiry confirmed my suspicions that the guard was in it, possessing a duplicate key to the black bag, and I saw where the solution was. Undoubtedly the cigars were in the country, the only question was their whereabouts.

"The problem was very simple. I had only to keep a watch on Crane. He didn't notice the cyclist who followed him when he took a trap from here the next day, nor did he see that same cyclist lying behind a bush on Pinkney's Common with a field-glass watching him get a parcel from the level-crossing box. The rest you know. I guessed pretty accurately where the guard dropped them, and here they are."

"There's one thing I don't understand, sir," replied Brett, "and that is, why the guard didn't put the cigars in the brown bag and throw that out—or, in fact, why he took two bags at all."

"Oh, but that was where his greatest artfulness came in—the subtlety of the whole thing. The black bag was weighed at Gantes, and its weight registered. It was necessary to have a corresponding weight to it when it arrived in London. That's why he carried those heavy books and used the other bag for them.

"Then he and the guard knew perfectly well that detectives are pretty sharp in these matters, and if it had been noticed that he started back with two bags and only one arrived, especially as he was doing this more than once, suspicion would have been aroused. That's why the other bag was not thrown out. The whole thing was beautifully planned. Now we'll pack up—stop, though—I want three or four more of those cigars. That's right."

He packed up the cigars, and directed them to H.M. Customs.

"There," he said, "we'll send it anonymously. I expect, after his little visit to Pinkney's Common crossing, Master Crane will take a holiday. I must really thank you, Brett, for having given me an interesting little problem. I don't think we need take any further action. The three of them will have quite fright enough to stop them. Good night!"

Hazell was right. Peter Crane suddenly disappeared from view, and the tobacco window was devoted to confectionery again. Harry Brett's prospects so increased with the return of custom that he made a formal proposal for the partnership, which was duly accepted, and the deed signed in the vestry of the parish church. Some weeks after the incident Thorpe Hazell was on the platform of the London terminus of the Mid-Southern and Eastern Railway, watching the incoming of the Continental express. As soon as the bustle was over, he strolled up to the rear guard, who was standing by his van.

"Have a cigar, guard!" he said, offering his case.

"Thank you, sir."

"Take three or four. They're more yours than mine."

"What, sir?"

"I believe you dropped them out of your van—some weeks ago—just by Pinkney's Common crossing. Good night!"

He turned his head when he reached the end of the platform. There was Guard Crane, standing like a statue, gazing at him with a paler face than was caused by the electric light.

DICKS ON STAGE

FORM AND FORMULA IN DETECTIVE DRAMA INSTALLMENT VI

By Charles LaBorde

PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLERS

A third major formula for confined mysteries relegates the search for the solution of a crime to a position of secondary importance. A detailed portrayal of a character's psychological collapse, which is precipitated by the commission of a crime, dominates the mystery puzzle in these plays. The mystery questions of such dramas ask, "How will the minds of these people be affected by their contact with a crime?" rather than pose the more standard query of "Who done it?" Plays written according to this formula first appeared in the late 1920's and were termed "psychological thrillers."¹ Although many earlier mysteries employed insanity or the effects of fear upon mental acuity, no mystery play before Patrick Hamilton's 1929 success, *Rope (Rope's End in the United States)*,² portrayed psychological deterioration of the villains and let that psychological emphasis overshadow concern for a solution to the mystery. Three years after Hamilton's initial thriller, J.B. Priestley offered a subtle approach to psychological thrillers with his first solo effort for the stage, *Dangerous Corner*.³ Since the appearance of such early attempts, psychological thrillers have remained a dominant force in the field of stage mysteries. They have more recently been represented on stage by William Archibald's *The Innocents*,⁴ a ghost mystery that relies heavily upon the effects of fear upon the mind, and *Sleuth*,⁵ a tongue-in-cheek attempt to revamp the aging formula. In the latter play, author Anthony Shaffer created a theretofore nonexistent balance in thrillers by adding an emphasis upon bafflement to the formula.

Compared to previous formulas, the beginning of a psychological thriller contains a lesser exposition of details of the crime and a correspondingly greater degree of character development. One factor that makes such an approach possible arises from the subordinate importance of the crime. Details are not essentials because the crime itself is not of paramount concern. Furthermore, the relatively small number of characters in these plays⁶ permits greater development than is possible in such a character-

laden formula as the murder-house mystery. In each of these plays the first scene merely establishes the characters' dispositions or mental states before any psychological effects of a crime begin to cause changes. Authors usually handle such initial scenes at a leisurely pace. For example, the first minutes of *Sleuth* consist of witty verbal sparring that helps to establish characterization of the two opponents, Milo and Andrew, but does not hint at the approaching violence.

Similarly, the middle of each of these thrillers presents few clues and abounds instead in slow alterations in character. In *Rope* the author includes an occasional clue, such as an incriminating movie ticket, in order to hinder the killers' plans for a perfect crime. Character qualities and changes in character, however, create most of the complication for the villains. Their plan first weakens when the leader, Brandon, attempts to bolster his facade of confidence in his partner Granillo's view by daringly speaking of bones in chests at the very moment that the two killers and their dinner guests are eating off a chest containing the victim's body. While Brandon's seeming confidence may enhance Granillo's image of him, it also arouses the curiosity of Rupert, the play's functional detective. Nevertheless, such talk would not be sufficient to precipitate the villains' downfall without erosions in their confidence. Their increasingly nervous reactions to Rupert's joking questions only kindle his curiosity. As his inquiries become more serious and probing, the murderers begin to lose control, thus assuring their failure. Braggadocio and a single piece of evidence (the ticket) coupled with the unstable characters of the killers set in motion a series of events and questions that make the villains' capture inevitable.

Development of the plot in *Dangerous Corner* differs from that of *Rope* in that many details from the night of the crime are provided. Nevertheless, those facts do not function as clues, because almost all such revelations are explained when first presented rather than being left unanswered until a final solution scene. Instead, the facts serve to reveal the lives and characters both of the people offering the details and of the persons hearing them for the first time.⁷

Although much of the complication in *Sleuth* arises from its many major discoveries and reversals, a nearly equal amount of its development derives in typical psychological-thriller fashion from depiction of changes in character. The first act consists chiefly of a single lengthy transformation of Milo's mental state by his tormentor, Andrew. In the second act focus shifts to Andrew, whose alteration is effected in a series of mental games played on him by his first-act victim. Whether an alteration of character comprises most of the development, as it does in *Rope*, or only a portion of it, as in *Sleuth*, the middle of a psychological thriller must contain a detailed portrayal of character change so as to prepare for the character's collapse in the end or solution scene.

The ending of a psychological thriller grows out of

character development as much as do its beginning and middle. The downfall of the central character (usually but not always a villain) results from either the collapse of his mind under pressure or his misjudgment of the character of others. Patrick Hamilton's killers suffer both misfortunes. As noted earlier, even the self-assured Brandon falls apart as Rupert shows his understanding of the murder scheme. Similarly, Brandon misreads Rupert as an inferior but kindred mind who would concur with a great adventure in murder for murder's sake. Brandon so wrongly interprets the situation at the end of the play that he permits Rupert to see the body and then rather confidently explains why Rupert must not tell the police. Brandon seems genuinely awestruck when Rupert, quite literally, blows the whistle on him (III.89-90).

J.B. Priestley uses a two-level mystery in *Dangerous Corner*, which somewhat alters his approach to the thriller. Not only does this play, like all psychological solutions, ponder the effect of crime on the minds of its characters, but it also poses the standard mystery question, "Who done it?" Clearly the less important question is the latter, and it is handled in typical mystery fashion through self-confession by the killer. The relative significance of that part of the ending can be seen in its position in the play: the confession comes at the beginning of the final act. Most of the remainder of the play shows the effect of that disclosure upon the individuals and particularly upon Robert, the chief investigator. Only with his detailing of Robert's reactions does the author provide his final answer to the question of how well the characters will withstand the pressures resulting from the crime.

Because Shaffer uses a pattern of interlocking mystery questions and resolutions in addition to a psychological concern, *Sleuth* contains a multitude of solutions, each of which is a major discovery that precipitates a reversal. Out of each reversal, a new mystery question arises. For example, at one point in the second act the primary concern involves ascertaining what happened to Milo. The answer to that question (that Milo is alive and seeking revenge) precipitates a reversal in fortune for Andrew. The mystery question then becomes "How will Andrew be able to save himself from Milo?" The pattern of question-discovery (solution)-reversal-new question continues until the final answer occurs seconds before the end of the play. The methods of solution read like a listing in a "how to" book for mystery writers: Shaffer includes confession, inadvertent self-revelation, deduction from clues, and character-centered solutions.

The final and ultimately most important question has its answer arising out of depiction of character, as befits a play of the psychological school. The question concerns whether Milo is lying about having gone to the police; Andrew must assess Milo's ability to lie and then must act accordingly. Andrew misjudges Milo for two reasons: he does not realize how strongly his first-act tormenting has altered Milo's character, and he does not perceive his own state of agitation over Milo's taunting, which has impaired

Andrew's normally sharp insight into human character. Andrew guesses that Milo is lying, shoots him, and then cries in despair as the police arrive moments later. By enabling Milo to lie convincingly to the once-perceptive Andrew, the author not only provides an answer to the final mystery question but also reveals just how the two men have changed as a result of their mutual cruelty. Even in as radically different a play as *Sleuth*, therefore, the effect of character change plays a significant role in the ending, as it should in all psychological thrillers.

Almost as striking an aspect of plot in psychological mysteries is the remarkable degree of unity found in these plays. Most unity problems in mysteries result from inherently episodic devices such as presentation of clues and interrogation of witnesses. By diminishing the importance of clues and testimony, psychological thrillers remove those intrinsic blocks to unity. Even more importantly, these dramas concentrate upon a distinct cause-and-effect situation, the deterioration of character as a result of stress following a crime.

Dangerous Corner illustrates that causal pattern clearly. The premise of the play is that a single remark can set a chain of events in motion. Priestley depicts how a comment about a music box leads to more remarks on a different subject, a suicide. As friends of the deceased remember the circumstances of his death, they are led to make startling revelations. Those disclosures bring about severe alterations in character, which in turn result in a murder confession, more revelations, more character change, and a final suicide. None of the links in the chain can be removed or even rearranged without disrupting the pattern that Priestley indicates leads inexorably toward death.⁸ Through such careful linkage of events and development of the probability and necessity that those events will turn out as they do, Priestley creates a rarity among mysteries—a well unified play.

Although psychological thrillers differ from most other mysteries in the matter of unity, they display no uniqueness in their lack of complexity. Like many other mysteries, these dramas are essentially simple, with their emphasis placed upon suffering, or the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Most psychological thrillers lack the major discoveries and reversals that lend a play complexity. Generally, the only reversals occur near the ends of the plays, as is typical of many other types of mystery dramas. In *Rope* for example, Rupert reappears just at the moment that the two killers believe their plan has succeeded. His late reappearance represents a discovery to Brandon and Granillo and precipitates a reversal of their fortunes. The same late discovery and attendant reversal can also be found in *Dangerous Corner*, in which a quest for information reveals that the deceased did not commit suicide but was murdered instead. While their discovery-reversal patterns lend *Rope* and *Dangerous Corner* some complexity, such late attempts suffer from the faults noted in connection with murder-house mysteries. Furthermore, the progressive deterioration of the

characters under stress never undergoes a reversal. The movement toward collapse begins quite early in the action⁹ and continues steadily throughout each drama. Therefore, as psychological thrillers, these plays are extraordinarily simple.

None of the above observations holds true for *Sleuth*, which is one of the most complex of all mystery plays. The Shaffer drama contains eight major discovery-reversals, seven of them coming in the second act. Nevertheless, the revisions Shaffer makes in the psychological formula lend credence to the previously stated observation that simplicity works best in psychological thrillers. The complexity of *Sleuth* detracts from its study of character by providing an appealing adjunct, a puzzling and even confusing series of mystery problems. The more complex the play becomes, the greater is its bafflement, thus taking much of the focus from the character exploration aspect. Consequently, the same engrossingly complex turns of plot that make *Sleuth* an exciting piece of mystery theater also serve to weaken it as a psychological thriller.

Sleuth also differs from older psychological-formula plays in the area of seriousness. While the mystery aspect of each thriller must remain, as in all mysteries, only seemingly serious, the psychological study receives a more sober treatment in most of these plays. *Rope* goes so far in that direction without much relief through humor¹⁰ that critics at the time of its premiere dubbed it "disgusting" in comparison with the less serious mysteries of its day.¹¹ While not as suggestively gruesome, *Dangerous Corner* takes a similarly serious look at the problems attendant upon delving too deeply into the past. Priestley avoids even a suggestion of humor, which might seem to dilute the loftiness of his character study.

Conversely, Shaffer begins *Sleuth* by emphasizing the game-like nature of the mystery format, a factor that the authors of most psychological thrillers appear to find only marginally tolerable. He then proceeds to subordinate the seriousness of his psychological study not only to that game-like quality but also to comic dialogue, such as the following witty banter:

ANDREW. Basically the firm of Prurient and Pry Ltd., whom you and Marguerite have seen fit to employ. Don't look so innocent. Those Woodbine-stained private detectives who've been camping outside Tea's flat for the last week.

MILO. So you spotted them?

ANDREW. A Bantu with glaucoma couldn't have missed them. No one can read the *Evening News* for four hours in a Messerschmitt bubble car, and expect to remain undetected (I.2.11).

Unlike his predecessors, Shaffer uses humor liberally to point the absence of serious intent in his play. While earlier authors attempted to impose their serious studies of character upon a form patently lacking in seriousness, Shaffer recognizes the limitations of that form and works skillfully within them.

In the area of emotions that the plays arouse, psychological thrillers obviously depend less upon bafflement

than is characteristic for mystery dramas. Again *Sleuth* proves to be an exception. In these dramas dealing with mental collapse under pressure, most of the stress takes the form of fear or hate. *Rope* offers a maximum amount of these emotions with an accompanying dose of suspense. The first moments of the drama establish the probability of fearful incidents through the use of low light-levels and ominous talk of bodies and murder. Fear grows steadily after the sympathetic characters (that is, all except the murderers) are introduced into the room in which the victim was tortured and slain. Both fear and suspense increase as the detective, Rupert, becomes more likable or "like ourselves" and as the villains' perceptions of his awareness of their crime increase. Hate for the killers builds concomitant with the arousal of fear and suspense. The inverted form of this play¹² allows for an early revelation of the murderers' identities and permits the author to identify clearly the objects of hatred, thereby making arousal of that emotion easier than in other mystery formulas. The advantages of inversion in the creation of hate are balanced by an almost total loss of bafflement, but in psychological thrillers an absence of baffling materials is not nearly so important as in most other mysteries. In fact, it may even be an advantage, since the audience can devote its full attention to character deterioration when it is not pondering "Who done it?"

Dangerous Corner differs somewhat from *Rope* in its emotional makeup. Because the story does not take an inverted form, a modicum of bafflement exists. Nevertheless, it has only minimal importance in maintaining the play's interest, since bafflement is dispelled early in the third act long before other emotional material is relieved. Hate and suspense play an even less significant part in Priestley's melodrama because the author provides no object of hate, no villain, and no anticipation of danger. Even the so-called murderer elicits sympathy when she reveals that she accidentally killed the victim while fighting off his attempt to rape her. Priestley concentrates instead on fear. His version of fear subtly departs from the variety found in most mysteries, in which physical danger arouses the emotion. Fear has its basis in this play in the mental dangers facing the characters as they uncover old secrets. Although the fearful incidents are mental and interior rather than physical and visible, they pose no less a threat to the characters' well-being. Fear mounts for all individuals in the play until each reveals his worst secrets and suffers from the mental strain.

Sleuth departs from the patterns of its predecessors in its use of excessive bafflement, while it maintains fear and hate as well. The latter emotions develop gradually as detailed characterizations emerge. From the outset Andrew acts pompous, over-confident, and overbearing. When Shaffer adds malevolence to the recipe, Andrew becomes an object of hatred. Conversely, Milo cannot hope to match wits with his formidable adversary. Placing such an ineffectual but ingenuous young man in danger

for his life arouses fear. With Milo's apparent death at the end of the first act, danger is removed and fear disappears along with it, but hatred of Andrew continues to grow. The later discovery that Milo was only tormented and not killed fails to diminish that hate. The remainder of the play merely depicts Andrew's deserved repayment in kind. Although hate figures prominently in both acts of this thriller, bafflement overshadows it in the second half of the play. The complex and complicated series of mystery questions, discoveries, and reversals effectively arouses bafflement. The play's complexity offers more than mere confusion; it allows for unique arousal and relief of bafflement. The highly repetitive pattern has something of a quantum effect, in which bafflement is constantly aroused and then satisfied by a solution to each mini-mystery. While a number of separate puzzling situations arise, they come so fast and so often that they maintain an appearance of constant bafflement. In his integration of bafflement into a type of mystery that usually relies on fear, Shaffer demonstrates his ability to inject new vitality and variety into one of the essentially rigid mystery formulas.¹³

In virtually all areas of the preceding discussion of plot, character figured prominently. Realizing the particular significance of character in these thrillers, the authors have often sought innovation in their approaches to its revelation. Hamilton shows particular originality in his presentation of character in *Rope*. Much of his inventiveness comes in the way he creates the all-important first impression of the villains. Instead of showing the killers from the beginning and giving them tangible human form, he provides only their voices and the silhouettes of their figures. As the villains frankly discuss a cold-blooded murder, their voices create vivid impressions of two almost inhuman killers. Only after establishing their monstrous, villainous qualities does the author give them visible human forms. The supporting roles in the play are drawn to type, as is standard in mystery plays, but Hamilton again makes novel use even of such characters. He conceals his other major character, the functional detective Rupert, among the typed minor figures, thereby creating a false initial impression that Rupert adheres to type and is as vapid, bored, and insensitive as the characters with whom he is grouped. Only as Rupert reveals more of his real character does it become apparent that he belongs instead in a separate class as a more than worthy adversary for the murderers.

In *Dangerous Corner* character revelation consists primarily of directly depicting the changes people undergo as they uncover secrets about their past lives. More remarkable is Priestley's evocation of the unseen victim, Martin, whose character unfolds in minute detail through not only what people say about him but also in the subtly differing perceptions of him by his friends, lovers, and enemies. His appearance, habits, and tastes all become well established during the course of the play. In *Sleuth*, the thriller with the least remarkable treatment of character, all of the first act except for its closing moments

consists of a leisurely presentation of the characters of Milo and Andrew. The last scene of the act then depicts another essential feature of character in psychological thrillers—a change from one mental state to another.

Character change in psychological plays is virtually synonymous with deterioration. Probably most typical of the plays under examination is *Rope*, in which not every character changes and not all alterations are for the worse. The typed characters seem oblivious to the forces at work around them. They know nothing of the murder and do not readily perceive obvious changes in the behavior of major characters. The villains, however, follow a pattern of deterioration and collapse that is standard for central characters in psychological thrillers. Granillo's destruction is the more overt. He first appears in a state of nervousness and reduces to one of panic in which he utters "a horrible, shuddering, muffled scream" (II.51). Moments before he reverts to a catatonic silence, he starts in horror, makes "terrible, piercing, falsetto" screams and groans, staggers around the room, and then gives in to a "low, long-drawn-out, shuddering sob" (III.81). Hamilton handles Brandon's decline with greater finesse. While Brandon makes occasional overt responses, such as a display of tension by banging on the trunk when he feels "sudden terrible rage" (II.55), most of the time he retains at least a veneer of confidence. His deterioration is demonstrated subtly through his increasingly impaired judgment, which causes him to make grave misreadings of Rupert as the plight worsens. The alteration in Rupert himself does not represent so much an actual change as it does an emergence of his true character. As noted earlier, only as the play progresses does he overcome the false, typed impression and emerge as his noble, intelligent, heroic self. He allows his real personality to show completely only with his final denunciation speech, when he is seen "suddenly letting himself go—a thing he has not done all evening, and which he now does with tremendous force, and clear, angry articulation" (III.89). Rupert's repression of his aggressive, positive personality enables him to fool Brandon completely and lead him into entrapment.

Change in both *Dangerous Corner* and *Sleuth* differs from the typical psychological-thriller pattern in that it is unidirectional: all characters deteriorate. In the Priestley play variety appears only as a matter of degree. The secondary figures suffer only minor embarrassments or momentary depressions. While the experience alters all of them, they seem capable of living with their new discoveries. One person's collapse, however, is total: Robert, the man who forces the investigation to the limits, cannot bear up under the anguish of what he has learned. At the end of the play, he catalogues the many changes in his world, which he perceives as being in utter disrepair. His anticlimactic and ambiguous suicide only calls attention theatrically to an established fact: Robert has destroyed himself.

Sleuth portrays a two-fold deterioration not unlike

those of the murderers in *Rope*. In the Hamilton drama, however, the declines are simultaneous, whereas *Sleuth* shows the collapse of one character in the first act and that of the other man in the last half of the play. Andrew destroys Milo in the opening act. The younger man allows himself to be treated foolishly, dressed like a clown, and mentally tortured unmercifully. Before he "dies" in a mock shooting, he shudders spasmodically, shakes with fear, and screams for quarter in a high falsetto voice (I.232-33). Even though he is resurrected in the next act, the old Milo is dead. The new, post-deterioration man exhibits a shrewdness and callousness that were alien to his former self; revenge becomes his sole ambition. When he gets that revenge even at the cost of his own life, he manages to smile triumphantly (II.262). Andrew's second-act decline is considerably slower than Milo's, as Andrew fluctuates between moments of nervousness or panic followed by periods of stability. Nevertheless, the effect is the same: each man destroys the mental balance of the other. In Andrew's deterioration, however, Shaffer adds a touch of irony in that the man who effects that destruction is not the one whom Andrew tortured but the one he created through his tormenting.

As in other aspects of these psychological thrillers, their thought differs considerably in content from that in the previously discussed confined-mystery formulas. Deduction plays a greatly reduced role; in *Dangerous Corner* it is almost nonexistent, while in *Rope* and *Sleuth* deductive processes occupy only small parts of the plays' total actions. Like murder-house mysteries and procedurals, however, these thrillers often contain brief but supposedly serious discussions of weighty subjects that are only tangentially related to the mysteries.

Hamilton manages to tie his deviations from the course of the action more closely to the central concern of his play than do most mystery dramatists. Although he provides discourses on such subjects as the value of human life, the morality of murder, and the fairness of capital punishment, he usually depicts such thought as being glib and shallow. The purpose of such patently superficial thought lies in the play's all-important facet of a misreading of Rupert's character. He freely engages in vapid, pseudo-intellectual banter, often with minor characters like Leila and Raglan. Consequently, he seems, like them, rather foolish, immature, and ineffectual. Brandon's error lies in this area of thought—he mistakes Rupert's harmless, frankly shallow speechmaking as a true indication of his character and believes that comments made during dinner reveal how Rupert would act when faced with a moral dilemma. Unfortunately for Brandon, nothing could be farther from the truth. J.B. Priestley works in more typical mystery fashion by imposing some of his own special interests on *Dangerous Corner*. He includes such pet topics as time bending, the efficacy of truth, getting past obstacles in life, and the shallowness of one man's knowledge of another. Happily, Anthony

Shaffer avoids all such pseudo-serious discussion in *Sleuth*.

These psychological mysteries serve as excellent examples of works in which the entirety of the drama is required to express their thought. The three dramas fully depict the results of stress upon the mind, and all come to the same conclusion—that stress leads to deterioration and collapse. The same idea occasionally appears in plays not of the psychological school; Owen Davis's murder-house mystery, *The Ninth Guest*, makes such a case. The difference lies in the fact that Davis treats the effects of stress superficially and chiefly through typically tangential discussions. When the topic of stress resulting from a criminal act becomes the driving concern of an entire work, however, the drama begins to move in the direction of the psychological-thriller formula.

Diction, the vehicle for that thought, is striking in psychological thrillers because of a degree of sophistication in its use. In *Dangerous Corner* Priestley depends upon his ability with language to create desired effects. Since he does not employ the typical mystery fear-builders of suggestive sound and spectacle, *Dangerous Corner* relies upon its polished sentences for much of its appeal. Priestley's experience as a novelist surely aided him in his ability to write graceful prose for his early stage effort.

Shaffer matches Priestley's control of language with his aforementioned masterful handling of verbal wit. Not only does the dialogue serve the welcome function of lightening what could easily become a rather gruesome study in human torment, but it also works as a key indicator of a character's control. The more sure an individual is of himself, the greater is his command of a witty turn of phrase. Consequently, Andrew moves from his early verbal gymnastics to wearisome, humorless pleading. Milo, on the other hand, leaves his reticence and banality behind after the first act and demonstrates a new-found command of diction as he begins to dominate Andrew.

In *Rope* Hamilton employs diction as a primary means of identifying his typed characters and of indicating which characters belong to the same type. The bored, disinterested young people speak in a fashion befitting their vacuity. Hamilton describes Leila's speech in the following manner:

She has a fairly good stock of rather *outré* words which she brings out with a rather comic emphasis, . . . as though she doesn't mean what she is saying. In this way she never actually commits herself to any emotion or feeling, and might even be thought deep. But she is not (I.26).

Hamilton then gives similar language to Rupert; he is enormously affected in speech. . . . He brings his words out not only as though he is infinitely weary of all things, but also as though articulation is causing him some definite physical pain which he is trying to circumvent. . . . His sentences are often involved, but nearly always syntactically complete (I.31).

By linking Rupert to Leila through a similarity in diction,

the author subtly furthers his efforts to disguise his functional detective and put the murderers off guard. Like Priestley and Shaffer, Hamilton demonstrates both greater concern and skill in the treatment of diction than do most mystery writers.

As might be expected in a formula characterized by departures from strict guidelines, sound and spectacle in psychological thrillers exhibit a variety that makes generalization about these aspects difficult. As already observed, *Dangerous Corner* makes scant use of either sound or spectacle in typical fashion for mysteries, but Priestley does not neglect the traditional devices in *Dangerous Corner* out of ignorance of them. In fact, he signals his awareness of them early in the play. After a few minutes of incidental conversation by the ladies in the play, Priestley contrives to have the stage in "complete darkness, except for the moonlight which silhouettes the four women against the window." In the moment of darkness someone fires a revolver, which causes the women to scream (I.679-80). What at first appears to be a typical initial murder in a stage mystery proves moments later merely to be men taking target practice. From that point until the repetition of that scene in the epilogue, guns remain silent and light-levels high. In so acknowledging the more traditional uses of sound and spectacle in mysteries and then ignoring them, Priestley effectively indicates his disdain for such unsubtle enhancements.

Sound and spectacle play a more central role in *Sleuth*. Shaffer provides some typical offstage suggestions of objects through the use of the two production elements. The most noteworthy example entails the combination of the sounds of a car, pulsating blue lights, ringing doorbells, and loud knocking on a door to create the effect of the arrival of the police (II.262). Scenically the house and its furnishings, including dozens of complicated games and puzzles, function to emphasize the game-like nature of the battle between Andrew and Milo. The author also brings visible violence into his version of the mystery play, a form that ordinarily covers gunshots and death with darkness. Shots are fired in full view of the audience; objects explode or characters bleed profusely upon impact of the bullets. Milo's first-act "death" is particularly gruesome: Andrew places a gun at the victim's head, pulls the trigger slowly, and watches the body fall backward down the stairs (I.233). Disguise, both visually and vocally, also figures prominently in the play. The makeup artist has the problem of transforming Milo into a taller, heavier, balded, and totally unrecognizable character for his surprising reincarnation in the second act. The actor playing Milo has an even greater challenge. Not only must he develop a similarly undetectable voice to match his new persona, but he must also supply two other distinct, unrecognizable voices that he uses offstage. In both visual and vocal disguise, the effects cannot merely be performed; they must be executed skillfully, so as to make the disguises effective.

In *Rope* Hamilton relies extensively upon sound and

spectacle, but his effects fall along more traditional, suggestive lines than the concrete, visible representations of *Sleuth*. The keynote for the use of sound in *Rope* is a subtle build in intensity. When the play begins, activity from the two killers can be faintly seen, but "The silence is complete" (I.13). The first human sounds heard are occasional exclamations and unanswered questions uttered by the murderers. When conversation finally begins, it is punctuated with frequent pauses, periods of "tense stillness" (I.16), and moments of silence in which a box of matches can be heard "rattling in the air" (I.14). As more characters arrive on stage, conversation increases and the quiet moments become infrequent. The author then supplies a gentle rainfall, which builds in intensity as the problems of the villains mount. The culmination of the increase in sound comes with the final retributive whistle blasts used by Rupert to signal the police.

Spectacle functions in a similarly important fashion. The "faintly bizarre" setting (I.13) suggests the warped personalities of the murderers. Suggestion comes even more strongly into play in Hamilton's masterstroke of using the body-concealing chest as a dining table. While the chest itself is not intrinsically horrifying, it evokes a macabre feeling when the guests eat a meal on it. Lighting in the play features the overworked but effective evil-in-the-dark approach. The thriller opens with the prolonged dark scene during which the villains complete their hiding of the corpse and review the details of their successful exercise in mayhem. Not only does the combination of darkness and talk of callous homicide readily establish the probability of more fearful incidents, but it also firmly associates death and darkness in the minds of the killers. In the many scenes in the dark that follow, the murderers' thoughts always revert to death. Even the usually controlled Brandon grows tense and easily excitable when the lights are turned out and his mind wanders to thoughts of the corpse in the chest. Consequently, the dark scenes contribute to the mental collapse of the killers. Without blood, bullets, or exploding vases, Hamilton successfully uses suggestion through spectacle to enhance greatly the quality of fearfulness in his study of psychological deterioration. Whether an author employs such traditional suggestiveness or Shaffer's newer emphasis on visible violence or Priestley's toying with overused mystery techniques, sound and spectacle play a significant, though sometimes restricted, role in these character-centered plays.

This analysis of three psychological thrillers has revealed the formula to be one allowing considerably more variation than is found in most mystery plays. Nevertheless, the broad restrictions of the formula are clear. All these plays, which portray the detrimental effects of crime on individual psyches, emphasize character while diminishing the importance of the mystery aspect itself. The beginnings of the plays introduce extensive character development; alterations in character occupy the middle of the plays; and the resolution scenes portray the final

effects of stress upon the characters. Unity of action is much more typical in these plays than in most mystery formulas, since the action ordinarily depicts a cause-to-effect relationship between the distressing incidents portrayed and the mental collapse of one or more characters. Simplicity in plot seems most desirable because complexity tends to increase perplexity in a mystery, a process that would detract from the central character-study. As the authors delve into character and its deterioration, their plays usually present a greater semblance of seriousness than is ordinarily desirable in a mystery drama. Among emotional materials, bafflement is less prevalent than in other forms, and suspense may often be lacking as well. Either fear or hate, however, can always be found in psychological thrillers, since those emotional ingredients are the chief forces that destroy the mental stability of the characters.

Obviously characterization figures prominently in all psychological thrillers. The favored method for its revelation involves detailed development by showing characters in action. The most noteworthy aspect of character is that at least one major figure must undergo a severe decline in mental acuity that ends in his complete destruction. In thought, diction, sound, and spectacle, the plays differ greatly from one another. The element of thought, however, is consistent among the examples in its reduction of the importance of deduction and in its use of the entirety of the action to express the mentally debilitating effects of crime. Furthermore, in at least one example, ordinarily tangential discussions are carefully integrated into the depiction of the forces leading to the central characters' destruction. Diction is handled in a more skillful and sophisticated manner in these thrillers than in most mysteries, while sound and spectacle play such exceedingly varied roles that a formulaic observation is impossible.

Such numerous points of dissimilarity between early psychological thrillers and the more recent *Sleuth* reflect a goal mystery writers have begun to pursue: variety within the formerly strict confines of a formula. Departures from the basic patterns are not entirely recent developments, however. As early as the second and third decades of the century, in an attempt to revitalize mystery plays, authors were varying the formulas in sometimes subtle but ingenious ways, as will be seen later.

Notes

1. The authors of the plays applied the name "psychological" to their works. See Reginald Denham's comments on the plays of the 1920's and 1930's quoted in Stanley Richards, ed., *10 Classic Mystery and Suspense Plays* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1973), pp. ix-xi.
2. Patrick Hamilton, *Rope; or, Rope's End* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1930). Further references to this play will be noted in the text.
3. J.B. Priestley, *Dangerous Corner*, in *Best Mystery and Suspense Plays of the Modern Theatre*, ed. Stanley Richards (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1971). Further references to this play will be noted in the text.

4. *The Innocents* is discussed later as a ghost-play variation on the psychological-thriller formula.

5. Anthony Shaffer, *Sleuth*, in *Best Mystery and Suspense Plays of the Modern Theatre*, ed. Stanley Richards (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1971). Further references to this play will be included in the text.

6. The number of characters ranges from two in *Sleuth* to eight in *Rope*.

7. That such information is not included solely for the purpose of solving the mystery is further substantiated by the fact that the information continues to be presented long after the murderer has confessed.

8. In an epilogue Priestley changes a single incident. A character gets music on the radio (III.733), and the dancing that follows obliterates all thought of the remark about the music box. The chain is destroyed and a suicide avoided.

Priestley's manipulation of time anticipates his "time plays," which began to appear in 1937 with *Time and the Conways*. In those later dramas Priestley employed J.W. Dunne's theory of Serialism, "the curious feeling which almost everyone has now and then experienced—that sudden, fleeting, disturbing conviction that something which is happening at the moment happened before." See Richards, ed., *Best Mystery*, p. 672.

9. In *Rope* Granillo has already begun to feel stress when the play begins. He is never depicted as calm and sure of his safety.

10. The only attempts at humor in *Rope* are, like the rest of the play, rather macabre. For example, the entire episode of eating dinner off the top of a chest in which a body has been hidden is treated as a joke by the murderers. Black-comic *double-entendres* also can be found. The following exchange about the boy, whose murder has not yet been discovered, takes place between one of the killers and a guest:

BRANDON. As a matter of fact, he's the living image of yourself . . .

RAGLAN. Me? In what way?

BRANDON. Oh, in every way. Same age. Same height.

Same colour. Same sweet and refreshing innocence.

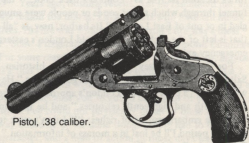
RAGLAN. Oh, shut up. I'm not an athlete, anyway.

BRANDON. No. But you're just as much alive. In fact, more so" (I.25).

11. Hamilton notes the reaction of critics in his "Preface on Thrillers," which appears in the published edition of *Rope*, pp. vii-ix.

12. Inverted mysteries disclose the villain's identity at their outset and place emphasis on how the culprit will be caught by the detective. A complete exploration of the inverted formula appears in the next installment.

13. Shaffer is not alone in his desire to alter the standard formulas. Examples of variations on the established patterns are examined in succeeding installments.



Pistol, .38 caliber.

MARGERY ALLINGHAM'S ALBERT CAMPION

A Chronological Examination of the Novels in which he Appears

Part XIII

By B. A. Pike

Cargo of Eagles is the last of Margery Allingham's novels, published posthumously in 1968, two years after her death. Miss Allingham died before it was finished, but a reassuring note guarantees its authenticity: the "whole fabric" of the story "had been mapped out long before her death," and she specifically requested its completion by her husband and "partner for nearly forty years," Philip Youngman Carter, himself an accomplished writer. Although Edmund Crispin claimed in his review to be able to see the join, the book has the force and coherence of a unified whole, in no way diminished by the enforced collaboration. It is, in fact, vintage Allingham, a total success in her lighter vein, vivacious, various and enticingly mysterious. Zestful and fantastic like the earliest stories, it is also subtle and stylish like the later ones, combining detection with a treasure hunt and high spirits with the deftest control.

As so often before, the action moves between London and East Anglia, not Suffolk on this occasion, but Essex, in the coastal area beyond the author's real-life home in Tolleshunt D'Arcy. Saltey, like *Mystery Mile*, is "virtually an island," "on the road to nowhere" and "cut off by the saltings." It is approached through "a waste of worked out clay pits," now "turned into a wilderness," a "no man's land" with a "hair-raising" history. Its situation "on the end of an escape route" has for centuries dictated its role as "London's back door," "the funnel through which secret goods or people were smuggled in or out of East London." Its harbor, now, is "all that is left of the ancient bolthole, old London's eastern emergency exit."

For Mortimer Kelsey, a young American historian, Saltey is "a honey of a find," "full of good things." He is working on "a paper . . . on London's approaches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries," and he finds in Saltey an embarrassment of riches: "If I don't stick to my own period I'll be lost in a morass of information." The "heyday" of the village "was probably pre-Saxon," and Morty suspects "an early fortress . . . just waiting to be uncovered." Picturesque names, "as ancient as anything in England," suggest a "dateless" antiquity: the

surname of a local farmer evokes the Green Man himself, and the original name of the Demon Inn raises a similar echo. More to Morty's purpose is a link with Mob's Hole, "a rakehellly dive" established "in Wantstead about seventeen ten or so" (its existence confirmed by "a fine, fruity account . . . in *The London Spy*").

Saltey, for Morty, is initially an "absurd place," "perfectly enchanting in an off-beat sort of way" and with a population "almost entirely vegetable." He questions whether "they think at all" and finds their pretense of being "deeply and secretly wicked . . . naive and kind of endearing." But increasing experience of Saltey undermines this mistaken view and reminds him repeatedly of his "alien" status: he is "very much a foreigner," an intruder in the village who can never hope to understand its ways. He reaches a peak of disenchantment when the arrival of a particularly vicious anonymous letter moves him to curse "this godforsaken countryside with its sly venom and its abominable secrets."

There is no pretense about Saltey's wickedness and nothing "naive" or "endearing" about its people, who are more accurately described as "smiling savages playing stupid," "pig ignorant and . . . enjoying the fact." It is easy to draw up a crowded roster of potential poison pens with the "roots of sin" in them. Trouble is inevitable in such a "Contrary hole" with its long tradition of "native mischief—the natural evil of the locality." Morty is warned against "Evil" and a whole spiteful catalogue of sin from the prayer book: "Envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness."

For various reasons, Saltey's dislike of strangers is endemic and the characteristic resentment of outsiders shows itself continually. The locals are not so much "feudal" as "tribal," so surly and "suspicious" that "they won't let you in the house if they can help it." Property is all-important—"Their great interest is the contents of each other's wills"—so that a bequest to a stranger raises "a fine old poison pen storm" and prompts a chain of broken bottles across the approach road. Under pressure from a full invasion, the "true inhabitants" lock and bar their houses "as for a siege, offering no welcome to

visitors." At such times the village seems hostile, even sinister, "a secret place, shrouded but still slyly awake."

The villagers obstruct authority as a matter of course, presenting a united front against the police. "Saltey doesn't take kindly to the law," and a wealthy farmer threatens any policeman who "puts so much as a foot" on his land with "a backside full of lead." It is futile for the police to investigate the poison pen campaign: "They'll never get near it in a month of Sundays." The community reacts as one to questioning, with a "dumb insolence" that yet maintains a "grudging" minimal semblance of cooperation: there is "no loophole in the facade, nothing to suggest conspiracy or even simple concealment by omission."

Saltey offers only passive resistance to the police but meets more active aggression head-on. When a group of city "tearaways" stirs up trouble at the Demon, the men of Saltey welcome the chance to settle old scores: "The resentment of the local men against the possessive arrogance of invading strangers had reached the point of no return. Each man sought out his opposite number, happily determined to repay months of calculated in sult." In an earlier confrontation, even Morty crosses the line, applying first principles of Vere University's "course on self-defence" to initiate a rout—though it is typical of Saltey that he becomes not the hero of the hour but of "the minute before," his decisive lead quickly "forgotten."

The aggressors form a part of Saltey's alternative society, a "caravan and tent lot" who "can mostly find a shed or a hut to one if they don't want to go home." They are members of one of "the wilder teen-age gangs," "ton-up types" in "the ritual uniform of their kind . . . tight blue faded jeans, decorative boots and leather coats," their hair in "scruffy ringlets," their eyes inscrutable behind "dark glasses" that give them "a calculated anonymity with an underlying note of menace."

Already the Mods and Rockers of the 1960's are a part of social history, supplanted now by the Punk movement as they themselves supplanted the Teds of the 1950's. Miss Allingham's gang are rockers, "who by definition ride more powerful machines than mods and who make a display of living dangerously." They are apt exemplars of "the viciousness of modern youth," noisy and disruptive, "militant" and "menacing," often "as high as kites," "crazed with drugs or drink." They destroy the peace with transistors or firecrackers or the "insolent gunfire" of motor-bike engines. They dance naked on the sea-wall and establish "a rough-riding circuit of the inn regardless of property."

At times they are "actively" frightening, with a disturbing suggestion of violence held only casually in check. They favor "strong arm tactics" to impose their will and make their demands "with conscious truculence." Their behavior is "intentionally shocking," inducing "discomfort and unease" and "creating an atmosphere of dangerous uncertainty." Their storm-trooper garb obliterates sexual distinctions and intensifies their aura of menace:

for all their complaints about freedom, they affect a paramilitary "uniform . . . as rigid as a subaltern's at a Trooping."

To some extent the author sees them as part of a continuing tradition of aggressive license and explosive contempt for the restraints of conventional society. The point is repeatedly made that each era has its "tearaways," that "the ranks of disorder" are not a modern phenomenon. The Saturday of the Whit holiday is "one of those days which Ned Ward, the London Spy, would have recognised as belonging to his own age," and a group of extremist weekend invaders "might have come from a quattro cento harlequinade." Saltey's history is such that "the shenanigans" of the gang "don't seem half as modern as they might," and Morty's eyewitness account of an "occasional orgy" on the sea-wall is much in the spirit of his description of Mob's Hole. In particular, Doll Jensen, the "ringleader" of the gang, would have found her element in Ned Ward's London. Her vagrant life and aggressive sexuality establish her kinship with the whores and rogues who rode out of the city for "a barbecue and a punch-up"; (the implicit parallel between two ages is confirmed by the author's modern usage in an eighteenth century context).

And yet the spirit of Ned Ward is, after all, lacking in these modern counterparts of his Queen Anne riff-raff. A positive note informs the brief passage from *The London Spy* that precedes the narrative, and a vigorous enjoyment characterizes the account of a progress to Wanstead. But the modern youths deny any such concept of communal delight: their view of life is negative and their pleasures are destructive. Their idea of leisure activity is to "organise punch-ups at the coastal resorts mostly just for the heck of it"; they enjoy their "orgy" the more because Morty is unnerved by it; and they play darts in "truculent isolation," "giggling amongst themselves when one of the feathered needles went dangerously wide of its mark." What they take from the past they distort and debase: music is reduced to an "adenoidal moan," spraying the air "with a confetti of competing rhythms." What is already offensive becomes even more so: a catapult is refined into "a modern and vicious version of the ancient device"; and demonic masks transcend "echoes of the ancient pit" to achieve a shocking "modernity" of "mindless wickedness."

For all that he is near the gang in age, Morty is disconcerted by the defiant naked dance of which he is such a reluctant witness. Doll in particular disturbs him and he expresses a fear that he may be "growing old." Even when her sexual play for him confirms that they are of the same generation, he again feels "old" in comparison, and as their physical intimacy increases, their values increasingly diverge. Morty can only reject the gang's need to alleviate boredom by violence, even to the point of endangering such limited stability as they have: "There was a gap here which he could not bridge. The philosophy of life, if it could be defined by such a phrase, was beyond his grasp."

Doll and the gang show the author for the last time absorbing a social phenomenon into the fabric of one of her books: they are real and she presents them as they are. But a mystery novel is not a social document and she sets them deliberately in a traditional context; and though they are not subdued by their environment, neither do they challenge the essentially civilized tone of a typical Allingham entertainment. Mr. Campion has "a watching brief" and other old friends make characteristic contributions: Oates, now "older than God," but with his raconteur's flair intact, entertains friends and clients in the basement of a London club so reactionary as to be "on the direct route to embalment"; and Lugg still "shoots the most magnificent line" in the raciest and least predictable of styles. Morty's romance with a woman doctor commands our sympathy throughout; and if its tensions are occasionally deeply felt they are no less convincing for being lightly stated.

For all its perversity, Saltey is Allingham territory, in its antiquity, in its secrets, in its seclusion. It has a stylish map, dating from 1758; a "grandiose" ghost town in its hinterland; and a colorful legend, buttressed by fancy cakes and a whimsical booklet. Its reporter is a daughter of the manor, relict for thirty years of Hugo Weatherby, Esquire; and its publican is a "genuine minor poet," who "shot up like a rocket and vanished," his early success apparently without sequel in an enigmatic lifetime of "silence."

Mrs. Weatherby is a particular triumph, a credible eccentric in the author's richest vein, lovingly observed and irresistibly tonic in effect. She holds her own with such seasoned charmers as Oates and Lugg, and her talk contains something of the best of both, combining Oates' exhaustive knowledge of his terrain with the bizarre eclecticism of Lugg's utterance. Indeed, her speeches derive more truly from life than Lugg's, so that they have a plausibility lacking at times in the baroque lingo he affects. Her conversational style embraces the odd rural metaphor, but leans most heavily on breezy clichés and antiquated slang. She gets "down to brass tacks" and argues "straight from the shoulder." A quarrel is "an up and a downer" and a lucky encounter a "right and a left straight off." A precautionary measure is a "jolly good wheeze" and a sudden departure "a moonlight flit." She suspects a neighbor "inclined to blow his top" of having "skedaddles"; and hopes that Morty will "see her pronto" since she can't "stay more than half a jiffy." After calling her office on "the blower," she deplores the grime that accumulates in telephone boxes—"Not enough grooming done to keep them tickety boo." Since it is "Too early for a sniffer," she proposes "a chinwag" over coffee; later, she orders "a Harry pinkers" from the bar. In search of "the gen about who's really been kept in the cooler," she plans to "drop in at the Cop-shop."

She is "a tall thin woman" in her fifties, with "wild white hair" and "sharp intelligent eyes set above a nose

which would have looked normal on an eagle." As gauche as a schoolgirl, she seems at times to be "carrying an invisible hockey stick," and she has "long since substituted a friendly heartiness for the feminine charm which eluded her." But despite her lack of conventional womanly appeal, Morty finds her attractive and "endearing": she is "autocratic" but in a "slap-happy" way that is "disarming."

Her manner is direct and "emphatic" and her voice holds "the unmistakable note of authority which long country breeding brings to women of gentle birth." She reacts to a suspicion of drug traffic in Saltey with the fierce concern of a squire's lady for her "hundred": distributing "dope" is a "dirty business" that must be blown "sky high": "I won't have it . . . It's got to be stopped." When, in her vehemence, she raps the table, Morty is "vividly reminded of his first schoolmistress."

She has a brisk way with inanimate objects, thumping the telephone, slamming her case onto the table, and kicking the support on her scooter. Her "large sensible shoes" are well adapted to the "slogging tread of a route-marcher" that she adopts for walking, and she swings "her shoulder bag as if it were a set of golf clubs." She wears "an outsize wrist watch" and quarters her territory on her "phut-phut," controlling it with such "impressive flair" that she can turn in the saddle at bends in the road to wave to a car behind.

Her insight into her neighbors is acute and unsparring, and she assesses them with devastating candor: one is an "acid little runt with duck's disease," and another "a toothy vixen . . . with a mind like a cesspool." She describes herself in equally unflattering terms—as "an interfering old witch" with a face "like a dilapidated barn-owl." Perhaps because she regards curiosity as her own preserve, she disapproves of it in others, applauding a move to "keep out snoopers and noseyparkers," and deploring the need of Saltey's residents to "know their neighbour's business."

She clearly regards her own omnivorous curiosity as licensed by her profession: "I always tell 'em 'I only ask because I want to know' and that's how I earn my living." As a journalist, she is very much a professional, always on the alert for a potential story and resentful of casual intruders into her own specialist field: "too many people . . . cash in" on a fire: "They get a cut price and do honest journalists out of a job." She sees it "all to the good" that a murder remains unsolved and looks forward to a decent number of arrests after a police raid. She hopes "the worst" of the "moonlight flit" she uncovers because a "disaster . . . would make tophole copy."

Mrs. Weatherby is the supreme example in the novel of the author's gift for high-spirited invention disciplined by intelligence, but there are many smaller details of "decorative embroidery" that briefly offer a similar pleasure: the ironing of the bootlaces at the Ottoman Hotel; the advertisement for "McNab's Dew of Kirkcudbright" at the Cap

A witty entertainment and a classic puzzle
—CHICAGO TRIBUNE

MARGERY ALLINGHAM CARGO OF EAGLES



and Bells; the "Fertility Venus" exhumed near Saltey and now reposing in the "horror comic room" at the British Museum; the pub entertainer who vibrates "a pair of spoons . . . dexterously over every available section of his person"; Oates' recollection of an East End "snake farm"; and the "fabled collection of George III silver" at his London base. More significant factors are distinguished by the same vein of controlled creative fancy. The bottles strewn across the road have connoisseur labels; the local legend derives in fact from an inspired method of distracting attention from a batch of burnt cakes; the octogenarian cadging drinks from a corner at the Demon helped to launch the legend as a "miscreant" child; and the anonymous letters prove to be the latest in a series of works "with remarkable literary qualities." Even death in Saltey has a certain bizarre style. The village has wondered for twenty years about the undertaker found dead in one of his own coffins; the "ancient mariner" at the Demon is

literally shaken to death, and a silver bullet kills the local solicitor in the house at the center of the poison pen storm.

Despite the gap of twenty years between the undertaker's death and those of the lawyer and the old man, all three stem from the same basic circumstance: the conveyance of a great treasure to Saltey soon after the war. The central excitement of the novel derives from the treasure and the race to locate and possess it. Most of a series of "Unexplained Incidents" appear to arise from a desire to protect the hoard or greed for so great a gain: the murders, the anonymous letters, the glass in the road, a calculated fire, and a whole string of assaults and break-ins.

If some of these circumstances suggest no more than anger at the perverse bequest of the house to a stranger, the majority point to a "reign of terror" in the style of two criminal veterans from Saltey's past, the notorious

James Teague and "Target" Burrows, "the biggest villains for miles" in the years before the war. Neither has been seen for twenty years, Teague because he has been in prison, Burrows because he is thought to have "got clean away out of the country" and remained abroad. Now Teague is out of jail and already he has evaded the watch kept on newly released prisoners.

Both Teague and Burrows were irredeemably wicked men, vicious and destructive on a scale undreamed of by Miss Allingham's teenage toughs. Teague was "a natural killer with practical wartime experience," "a coldblooded adventurer," "so reckless that you could say he was mad." Burrows was less flamboyant, more brutish, "a shifty, foulmouthed bully," "sly" and "feckless" and so detested that "Every man would play Judas to him given the chance." But for all Teague's explosive instability and Burrows' "ugly reputation," their joint impact is muted by the distancing effect of twenty years. We are asked to take their wickedness on trust, rather as, earlier, we were expected to endorse the heroic qualities of Johnny Carados without ever having seen them.

In addition, both men are hung about with romantic trappings that further diminish them as dangerous killers in the Havoc mold and bring them into line as swash-buckling rogues in a more picaresque vein. Teague was "very colourful," "a violent, magnetic, unpredictable animal" whom no woman could resist, "one of those larger than life characters who resent any events which don't match up to their own idea of themselves"; and Burrows had a glass eye, over which he sometimes wore an eyepatch, like Long John Silver or the elder Douglas Fairbanks. Their criminal record enhances the theme: their prewar staple was smuggling, regarded in Saltey more "as a sport" than as a crime, and their crowning exploit was an actual pirate raid conducted "on the high seas." Comments by professional observers make the point explicit. Mrs. Weatherby remarks that smuggling "has a fine, romantic ring about it—once aboard the lugger, yo heave ho and all that kind of malarky"; and the local inspector jeers at the improbably "romantic" image of "The last of the Pirates . . . Dashing Jim Teague and One-Eyed Target." Appropriately for two such florid villains, both had bravura "trademarks . . . well known . . . in Saltey": Burrows announced his returns to the village by throwing stones to hit a weathercock; and Teague, believing that only a silver bullet could kill him, "used them himself in case anyone else had the same theory."

The silver bullet in the solicitor is only one of the "little bits of this and that" indicating that Teague and Burrows have come at last to collect their pirate hoard. The superior labels on the scattered bottles suggest the "parcel of booze" in the loot from the yacht they boarded; Morty is said to have been coshed by a man with "a black patch over one eye"; stones are again rattling against the weathercock; and the old codger is shaken to

death soon after his public pronouncement of having "seen a ghost."

Mr. Campion, like everyone else, follows these signs to their logical conclusion, and the action is well advanced before he is forced to think again. But though he is fazed by appearances for far too long in a case with a pressing deadline, he commands respect even when on the wrong tack, and he has his usual small successes on the way—a "long shot" that rescues a kidnap victim; an insight into the poet's course during his "forgotten" years; and a devastating analysis of the anonymous letters. Even after his "downfall" there is still a shot in his locker, and he is able to counter "Elsie" Corkran's fears that they are "back to square one" with the hope that "one or two untidy threads" may yet lead "out of the labyrinth."

Corkran is about to retire as Head of Intelligence and has pressed Campion into service for the last time. In "extreme emergency," the Department has been denied official aid, so there is a score to settle as well as a crisis to resolve: Campion's mission is to meet the extremity but also to further Corkran's ambition to slip "a final fast one past the New Establishment." Both men know the history of the Saltey treasure and Campion intends not only to get to it first but to "misappropriate it" for "an excellent reason." As on former occasions he plays a lone hand, independent of the police and anxious, even, to deflect "official attention" from Saltey, since Teague, if caught, will "die with his secret." His aides are amateurs, whether new recruits like Morty and Mrs. Weatherby or old hands like Lugg and Oates, under no official allegiance since his retirement. Even at the end, the police are excluded, so that Campion may "compound a felony" and let the killer go free (ostensibly because Campion's responsibilities "are to the living, to the future," but actually because by then he has already commandeered the treasure).

For all his godlike resolve to allow the killer to evade punishment, Mr. Campion remains, as ever, the least assertive of men, modest and reflective, patient and benevolent, "a celebrated figure," but only "in his own apologetic way." His "careful veil of affable vacuity" is worn like "a second skin" and there is still the possibility that he may seem "negligible until . . . just too late." He speaks "gently" even when there is "no kindness in his tone," and his gripping exposition is delivered in a "diffident murmur." But he controls the final sequence with an assurance matching anything in his long career. From a hazy recollection of a photograph he identifies the cache, and by taking up the last of his "threads" he closes in at last on the killer. He provides a Biblical text as an exact forecast of the final scene, and with a fine sense of theater literally unmasks the murderer, stage-managing the subsequent revelations with a shrewd showmanship calculated to achieve exactly the effect he wants. It's a fine swan song, for Campion, of course, but more particularly for Miss Allingham: though his career is continued in two sequels by Youngman Carter, for her this was the end.

LETTERS

From Peter E. Blau:

Please pass on to Douglas G. Greene: According to Ronald B. De Waal's *World Biography of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson* (p. 382), John Dickson Carr's adaptation of "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" was broadcast by the BBC Home Service on Dec. 27, 1948, directed by David H. Godfrey and with Howard Marion-Crawford (Holmes) and Finlay Currie (Watson); presumably they used the 1945 script.

From William F. Nolan:

Your delayed Winter '79 number was worth the wait! I was delighted to read the Steve Mertz interview with W.T. "Tod" Ballard. In researching my book on Hammett, I exchanged letters with Mr. Ballard, who was most kind and cooperative. He is one of the few surviving *Black Mask* "giants" and an ideal subject for this sort of in-depth interview.

Of equal fascination for me was the piece on "Paul Cain," whose *Fast One* (which I have in a good hardcover first) has long been a top favorite of mine in the ultra-hard-boiled school. I personally rate this diamond-hard novel well above the better-known works of Raoul Whitfield. (Recently re-read all three of Whitfield's published mysteries, *Green Ice*, *Death in a Bowl*, and *The Virgin Kills*, and found them basically thin and pulpish—though *Green Ice* is, by far, the best of the lot. *The Virgin Kills*, in particular, is silly, poorly characterized, highly improbable, and downright boring.) There isn't a boring moment in *Fast One*. Some years ago I sent one of my two copies to Ken Millar, knowing he'd appreciate the style and content. He didn't respond directly, but I never got it back—and now, years later, I see that he is on the jacket of the reissued book, praising it. I look forward to Mr. Hagemann's full critical examination of this offbeat novel in a future issue of TAD. Worthy project!

There was one more bit of bio data printed on "Paul Cain," which Mr. Hagemann did not quote. It is an unsigned jacket note on the back of the paperback *7 Slayes* (1946), and was likely written by Cain himself. Titled "About the Author," I won't quote all of it, but enough to give the flavor:

"Paul Cain isn't his real name. He is slender, blond, bearded, 30-odd years old. He spent the bulk of these years in South and North America, Africa, the Near East, Europe . . . a bosun's mate, Dada painter, gambler and a "no" man in Hollywood.

"He likes: Mercedes motor cars, peanut butter . . . Scotch whiskey . . . gardenias, Garbo, Richebourg 1904 and dislikes: parsnips, sopranos, men who wear white nylon sox . . .



"He writes as he has lived—at high speed and with violence."

Terse, tart, tongue-in-cheek; it's got to be Cain on Cain. And it adds just a bit more to our limited knowledge of this talented gentleman of mystery.

Finally, a nod of thanks to the ubiquitous Mike Avallone for his short but heartfelt tribute to Ian Fleming. Critics have tended to undervalue this man's amazing ability in the creation of suspense and truly breathless adventure. The best of Fleming is indeed vintage stuff, and every thrill-reader owes him a fat debt of gratitude for having given us 007. Like Avallone, I was into Bond well before Connery became 007 in *Doctor No*, and still fondly recall the afternoon (in 1969) spent with Fleming in Chicago, when he was researching his *Thrilling Cities*. He was Bond—colorful, urbane, witty, keen-minded. . . . As we toured the seamy Capone-era streets of Old Chicago I listened to him complain about getting Bond onto the screen. He seemed convinced that his books would never be made into films. How wrong he was!

I particularly value, in my Bond collection, a copy of an auction pamphlet, *Ian Lancaster Fleming*, circa 1970 (limited edition, from Indiana University) in which some of the Bond manuscript pages are reproduced, including a handwritten insert page (the golf game between 007 and Goldfinger) and a note he wrote about himself:

I have always smoked and drunk and loved too much . . . one day the iron crab will get me. Then I shall have died of living too much.

The iron crab was heart disease, and it got him soon after. It killed a hell of a man!

Well, gang, you can scratch three entries in the Hammett Sweepstakes: William Godshalk has abandoned his critical biog on Dash (which was to have been part of Twayne's U.S. Authors series), and real-life private eye David Feuchheimer won't be writing his book about "Hammett's San Francisco Years" (which Geis was set to publish). And Prof. Steven Marcus, originally Hellman-chosen by Lady Lil herself to scribe the "official" biog, has also quietly dropped out of the

lists. He has been replaced by Diane Johnson, currently working with Hellman on this Random House project, with 1980 as the projected year of completion.

But . . . Peter Wolfe's critical study, *Beams Falling: The Art of Dashiell Hammett*, is now in the home stretch and will be out this fall from Bowling Green Popular Press. (I read it in manuscript: extremely interesting!) A late entry in the Hammett Sweepstakes is a dark horse from Ungar, a critical study also set for fall. Don't have the author's name as yet.

The major Hammett effort now in progress seems to be Richard Layman's untitled full-scale biography due to come out from Harcourt Brace (in '80-81?). Layman's *Dashiell Hammett: A Bibliography*, from the University of Pittsburgh Press, is due out any day—and his research on this one led to his desire to write a full biog free of the Hellman Influence. It is no secret that Lillian is far from delighted by Layman's entry, since he promises to reveal some carefully documented facts about the Hammett-Hellman relationship, and its aftermath which do *not* place the lady in a saintly light. He's dug up some terrific stuff, and has been aided by Feuchheimer, who turned over his extensive Hammett file to Layman. It will be most interesting to compare the "official" Hellman-supervised Johnson book to Layman's independent study.

My own Hammett *Casebook* is due for an overhaul. I am updating and revising the book for mass-market paperback release, incorporating data from my two TAD checklists. The full-size trade reprint, now in paper from McNally-Loflin, cries out for revision. After all, I wrote this one way back in mid-'68, and I have learned a lot about Hammett over the last decade.

Meanwhile, on the Nolan Front, Triton Productions is moving briskly with plans to film my *Space for Hire* (starring my tough future 'tec, Sam Space of Mars)—and I'm now into a final polish on the screenplay. My second novel, *Look Out for Space!* may also be filmed as a sequel, and I have already plotted the third, *Here Comes Space! Great fun!*

The hard-boiled private eye seems to be making a comeback in films and fiction these days, which warms my tough 'tec soul. I'm convinced the genre won't go away; it'll be with us for a long time to come. America is still a frontier nation (now it's the space frontier) and the mythic private operative is a natural outgrowth of the mythic western gunslinger. He's a part of us all, deep down, and our children's children will be savoring Hammett and Chandler (and, God knows, maybe even Nolan!) on Mars in 2079.

They could do worse.

From Michael Masliah:

Enclosed is a supplementary list of digest-size mystery magazines. It includes a revision of several entries from the preceding list because earlier issues were examined. One correction must be made on the earlier list; the correct title is *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E. Magazine*.

While examining old mystery magazines I uncovered samples of the publishing collaboration of Leslie Charteris and Anson Bond in Hollywood in 1945-46. From the books I've seen and from the various ads in the back, I have come up with 28 titles so far. All of the books were digest-sized and sold for 25¢ each. They seem to have been numbered serially, probably starting with 1, but not all titles have their numbers on them. The publisher was variously listed as Bond-Charteris Enterprises, Jacobs Publishing Co., The Shaw Press, Black Publishing Co., and finally as Saint Enterprises, but the address remained 314 North Robertson Blvd., Hollywood 36, Calif. Evidently they split up in 1946 when Anson Bond formed his own company.

More than half of the books were either anthologies edited by Leslie Charteris (The Saint's Choice—7 volumes) or written by him. All the latter save one were reprints of Saint stories. The exception was an original novelization of the Deanna Durbin film "Lady on a Train" adapted from the screenplay based on the author's own screen story. The other books they published were either reprints or the first book publication of novels or stories previously published in magazines. Late in 1946 Leslie Charteris became the first editor of the monthly magazine *Suspense*.

Bond-Charteris Enterprises & Saint Enterprises

Charteris, Leslie, ed. *The Saint's Choice* (A Bonded Collection). Bond-Charteris Enterprises, 1945 (No. 17).

—, *The Saint's Choice*, Vol. 2 (A Bonded Collection). Jacobs Publishing Co., 1945 (No. 6).

—, *The Saint's Choice* (Vol. 3) of *True Crime Stories* (A Bonded Collection). Jacobs Publishing Co., 1945 (No. 8).

—, *The Saint's Choice* (Vol. 4) of *Humorous Crime* (A Bonded Collection). The Shaw Press, 1945.

—, *The Saint's Choice* (Vol. 5) of *Impossible Crime* (A Bonded Collection). Bond-Charteris Enterprises, 1945 (No. 11).

—, *The Saint's Choice* (Vol. 6) of *Hollywood Crime* (A Chartered Collection). Saint Enterprises, 194— (No. 17).

—, *The Saint's Choice* (Vol. 7) of *Radio Thrillers* (A Chartered Collection). Saint Enterprises, 1946 (No. 27).

Charteris, Leslie, *Alias the Saint* (A Bonded Mystery). Jacobs Publishing Co., 1945 (No. 5).

—, *The Brighter Buccaneer* (A Chartered Book). Saint Enterprises, 1946 (No. 26).

—, *Featuring the Saint* (A Bonded Mystery). Black Publishing Co., 1945.

—, *The Last Hero*.

—, *Paging the Saint* (A Bonded Mystery). Jacobs Publishing Co., 1945 (No. 7).

—, *The Saint Meets His Match* (A Bonded Mystery). Bond-Charteris, 1945 (No. 14).

—, *The Saint Meets the Tiger* (A Bonded Mystery). Bond-Charteris Publication, 1945.

—, *The Saint's Getaway* (A Bonded Mystery). Black Publishing Co., 1945.

—, *Lady on a Train* (A Bonded Mystery). The Shaw Press, 1945.

Cain, Paul, *Fast One* (A Bonded Mystery). Shaw Press, 1945 (No. 10).

—, *Seven Slayings* (A Chartered Collection). Saint Enterprises, 1946 (No. 21).

Friend, Oscar J., *Guns of Powder River* (A Bonded Western). Bond-Charteris Publication, 1945 (No. 10B).

Gruber, Frank, *The Last Doorbell* (A Chartered Mystery). Saint Enterprises, 1946.

Gunn, James, *Deadlier than the Male*. Jameson, Malcolm, *Atomic Bomb* (A Bonded Special). Bond-Charteris Publication, 1945 (No. 10A).

Kline, Otis Adelbert, *The Man Who Limped and Other Stories* (A Chartered Collection). Saint Enterprises, 1946 (No. 22).

Langham, James R., *A Pocket Full of Cues* (A Chartered Mystery). Saint Enterprises, 1946 (No. 28).

Paul, Elliot, *I'll Hate Myself in the Morning* (A Bonded Mystery). Bond-Charteris Publication, 1945 (No. 16).

Rice, Craig, *8 Faces at 3* (A Bonded Mystery). Bond-Charteris Publication, 1945.

Rice, Craig, ed. *The Craig Rice Mystery Digest*, Bond-Charteris Publication, 1945. Condensations of *Prelude to War* by Leslie Charteris, *Bamboo Blonde* by Dorothy B. Hughes, *The Big Midget Murders* by Craig Rice and *Cold Steel* by Alice Tilton (A Bonded Collection).

(No. 12). Sanders, George, *Crime on My Hands*.

Anson Bond moved to 913 N. La Cienega Blvd., Hollywood 46, early in 1946. In those books, and the *Cumulative Paperback Index*, at least 16 books were published. The first two (and possibly Nos. 3 and 4) were digest-sized while the remainder were small paperbacks. All were reprints of hardcover mysteries and were abridged to about 62,000 words. Two bi-monthly magazines were published on alternate months and went at least two issues each. The company seems to have stopped publishing in early 1947.

1. *The Goose Is Cooked*, Emmet Hogarth.

2. *Murder of a Novelist*, Sally Wood.

3. *The Hungry House*, Lillian Lauferty.

4. *Murder Strikes Thrice*, Charles G. Booth.

5. *I'll Eat You Last*, H.C. Branson.

6. *The Thing in the Brook*, Peter Storme.

7. *Death Blew Out the Match*, Kathleen Moore Knight.

8. *The Twitting Bird Mystery*, H.C. Bailey.

9. *Murder Needs a Name*, Ruth Fenison.

10. "B" as in *Banshee*, Lawrence Treat.

11. *Johnnie*, Dorothy B. Hughes.

12. *Kingdom of Death*, Margery Allingham.

13. *Harbour*, Philip MacDonald.

14. *Who's Afraid*, Elizabeth Sanxay Holding.

This Is Mr. Fortune, H.C. Bailey.

Footsteps in the Air, Susan Wells.

Movie Mystery Magazine

V. 1, July-Aug. 1946. Novelization of "The Stranger" plus 9 other columns and departments.

V. 2, Sept.-Oct. 1946. Novelization of "Home Sweet Homicide" plus 9 other columns and departments.

Craig Rice Crime Digest, ed. by Craig Rice.

V. 1, Aug.-Sept. 1946. Condensations of *The White Priory Murders* by Carter Dickson, *The Sister of Cain* by Mary Collins and *The Sunday Pigeon Murders* by Craig Rice.

V. 2, Oct.-Nov. 1946. Condensations of *Don't Catch Me* by Richard Powell, *O as in Omen* by Lawrence Treat and *Bury the Hatchet* by Manning Long.

Supplementary List of Digest-Size Mystery Magazines

Accused

V. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1956; bimonthly.

Bizarre! Mystery Magazine

V. 1, No. 1, Oct. 1965; quarterly.

Conflict

V. 1, No. 1, Fall 1953; quarterly.

Craig Rice Crime Digest

V. 1, No. 1, Aug.-Sept. 1936; bi-monthly.

Crime and Justice Story Magazine

No. 1, Sept. 1956; bimonthly.

Double Action Detective Stories (rev.)

Issue 1, c. 1954; frequency?

Guilty Detective Story Magazine

Vol. 1, No. 3, Nov. 1956; bimonthly.

London Mystery Magazine (rev.)

V. 1, No. 6, Oct.-Nov. 1950; bimonthly. When did it change frequency?

Mantrap

V. 1, No. 1, July 1956, quarterly.

The Man from U.N.C.L.E. Magazine

V. 1, 31, February 1966; bimonthly.

Mercury Mystery Book Magazine (rev.)

V. 1, No. 1 (whole no. 210), Sept. 1955; monthly.

Movie Mystery Magazine

V. 1, No. 1, July-Aug. 1946; bi-monthly. Have not seen, but according to ads in other Bond publications there were at least two issues. The first one featured *The Stranger* and the second *Home Sweet Homicide*.

Off Beat Detective Stories

V. 3, No. 3, July 1959; bimonthly.

Sure Fire Detective Stories

V. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1957 (cover and spine dated Dec. 1956); bimonthly.

Suspect Detective Stories

V. 1, No. 2, Feb. 1957; bimonthly.

Suspense

V. 1, No. 1, Nov. 1946; monthly. Ed. by Leslie Charteris. This magazine featured novelizations of actual stories used on the popular radio program. The second version (see below) featured original stories suggested by the radio program.

Suspense (rev.)

V. 1, No. 1, Spring 1951; quarterly.

Terror Detective Story Magazine

No. 2, Dec. 1956; bimonthly.

Verdict

V. 1, No. 2, July 1953; monthly.

Web Detective Stories

V. 1, No. 4, Sept. 1959; bimonthly.

From Lillian de la Torre:

Hurrah for TAD! Every issue is a feast, and Mary Smith's "Lament for a Legend" is a brilliant major contribution to the legend of Lizzie (TAD, April 1978).

Like Mary, I have always thought that the heart of the Borden mystery lies in that long interval of calm—90 whole minutes!—that intervened between the murderous frenzy that battered Mrs. Borden and the murderous frenzy that shattered Mr. Borden. How could anybody, whether Lizzie or Bridget or "wild-eyed man," have kept on the boil for those interminable 90 minutes, and not show it?

Mary's answer is masterful: There was only one murderous frenzy. Nobody stayed on the boil. The frenzy that abolished Mr. Borden was simulated in cold blood.

The murderous frenzy was Bridget's, and she did show it, by her prolonged fit of nausea at just about the time of the first murder. She said she talked with Mrs. Borden afterwards—but did she?

I cannot believe that Lizzie entered into collusion with Bridget. That would be foreign to her nature. I think rather that she silently discovered what Bridget had done, and when the exhausted girl withdrew for her "lie-down," opportunistically repeated the pattern. She would have a supreme confidence that Bridget dared not speak, and if she did the superior Miss Borden could override her. Rather than as a conspiracy, I see it as a silent Mexican standoff.

A couple of questions remain, to which perhaps answers still may be found.

The stained dresses. We know what became of Lizzie's. She burned it in the kitchen stove on the Sunday. What became of Bridget's?

Wasn't it soaking quietly in the window-washing pail, probably ripped into unrecognizable rags?

What was Bridget's motive? Surely it has to be more than just overwork, as suggested by Mary and by Ed Radin in his book fingering Bridget for both murders.

Reviewing Radin in the New York Times, I advanced a suggestion, saying:

Mrs. Borden's desk had been mysteriously rifled some time before the murders. Had the elder Borden been quietly holding the episode over somebody's head until continued pressure finally brought on a brain-storm?

It would have been just like the skint-flint Borden to use the threat of jail to hold the hapless Irish girl in a kind of perpetual penance, enough to drive anyone frantic. But as to this we shall never know.

From Peter Christensen:

It may be of interest to some readers that the Correspondence Study Division of Loyola University of Chicago will soon be offering a course in Mystery and Detective Fiction. I am at present drawing up the lessons and exams, and expect the course to be included in the 1980 catalogue, which will be out in January. The reading for the course will include works by Poe, Willie Collins, Conan Doyle, Chesterton, Bentley, Christie, Carr, Hammett, Chandler, Ross Macdonald, Aillingham, and Symons. Hugh Greene's *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* will also be included.

I found Volume 12, Number 2 to be another solid issue. My one complaint, unfortunately, has to do with my piece on William Hope Hodgson. The next to last sentence in paragraph three should read, in part, as follows: "... and a lengthy explanation [not 'exposition'] by Carnacki which would have been better as part of the story's exposition."

From Randy Cox:

Spring came late this year, both seasonally and the appearance of TAD 12:2. As usual, there is a bounty of material worthy of lengthy comment. Since I am hammering this out on an ancient Remington Electric the night before a visit to the editorial offices so it can be hand-delivered and have a chance of getting into an issue actually put together in 1979, I will not succumb to the temptation to be verbose.

If Charles Shibus expects someone to disagree with his review of *The Red Right Hand*, it will have to be someone other than myself. I must admit that I have had difficulty finding any comment on the book (other than a list in TAD and a reference in *Murder Ink*) prior to my actually laying hands on my copy last January. A Classic, huh? Well, it did appear in the Dell Great Mystery Library before it appeared in The Mystery Library, and I understand there was another paperback appearance as well. Intrigued, I plunged in and read it at almost one sitting.

I found myself reading just to find out what was going to happen, but without much sense of actual suspense. I had difficulty with the prose at first, which seemed like imitation Faulkner, but later on I adjusted to it. After reading the Preface and Appendices I viewed it as a Gimmick Novel and one which I could easily use in a classroom to demonstrate one way an author can bamboozle the reader. I'm still not certain it belongs in hardcover with all of the scholarly apparatus which one finds in The Mystery Library. Paperback, yes.

A good friend of mine (who will remain nameless unless he decides to write as well) read his copy and mailed it back to the publisher with an acid critique written with thumb on nose and fingers spread. I wasn't that clever.

Charles Shibus seems to have been a major contributor to this issue with more reviews per square foot than most others. I was also intrigued by his comments on

Dornford Yates' *Shoal Water*. As ye editor can attest, I have been desultorily working on an article about Yates for some years. Sloth and a lot of previous commitments prevent me from working on it for a good great period of time. However, Charles' enthusiasm for Yates encourages me to get cracking. I will also have to take a closer look at the other Ruritanian novels. My first reading of Yates gave me the impression he had one basic plot: Storm the Bastille and Rescue the Maiden! I may be wrong. My favorites are not within the genre, however, but the Berry stories, some of which are hilarious, all a delight. Yates is a hard writer to get a handle on, in spite of the excellent guide in Richard Usborne's *Clubland Heroes*. Perhaps that's why I've had so much difficulty. Usborne once told me he felt he would never have enjoyed the books so much had he not read them first at a very impressionable age. I read my first Yates when I was about 30.

It also seemed very apropos that the local PBS station should have shown "The Horse of the Invisible" from *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes* right after I read that fine article on Carnacki in TAD 12:2.

From E. Lynne Van Buskirk:

"Classic Corner" is a worthwhile feature in TAD and it's great to read stories featuring characters I've only heard about.

For those readers who are interested in that great villainess, Madame Sara, who was featured in the "Classic Corner" in the Spring 1979 issue, two additional short stories have been reprinted in *The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes: Forty stories of crime and detection from original illustrated magazines*, selected and introduced by Alan K. Russell (Secaucus, N.J.: Castle Books, A Division of Book Sales, Inc., 1978). Besides the story you reprinted, *The Rivals* includes "The Blood-Red Cross" and "The Fact of the Abbot." Although the writing is quaint, the character of Madame Sara is so interesting that the stories merit reading.

From Douglas Greene:

I am one of those whose subscriptions to TAD were mucked up for more than 9 months. But now that the October and Winter numbers have at last reached me, I hasten to comment. First, and most importantly, the "Classic Corner" is a splendid idea; please continue to reprint such unobtainable stories. Sam Moskowitz published similar reprints, "Detectives by Gaslight," in the *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine* around 1973 and 1974, but so far Otto Penzler has chosen better stories. It is an honor that my first TAD contribution ("John Dickson Carr, alias Roger Fairbairn, and the Historical Novel") was noted on the cover of the October issue. I assume that, when TAD hit all the newsstands across the country, patrons tossed aside their copy of *Playboy* and became good TADians in order to discover an unknown Carr pseudonym. I wonder what

Carr would have thought of having his name on the cover along with a picture of a hard-boiled private eye.

I'm glad that you were able to use my list of JDC's BBC radio work in the Winter number. I had thought it was to appear as a "note," but I do like the large type and I think that JDC does deserve the prominence which recent TAD's have given him.

I should, however, add one correction. I suggested that Ron Haydock was wrong that JDC was involved in a 1944 *The Lost World* serial. It is true, as I pointed out, that the BBC does not record such a serial under Carr's name, but he was involved in some capacity. In explaining how Carr became associated with the Doyle family (which resulted in his writing the biography of Sir Arthur), *The New Yorker* (September 15, 1951) says, "When the B.B.C. undertook a radio dramatization of 'The Lost World,' Adrian Conan Doyle asked that Carr be persuaded to act in an advisory capacity on the script. The two men became friendly. . . ." (This is just one of several stories that have circulated about Carr's acquaintance with Adrian Doyle.)

Just as vague about Carr's role in *The Lost World* are his comments in his introduction to Doyle's *The Poison Belt* (Macmillan, 1964): "At the drama department of the B.B.C. in London, during the great days of radio broadcasting toward the close of World War II, we discovered that almost any story by Conan Doyle was a sure winner. A serial-version of *The Lost World*, with the late British actor Francis L. Sullivan as Challenger, scored a great success in spring of 1944. Its sequel, *The Poison Belt*, was to follow late in summer. A script had been prepared [by Carr?]; the same admirable cast would play it. Then came the flying bombs. We realized, with consternation, that the track of the worst damage through Southern England lay along the exact road taken by Challenger. . . . Conan Doyle's story, pure science or not, was too convincing and too realistic. If we had kept strictly to that original script, we should have been chased with hatchets through every corridor of Broadcasting House. There was no help for it; the best scenes in the book had to be softened or cut out."

It seems likely to me that the BBC version of *The Lost World* is recorded in the Play Library under "Doyle" rather than "Carr," but whether JDC wrote the scripts or merely acted as advisor is not clear. I'll be grateful for any comments TADians may have, both on *The Lost World* and on any other information on Carr's BBC work which I may have overlooked. Does anyone have tapes of *Appointment with Fear?* Or, for that matter, the CBS 1948 show *Cabin B-13?*

One of the most admirable things about Messrs. Bazzon and Teylor is their willingness to revise their opinions in COC. A few issues ago, they rewrote the previously lukewarm comments about Ruth Rendell, and in the Winter number they have become much more positive about Robert van Gulik. Oddly, however, they state that their "hasty and adverse re-

marks" were on *Chinese Nail and Bell*; but in COC they were favorable about *Nail* and neutral about *Bell*. Their negative comments were, in fact, on *Lake, Emperor's Pearl, Phantom of the Temple*, and on what I consider a superb short story, "New Year's Eve in Lan-Fang." Oh, well; whatever the case, I'm delighted that Messrs. B & T now praise van Gulik.

Speaking of Oriental detection, I greatly enjoyed E.F. Bleiler's account of translations of Chinese stories into Polish. I hope that Mr. Bleiler will prevail upon Dover to make an English version of these stories available. If an expert in Chinese is not available, how about translations from the Polish and Italian versions, perhaps augmented by the Magistrate Lan cases (in English) in Herbert Giles' *Historical China* (1882)? The Giles book, incidentally, also has one translation of a Magistrate Pao story: "The Intercession of Amida Buddha," which is also in the Comber book.

I was interested in the reviews of Ellery Queen's *Japanese Golden Dozen*, a book which I had previously decided to ignore. If the stories by Edogawa Ramo (in *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination*) were typical, I thought that the less known about Japanese detection the better. But the reviews of the Queen collection (and, of course, Queen's superb taste in crimsin matters) have led me to revise my hasty judgment, and I'll try the Queen book.

Any time an amateur journal goes from typewritten to typeset pages, there are anguished cries that scholarship is taking over from enthusiasm. I suspect that such responses have less to do with the contents of the journal than in an impression that typesetting is more formal and less "fun." So, of course, letters have come into TAD asking it to return to the interests of "fans." As a subscriber since volume 7, I haven't noticed any decline in the high quality of the articles and the enthusiasm of the writers (indeed, TAD seems to go from strength to strength), and I think that the improvements in readability of the printing and the valuable inclusion of illustrations have gone unappreciated in the letter columns. Please consider yourself praised.

Connected with fears of too much scholarship is the occasional complaint that using footnotes is "pedantic." If readers don't want to know sources of information and don't want to use those sources to investigate further or even to read further, I'm tempted to say "that's swell and good"—though I don't really think it is. In my "Carr alias Fairbairn" article, for example, I should think that readers would like to know where Carr remarked that "to write good history is the noblest work of man," so that they can read what else Carr said in the context. Including such references in footnotes stops the pedantry of loading the text of the article with sources or the mistake of simply making the reader guess the basis of the author's opinion.

TAD has also received letters for the inclusion of one type of article and the

elimination of another. I prefer analyses of the plots of books, and I am not so fond of the lit-crit studies which examine the author's attitudes toward love, death, and so on. Thus, I greatly enjoyed Mike Nevins' contributions about Milton Propper and Carr's radio plays, Bill Pronzini's study of the Phoenix Press, and Jo Ann Vicalar's account of the Rendell books. I'd like to see more on the lesser-known figures of the Golden Age—the Clyde Clasons, Clifford Knights, Timothy Fullers and others. I'm currently working on an article about Darwin and Hildegarde Teitel, whose works are usually excellent. But I don't want TAD to publish only articles that appeal to me. It has maintained an excellent balance in its contents. So please don't change anything! And don't listen to me or anyone else who wants only one type of article.

From Herbert Ruhm:

I am grateful to Prof. Hagemann for establishing the date and the place of death of Paul Cain (Peter Ruric). Had these been available earlier, I would have been able to include a Paul Cain story in my *Black Mask* anthology, if I had also been able to locate Cain's heirs or executors. Try as I might, I was unable to establish anything about the end of Cain to a certainty (at least from New York), not even that or whether Cain had died, as it was rumored that he had; and calls to the Screenwriters Guild in Los Angeles, including one with a dead-air time of about fifteen minutes while they checked their records, revealed only that they had no record of him after 1951. A story by Cain was in galleys but had to be pulled at the last moment because the Vintage/Random House lawyers feared a lawsuit by the unlocated Cain or by his heirs. My comment about Cain in the penultimate paragraph of my Introduction was intended to smoke him or his heirs out; in that it failed.

I would not have spent the time and money to track down Cain, had I not concluded after going through the *Black Mask* file for the anthology that Cain, for parts of *Fast One* and for several stories, is, with Hammett and Chandler, of the *Black Mask* triumvirate; certainly, the first part of *Fast One* is the unsurpassed opening of any hard-boiled novel. That part was my first selection, but as it was unresolved, I turned to one of his excellent short stories.

In turn, I am glad to tell Prof. Hagemann and other TAD readers of a piece by Ruric, possibly his last published piece: "Viva las Castanetas," in *Gourmet Magazine*, June 1951 (*Gourmet* is at 777 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.) Since the subject is dining in Majorca and Majorca's native dishes, there is something to Cain-Ruric-Sims's claim in the third paragraph of his letter to Shaw, which Prof. Hagemann quotes.

From Frank D. McSherry, Jr.:

TAD's latest cover (Vol. 12, No. 2) is a

letdown from last issue's, but then it had a very tough act to follow—Gahan Wilson's black-and-gold Fu Manchu print.

Inside quality was as high as ever, though—and it is my imagination, or is there a lessening of the stiffness of academic prose that several readers have complained about recently? There's no difficulty about awarding first place this time—clearly it's Nevins's article on "Woolrich: The Years Before Suspense," notable for the original research throwing a startling light on Woolrich's private life, the excellent (as usual) prose, and the punch line that makes you look ahead for the next installment. Ms. Bakerman's study of detective Tobin's recovery from tragedy and guilt takes an easy second, with B.A. Pyle's smooth, well-liked analysis of the life of and novels about Albert Campion placing third. Occhiogrosso's study of the effect a police force has upon the society that creates it, and the questions it raises, is next, and would have rated higher with more discussion of why the Wahloos feel that the police do more harm than good to a country, and may themselves be part of the cause of a rising crime rate.

Reader Masliah, who wishes information and indexes of digest-size detective magazines, will be interested to learn that a series of such, under the general editorship of Michal L. Cook and John Nieminski (compiler of *EQMM 350*) is now under way. The first issue will feature *The Saint Magazine*, "complete from 1953 to 1967," from ("Watch for Announcement") Cook and McDowell, 3318 Wimborg Ave., Evansville, Indiana 47712. (Or subscribe to the adzine-fanzine, *The Unicorn*, same address, bimonthly at \$6 for 6 issues.)

Some digest titles left out of Mr. Masliah's letter: *Chase; The Man from U.N.C.L.E.; The Executioner; Intrigue*—at least three issues of this came out, Vol. 1, No. 1 being dated Oct. 1965, 144 pp.; riding the wave of James Bond's popularity, it consisted entirely of spy stories—*Bizarre! Mystery Magazine*, companion to *Intrigue*, with some fantasy stories, also bimonthly, also three issues at least. There was at least one other, earlier *Suspense* too—rather unusual in its concept: it consisted entirely of radio plays rewritten into prose form, with the authors of the radio plays, all produced and presented on *Suspense*, listed at the foot of the first page of each story.

Usually the author of the story was someone other than the author of the play, though one original radio script was printed (or announced as forthcoming in the next [fourth] issue), Lucille Fletcher's chiller, "Sorry, Wrong Number." Edited by Leslie Charteris, the magazine came out for at least three issues during 1946-47. And of course there's the promising *Mystery Monthly* magazine, issued from June 1976 to February 1977. . . . And probably a good many more I've overlooked.

Add to Walter Albert's "Secondary Sources" an interview with Frederick Dannay: "Elbery Queen Unmasked," by Marlene Cmons, in *OK, the Tulsa World*

Sunday Supplement Magazine for July 1, 1979 (pp. 10-12). Part of the interview confirms a conclusion of Nevins's in *Royal Bloodline* about the reason for the change in style of the EQ novels from the Golden Age complexity to a series of more woman-oriented, more romantic and lighter novels such as *The Four of Hearts* and *The Devil To Pay*: "After the decline of the golden age, he says, they turned to a more commercial style of writing, designed primarily to appeal to magazines for serialization, or possibly for movies. 'Frankly, our motivation then was to make more money,' he says. 'As I look back at it in retrospect, it was probably a misstep.' They were successful, he says, but they were not satisfied."

Vol. 2 of *Charlie Chan's Adventures*, by Alfred Andriola, was favorably reviewed in TAD recently, and now Vol. 1 is available. (Delay was caused by a search for early Chan daily comic strips, which appeared in few papers, often as sample strips to see if the strip would be liked, and are rare.) The price is \$15: it's hardcover, black and white, a year's collection, from Oct. 1938 to Nov. 1939, large format, 10 by 14 inches, slick paper, from the same firm: Anthony Raiola, P.O. Box 14361, Long Beach, Calif. 90803. Note for TAD's business department: TAD readers are not, apparently, comics-oriented as a group; Raiola reports that his ad, in the same issue with a favorable review for Vol. 2, got only three responses! For those three (four, including me), I'll note that a third volume, completing the reprinting on fine, longer-lasting paper than the newsprint of the entire Adriola-created Chan strip, is due out soon.

Reader Cowell, interested in reader-as-detective mysteries, will find a couple of ingenious variants on the theme intriguing: one, *Hanging in the Balance*, by Leslie Hale, Jonathan Cape, London, 1962, gives readers the background of several cases, a description of the death scene, and asks them to judge if a crime occurred at all—and if so, what kind: murder, suicide, or accidental death? The author includes his own solutions after each case and reports the legal outcome of each. The other, *You Be the Judge* by Marcus Kavanaugh (Reilly and Lee, Chicago, 1929), is described by Aspen Bookhouse's 30th catalogue as consisting of accounts of "twenty-six . . . criminal cases in which the reader is challenged to guess the judges' verdicts. The answers were sealed at the end of the book. . . . Five hundred dollars in prizes were promised to participating readers." Nonfiction; classifies as sealed mystery, too.

Trying to track down a rumored western novel set in the late 1800's and featuring Sherlock Holmes in an anonymous role, said to be titled *Rivers of Bullets* and said to be an original paperback from one of the smaller companies, I asked the Library of Congress for information and got this answer from them: apparently there's no such book—or at least no such title published during 1955-1979. "A staff member from Major Books

. . . and from Manor Books . . . reports that neither company published a book entitled *Rivers of Bullets*." Is this then a "phantom title" based on rumor? (Talbot Mundy fans looked for years for a Mundy novel called *The Man from Jupiter*, which didn't exist; apparently some fan had confused the title of the book *Black Light* with the title of the main character in the book, who was called "The Man from Jupiter.")

Robert Weinberg's series of facsimile pulp reprints will soon include the rare first issue of *The Phantom Detective*, featuring G. Wayman Jones' "The Emperor of Death." Weinberg is branching out into hardcover with his Pulp Press as well, the first book, due soon, being a collection of two short novels from *Argosy* by Lester Dent, *Hades and Hocus Pocus*. (From Weinberg at 10606 S. Central Park, Chicago, Ill. 60655, at, probably, \$4.95 and \$15 respectively). Weinberg also plans, if it can be arranged, to reprint Richard Sale's excellent pulp tales of Capt. McGrail, the policeman who met the oddest criminals imaginable in smoothly, ingeniously plotted and exciting reading. . . .

Fans of science fiction-detective story blends will find the third anthology of such out from St. Martin's Press, *Mysterious Visions*, edited by Charles Waugh, Martin Greenberg, and Joseph Olander, 510 pp. at \$15, including such authors as Erle Stanley Gardner with a novelette about a mad scientist and a new and hazardous murder weapon, "The Human Zero"; Woolrich with murder by voodoo in "Dark Melody of Madness"; a Charlotte Armstrong novella, "Three-Day Magic," an utterly charming story; Maurice Procter's story of the London boy who finds the Lamp of Aladdin in London; and Boucher, Pronzini ("The Man Who Collected The Shadow"), Westlake, Christie, and John D. MacDonald, among a good many others.

The scripts of famous crime films are being reprinted in book form by the University of Wisconsin. *Mystery of the Wax Museum* is out now, in paper at \$4.95, and *High Sierra*, the Bogart-Lupino film that captured the gritty feel of the Depression, is due around October, along with Howard Hawks' *The Big Sleep*. (The latter is the good one, with Bogart, in a script by William Faulkner, Leigh Brackett, and Jules Furthman, with some of the dialogue, Ms. Brackett once stated in an interview, being written by Bogart and director Hawks on the set.) Also at \$4.95 in paper; hardcovers of both are planned.

From Harold D. Kaiser:
Perhaps someone can enlighten me: with all the reprinting going on, both in paperback and hardcover, why is it there are no reprints of Freeman's Dr. Thorne-dyke novels? As far as I know, the Dover reprints of *The Stoneware Monkey* and *The Penrose Mystery* are the only ones available. If these two are typical examples, then his work is considerably better than some of the stuff being reprinted.

NOTE TO READERS: The accompanying chronology was inadvertently omitted from William Antony S. Sarjeant's article, "The Great Australian Detective," in TAD 12:2, Spring 1979. It should accompany the map on p. 101. Our apologies to Mr. Sarjeant and our readers.

A PRELIMINARY CHRONOLOGY OF THE DOCUMENTED CASES OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Case No.	Date of Case (if established)	Publication Date of Book	Book Title or Case Details (alternative titles for books are given in brackets)
1	1918	*	Bony's earliest case (see text). Ref. in 4, p. 73; dated by reference in 15, pp. 26, 273.
2	1920	*	Tracking at Camooeal, Queensland (4, p. 93).
3	1921	*	Tracking at Cunnamulla, Queensland (6, p. 124).
4	*	1928	<i>The Barrakee Mystery [The Lure of the Bush]</i> , Barrakee Station, River Darling Basin, New South Wales.
5	*	*	Cave v. Black castle-duffing case, Sydney (Ref. in 4, p. 6.)
6	*	1931	<i>The Sands of Windee</i> , Windee Station, western New South Wales.
7	*	*	Bank robbery in Toowoomba, Queensland. Ref. in 6, p. 280.
8	*	*	Case at Longreach, Queensland. Ref. in 9, p. 52.
9	*	1936	<i>Wings over the Diamantina [Wings Above the Claypan]</i> , Coolibah cattle station, western Queensland.
10	*	*	Advisor in the Gascoyne affair, Perth; advised Det.-Serg. Muir to go to Myall Station, near Winton, Queensland, to arrest Andrew Andrews (11, pp. 11, 15).
11	*	1937	<i>Mr. Jelly's Business [Murder Down Under]</i> , Burracoppin, southwest Western Australia.
12	*	1937	<i>Winds of Evil</i> , Warrigatta Station, near Broken Hill, New South Wales.
13	*	1938	<i>The Bone Is Pointed</i> , Opal Town, St. Albans, Queensland.
14	*	1939	<i>The Mystery of Swordfish Reef</i> , Bermagui, southern New South Wales.
15	1940	1940	<i>Bushranger of the Skies [No Footprints in the Bush]</i> , McPhersons Station, 80 miles N.W. of Shaw's Lagoon, South Australia. (For date see p. 273.)
16	3/42	*	Located leaders of a spy ring acting for Japan (17, p. 34). (The incident in which Bony was captured on a boat by the Japanese, also referred to, is probably part of the same case.)
17	1945	1946	<i>The Devil's Steps</i> , Wideview Chalet, Manton, Mount Chalmers, Victoria. (For date, see p. 247.)
18	Begins 10/12/42	1945	<i>Death of a Swagman</i> , Merino, western New South Wales.
19	1946	*	Arrest of Edward Jenks for murdering a prostitute in Brisbane, Queensland; Jenks served 9 years before release in 1955 or 1956, so date of arrest is probably 1946 (31, p. 75).
20	Begins prob. 1/3/47	1948	<i>An Author Bites the Dust</i> , Yarrabo, R. Yarra Valley, near Melbourne, Victoria. (Day and month stated; year inferred.)
21	9/49-3/50	1958	<i>The Bachelors of Broken Hill</i> , western New South Wales. (For date, see p. 135 and elsewhere.)
22	*	1950	<i>The Widows of Broome</i> , north Western Australia.
23	*	1955	<i>Cake in the Hatbox [Sinister Stones]</i> , Agar's Lagoon, 240 miles south of Wyndham, Western Australia. (Follows Broome case; see p. 1.)
24	*	1952	<i>The Mountains Have a Secret</i> , Dunkeld, Grampian Hills, Victoria.

A PRELIMINARY CHRONOLOGY OF
THE DOCUMENTED CASES OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE
(continued)

Case No.	Date of Case (if established)	Publication Date of Book	Book Title or Case Details (alternative titles for books are given in brackets)
25	*	1952	<i>The New Shoe</i> [<i>The Clue of the New Shoe</i>], Split Point, between Anglesea and Lorne, Victoria.
26	*	1953	<i>Venom House</i> , near Edison, southernmost Queensland.
27	*	1953	<i>Murder Must Wait</i> , Mitford, on the R. Murray, New South Wales.
28	Began 11/7/?	1953	<i>Death of a Lake</i> , Porchester Station, Lake Otway, New South Wales. Year unstated.
29	*	*	Smuggling case in Adelaide, South Australia. Ref. in 27, p. 6.
30	*	1956	<i>The Battling Prophet</i> , Mount Marlo, near Cowdry, South Australia.
31	1956	1956	<i>Man of Two Tribes</i> , Nullarbor Plain, southeast Western Australia. (For date see p. 75.)
32	*	*	Investigated killing of an aboriginal stockman near Boulia, Queensland. Ref. in 30, p. 31.
33	Began 2/7/57	1957	<i>Bony Buys a Woman</i> [<i>The Bushman Who Came Back</i>], Mount Eden, Lake Eyre, South Australia.
34	*	1959	<i>Bony and the Black Virgin</i> , Mindee, River Darling, New South Wales.
35	Began July	1959	<i>Bony and the Mouse</i> [<i>Journey to the Hangman</i>], Daybreak, Bulow's Range, Western Australia. (Bony arrived April of the following year.)
36	*	1960	<i>Bony and the Kelly Gang</i> [<i>The Valley of Smugglers</i>], Cork Valley, Southern Mountains, New South Wales.
37	*	*	Case at Shark Bay, near Gladstone, West Australia. Ref. in 38, p. 29.
38	*	1961	<i>Bony and the White Savage</i> [<i>The White Savage</i>], Rhudders Inlet, near Cape Leeuwin, extreme southwest Western Australia.
39	Began 4/27/60	1962	<i>The Will of the Tribe</i> , Wolf Creek Meteor Crater, east Western Australia. (For date see pp. 13, 17.)
40	*	1963	<i>Madman's Bend</i> [<i>The Body at Madman's Bend</i>], White Bend, Darling River, New South Wales.
41	1963?	1966	<i>The Lake Frome Monster</i> , Lake Frome, South Australia.

UNDATED CASES:

42	?	*	Case finalized in a week. Ref. in 41, p. 38.
43	?	*	Case that took two years. Ref. in 41, p. 38.
44	Pre-1956	*	Arrest of Jim Ond for murdering a Swede near Milparinka, New South Wales. Ref. in 31, p. 104.
45	Pre-1956	*	Conviction of Frank Lord for murdering a prospector. Ref. in 30, p. 9.
46	Pre-1959	*	Search for a missing Austrian V.I.P. Ref. in 34, p. 214.

[Bony's arrest when a Constable of a European king for murdering a prostitute, recounted in 30, pp. 149-151, is excluded since it is certainly only a parable, for his earliest rank was as Detective-Sergeant; see 4, p. 73.]

CHECKLIST

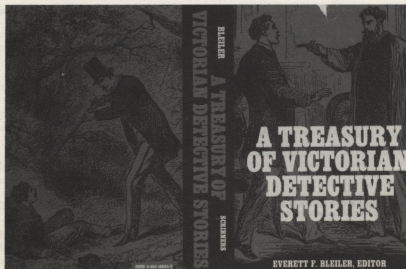
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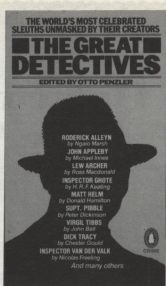


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Detective Story Aspects of the *Nouveau Roman*

By Erica M. Eisinger



One of the most pervasive and intriguing aspects of the French *nouveau roman* is the use of themes and techniques drawn from the detective story. The *nouveau roman* frequently derives not simply its content from detective fiction, the story of a crime and its investigation, but also its form, an esthetic of concealment. The police aspect of the *nouveau roman* has been noted by French critics, but the terms of this relationship have not been explored for an English-speaking public primarily concerned with the serious possibilities of detective fiction.¹ To speak generically of both the *nouveau roman* and the detective story naturally obscures some of the differences among individual writers, but serves to highlight the considerable similarities between these two literary phenomena. For what the *nouveau roman* shares with the detective novel is impressive: a common assumption that reality is mysterious, its significance hidden to the observer; and a common point of view: that of the investigator. In an "Age of Suspicion" it is not accidental that the novel should reflect a genre which generalizes suspicion:² the detective story.

Almost all the early novels of Alain Robbe-Grillet, Michel Butor, Claude Simon, Marguerite Duras, Claude Ollier, even Nathalie Sarraute, concern efforts to uncover the mysterious events surrounding a crime, often a murder. In the later works, crime disappears but mystery remains. Human exchange in these novels is invariably violent, fraught with murderous aspirations, but comes to no conclusion. It becomes increasingly difficult for the reader to determine what, if anything, has actually taken place. The gross event, the murder, gives way to a deeper, more pervasive investigation into the nature of reality and the possibilities of literature. The puzzle in the *nouveau roman* is the identity not so much of the criminal, but of the narrator. Who is telling the story? "Qui parle?," the anguished question at the end of Butor's *Degrés*, becomes the question to solve for the reader who must assume the rôle of detective when the novelist plays *mystificateur*.

Crime is incidental to many of the new novels because, as in a detective story, the murder is less important than its investigation. What creates a police-like atmosphere in the *nouveau roman* is the presence of mystery and the necessity of detection: events occur deprived of their significance. The detective responds to the intellectual challenge, the compulsion to know with certainty about the past. The problem is how to know—*comment savoir, comment savoir*, in the words that form the refrain of Simon's *La Route des Flandres*—and, also, how to tell. Since the telling of a story necessarily lags behind the happening, the actual occurrence of events, the storyteller is always in a position of inferiority vis-à-vis the material he wishes to relate, like the detective vis-à-vis the crime under investigation.

The alienation of the writer from the event is reflected in the *nouveau roman* by what Michael Butor calls the detective novel's two stories: the days of the drama and the days of the investigation, which become for the new novelist the story of what happened, and the story of how the narrator came to know what happened. The detective story does not tell a story, but indicates the ways in which the story could be told. Both the *nouveau roman* and the detective story are more concerned with reconstruction than construction. Art is seen literally as a re-presentation much in the way the detective re-presents the evidence in the final scene of a crime novel.

The detective enterprise gives to the *nouveau roman* its atmosphere of intense anxiety. The *nouveau roman* recounts the desperate struggle to know, to obtain and hold on to information in a fast-changing world where we are constantly besieged by an excess of data. In the detective story the rush to fit all the pieces of the puzzle together is literally a matter of life and death. "The detective story subscribes, in fact, to the Socratic daydream: 'Sin is ignorance,'" says W.H. Auden.³ The central characters of the *nouveau roman*—Wallis in *Les Gommès*, Jacques Revel in *L'Emploi du temps*, Anne Desbaresdes in *Moderato cantabile*, and others as well—are all engaged

in a heroic battle against ignorance, an attempt to salvage their lives by trying to understand them at last.

The *nouveau roman* proceeds on the detective story assumption that everyone is suspect. The attitude of the central character is constant vigilance; persistent, obsessive observation. He is a spy; he is a *voyeur*; he is a detective. He is a detective who fails to find a solution, however, just as his crime fails to materialize. Rather than progressing in a linear fashion, his puzzle expands geometrically in ever-widening circles of doubt. Like the amateur detective of *Portrait d'un inconnu* by Sarraute, the investigator-hero of the *nouveau roman* finds nothing, or practically nothing. As Sartre says, "He will give up his search after undergoing a metamorphosis: as though an Agatha Christie detective, on the point of exposing the culprit, turned suddenly into a criminal."⁴

The problem which is resolved in the detective story remains open in the *nouveau roman*. Suspense is permanent; there is an excess of mystery. The murder investigation is a wedge into the vaster mystery of reality. The initial doubt about time, place, identity expands to encompass and define man's existence in the world.

The *nouveau roman*, as well as the detective story, is a search for the meaning of events. It is a search which places individuals under suspicion; which proceeds by interrogation; which reverses chronology and renders space mysterious; where objects receive special attention as potential indicators of guilt; where language or dialogue is enigmatic on principle, seeking to conceal rather than reveal. The use of the detective story allows the *nouveau roman* to challenge the notion of significance as well as man's ability to detect that significance, if any. Rather than being a "parody" of the detective story, the *nouveau roman* is, more accurately, "le roman policier pris au sérieux."⁵

The *nouveau roman* developed negatively, as a novel of refusal, defined by what it rejected, rather than what it attempted. To many, the *nouveau roman* actually sought a violent end: the demise of the traditional novel and its established conventions, plot, and character. It is no accident, then, that critics were tempted to speak of the *nouveau roman* as an anti-novel, and to use a vocabulary that derives from the detective story before they actually perceived the full impact of detective story influence. Sartre defined the aim of the anti-novel as assassination. Roland Barthes suggests that Robbe-Grillet's purpose is to "assassinate the classical object." And another critic asks, "Are these novels innocent?"

The new novel's attack on traditional fiction is in fact closely related to the incorporation of detective story techniques. For the detective tale is a novel of elimination; not only because it concerns a murder, a death which provides a model for the death of the conventional "hero" of fiction, but also because elimination is the basis of both the detective's method (who solves the crime through the elimination of suspects), and the author's as well (who constructs his novel through the suppression or

elimination of essential information). A satisfying image for the new novel's negative impulse is found in the title and recurring obsession of Robbe-Grillet's first novel, *Les Gommes*. The *nouveau roman* seeks to erase or rub out all vestiges of the traditional novel, just as the criminal "rubs out" his victim.

The *nouveau roman* is skeptical about "plot" in the traditional novel, because plot implies causality, that is, one thing happens *because* of another. The detective story presents the consequence—the corpse on the library floor—and posits the cause as hidden. "Plot" retains its original meaning as "conspiracy."⁶ Although ingenious plots would seem to be the essence of the detective story, in actuality, plot is unimportant because it is always the same: the successful solution of a crime. The originality lies in the experimentation with a form which is fixed. Distinctive detective stories are virtuoso variations on an unvarying theme. The detective story is a genre which like the new novel treats questions of form very seriously.

The "story" or "plot" of the conventional novel becomes, instead, a search for a story: an investigation. In place of a forward-going story of a man making history, the *nouveau roman* adopts the backwards chronology of the detective story which presents history made. The active hero, creator of his destiny, is replaced by the passive observer of the *nouveau roman*, existing for others.

The story of the *roman nouveau* is thus a quest for knowledge about mysterious events in the past, like a detective story. Whether it be Moran searching for Molloy in *Beckett*; the narrator spying on the father-daughter couple in *Portrait d'un inconnu*; Wallas searching for Dupont in *Les Gommes*; Mathias of *Le Voyeur* for his lost hour; Jacques Revel for evidence of a crime in *L'Emploi du temps*; the husband in *La Jalousie* for evidence of an extramarital affair; Leon Delmont of *La Modification* for his authentic self; Anne Desbresses of *Moderato cantabile* for an understanding of a murder; the formula is the same: one individual seeks out the secret of another; a detective stalks a criminal (even though the criminal may be himself). The quest theme is no longer a pretext for a series of episodes; it is the essence of the novel itself.

Where the traditional novel depends on creating an illusion of reality, the *nouveau roman* on the contrary invites suspicion. It seeks not to prove its veracity, but to restore to fiction its true value as non-fact. Fiction is by definition that which is unverifiable. The *nouveau roman* no longer attempts to disguise its falseness, but affirms its fictitiousness as a point of privilege. It is the novel's special domain to explore that which cannot be proved. The detective story provides a model for the novel as a self-contained "case," what Butor calls "le domaine *phenomenologique*." It is a fiction *par excellence* where everyone lies, where several versions of truth compete, and where the author himself is deeply involved in the trickery, since he withholds the revelation of the criminal's guilt until the very end.

Beneath its surface intrigue, the detective story contains a particularly rich and sophisticated illustration of the nature of fiction. The narration of a mystery is never straightforward; the dilemma of the detective, who must hypothesize, imagine, and ultimately invent what he does not know, is analogous to the new novelist's focus on the storytelling process. The manifest content of the detective story, its themes of murder and amorality, are consequently less important for the *nouveau roman* than its method of presentation. Three techniques are of special relevance to the *nouveau roman*: *inversion*, the typical reverse chronology whereby the story follows the order of discovery rather than the order of events;⁷ *suppression*, whereby critical information, if not the entire story of the crime, is absent from the novel; and finally the substitution of *partial visions*, of particular witnesses' accounts, for the single, coherent overview provided in traditional novels by the omniscient narrator.⁸

What replaces plot and character development in the *nouveau roman* is the evidence: the phenomenological view of objects found in detective literature. The detective story is a story of things; in Robbe-Grillet's terms, objects are *there* before they are *something*. The real clash is not between the detective and the criminal, but between the mind and physical matter.⁹ Things in a detective story are scrutinized for their surface evidence; they are stripped of their interiority, their metaphorical correspondence with man, what Barthes has called "*le coeur romantique des choses*." The detective does not look at objects symbolically but literally. The detective story, like the *nouveau roman*, is "*chosiste*." The bit of string, the piece of cigarette paper and candy wrapper of *Le Voyeur* do not permit the same reconstruction as in a Sherlock Holmes tale, but we treat these objects as we treat evidence in a detective story.

More attention is paid to objects in detective novels than to character study, just as in the *nouveau roman* objective description of the physical world has replaced psychological speculation and analyses of the human heart. The classic detective is generally not a rounded character, but exists in terms of his function. He is presented through his actions and through the objects which surround him. The detective *is* his accompanying objects: Sherlock Holmes his meerschaum pipe and houndstooth cap, Maigret his pipe and beer.

The investigator-hero of the *nouveau roman* is plagued by the mystery of things, but the world proves unintelligible. He is deluged by a superabundance of clues, an alarming multiplicity of signs. Objects in the *nouveau roman* are hypersignificant; meaning is destroyed through an excess of meaning. As in a detective novel, the investigation turns up false clues, red herrings, signs which yield no significance. Objects fail to serve as evidence because the new novelists reject a metaphorical interpretation of reality in which the physical world is the sign of another, spiritual order.

Objects are clues to nothing beyond their mere

existence in a Robbe-Grillet novel. Far from being "there," in fact; objects are often missing. There is, for example, no eraser in the novel that bears that title. Like "the curious incident of the dog in the night-time" of Conan Doyle's tale, the new novelists call attention to the positive importance of negative phenomena. Perhaps the most significant absence of all in *Les Gommés* is that of the crime itself which does not occur until after the investigation. A search goes on for what cannot be found, as in Dashiell Hammett's *The Thin Man*. What creates the crime in the *nouveau roman* is the investigation.

As the direct physical evidence of crime evaporates, the focus of the *nouveau roman* turns to language itself, the only means of salvation, however inadequate. In the criminal labyrinth, language is Ariadne's thread. The model for confronting the enigma of the human condition is the police interrogation. The detective story supplies the accusatory voice of the *nouveau roman*, the God-like voice which points the finger and says "you." Butor has constructed the entire novel *La Modification* in the second-person plural, but other new novelists use this voice as well to name a character's guilt. The classic final scene of a detective story is traditionally narrated in the second person, Butor reminds us, the detective revealing to the criminal what the latter already knows. He is informing, not the criminal, but the others assembled for the final reconstruction, that he has penetrated, and now has control over, the mind of the culprit. This is language, not as communication, but as confrontation. The detective says "you" to declare his victory in a triumphant display of knowledge. This is the second murder of the detective story, Butor says, the destruction of the criminal by the detective. The detective's weapon is language; he kills by an explosion of truth. Writing is thus a powerful act to the New Novelist, the novel a devastating instrument of discovery.

The *nouveau roman* is often an ante-novel, that is, the novel which recounts the writing of a novel. The central characters are initially half-asleep, unconscious victims or accomplices of the criminal process, sluggish, laconic detectives, like Maigret, who are reluctant to investigate. The crime awakens them to the imperatives of detection and launches them on the path of discovery. Death is creative in the detective story; it engages the hero in a search which is the essence of the artistic enterprise. The detective story teaches that consciousness is survival. In many *nouveaux romans* characters initially read mysteries as "escape" literature, like Revel in *L'Emploi du temps*, much as the young son of the missing man in *The Thin Man* reads *Celebrated Criminal Cases of America*. Far from being mere diversions, these stories-within-the-story function as signposts, as warnings. The reader, just as the investigator, is cautioned in a detective tale to pay attention to everything. In the *nouveau roman* one is warned simultaneously not to interpret too narrowly, thereby reducing the novel to a single significance. Discussions of traditional fiction are often included in the

nouveau roman, like *La Jalousie*, as examples of false readings, mistaken attempts to impose a meaning where there is none. The use of the detective story in the *nouveau roman* often announces the failure of detective enterprises.

If the investigations in the *nouveau roman* are failures, it is not simply because we cannot know. The investigators of Butor and Duras do learn; they are modified by their inquiry. The inquiry fails because that is the only way in which the threads of the investigation, the research, can receive the primary focus. The *nouveau roman* gives us, not the detective story, whose end is to dissolve itself in its success,¹⁰ but the story of the detective, the detective story uncontaminated by success. A new novelist like Robbe-Grillet totally rejects any solution and refuses to conclude, because mystery is a permanent component of the human condition. Man seeks to understand, and reality eludes his grasp. "*L'homme regarde le monde, et le monde ne lui rend pas son regard.*"¹¹ The detective is disappointed in his search, as is the reader; both must fail in an attempt to impose significance where none exists. In a novel by Butor, however, there is a progression from ignorance to knowledge. If not a final solution, at least an awareness of the impossibility of knowing and of the heroism of the endeavor are achieved.

The New Novel uses the detective story to carry a message to the reader about the nature of reality and the nature of literature. The reader who plays detective in a novel like *Les Gommages* will be defeated in his attempt to assemble all the literary allusions, like clues in a detective story, into a single, coherent whole. In the end, the *nouveau roman* employs the detective plot as a massive false clue, to mislead the reader who treats plot as significant.

Yet the reader of the *nouveau roman* would do well to imitate the attitude of the detective story reader. He should pay close attention to details, remembering that in the *nouveau roman*, like the detective story, nothing is gratuitous; secrets are harbored in the most trivial of objects. If the totality resists significance, the particular is packed with meaning. The New Novelists subscribe to the "fair play" doctrine of detective fiction; the puzzles of Robbe-Grillet, Butor, and others can be deciphered on the evidence even if the solution is deliberately disappointing or ambiguous.¹²

The inclusion of detective story techniques in such New Novels as *Portrait d'un inconnu*, *Les Gommages*, *Le Voyeur*, *L'Emploie du temps*, *Moderato cantabile*, *Le Vent*, and others, serves to place the enigma at the center of human experience. The *nouveau roman* suggests that the detective stance is the only means of survival in a world which constantly eludes our grasp. The need for investigation is total. Murder is only a form, perhaps the most perfect one, of the wider obscurity. If murder becomes realistic, or worse, rationally explained, rooted, say, in a real political terror as in a thriller, then the terrorism of life is no longer implicated. The murder in a

detective story is always gratuitous, shocking, out of place, by definition not immediately understandable.

The human situation in the *nouveau roman* is a state of search, for the meaning of events must end in failure in order that the need for investigation remain permanent. Human interaction in the *nouveau roman* is a confrontation between detective and criminal, between watcher and watched. The force of the *nouveau roman* is to see that the situation which occurs temporarily in the detective story is, in fact, fundamental, eternal, and unexplainable. The *nouveau roman* supplies no reason for the detective story tension which prevails. Like the objects of which Robbe-Grillet speaks, that anxiety is simply *there*. The *nouveau roman* declares that the detective story experience is not the extraordinary, but the basic condition of man. Reality is a mystery story; the New Novel reflects that mystery.

Notes

1. Studies in English of the police aspect of individual New Novelists include Thomas D. O'Donnell, "Michel Butor's *Passing Time* and the Detective Hero," *The Mystery and Detection Annual* (Beverly Hills, California: Donald Adams, 1973), 211-20; and Erica M. Eisinger, "Crime and Detection in the Novels of Marguerite Duras," *Contemporary Literature* 15, 4 (Autumn 1974), 503-20.
2. Ludovic Janvier, *Une Parole exigeante* (Paris: Minuit, 1964), p. 47.
3. "The Guilty Vicarage," *Harper's* (May 1948), p. 412.
4. Jean-Paul Sartre, "The Anti-Novel of Nathalie Sarraute," *Yale French Studies* XVI (Winter 1955-56), trans. Beth Brombert, p. 40.
5. Ludovic Janvier, *Une Parole exigeante*, p. 49. On the self-conscious parody of detective fiction, see Hanna Charney, "Pourquoi le Nouveau Roman Policier?" *The French Review* XLVI, 1 (October 1972), pp. 22-23.
6. John Sturrock, *The French New Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 18.
7. This distinction is noted by Roger Callois, *Puissance du roman* (Buenos Aires: Editions du Trident, 1945), pp. 56-57.
8. See Tzvetan Todorov, "Topologie du roman policier," *Poétique de la prose* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), pp. 58-59.
9. On objects in detective fiction, see Jacques Barzun, "Detection and the Literary Art," *The Mystery Writer's Art*, Francis M. Nevins, Jr., ed. (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970), p. 250.
10. Jean Pouillon, "Les Regles du Je," *Les Temps modernes* 134 (avril 1957), p. 1593.
11. Allain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Gallimard, Collection Idées, 1963), p. 65.
12. John Sturrock notes that the New Novelists are not deliberate *mystificateurs* unlike the Surrealists "whose puzzles are clearly insoluble." *The French New Novel*, p. 35.



SERIES SYNOPSIS

Robert J. Randisi

Mongo the Magnificent by George C. Chesbro

Mongo the Magnificent, whose real name is Robert Frederickson, was once one of the dwarfs people see in the circus. He was a headline performer for eight years while he studied for his degree in criminology. Once he got his degree he became Dr. Frederickson and began teaching criminology at the university. He also got a private investigator's license and began to take side jobs as a private eye.

Mongo first appeared in the October 1971 issue of *Mike Shayne's Mystery Magazine* in a story called "The Drop." James Barret hires Mongo to go to Italy to find his brother, Tommy. Tommy is a drug addict who has taken to trafficking drugs back and forth over the Italian border to support his habit. James Barret wants Mongo to find him and inform him that Interpol is onto him and will arrest him the next time he crosses the border. He soon finds out that Tommy Barret does not have a brother. Then Mongo is framed on a drug charge and arrested for the murder of Tommy Barret, who died of an overdose of heroin. Mongo finds out from his brother, Garth, who is a lieutenant with the New York City Police Department, that Tommy Barret is the son of Garth's partner, Jimmy Barret, who was not the man who hired Mongo. That was Vincent Pernod, a drug dealer who used Mongo to find Tommy and killed him to get revenge on Garth's partner and framed Mongo to get back at Garth, both of whom have spent eighteen months trying to build a case against Pernod. Now it's up to Mongo to clear himself and nail Pernod.

Mongo's second appearance was "High Wire" in the March 1972 issue of *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*. Mongo is asked by an old friend from his days at the Statter Brothers' Circus, Bruno Jessum, to speak to his wife and persuade her that she's making a mistake by playing around with a new aerialist, Count Anagori. Mongo agrees to help Bruno as a friend, not as a private detective. Mongo returns to the circus world where he was a headliner but an unhappy man. Memories that he would rather leave behind are brought back. He arrives at Madison Square Garden to talk to Bethel Jessum, but arrives too late. Bethel and Bruno are dead in what looks like a murder/suicide by Bruno. Mongo's brother Garth arrives to investigate and Mongo informs him that he doesn't buy the suicide story. Mongo must convince Garth that there is much more to the incident than meets the eye, and he believes that Count Anagori is very much a part of it.

"Rage," the third Mongo story, appeared in *AHMM* February 1973. Mongo is visited by his brother Garth—who is a very normal six feet two—who hands him

his gun and tells him to put it in a drawer. When Mongo attempts to find out what is bothering his brother, Garth, in a fit of rage, almost kills Mongo who, despite a second-degree black belt in karate, is unable to handle his much larger brother. Garth brings himself to his senses before the damage can be done. Garth explains that it had happened three or four times before and he can't explain it. Mongo tries to find out what the problem is, and before it's all over is put through some mental torture of his own.

The fourth Mongo story is "Dark Hole on a Silent Planet" in the November 1973 issue of *AHMM*. The university president hires Mongo to investigate one of his colleagues, Dr. Vincent Smathers. Dr. Smathers has been receiving a \$100,000 yearly endowment and the president, Dr. Peter Barnum, would like to know where the money is going. Then there is the curious fact that Dr. Smathers has brought in two Chinese to act as his assistants and another member of the university staff, who was a POW in Korea, swears that he has seen one of them before. He believes that Dr. Chiang Kee was an enemy interrogator in charge of brainwashing. Finally, the body of a Bowery bum turns up on campus. Mongo agrees to investigate and in the course of his investigation he once again, as in "Rage," is put through a kind of psychological torture.

Mongo Number Five is "Country for Sale" in the June 1973 issue of *MSMM*. Mongo is called to the little country of San Marino to find Phil Statter, of the Statter Brothers' Circus, who has disappeared. He is telephoned by Roscoe Blanchard, who is cut off before he can finish explaining things to Mongo. When Mongo arrives in San Marino he finds that Statter is still missing, Roscoe is dead, and a knife-thrower named Jandor is accused. Mongo soon finds that the Mafia is involved, having taken over the tiny country in order to use it as a sort of underground railway to get exiled hoods out of Europe and turn San Marino into a sanctuary for international criminals.

"The Healer," in *AHMM*, August 1974, involves Mongo with the psychic world. One of Mr. Chesbro's hobbies is the study of the occult, which he uses in two more Mongo stories and in one of the Mongo novels. A state senator hires Mongo to prove that psychic healer Esteban Morales did not kill physician Robert Edmonston, as he is accused.

Once again the occult comes into play in "Falling Star" (*AHMM*, November 1974). Sandor Perth hires Mongo to save rock star Harley Davidson from the clutches of an astrologer called Bornn. He enlists the aid of friend and colleague

Uranus Jones, who he always thought was just an astronomer but now finds out is a psychic and possibly a materializer, which is a person who can make an object appear in another person's hand by an act of will. She warns Mongo about Bornn, telling him that Bornn is evil and dangerous and is rumored to be part of a witch's coven. When Harley turns up dead, found with a Book of Shadows—a witch's diary—in his possession, Mongo starts after Bornn. Interesting facts about witchcraft are brought to light here and, in a socko ending, Mongo discovers that Uranus is much more involved with witchcraft than he had thought, so much so that she takes on a coven of witches in his defense, using her own powers to do it.

"Book of Shadows" (*MSMM*, June 1975) is the best story of the series. Billed as one of Mike Shayne's series of "Difference" stories, Chesbro again combines the world of the private eye with the world of the occult, and very, very effectively. A small friend of Mongo's from down the hall, a little girl named Kathy Marsten, is stricken ill and lies dying in the hospital. The doctors can offer no explanation for her condition. Once again Uranus Jones assists Mongo in his excursion into the world of the occult. Mongo is forced to take on the demon Baliei to save the girl's life and the finish is an engrossing rite of exorcism.

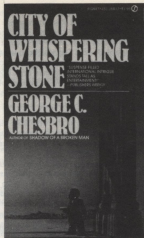
Last of the Mongo novelettes is "Tiger in the Snow" (*MSMM*, March 1976), in which Mongo goes tiger hunting for an old friend—Sam the tiger from Statter Brothers' Circus. Phil Statter asks Mongo's help in getting Sam back before he kills someone. "Tiger" is an interesting change of pace after the previous three stories.

Mongo's next appearance is in *George Chesbro's* first novel, *Shadow of a Broken Man* (Simon & Schuster, 252 pp., \$7.95), published in 1977 and for some strange reason not nominated for an Edgar. He is hired by Mike Foster to search for his wife's ex-husband, an architect named Rafferty, who is supposed to be dead, the victim of a bizarre accident when he fell into an open smelting furnace in a metallurgical laboratory. Foster's wife has seen a picture of a new building and is convinced that it was designed by Rafferty. Soon Mongo is involved in a race to locate Victory Rafferty who, he discovers, is not a normal man but is the possessor of certain psychic abilities. Rafferty is also being sought by the government in the person of Lippit, the victim of a strange Communist torture who wears an overcoat in the summer to combat a chill he can never rid himself of. This book has been called a thriller, but it's a private-eye novel mixed with psychic phenomena and ESP, and it's an auspicious debut.

City of Whispering Stone (Simon &

Schuster, 236 pp., 1978, \$8.95) is the second Mongo Frederickson novel. Mongo is hired by Phil Statter to find Khordad, an Iranian strongman who has disappeared. He is soon involved in international politics and at odds with SAVAK, the secret police of the Shah of Iran. Political novels are not my bag—I like my private-eye novels pure—but this is well-written and moves quickly, although I enjoyed the first novel much more. I only hope that Chesbro's third novel about Mongo will not be long in coming.

I said I like my private-eye fiction pure, but nonetheless I thoroughly enjoyed "The Healer," "Falling Star," and "Book of Shadows" which, along with *Shadow of a Broken Man*, combine the P.I. form with the occult. I'd like to see the third Mongo novel utilize Uranus Jones, a fabulous character too good not to be used in a novel. I much prefer the world of the occult to the world of international politics.



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TAD at the MOVIES

By Thomas Godfrey

Last Embrace is the latest of a series of suspense pictures being sold to the public as "In the Hitchcock Tradition." It isn't, of course, though it does demonstrate a familiarity with that director's work.

It is obvious that we have now entered the "Post-Hitchcockian" era in film entertainment. Wagner's disciples, Bruckner, Mahler, and Richard Strauss, were musicaly active before the master's death. Hitchcock's are not disposed to sitting around either.

In 1962 the French critic turned director, Francois Truffaut, began recording a series of conversations with the Anglo-American director that explored every facet of his art on a picture-by-picture basis. The book that emerged from this project, *Hitchcock* (1966) has become a classic of cinema literature. Anyone who loves movies, and suspense movies in particular, should read it.

Soon afterwards Truffaut also made a film, *The Bride Wore Black*, after a story by Cornell Woolrich. Reflections of the director's study of Hitchcock were everywhere in it, but it was not a success. Whatever his intentions, Truffaut, so insightful in the interviews, did not translate a sense of Hitchcockian suspense to the screen. There was a basic clash of styles, French cognac mixed with English

ale. At any rate, the experiment was not repeated and Truffaut moved back to more familiar terrain.

But there would be others. Before, films from other sources demonstrated a passing familiarity with Hitchcock at best. Only in *Diabolique* (1955) did one sense that his influence was undeniably present. Even the remake of *The 39 Steps* (1955) offered the curiosity of Hitchcock without Hitchcock. In spite of previous interest (mostly by the French), it was Truffaut's work that focused attention on Hitchcock's work at a primary level.

As movies like *Night Watch* and *Sisters* came and went, Hitchcock's reputation grew stronger. His preeminence in the suspense field was unchallenged. Increasingly exhaustive studies by Wood (1969), Dargatzis (1974), and Spoto (1977) followed. A new generation was discovering Hitchcock with a passion. Devotion became obsession. Admiration turned to slavish imitation.

Certainly no director, not even D.W. Griffith, has been analyzed and praised, dissected and lionized as has Alfred Hitchcock. His appearances as a television personality no doubt catalyzed this. But it is safe to say his reputation would have emerged without them.

Even the fact that he had been working

somewhat below form for a decade failed to tarnish the legend. Admirers quickly point out his problems were not his own. They argue he had not enjoyed the stellar casts that were integral to his success in the past.

And, basically, they are right. *Frenzy* (1972), in many ways a good film, suffered grievously from the non-presence of actor Jon Finch in the central role. And there was no Grace Kelly or Eva Marie Saint around as compensation.

But worse, to my mind, was the "Universalization" of production values in his films at that studio. Anonymous sets, unconvincing rear projections, bland musical scores—all contributed to the re-fab, assembly-line look of the finished production. Rock bottom came in 1969 with *Topaz*, a conspiracy of all these ills that looks for all the world like it was made for TV.

His recent return to form in *Family Plot* (1976) was an effort that stands comparison with *The Trouble with Harry* as his two completely satisfying, if modestly scaled, black comedies.

He got memorable performances from that cast, particularly Bruce Dern in a seedier version of the James Stewart part. The script was good. The touch was there. Somehow it all came together—the Cary

Grant-Ingrid Bergman glamor fantasy of the past and the Lowered-Expectation realities of the present. It will be interesting to see if this synthesis carries over to the picture now in production.

Whatever the outcome, regard to recent problems, Hitchcock's niche in the pantheon of great film makers is guaranteed. He is still the director most recognized by the public. A Hitchcock festival is box-office insurance for revival houses.

Every Hitchcock fan seems to have a favorite moment—the shower scene in *Psycho*, the cymbal crash in *The Man Who Knew Too Much* . . . The list goes on, and so do the fans, given the opportunity.

Film makers are apparently no exception. *Foul Play*, last year's Hitchcock offering, was little more than a string of half-baked reminders of these great moments of the past. Mel Brooks' *High Anxiety* was a similar concoction.

And so, unfortunately, is *Last Embrace*. Buried beneath the piles of ersatz-Hitchcock are vestiges of a movie-that-might-have-been: A group of men are being systematically eliminated; each death is announced with a warning in ancient Hebrew; Roy Scheider, just recovering from a nervous breakdown, returns to his New York apartment and finds himself targeted as the next victim; he also finds his apartment sublet to an attractive graduate student (Janet Margolin); a connection is found between the murdered men and a Jewish immigrant ghetto two generations in the past.

Sound interesting?

It might have been, but then the Hitchcock fans get into the act and motivation and intelligence go right out the window.

Now, the movie opens with a long scene in which government agent Scheider's wife is shot in a gun battle somewhere in Latin America. It has really nothing to do with the central plot, but director Jonathan Demme has Scheider recount the whole thing in detail later in the picture. Why? My guess is he saw elements of *Spellbound* in it.

Later Scheider finds himself in an empty quadrangle at Princeton where he hears noises in one of the towers and goes charging up the stairs like a participant in the original Bastille Day celebrations to engage in a confusing scene with an incidental character that suggests they both forgot their blocking. Why? Presumably someone involved in the picture also saw *Vertigo* and liked it.

But wait, there is more.

Like that scene at the cemetery that looks like it was improvised during a lunch break. (Perhaps somebody had just seen a similar scene in *Family Plot*.)

And Christopher Walken, last year's Oscar winner for supporting actor, as Scheider's government contact who decides to have him rubbed out because the Psych cure did not take. It's a variation on the Louis Calhern role in *Notorious*. And, as written here, a humiliating role for an actor. In Walken's hands it becomes absolutely unforgivable. I was embarrassed for him. He is lucky Academy Awards cannot be recalled.

Characters, events, scenes just "happen" in a haphazard, barococco fashion. The murderer jumps from Princeton to Niagara Falls to New York City faster than Superman. Scheider, at one point, hops in his car and drags someone over 500 miles just to make an accusation against the right setting. Rhythm and timing don't exist. The whole thing looks like it has been edited by a food processor.

Finally it ends with a *North by Northwest-Saboteur* dangling scene over Niagara Falls. Potentially, a terrific climax, but Demme's handling of it only made me wish it was Hitchcock behind the camera.

Scheider, to his credit, tries hard, but he does not come off as a leading actor. At least, not against material like this. He plays too many scenes numb, as though he thought he had just been insulted but wasn't sure. Janet Margolin has a few moments, but she too finally succumbs to the anesthetic effects of the production. Only Sam Levene registers in a small role

that seems to have been written with Zero Mostel in mind.

It would be charitable to end the review here if this were Demme's first film. But a check of his credits shows at least two other features that could qualify him for the Public Enemies List alone. Maybe the producers got in his way, but his work here suggests talents better suited to a shorter format—like dog food commercials.

Perhaps I am not incriminating the writers enough, but all during the picture, I kept imagining a writer on the fringes of the set during shooting, who was frothing at the mouth, screaming "My script. What are you doing to my script?" If truth-in-packaging laws applied to movies, my guess is this one should have been called *Last Rewrite*.

The post-Hitchcockian film makers seem to be floundering around no further from *Midnight Lace* and *Moment to Moment* than they were ten years ago.

All the skilled analyses of Hitchcock's art seem to have gone over the heads of the emerging group of directors.

What will 1980 bring? The prospects are grim.

But maybe, just maybe, someone will finally wake up to the realization that it was not the great scenes that made Hitchcock a master, but his organic, ruthlessly disciplined approach to material. Yes, he gave us those moments, those little "gems," but he also provided a strong, substantial setting for them as well.

It is time for this generation of admiring film makers to integrate the lessons learned from Hitchcock (and others) into their own individual approaches. If we are to have suspense classics to stand with *Rebecca* and *Strangers on a Train*, it will be from film makers who are accomplished and rigorous in their own art as Hitchcock has been in his.

Pictures like *Last Embrace* will never do. Courtiers do not become kings. Imitators do not become masters.

THE PAPERBACK REVOLUTION

SIMON BRETT

Aging, hard-drinking, wenching, and far-from-successful actor Charles Paris is giving a one-man show, dedicated to the poetry of Thomas Hood, on the fringes of the Edinburgh Festival. Unfortunately, Death, the master dramatist, attends a rehearsal and dire consequences ensue in *So Much Blood* (1976) (Berkley).

MICHAEL COLLINS

An attractive brunette hires tough private eye Dan Fortune to identify a beautiful blonde in a snapshot, and procure additional photographs of her gentleman friends. This simple problem escalates to a bloody nightmare of financial machinations, multiple murder, and corruption

By Charles Shibuk

on many levels in *The Silent Scream* (1973) (Playboy Press). This hard-boiled novel is fast-paced, vigorous, and complexly plotted.

EDMUND CRISPIN

This author's untimely death is most regrettable, but we are indebted to him for the rich legacy of *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1977) (Avon). This novel is unsatisfying as an example of the formal detective problem, but, rest assured, it has many splendid qualities to recommend it, and is probably one of the funniest and most eccentric crime novels of all time.

AMANDA CROSS

Take Professor Kate Fansler, who teaches English at a prestigious college in New York City. Add an unexpected and possibly suspicious death. Embellish with the poetry of W.H. Auden, and a dash of sophistication and wit. Flavor with a large sprinkling of Hamillian readability. The result is *Poetic Justice* (1970) (Avon).

DICK FRANCIS

Risk (1977) (Pocket Books) starts when accountant and amateur sleuth-chase rider Roland Brittain wins an important race, but loses his freedom to a group of almost civilized kidnapers. The involving narrative continues with all the

usual Francis merit and readability to an unexpected but logical ending.

This author's excellent second novel, *Nerve* (1964), has recently been reissued by the same publisher.

TONY HILLERMAN

Reporter John Cotton, investigating what could be the political story of a lifetime in his state, stumbles across explosive evidence in the notebook of his recently murdered best friend. Cotton then automatically becomes a prime candidate to make headlines—in the obituary column—in *The Fly on the Wall* (1971) (Avon).

MICHAEL Z. LEWIN

Indianapolis detective Albert Samson is hired to look into a case wherein his client, a Vietnam veteran with a history of mental instability, appears to be guilty of murder in no uncertain terms. *The Way*

We Die Now (1973) (Berkley) is only a fair example of Lewin's skill in writing the first person private eye novel, but his ability seems superior to that of most of his competitors.

GWEN ROBYNS

The Mystery of Agatha Christie (1978) (Penguin) is an engaging addition to the burgeoning literature surrounding one of the best-loved masters of the storytelling art. The biographic details are familiar, and the famous disappearance is treated in full. The last few chapters contain many interesting and unfamiliar anecdotes that are worth the price of admission.

PHOEBE ATWOOD TAYLOR

The enjoyable adventures of Leonidas Withersall, headmaster of a fashionable boys' academy, covert writer of thrillers, and dead ringer for William Shakespeare,

were originally published under the pseudonym "Alice Tilton." Outrageously farcical, they moved with the speed of great lightning. The splendid *The Cut Direct* (1938) is the first in a series of revivals from Foul Play Press, which also now offers the less interesting investigations of Cape Cod's first citizen, Asey Mayo, in *Figure Away* and *Octagon House*, which both date from 1937.

JOHN WAINWRIGHT

The Hard Hit (1974) (Berkley) is the first person story, narrated mainly in the present tense, of a top professional hit man assigned to eliminate his former mentor, an unusual tale, not wholly successful, but interesting enough, and one that contains more philosophical thought than violence.

CURRENT REVIEWS

Secret Agent X-9 by Alex Raymond and Dashiell Hammett. Nostalgia Press, 1976 (1977). \$8.95.

Miss Fury by Tarpe Mills. Archival Press, 1979. \$3.95.

It has been said there are no definitive works, only classic ones. There are also legendary ones. The newspaper comic strip of *X-9* is certainly among the classic and legendary works of the genre. Designed by King Features Syndicate to compete with *Dick Tracy*, *Dan Dunn*, *Red Barry*, and *Radio Patrol*, *X-9* was the visual counterpart of the pulp tradition of detective fiction when it began in January 1934.

Most histories of the newspaper comic strip have been somewhat vague about the number of years that Dashiell Hammett's scripts were matched to Alex Raymond's art. Even a pioneering work like Nolan's *Dashiell Hammett: A Casebook* was unable to penetrate the fog. Coulton Waugh's book, *The Comics* (1947), barely mentions the early strip, concentrating more on Mel Graff's continuation, Martin Sheridan's *Comics and Their Creators* (1944) doesn't mention Hammett at all, only that Raymond won the right to draw the strip, relinquishing it "several months" after he began drawing *Flash Gordon*.

Stephen Becker (*Comic Art in America, 1939*) merely says that the continuity had originally been by "mystery writer Dashiell Hammett, but by the time [Mel] Graff took over [in 1939] Hammett had bowed out." Ron Goulart, who did a lot of original research for *The Adventurous Decade: Comic Strips in the Thirties* (1975), finally pins it down. The strip began in January 1934, but Hammett left it the next year, fired when he got too far behind schedule. Apparently, Raymond did the writing for a time, then Leslie Charteris took over. Raymond was replaced by Charles Flanders by November

of 1935. Keeping track of all of this is a bit like watching a revolving door.

For years the only sources for reprints of the Hammett/Raymond strip were a set of David McKay comic books and a pirated Canadian edition of the first 94 strips. The volume issued by Nostalgia Press in 1977, but copyrighted in 1976, is the first complete collection of *Secret Agent X-9* as produced by the justly famous duo, January 1934 through September 21, 1935. (For some reason it has gone unnoticed in the pages of this publication since Nolan recorded it as "forthcoming in TAD 9:4, p. 295.) There are five stories, the longest being the introductory one with the mysterious *X-9*, who takes the name "Dexter" for clarity's sake, hired by wealthy Tarleton Powers who fears death from a gang led by a man called "The Top." (The other stories are: "Mystery of the Silent Guns," "The Martyr Case," "The Iron Claw Gang," and "The Egyptian Jewel Case.")

It is folly to attempt to explain a legend. There is action, mystery, crackling dialogue, excellent art, with the story sometimes best told where not a word is needed. *X-9* is also old-fashioned 1930's melodrama at its best.

A brief introduction by Bill Blackbeard, some samples of the detective strip competition in 1934, and a newspaper clipping on Hammett as a Pinkerton agent used to advertise the strip preface this collection.

Miss Fury began April 6, 1941, the first adventure strip created, written, and drawn by a woman about a woman. Unlike *X-9*, it is discussed in only two of the histories mentioned above, Waugh and Goulart. Originally known as *Black Fury*, the strip was distributed by the Bell Syndicate for over 10 years.

If *X-9* was a visual pulp, *Fury* was the comic book tradition transferred to the

continuity of the Sunday newspaper. Socialist Marla Drake puts on a black leopardskin to fight crime, but with a similarity to other costumed crime fighters is barely coincidental. *Black Fury* appears to be pursued by both sides of the law as well as an avid following of newspaper readers. *Fury* is no ordinary superwoman, and the story-line is too complex to be described with simple statements. For anyone who enjoys 1940's espionage, delightfully villainous like Baroness Erica Von Kamp and Bruno Beitz, as well as gutsy, hard-boiled women, this is the place to begin.

There has been some editing of the strip in this collection. There is no indication of the divisions between individual Sunday pages as there is in the *X-9* book, where three complete dailies appear on each page. The panels in *Miss Fury* have been rearranged, six to a page, to form a continuous narrative. A comparison of the sequence on pages 26-27 with the Sunday page of June 22, 1941, reproduced on page 181 of Goulart, also indicates that five panels have been dropped from the fight on the terrace between Marla Drake and the Baroness. While this removes some of the violence, it also makes it impossible to comment on the similarity to a page from *Spicy Detective*. The Baroness appears to be clad only in a robe and slippers, while Marla is wearing a slip and high heels.

If there is one objection to this collection of *Miss Fury*, it is that it ends in the middle of a story, with someone about to plunge a knife into our heroine. A second collection is hereby demanded!

There's an enthusiasm about the strip as well as a good deal of humor as villainous intentions are thwarted by luck and pluck. The introduction by Tom Fagan reflects some of this as he vividly puts the strip in historical perspective and

does much to interpret its contemporary appeal. So enthusiastic does he become that he gets ahead of the story to mention Bruno's loss of an arm, an incident reserved for a later collection.

Mis Fury may not be for every taste, but for those willing to include the crime comic strip within the genre, it doesn't deserve to be forgotten. It's as much a classic in its own way as is *Secret Agent X-9*.

—J. Randolph Cox

Filmi, Filmi, Inspector Ghote by H.R.F. Keating. Doubleday, Crime Club. \$5.95

This most recent entry in the Inspector Ghote series finds the intrepid Bombay investigator thrust into a murder on the set of an Indian movie studio. As usual, Keating has arranged for an assortment of irritating eccentrics and frequent harassment to slow his hero's progress toward solution.

Ganesh Ghote (pronounced Go-tay) is a worthy successor to the great creators of mystery fiction's golden age. Like Sherlock Holmes, Charlie Chan, and Miss Marple, he remains in the reader's mind after he has closed the book, a claim that can be made in behalf of very few series characters appearing today. Yet he is not all fantasy and creation; Keating carefully keeps him human enough for the reader to identify with the character during the story. Perhaps the closest analogue is TV's Colombo, although Ghote is a unique creation.

The problem with *Filmi, Filmi*, as well as with a few of the other books in the series, is that Keating never seems to get the plot out of first gear. It all proceeds at a jog-trot, with the reader enjoying the scenery but never feeling imperiled or urged to move on. This one in particular moves from one long but amusing episode to another without much inner tension.

Perhaps the author feels this is more in keeping with the nature of his central character and the culture. At any rate, it is an important series and one worth the investigation of any reader who loves mysteries.

—Thomas F. Godfrey

The Spider Orchid by Celia Fremelin. Doubleday, Crime Club. \$7.95

If your tastes in suspense fiction run to contemporary English settings peopled by Dereks and Amelias and Adrians who keep saying to one another "Now look here . . . I say—you can't . . . I mean," then *The Spider Orchid* may be for you. Personally, I thought this sort of thing went out with whalebone corsets. If it didn't it should have.

—Thomas F. Godfrey

Cast for Death by Margaret York. Walker. \$6.95

The murder of a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company forms the framework of this readable offering by one of the successors to the late Agatha Christie. York's detective, Oxford don Patrick Grant, is more convincingly contemporary than any of Christie's creations, and her

handling of intimate settings and the English countryside is worthy of The Mistress. However, given the possibilities of Shakespeare and the theater, the plot is disappointingly ordinary. Marvin Kaye's *Bullets for Macbeth* (Saturday Review, Dutton, 1976) does better with similar material.

Thomas F. Godfrey

The Poisoned Chocolates Case by Anthony Berkeley. The Mystery Library/Publisher's Inc., 1979. 303 pp. \$7.95

Anthony Berkeley Cox, who wrote as A.B. Cox, Anthony Berkeley, and Francis Iles, is one of the half-dozen greatest mystery writers of all time. I offer *Before the Fact* (currently reprinted by Gregg Press) and *Trial and Error*—among others—if any evidence is needed to prove my assertion.

The Poisoned Chocolates Case (1929) is a satiric view of an organization somewhat similar to London's famed Detection Club, and its device of six serial solutions to the problem of who killed Mrs. Joan Bendix is clever if not brilliant. It's one of Cox's best known novels and has much to recommend it, but I don't think it can aspire to the towering majesty of the above-named efforts.

On the other hand, this novel's progenitor, "The Avenging Chance," included in this volume, is surely one of the ten greatest detective short stories of all time. Barzun & Taylor consider it to be Berkeley's masterpiece, and claim that its elaboration into a novel causes the original plot to lose much of its force.

James Sandoe's brief three-page introduction gives us some essential facts, but is disappointing—especially when one considers the merit of most of the previous introductions in this series.

The section of appendices introduces a recently written seventh solution to *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* by Christianna Brand. I hope it is a warmup exercise for a forthcoming diabolically ingenious detective novel of her own.

A biographical sketch of Berkeley's chief sleuth Roger Sheringham, excerpted from his novel *Dead Mrs. Stratton*, is followed by "The Detection Club Oath" from Haycraft's *The Art of the Mystery Story*.

Mary Smith contributes a new essay, "Notes on the Parallel Poisonings," that explicates various true crime cases cited in the novel.

"A Tribute to Cox" is reprinted from John Dickson Carr's "Jury Box" column in the July 1972 issue of *EQMM*—a heartfelt and well-deserved tribute from one master to another.

A checklist with interesting and often incisive comments by Sandoe concludes this volume, but there are a few problems here. Omission of the names of the British and American publishers of Cox's first two crime novels seems inexplicable at this late date. Also among the missing are the 1926 fantasy novel *The Professor on Paws*, the takedown on Lord Peter Wimsey in *Ask a Policeman* (1933), and the novelette "The Publicity Heroine" contained in *Missing from Their Homes*.

Much more serious is Sandoe's assignment of 1928 to "The Avenging Chance,"

which first saw hardcover publication in the anonymously edited *The Best Detective Stories of the Year*. The year in question was 1929, and is mentioned in the American edition of this anthology. The English publication by Faber and Faber would appear to be in 1930—and not 1929, as Mr. Sandoe claims. Furthermore, an earlier reprint of this story in the April, 1959, issue of *EQMM* indicates 1929 as the copyright date.

—Charles Shibus

Act of Providence by Joseph Payne Brennan and Donald M. Grant. Illus. by Robert Arrington. Donald M. Grant. 122 pp. Trade edition \$10.00; limited edition \$20.00

When one sits down with a new Lucius Leffing detective story the problem for the reader is whether an individual episode will offer a straight case of crime and detection, with Leffing in the mold of the Holmesian eccentric, or a psychic adventure, with Leffing fighting supernatural forces in the manner of a John Silence. Often the supernatural cases of Lucius Leffing have been more memorable than those of more ordinary criminal activity. However, there is no reason why a private detective cannot also be a psychic detective, though it is more usual for a ghost fighter to specialize in cases dealing only with the supernatural, like Silence, Curtnack, Jules de Grandin and Miles Pennoyer.

Act of Providence is purely supernatural and will please the followers of the neo-Victorian sleuth who prefer occult encounters and fantastic adventure. In this novel Brennan and Donald Grant (an actual well-known publisher of fantasy) memorialize the First World Fantasy Convention held in Providence in 1975, and much is made of the fact that the horror writer H.P. Lovecraft once lived in that city. Brennan attends the convention with his friend Leffing, the detective using an anonymous name to keep from attracting attention. Real writers of fantasy and supernatural horror who also attend are Robert Bloch, Frank Belknap Long, Manly Wade Wellman, Fritz Leiber, and L. Sprague de Camp, and the reader may be reminded of the gathering of science fiction writers in Anthony Boucher's *Rocket to the Morgue* (1942). The brief elements of crime concern the theft of a manuscript and a kidnaping. Leffing is asked to investigate, and his detectival activities soon lead him to the Shunned House (recognizable if one has read Lovecraft), where he enters an underground world, discovers altars with strange glyphs, a lost degenerate race, and a slithering monster which is destroyed. These are the familiar elements of the fiction of H.P. Lovecraft.

For TAD readers, however, the most useful part of the book is a short introduction by Joseph Payne Brennan in which he comments on the printed appearances of Leffing in magazines. All the Leffing stories, according to their creator, have been collected in *The Casebook of Lucius Leffing* (1973) and *The Chronicles of Lucius Leffing* (1977). The majority of the stories appeared first in *Alfred Hitch-*

cock's *Mystery Magazine* or *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*. Brennan gives a bibliography, pages 11-14, of the original publication of these stories and indicates in which collections they later appeared. This is a worthwhile bibliography for collectors and historians of detective stories. Brennan regrets that more of the adventures of Leffing were not supernatural: "I wanted Leffing to acquire an audience. I wanted to keep his name before the public. I concluded the only way to do this would be to involve him in stories of detection which had no supernatural content. As I have indicated . . . Leffing himself prefers cases of a weird, supernatural or at least bizarre nature, but if no professional magazine exists for the accounts of such cases, the incentive to record them is small." (pp. 8-9) This lack of a market comments on the contemporary publishing climate.

Act of Providence, then, is something of a Duke's mixture: it is a supernatural horror story that becomes part of the ever-growing mass of fiction in the Lovcraft school; it describes a gathering of fantasy enthusiasts not so different from the mystery story devotees found at conventions like the Bouchercon; and it contains bibliographical information about the publication of the Lucius Leffing detective stories.

—Edward Lauterbach

Follow the Leader by John Logue, Crown, 1979. 210 pp. \$8.95

Mystery novels with a golf background are not particularly unusual. Nero Wolfe's first appearance in print concerned a murder committed with a golf club, and an early Christie had Poirot investigating a murder on the Links.

John Logue, an experienced sportswriter, has an advantage in writing about golf, and his amateur sleuth, appropriately enough, is a sportswriter, John Morris. Morris, covering the U.S. Open in Atlanta for AP, witnesses a spectacular murder of a golf coach in the Peachtree Towers. Two young pros are subsequently murdered and nearly all the contenders in the tournament become suspects. Although the golf sometimes intrudes on the plot, to the distraction of the non-sports-minded, the plot is intricate and suspenseful and the characters interesting enough to entertain even those readers who never give a second thought to the sport of golf.

—Mary S. Cappadonna

Carnage of the Realm by Charles A. Goodrum, Crown, 1979. \$8.95

Charles Goodrum has presented us with a sequel to last year's *Dewey Decimated*, continuing the adventures of former Yale librarian Edward George and his two young friends, Steve Carson and Crighton Jones. The plot of *Carnage of the Realm* is more original and full of surprises than the author's first mystery. The setting is the world of coin collecting. The president of a Washington, D.C., numismatic club is found murdered. Circumstances would indicate burglary, had the victim not hinted to George that he believed one



of his fellow officers was out to get him. Using the technology of a computerized data base, George quickly uncovers the murderer's identity only to have the suspect eliminated, probably by the killer of the president. The remaining suspects include a bitter former ambassador, a suspiciously wealthy dental assistant, a snobbish professor and an aristocratic German immigrant. In following the search for the culprit, the reader will also absorb a good deal of information on numismatics and library research.

Goodrum combines erudition and humor in a manner comparable to Michael Innes and Edmund Crispin. The only weak spot in his current book are the characters of Steve and Crighton. They are too much like stock juvenile lead and ingenue to be convincing. I sincerely hope that Goodrum marries them off to each other and sends them on a honeymoon that is long enough to preclude their appearance in his next novel.

—M.S. Cappadonna

Deathwork by James McLendon, Bantam, \$2.50

Deathwork by James McLendon is not a run-of-the-mill mystery novel; in fact, it's hardly a novel at all in the traditional sense. There's no character development, and precious little plot, simply the preparations by Florida officials, amid media hoopla, for the multiple execution of four condemned convicts. But McLendon knows well the grisly fascination of the electric chair (his father was a prison warden), and he knows that fascination will keep us plowing on to the grim climax in the Death Chamber.

It's a long mile to the climax, however, and the author does a lot of dallying along the way. It's obvious that McLendon is intent on examining all sides of the legal death question as objectively as possible. But he also wants to write a best-seller, and *Deathwork* as a result is curiously two-faced. On the one hand it bears some resemblance to a Jackie Susann-style roman à clef, with thinly disguised real people as characters. There's a gangster who's a dead ringer for Meyer Lansky, a news correspondent who sounds a lot like Fred Graham of CBS, a novelist who's a cross between James Jones and Norman Mailer. Even the crimes of the four condemned seem more spectacular than those of the Gilmores and Spenklinks we've been hearing about lately. Of the four, only one, a woman who has poisoned her husband and children, rings true to life. The others are a maniacal German-born

rapist, a CIA-trained Cuban terrorist, and a black ax-murderer with a criminal career dating back decades and spanning most of the Caribbean. Tedious biographies of these characters are interspersed with big swatches of exposition which make up the other, "serious" side of *Deathwork*. Every twenty pages or so somebody turns face to the camera and spins out a monologue on some aspect of capital punishment. There's an extended history of the electric chair, for instance, and articulate speeches by each of the condemned on how he feels as the end approaches. In McLendon's Florida even the lowest redneck prison guard is in danger of suddenly metamorphosing into an orator.

Predictably, in trying to be both a best-seller and an essay on capital punishment, *Deathwork* is not completely successful as *Death*. But it's worse as a "big" novel. We don't know the characters well enough to become involved with them, and McLendon lacks the trashy exuberance of, say, Harold Robbins. He's stronger as an essayist. The exposition is too long and often embarrassingly written, but by and large he gets through to the meaning and consequences of legal death. (Though here too he isn't as thorough as he might be. He doesn't deal with legal uncertainties like the possible execution of an innocent, which apparently occurred in both Britain and the United States as late as the 1950's, or the current discriminatory sentencing procedures which make a visit to the green room twelve times more likely for the killer of a white person than for the killer of a black.) But in a sense, all that's beside the point. We're reading *Deathwork* because of the electric chair, and the stunning execution sequence is what the book's all about.

Up to now it's all been preparation. We've watched quietly as members of the Death Committee (yes, that's what it's called) go about their business. Here, the electrician checks out the mechanism by watching it light 24 high-intensity bulbs; there, an assistant warden sets up a hotline to the governor's office against the possibility of a last-minute reprieve. The prisoners are fed their last meal (kept lukewarm as insurance against self-inflicted burns) and the anonymous executioner arrives over back roads. Then, heads shaved, the condemned are led one by one into the Death Chamber. Earlier we've heard the electrician musing that the components of the electric chair are homemade and unreliable; just how unreliable, we see in probably the most ghastly execution scene ever written. There may be quick, painless ways of putting people to death, but electrocution is not one of them.

After all the debate, McLendon's conclusion seems to be that legal death is regrettable but justified, a judgment with which I cannot agree. But *Deathwork* pulls no punches in its steady-eyed examination of the question, and after reading it, even the staunchest advocate of capital punishment will be forced to think twice. Despite its many faults, the book packs at least 2250 volts of power, a charge as raw and brutal as the chair itself.

—Carl Hoffman

RETRO REVIEWS

Who Killed Lady Poynder? by Richard Marsh. Appleton, 1907.

This mystery novel starts when the destitute and ingenious Claire Seton stumbles upon a murder victim. She innocently picks up a nearby revolver which accidentally discharges itself into the side of the dead woman's husband as he enters the scene. Claire is immediately taken to prison.

Next day, while still in a state of shock, Claire is taken before a magistrate and remanded for a week. Present is the enigmatic central character, barrister Leonard Cleethorpes. He befriends Claire and listens to her story. He agrees to defend her, claiming that this case will make the reputations of himself and his good friend, solicitor Bertram Drummond—who will soon fall in love with her.

Cleethorpes' real motives for defending Claire are all ulterior. He is also supposed to have been on the verge of eloping with the decedent, and might have killed her when she changed her mind. He denies both charges.

Meanwhile, there are complications. Lord Sark, a good friend of Cleethorpes', had seen his wife Margaret, who is an even better friend of the barrister, near the scene of the crime, and is willing to swear that she is the mystery woman Claire insists left the murder victim just as she (Claire) came on the scene—and therefore must be guilty.

Margaret's younger sister Alice, soon to become engaged to Cleethorpes, has been subject to fits of sleepwalking. She has had a vivid dream wherein she killed Lady Poynder. This "dream" coincides with all the circumstances of the crime, and Alice finds further physical evidence in her own room that appears damning.

Who Killed Lady Poynder? is a long, complex, slowly paced work. Richard Marsh, author of the famous (if not notorious) *The Beetle* (1897), writes fairly well and uses the English language with competence, but lacks any distinguishing style. He is often prolix, and his characters—with their frequent misunderstandings—do not converse; they make speeches to each other.

The novel starts fairly well and is imbued with a nice sense of ambiguity. It tends to slow down toward the middle, but recovers in time for an almost stark and gripping finale.

Cleethorpes has had a fairly good idea of what the murder of Lady Poynder has been all about from almost the beginning, but too many problems have had to be solved before he is able to act decisively. He has taken no one into his confidence—especially the reader. The motive for the crime and the murderer's identity are deeply hidden secrets, and both are incapable of being solved through available evidence.

In fact, the murderer's identity is so well concealed that this character, briefly mentioned two or three times during the narrative, does not appear until the climax.

—Charles Shibuk

The White Circle by Carroll John Daly. Clode, 1926; Hutchinson, 1927.

I thought the first Daly novel I'd ever read, *The Snarl of the Beast* (1927), a major work in the history of the hard-boiled form. Subsequent reading of five other Daly novels found nothing that remotely approached the power and gripping quality of *Snarl*. Now, a perusal of *The White Circle* maintains this pattern.

It does start promisingly when ex-adventurer turned society climber Stacey Lee, currently broke, is approached in his bedroom by a frail old man calling himself the White Circle with a business proposition "that is filled with danger, adventure, even romance, and at times a sordid reality—which is life, as we see it."

He wants Lee to become a modern (and more efficient) Don Quixote and wage a one-man war against a gang of vicious blackmailers. The remuneration is high, and there is a bonus of \$100,000 for the identity of the gang's masked leader, who is known as the Black Circle.

This initial promise of good melodrama to come does not sustain itself. The narrative momentum slows down due to excess padding and a first person narrator who is overly reflective and at times repetitious with action and movement.

Lee is preoccupied with firearms but has less ego-involvement than Daly's most famous series character, Race Williams. It wouldn't take a great deal of mental re-writing to change Lee to Williams, whom he closely resembles except that he isn't a private detective.

The White Circle also contains a tinge of romanticism and a softness around the edges that, I think, don't really mesh with Daly's design and are qualities that one usually doesn't expect to find in a hard-boiled novel. There is plenty of action, violence, and homicide throughout, but the climax is disappointing because it should have been stronger and perhaps more explicitly violent.

Adulation is directed toward Hammett, Chandler, and Ross Macdonald, and Daly remains the forgotten innovator, but it is curious that no one seems to have noticed that *The White Circle* appears to be the first hard-boiled novel published in book form.

—Charles Shibuk

Judge Robinson Murdered! by Raymond Leslie Goldman. Coward, 1936; Boardman, 1937.

Although published in 1971, *A Catalogue of Crime* still provides this reader with many "new" authors and works of conspicuous merit. This is also true of the various supplements that appear in TAD and hopefully will continue for many years to come.

"Supplement Four" has provided *Judge Robinson Murdered!*—an intriguing blend of crime, punishment, and politics.

The plot spirals about the violent death of the already moribund Judge Robinson that has ostensibly been perpetrated by an escaped homicidal lunatic previously institutionalized by the judge.

His pretty daughter, Ellen, is not satisfied with this view promulgated by honest, hard-working Detective Captain Lunderback and prevails upon newspaper publisher (and narrator) Jerry Spence to investigate—in spite of dire warnings that to do so might cause many anguish.

Her chief object of suspicion is the bearded Dr. Wilks, head of the nearby mental institution. Other suspects include evangelist Jonah Hatfield, who will inherit \$50,000 from the judge's estate; the judge's brother Andrew, who is the local political boss; Jack Curfew, a shady night-club owner; and his chief muscleman Joe Dominick.

Judge Robinson Murdered! is still reasonably fresh after the passage of four decades and is written in a terse, straightforward style not too distant from the medium-boiled. Its author appears to have substantial talent in evolving a complex puzzle while providing a fast-moving narrative.

On the other hand, there is a serious blunder in a medical detail—vital to one aspect of the solution—that should instantly be spotted by almost anyone on the scene of the crime, to say nothing of a skilled medical examination.

However, on the basis of this novel, Goldman's eight other essays in crime fiction might well be worth seeking out.

—Charles Shibuk

Too Many Magicians by Randall Garrett. Doubleday, 1967.

Although set in 1966 (the year of its original magazine publication), *Too Many Magicians* posits an alternate universe wherein the laws of magic have supplanted those of science. France and England are combined in a single Empire, and North and South America have become colonies and are known as New England and New France respectively.

This novel is billed by its publisher as science fiction, but the above-named elements only serve as background to a classic novel of detection.

A double agent is mysteriously killed in Cherbourg, and some valuable documents are believed to have been stolen by

agents of the Polish Empire. Shortly afterward, the Chief Sorcerer of the City of London is found dead in a locked room during a prestigious magician's convention.

Summoned to investigate the first crime, but diverted to the second—which might be related to the first—is Lord Darcy, Chief Investigator for His Royal Highness, Prince Richard, Duke of Normandy. He is assisted by his Chief Forensic Sorcerer, Master Sean O Lochlainn.

Curiously, Lord Darcy is "employed" to solve this case by the brilliant but lazy Marquis of London, who is nothing more than a thinly (pardon the pun) disguised Nero Wolfe—complete with the usual mannerisms and environment. Elementary students of the French language should have no difficulty in penetrating the identity of Lord Bontromphe, who serves as assistant and legman to the Marquis.

Too Many Magicians is not too dissimilar in plot to a John Dickson Carr novel of the golden age, but it does lack Carr's brooding sense of atmosphere and is told in straightforward, no-nonsense prose. It winds up in typical Rex Stout fashion when all the suspects are gathered in the office of the Marquis, but this time the logical solution to the problem is pro-pounded by Lord Darcy.

Garrett, a professional science fiction writer, has done very well in devising a locked-room problem in deduction with rigorous standards of fair play toward the reader.

—Charles Shibuk

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦
Mr. Holmes at Sea by Conrad Voss Bark. Macdonald, 1962; Macmillan, 1963.

England teeters on the brink of a financial crisis. Rumor is rife. The almighty pound may have to be devalued. Urgent telegrams are dispatched to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who is vacationing in the sleepy little village of Pillaloo in Cornwall, but he has gone off for the day in his sailboat and can't be located.

Meanwhile, the village postman, standing on a hill, spots a smoke-filled boat and rushes down to the harbor for assistance. A lifeboat is launched and discovers the Chancellor's fire-gutted boat and the severely burned, but still living, body of its owner.

The injured man is rushed to the local hospital for emergency treatment, and the proper authorities in London are notified. The powers that be request his immediate transfer to Downing Street. Consternation arises when it is discovered that the still-unconscious man is positively not the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

What to do? Where is the real Chancellor? The fate of England is in the balance. It looks like a case for Mr. Holmes!

Sorry to disappoint all members of the Baker Street Irregulars, but this intrepid hero is William (not Sherlock) Holmes of Downing (not Baker) Street.

He dashes back to Pillaloo to investigate the very odd circumstances and a rum collection of characters, until an incredible but logical pattern seems to emerge. Holmes believes that he now knows what has become of the missing Chancellor and

sets out via helicopter to find him, but does not suspect that danger lies ahead.

Mr. Holmes at Sea is a short, offbeat mystery that eschews the usual forms of violence and intrigue and still manages to relate an interesting, well-plotted, witty, suspenseful, and convincing story that is unconventional as it is attractive.

—Charles Shibuk

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦
Murder for Cash by James Ronald. Rich, 1938.

The distinguished British mystery writer, James Ronald, author of *Murder in the Family* and *This Way Out*, has committed the ultimate literary sin. He has stolen one of Harry Stephen Keeler's shorter (and tidier) manuscripts, translated it into English, and has had the audacity to publish it under his own name. Consider the evidence.

An aged western multimillionaire, King Kennedy, is obliged to leave his ranch and travel to Chicago (Keeler's home town) in order to undergo an operation that may save his failing sight.

His treacherous nephew (and heir), Neville Mervyn, establishes a perfect alibi upon his uncle's arrival and hires a professional killer, Whispering Benny Klaff, to rub out his uncle.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, the late millionaire's best friend, Sleepy Gus Williams, and his estranged son, Dolf, swear vengeance and head for Chicago.

Sounds like the beginning of a Keeler plot, doesn't it?

There is the Keeler-like use of staggering coincidences which start when killer Klaff shoots Kennedy with his own gun and soon afterward throws it in the river to obliterate the evidence of his crime. It seems that this gun has a hidden compartment that just might possibly contain Kennedy's new will naming his son Dolf as his heir.

In a Keeler novel that gun would never reach the water. In this one it not only doesn't but it constantly travels from character to character in dazzling fashion as many hands seek possession.

Its first recipient is a Portuguese-Spanish fisherman with a limited command of the English language named Joe Amigo, who tries to pawn it in order to feed his starving family and is eventually accused of robbery and then murder.

Keeler's themes of police brutality and racism are combined when crooked cops Slipe and Molloy "interrogate" the poor innocent into making a false confession.

This work twists and turns with Keeleresque regularity as almost everyone seeks the murder weapon, and young Kennedy and Sleepy Gus, aided and abetted by the helpful underworld character Little Hymie, seek the identity of the killers of the elder Kennedy.

Finally, through another group of Keelerian coincidences, every character—be he/she hero or villain—gets his/her just deserts.

The prosecution rests its case.

—Charles Shibuk

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦
The Alarm by John Rhode. Bles, 1925.

Much has been written about John Rhode, but except for bare mentions in *A Catalogue of Crime and Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*, *The Alarm* is practically unknown.

It's Rhode's third published work of crime fiction, and a thriller as were *A.S.F.* (1924) and *The Double Florin* (1924). It was immediately followed by *The Paddington Mystery* (1925), which introduced Dr. Priestley.

The Alarm is mainly concerned with the efforts of James Morrison to smuggle a shipload of arms to a revolutionary group in Portugal.

This novel has several elements that are completely uncharacteristic of its author.

Foremost is its emotional drive. Much of this tale revolves around a love story that is part of a triangle. Some of the characters not only experience this emotion, but they suffer because of it. One would not expect emotional problems to intrude into the work of an author usually cited for his "cardboard" characters.

There is also a great deal of natural lore, and almost half of this novel is set on or near the sea. Most of the action and adventure—including a chase and the pre-dictable storm at sea—occur here.

Rhode's narrative point of view keeps shifting from character to character. Suspense is increased when someone is left in a cliff-hanging position at the end of a chapter and Rhode continues with someone else in the next chapter.

Much more typical of Rhode is a killing by an unknown person which is blamed on Morrison, but its perpetrator seems very obvious even before we are given any information about the exact circumstances.

Rhode fumbles (or is uninterested in) any legitimate attempt at detection by withholding what could have been a vital clue—if he had bothered to prepare the reader for it—that enables Morrison to see the light.

As in other early Rhode novels, the author uses too many words to too little effect. Later work would display greater economy with a tighter prose style.

The Alarm is far from a major work, but it is interesting in terms of Rhode's later development into a major writer of detective fiction. It's also readable more than 50 years after its publication and still capable of providing entertainment and enjoyment today.

—Charles Shibuk

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦
Red Escapade by Roger Bax (Paul Winter-ton). Skeffington, 1940.

Moscow correspondent Stuart Mirroy meets his good friend Soviet diplomat Boris Kurilov on board a steamer bound from London to Leningrad. They soon meet the incredibly beautiful Roma Hamilton, and Boris falls madly in love with her. It's all very charming and romantic, but there is also a great deal of dialogue about the then current political situation in Russia that paralyzes Winterton's narra-

tive drive. Yet it's all good talk and necessary exposition for that which is to follow. It's also written with great expertise by a professional foreign correspondent turned novelist who was soon to spend three years in Russia for the *London News Chronicle*.

When they finally arrive in Russia, Boris and Roma are married and begin to live in an idyllic fashion until Boris falls from grace and is quietly executed by the OGPU. Milroy insistently seeks information about his friend but manages to step on the wrong toes and is given 48 hours to leave Russia.

Meanwhile, there is Roma, who has given up her British citizenship and become a Russian citizen in order to remain with her husband. She has also written a few indiscreet remarks in her diary about the Soviet form of government, and that little volume has just fallen into the wrong hands.

It's now obviously up to Milroy to get his dead friend's wife and himself out of the country, but that's not going to be an easy job.

Red Escapade is difficult to come by, but well worth the search. It's a long but engrossing novel that starts slowly but accelerates as it progresses toward its suspenseful climax. The people are well-drawn and seem real, and the Russian background material is masterly.

Red Escapade is well above average for Winterton and certainly vastly superior to the later and better known *Murder through the Looking Glass* (1951) and *The Ashes of Loda* (1965), which were written under this author's "Andrew Garve" pseudonym and set likewise in the Soviet Union.

—Charles Shibus

The Splendid Adventures of Hannibal Tod by Edgar Jepson, Jenkins, 1927; Macy-Masius, 1928, as *The Emerald Tiger*.

"Hannibal Tod was a splendid fellow and he had been splendid from childhood onwards, ever since, indeed, he had grown old enough to be a fellow at all. Splendidness was his natural bent, and he had cultivated it."

How could anyone resist such an opening?

Tod is a go-getter type of salesman who can sell anything—and usually does. He is so persuasive that one of his satisfied customers is willing to pay him 200 pounds if he will find the emerald tiger. This is a rare and valuable piece of jade—not quite as valuable as the real Maltese falcon, but whoever owns it is reputed to control "the power of the East"—whatever that might mean. (Shades of Dr. Nikola and Fu Manchu!!!)

Tod soon discovers that at least three groups of ill-assorted villains have the same goal, but through his usual industry and efficiency he is finally able to procure the elusive art object.

Everything now seems fine, but Tod's problems are just starting. His employer is murdered. He then loses the emerald tiger through a "slight" miscalculation. Most of

the villains think that Tod still possesses the jade, and they're not going to be too scrupulous about how they can get their hands on it.

The climax of this almost satirical adventure novel is not the dramatic thunderbolt that most readers might expect, but it does manage to tie all of the numerous loose threads together with simple brevity, and it is satisfying.

Hannibal Tod may be a trifle, but it's a charming and delightful work, and great fun to boot. In a word, it's splendid!

—Charles Shibus

File on Fenton & Farr by Q. Patrick. Morrow, 1937; Jarrolds, 1938. (Crimefile Number 3.)

Dr. Ferdinand Fenton, headmaster of Greenlands Academy in New Jersey, is reported missing. His secretary, Mrs. Pauline Farr, has also disappeared.

A student at the academy soon discovers their dead bodies nearby. Was it a suicide pact?

Chief of County Detectives Andrew J. Thorpe examines the scene and has grave suspicions of foul play. He telegraphs his chief County Prosecutor Joseph H. Burbank, vacationing in Maine, to return and assume command of the investigation.

Unfortunately, Burbank is in the hospital with a broken leg and cannot return. He suggests that Thorpe continue the investigation and airmail him copies of all reports and other pertinent data.

Thus you have this crimefile. It's about 8 by 10 inches, bound in a heavy yellow paper cover, and tied together by what appears to be a brown shoelace. It consists of many typewritten reports, newspaper headlines and pictures, letters, telegrams, maps, statements by various witnesses, and so on.

Also present are photographs of the victims taken at the scene of the crime, a suicide note, ticket stubs, a piece of gauze, an ink-stained blotter, and a miniature lipstick sample embedded in a cardboard wrapper that is at least a quarter of an inch thick.

The literary style of this crimefile does not exhibit quite the polish found in the Sayers-Eustace *The Documents in the Case* (1930), but *File on Fenton & Farr* does carry a great deal of verisimilitude in its approach.

The authors, Hugh C. Wheeler and Richard M. Webb, were both skilled professionals and did much of their best work in this period. They narrate their story in this "unusual" mode until the evidence points inexorably in one specific direction, but there are just a few more trifling matters to consider.

A statement on the front cover of this work tells us:

This file contains the complete dossier of a crime, with every clue and item of evidence preserved in its original, physical form, exactly as it might have been received at Police Headquarters. The crime was a murder. The police solved it. Can you?

All the evidence is present in this

unusual form of narration, and its clever, fair-play detection would certainly not be scorned by such advocates of the classic form as Messrs. Barzun and Taylor.

—Charles Shibus

Case with Ropes and Rings by Leo Bruce, Nicholson, 1949.

Much material has been written about Leo Bruce by Barzun and Taylor in *A Catalogue of Crime* and by R.C.S. Adey in Vol. 5, No. 3 of *The Mystery Reader's Newsletter*.

Previous critics have usually mentioned Bruce's debut novel, *Case for Three Detectives* (1936), and praised the author's satirical jibes at Messrs. Wimsey, Poirot, and Brown. Sutherland Scott goes a step further and praises the basic soundness of Bruce's detective plot.

I've read almost all the Sergeant Beef novels, and a few of the later Carolus Deene efforts, and I'm constantly amazed at Bruce's ability to pull rabbits out of his hat when his stories reach their conclusion.

Bruce's fertility of invention in this respect is exceptional, and his efforts to misdirect the reader are worthy of a Christie. It's unfortunate that most of his books are out of print and extremely difficult (in too many cases) to come by.

Case with Ropes and Rings starts with the newspaper announcement of a suicide in the gymnasium of an exclusive private school for boys. This story attracts the attention of Sergeant Beef, who persuades his "Watson" and chronicler Lionel Townsend to accompany him in this investigation.

Beef drinks much beer, plays quite a few games of darts, questions many people, and manages to thoroughly irritate Townsend, who does not think that Beef's methods will provide any material for a new detective novel.

A second and similar death occurs in a shabby London gym. Beef thinks further investigation is called for, and returns to London with Townsend.

As the bifurcated plot develops and turns toward its concluding stages, author Bruce stands behind the scenes while cleverly manipulating his plot and his characters.

The irascible Townsend thinks he has solved the first crime and takes it upon himself to call in Scotland Yard to arrest a character who appears guilty—if not totally demented.

Beef fumes, but perseveres, and continues his own investigation.

At the climax, Beef has not one but two surprises for this experienced reader. He is not only able to demonstrate his own deductive prowess but proves once again that his creator stands very high when it comes to subtlety and ingenuity in providing really unusual and unexpected solutions to this and many other crime problems.

—Charles Shibus

The Adventures of Detective Barney by Harvey J. O'Higgins, Century, 1915.

Barney Cook is 16 years old, plump

and sturdy-looking, with black hair, brown eyes, and an innocent brightness of face that is always ready with a smile. He works in dull drudgery as a Western Union messenger at \$6 a week so that he will not be a financial burden to his widowed mother, who runs a furnished lodging house. He has not had too much education of a formal nature, but has a rough-and-ready knowledge gained from New York City's streets. His one real vice is smoking cigarettes. His great ambition is to be a detective, and he reads about the exploits of Nick Carter in all his spare moments.

In "The Blackmailers," Barney opens a telegram and learns that a job will soon be available at Babbling's Detective Bureau. He applies and through sheer initiative and a series of lucky breaks is able to impersonate a bellboy and steal a book that enables Babbling to crack a secret code and make several arrests. He engages Barney at double his previous salary and the boy is jubilant.

"The Case of Padages Palmer" concerns Babbling's efforts to trace a recently arrived confidence trickster from Chicago by his taste in cigars. Barney acts as a mere stooge for Babbling, who spots his man and manages to turn the tables on him. Barney learns that any operative of a detective agency must obey orders without asking any questions and might never see the result of his actions.

A book of Elizabethan poetry provides Babbling with a clue that helps him locate an important witness in a case of embezzlement ("Though Mountains Meet Not"). Barney spends part of a night in a storm-drenched Catskill wood in order to tip off Babbling to his quarry's presence in a nearby mountain cabin. Barney also experiences compassion for a fellow human being and learns that a detective's job often has a darker side to it.

Barney acts the part of the deaf, dumb, and retarded son of newly arrived Chicago businessman Adam Cook (alias Babbling) in order to decoy "The Kidnappers" into making a false move that will lead to their capture.

A client comes to Babbling's office to complain about "The Anonymous Letters" that are being sent to his wife in order to discredit him. However, all is not as it seems to be, and Babbling, with 40 years of experience in the detective business, is able to give his young assistant a profound lesson in drawing inferences through observing the demeanor of a suspect.

"Barney and King Lear" introduces a neighbor who has given his property to his two daughters, who are currently disenchanted with his presence in their houses. Barney conceals a scheme (with a sizable assist from Babbling) to rewrite Shakespeare by placing his neighbor back in the good graces of his daughters, and also manages to gather some respect for himself from his own family.

"Barney Has a Hunch" when he observes a man's reaction while looking at a newspaper headline and is able to discover the whereabouts of a young society girl who had mysteriously disappeared from sight.

The Adventures of Detective Barney is a pleasant, agreeable, and smoothly written collection of short stories that shows some of the operations of a detective agency (from a boy's point of view) in a more realistic fashion than one would find in most of the hard-boiled, fast-paced, private-eye novels that we're accustomed to reading.

These stories are interesting enough in themselves to hold the reader's attention, but it must be admitted that they do lack dramatic action and feature few, if any, flights of deductive fancy.

They also serve to shed some light on their successor *Detective Duff Unravels It* (1929), and it might prove instructive to compare the characters of O'Higgins' two sleuths.

Walter Babbling is really the protagonist of *Barney*, and it is he who teaches the youth how to become a detective. Like John Duff (see *TAD*, Vol. 7, No. 4, pp. 285-86), Babbling collates the work of his subordinates and when he is ready acts upon it. He is also ruthless and will do anything to solve a case—including using Barney to gain the sympathy of people he wishes to betray as in "Though Mountains Meet Not."

Babbling does not use the psychological/psychoanalytic approach that Duff does, but in the story just cited he is able to examine a book and guess where he might find a suspect. This feat somewhat anticipates Duff's more elaborate methods of deductive reasoning.

To Babbling it is intuition, not logic, that is necessary to a detective, and although he is short, fat, elderly, and looks like a businessman and has nothing physically in common with Duff, his inspired hunches have made him a successful detective.

At one point he tells his assistant how a detective must act: "You're expected to swindle, and steal from, and lie to, and betray the enemies of society in any way you can, in order to defeat them and defend society. It's your duty to do it, and do it diligently. If you don't, you're as bad as the criminal. And that's the only moral law that binds you, professionally. But, in your private life, you're bound by all the moralities that bind every one else." And as the reader will see, Babbling practices what he preaches.

These stories appear to have been published first in *Collier's* magazine between 1912 and 1914, but detective Barney would go on to make three further appearances.

He is the "hero" of a "detective comedy," *The Dummy* by O'Higgins and Harriet Ford, which opened on Broadway at the Hudson Theater on April 13, 1914, and ran for 200 performances. The play was filmed in 1917 and again as an early talkie in 1929.

The silent film version of the play, directed by Francis J. Grandon, starred the well-known juvenile Jack Pickford (Mary's brother) as Barney Cook. The 1929 version (directed by Robert Milton) starred Ruth Chatterton, Frederic March (in his film debut), and John Cromwell.

Chatterton and March playing the parents of a kidnapped child had severely limited footage. Veteran stage actor Cromwell, who became better known as a film director (*The Prisoner of Zenda*, 1937), came off well as Babbling.

The story concerned the efforts of Barney (played by Mickey Bennett) who by pretending to be deaf and dumb manages to get himself kidnapped and is able to help capture the culprits and restore the missing child to her parents. The genesis of the original play, despite the author's prefatory note to the contrary in *The Adventures of Detective Barney*, can probably be found without great difficulty in "The Kidnappers."

—Charles Shibuk

Murder in a Walled Town by Katherine Woods. Houghton, 1934; Eyre, 1936.

There are many instances in which critics do not agree on the relative merits of a work of crime fiction. *Murder in a Walled Town* is a case in point.

Howard Haycraft, introducing James Sandoe's "Readers' Guide to Crime" in *The Art of the Mystery Story*, cites this novel as an above-average representative of its style. Contrariwise, Barzun and Taylor in *A Catalogue of Crime* claim that "the author's lack of the most rudimentary fictional power makes this longish novel unreadable."

I stand with Haycraft and wonder why Barzun and Taylor seem so dead set against Miss Woods' solo effort, which strikes me as having much to recommend it.

The setting of Nezyronnes, a small and very old town in France, is well-limed, and the surrounding countryside of the local inn, where two murders occur, is beautifully, almost heartbreakingly, evoked.

Well-characterized are the tourists, mainly American, most of whom reside at the inn due to financial pressure caused by America's abandonment of the gold standard and the sharp decrease in the value of the dollar.

Many of these people arouse empathy in the reader. Several others who promote much more negative emotions will highly deserve their eventual fate.

A writer who can do all this does not lack the most rudimentary fictional power, as far as I am concerned.

The reader will not be able to solve this crime problem because it is not an example of fair-play detection, but try to spot (or guess) the guilty party, and beware of several twists and turns before the ultimate revelation.

This novel does not race with express train speed, but like many others of its kind it moves agreeably and does not linger at any point more than is necessary.

Watch this author's civilized manner of story-telling, her discreet handling of a charming love story, and her sympathetic and intelligent approach to various aspects of the investigative procedure instituted by the French police.

—Charles Shibuk

Tainted Power by Carroll John Daly. Clode, 1931.

There have always been two strains of American hard-boiled detective writers: the "serious novelists," such as Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, and Ross Macdonald, who have concerned themselves with the "meaningful" aspects of the human condition in their novels; and the pure "storytellers," whose primary concerns have always been narrative pace, the relatively simple contrast of Good vs. Evil, and little else—writers like Carroll John Daly, Mickey Spillane, and Michael Avallone. Of course, the best of the "novelists" are good storytellers as well, and on occasion, and more often than you might think, you will find a "storyteller" (often considered a hack by followers, and sometimes practitioners, of the first group, incidentally) who will attempt something a bit more ambitious in a book than merely relating who bopped who over the head and how they are caught.

Tainted Power is a case in point.

Tainted Power—unfortunately long, long out of print—is a Race Williams novel, and while Carroll John Daly wrote some excellent fast-action mysteries starring his forerunner of all tough-guy private eyes (books like *The Hidden Hand* and *The Tag Murders*), *Tainted Power* is his most ambitious and, in some ways, his best.

The plot concerns a violent struggle between various criminal factions for control of the New York underworld. Daly's theme is the ultimate corruption, the tainting, of the soul which the acquisition of such power brings to those who would lust for it. To attain such power in Daly's underworld is to sacrifice all else. And nearly everyone in the novel is more than willing to make that sacrifice. Those who don't are the helpless prey of those who do.

It's interesting to note that when this book was published (and when it appeared originally as a *Black Mask* serial in 1930), the classical British detective story was still enjoying its so-called Golden Age. Yet, this period also marked the first emergence of the hard-boiled style from the pages of gaudy pulps to the more respectable packaging of hardcovers.

Certainly, Williams is the furthest thing from an armchair detective. "Thoughts never get me anywhere," he tells us. "If ever a lad can figure things out wrong, I'm that lad. What I want is action—and what I get is action . . . that's the game as I know how to play it. I like something to shoot at."

Writers like Daly, Hammett, and Paul Cain were making their own rules, and *Tainted Power* runs neck-and-neck with such already acknowledged early masterpieces of underworld realism as Hammett's *The Glass Key* (1931) and Cain's *Fast One* (1932) in its striking evocation of an urban criminal jungle where men and women really have no souls, only price tags. The double-cross and the bullet in the back are law in Daly's nightmare world. There is no compassion. There is no mercy. No love. Only the love of power.

To be sure, Daly was much more

"storyteller" than "novelist," and nearly all of his strengths and weaknesses as a writer are fully evident in *Tainted Power*.

First, the faults. Daly's capabilities, unfortunately, aren't always equal to his ambition. The story, it's true, is propelled by a large cast of singularly memorable characters, such as Williams' lover, Florence Drummond, known as *The Flame*, "the girl with the criminal mind"; old Myron Groten, pawnbroker, "the Angel of the Underworld," who rules gangland from his shabby storefront via his wealth of blackmail data; and, of course, the redoubtable Mr. Williams himself. Unfortunately, *characterization* is at a minimum, and virtually none of the cast ever breaks out of the standard melodrama of the day. Daly managed a silent movie theater before turning to mystery writing and one gets the idea that that was where he soaked up most of his sense of the dramatic. Also, some of the twists and turns of the labyrinthine plot are more than a bit murky as the various criminal gangs maneuver and counter-maneuver in their jockeying for control; you sometimes get the feeling that even Daly isn't quite sure just what the heck is going on, to say nothing of Williams or the reader (or maybe that was Daly's point!). Lastly, poor old Carroll had less than a tin ear when it came to dialogue. At its best, the speech of his characters barely approximates the English—or American—language.

Ah, but the strengths! In Williams, Daly created not only the first but the quintessential hard-boiled private eye. Williams' first-person narrative is strikingly distinctive and really quite convincing, the aforementioned facts notwithstanding, and is all the more impressive when one realizes that Daly was the first to utilize this style and technique. We're sitting in a den—or, more likely, a bar—listening to Williams tell us about the case. The guy is hard as nails. ("There's the animal in all of us. Things that make us no better than the beasts. And it was in me then. I just wanted to hurt and maim, and maybe kill. And I did it. Conscious? Of course. Voluntarily? Well—I'm not sure about that. But I up with my gun and banged it with terrific force behind the man's ear.") Race means business. He's a gunman; part of the underworld, and the only thing distinguishing him from the mobsters he guns out is his sense of justice; his conviction that his 44's are all that stand between him and the crooks and bought politicians taking over the metropolis from the law-abiding, God-fearing citizenry. "I don't suppose you ever killed a man that the world hasn't been better off without," the Flame tells Williams at one point. "I've never connected the word 'murder' with you."

Such is the "moral vision" of Race Williams, Carroll John Daly, and *Tainted Power*, a moral vision which has remained intact throughout succeeding generations of hard-boiled writers—sometimes modified and refined by such "novelists" as Chandler, sometimes simply restated by "storytellers" like Spillane—yet always a constant thread throughout the work of any writer who has ever attempted a

private-eye tale: the angry disillusionment with the failures of a "civilized" legal system, and the vigilante urge to go out and do something about it.

For all its stylistic flaws, *Tainted Power* cries out for the attention of all fans and scholars of the hard-boiled form. The book is a powerful, pioneering effort, every bit the genre milestone of *The Glass Key* or *Fast One*.

When it comes to recording the true essence of the underside, the black side, of the American experience with unblinking, cynical eyes, the founding fathers of the American tough-guy detective story have yet to be topped.

—Stephen Mertz

Retrospective Review of TV Film Interview

The Men Who Made the Movies: Alfred Hitchcock. 1973, WNET-TV, 60 minutes. Direction & script: Richard Schickel. Narrator: Cliff Robertson.

With *Psycho*, Hitchcock finally ripened into his Revolving period as a film-maker. This event partially coincided with two other aspects of his career and reputation. First, his reviewers began getting soft with him, after having previously underrated much of his most interesting American work. Each latest film now became the ultimate Hitch-masterpiece: whether we read Bogdanovich in '63 on *Birds*, the young Truffaut in '57 on *Wrong Man*, or the *Times*' Crawford claiming that *Vertigo* is more thrilling than Clouzot's *Les Diaboliques*—the one compliment one can't pay Hitch's most ambitious film.

Second, as catnip to the film intellectuals—and as a prestige director with a mass-audience draw, usually grossing second top 10—Hitch was able to replace some of his colorful (but free) publicity interviews with interview-books. (These in turn helped push his latest picture.) So we get Bogdanovich's ('63); Truffaut's ('66, Paris); and in '73 on ETV the directors' series by Richard Schickel, subsequently in rerun. These Hitchcock-interview books, including Schickel's, maintain a common tension in their format. Each time, Hitch struggles to introduce his very interesting formalist theories about film, much like Robert Bresson's. But each interviewer wishes to reassure himself and his sponsor and audience that he the interviewer is not discussing "mere" film thrillers. The interviewer invents for this pretext a maturing, "profound" Hitchcock, who has been ripened by his removal to 1940's Hollywood-Bowl California from that cultural backwater, London. So the interviewer turns a "form" director into a "content" man. To help him out, Hitch throws in a few autobiographically "revealing" anecdotes: always the same ones and more suspect each time the reader re-encounters them. Little Alfred's famous five minutes in that London jail cell—has any researcher yet tried to verify this Primal Scene?—become more significant than learning that a '29 London Hitchcock like *Blackmail* is a preview-antology of shots made famous by his U.S. movies of the 1950's.

The *Men Who Made the Movies* program records (like Dahlen's *Suspension* parody) the absolute predominance of the late Revolting Hitchcock in the minds of his "admirers": to put it more negatively, it emphasizes their non-interest in the first three to four decades of his professional career. In *MWMM*, for instance, of the nine films (1926-72) from which we see clips or longer sequences, the predominant period is 1959 (*North by Northwest*) to 1972 (*Frenzy*). To appreciate this specialized interest, remember the man shot his first feature in the early 1920's.

Hitchcock the interviewee is here as always lucid and entertaining. *MWMM* begins with some pretense of illustrating (a) his technical remarks about filmmaking; and (b) the autobiographical "revelations" so artlessly falling from those lips. In fact, this "educational" telenovela soon degenerates—except when Hitch is onscreen—into a 60-minute bloodbath worthy of Silent-Majority commercial prime-time TV: seven violent homicides, one on-screen rape, and two of the *Birds*' deadly air-war attacks, one involving the incineration of a live human.

Two of these murder-rape sequences (*Curtain*, *Frenzy*) from the Revolting Period are in fact technically banal. Any film sophisticate may compare how the latent pornography of all film violence—the audience's instinct to go with the "winner"—is morally controlled (by technical means) in the comparable scenes of Fellini's *Il Bidone* and of Bergman's *Virgin Spring*. Even with *Psycho*'s famous shower-bath cutting—of some technical interest—the mass-audience interest in 1960 remained in fact on detecting whether a name lead, Janet Leigh, was willing to show the breasts and publicity the camera keeps shadowed or just outside the frame. (Hitch didn't mention till later the use of an anonymous model for three of the barer stills.) The really superlative editing in *Psycho*—say, Perkins' removal of the body from the motel to the swamp; or the final cut from the fly on Norman/"Mother's" face to the car—these don't appear in *MWMM*. They don't show violent assaults on attractive women.

Some naive grammar-school bits in Hitch's technical lecture are filmed like Commandments from Moses or Adam's first naming of the animals. There's no cinematic sense of history. Hitch's thesis about advance-warning the audience about the menace to build suspense was not in fact first revealed to Moses Hitchcock. George Cohan employed it along the Great White Way, writing 1905 Broadway melodramas. Under siege from *The Birds* in her phone booth, Tippi Hedren is precisely comparable to Lillian Gish trapped by Donald Crisp in *Broken Blossoms* (19, Griffith), with the sole distinction that Gish was a more interesting actress playing a more complex characterization.

Despite the overemphasis on the Revolting Period, the inadequate illustration of the forties (*Saboteur*-*Shadow of a Doubt*-*Notorious*), and the non-representation of the London thirties, watching *MWMM* still gives us some idea, simply from the illustrative sequences, how the

pre-bloodbath American Hitchcock functioned. Two components of the era combined to help Hitch and his audience keep under partial control their kinky misogyny: the star system and the contemporary censorship on filmed violence.

Joseph Cotten's widow-killing lecture goes morally uncriticized in *Shadow*. But censorship's requirements meant that it had to be established that he was crazy; that the actor himself had to establish onscreen the charm that is dramatically necessary to his characterization; and that a 3-D relationship is established between him and the female characters in *Shadow*. (By contrast, check *Frenzy* all the way down the line.) In *Notorious*, Grant's FBI coldness and sterility with Bergman's pimping her to Rains—is something that the 1946 audience, censors, and script force him and Hitchcock (and Ben Hecht, on script) to make compensation for, at the end of the film; and this to *Notorious*'s aesthetic benefits, since its last three to five minutes are its best.

The star system stopped helping Hitch after the war. *Notorious* (46) "works" better than the *Man Who Knew Too Much* (56) remake, or than *Torn Curtain* (66), for purely technical reasons that would look acceptable in a film-history manual. But really because Grant-Bergman had more glamor, charisma, and chemistry for them than Day-Stewart or Newman-Andrews.

The misogynist in Hitch now began directing his films instead of just appearing in them as villains. He is becoming interested in his heroines as assault victims rather than as characterizations. In his first postwar cult film, *Strangers on a Train* (51), Ruth Roman's "heroine" has been edited into bits, at the expense of a series of onscreen scenes where "bad" or "silly" women are treated just as the villains wanted them treated in other movies. The cultists may reply that Bergman is more interesting onscreen than Roman. But then (in the *MWMM* clips) compare the Teresa Wright in *Shadow* with the very comparable Vera Miles in *Psycho*, in their final villain-pursued scenes. Wright, not a better actress, is a 3-D character with a dramatically "live" relationship to Cotten's Uncle Charlie. Miles has no part, in the actress sense; and in her final scene she even turns into a Had-I-But-Knewer—she goes down dark cellar stairs after the murder suspect, who is in the house with her, has left her an open route to the front door and help.

This simplistic misogyny, the generally increasing nastiness of his movies—probably the worst example is the treatment of the lady aristocrat spy in *Topaz*—becomes confused in *MWMM* with some sort of deeper "profundity" in old Hitch. The scriptwriter Schickel has identified himself in one of his other film books as an ex-Wauwatosa Catholic—Wauwatosa was the upwardly mobile city outside Milwaukee when I lived there, quite pleasant—who has now plugged himself into the media-book peer-group of Fun City. "His" Hitchcock is the director who has gone from the naive Christianity of *The Lodger* to an implicitly post-theistic apocalypticism

in the world of *Birds* and of *Frenzy*. *MWMM*'s closing credits run after and over the tracking-still shot that describes *Frenzy*'s second rape-murder. *MWMM*'s Schickel-script is then providing a kind of deviant cartoon version of Chabrol-Rohmer's sophisticated and influential treatment (*Hitchcock*, '57) of Hitch's Jesuit background.

In fact, despite Schickel, the consciously "Catholic" movies in the AH oeuvre are those we would automatically recall: not *The Lodger*, but *I Confess* ('53) and *The Wrong Man* ('57). Cliff's priest-hero in *Confess* spends most of the movie in the "accidental-victim" situation that Novello's *Lodger* endures for a few minutes of screen time at most. Fonda's *Wrong Man* spends the whole movie! And of course in any case the Accidental Victim ("They're picking on me") has no liaison with the rabbinically sophisticated Messiah of the Passion story. Hitch's pet protagonist derives from the emotional infantilism one young, bright, probably spoiled London fat boy shared with the popular stage-film audience of the 1920's.

The natural generic atmosphere for this klutz-hero is comedy. So paradoxically the healthiest Hitchcocks are the more superficial and "breezier": *39 Steps*, *Trouble with Harry*, *North by Northwest*. These often kid the films the AH interviewers take most seriously. *Steps*' '35 handcuffs are a comment on "Jesus"-Novello's in '26. *Northwest* works better as a wicked parody of *Confess* and *Wrong Man* than when the St. Marie subplot tries to crib "seriously" from *Notorious*.

Why did Hitch make his two "Catholic" films in the 1950's? Could it be because the big-studio accountants concentrated heavily on reaching a parochial audience from the late thirties through the fifties? That Hitch was adapting to a projected audience when he shot these films, as when he shot *Lodger* or *Frenzy*? Schickel can't deal seriously with this possibility, because if true, out the window goes the steadily "maturing" AH.

Schickel's book (*The Men Who Made the Movies*, 1975) offers a Hitchcock interview with two advances over the ETV arrangement of the same material. Hitch gets to keep "talking" instead of being interrupted by teaser clips from his most easily available films. And the cosmic metaphysical "theme" employed to organize the ETV material disappears, thank God: the book uses a different format in its layout that doesn't permit this pretentious approach to be developed. We have a series of topic headings in caps, under which AH's remarks are arranged: about the smiling villain; the "British murder"; the Macguffin, *et al.* Both TV and book are very much superstar treatments of the AH career: nothing about the permanent impact on Hitch, of say, John Hayes, Cary Grant, Setznick, Bass, or the new cameraman on *Strangers* ('51), whom one critic makes responsible for AH's postwar "revival."

—J.M. Purcell

Two-Detective Mysteries

By R. Jeff Banks

The following questions are each answerable only with the name of a single actor. In most cases, the actor was at least primarily a radio actor.

1. Name the one of three actors who played Jerry North and also the sound-alike Nick Charles, being one of six in that role.

2. What different one of those half-dozen Nick Charleses also was one of the two actors to play the title role in the short-lived *The Adventures of Christopher Wells*? Wells, as those who have ears with good memories will remember, was a globe-trotting, adventurous (of course) newsman created by the same people who brought us that perennial favorite, *Mr. District Attorney*.

3. Which of the spate of movie Philip Marlowes (only Bob Mitchum played the role twice on film) created the role of an important "new direction" private eye on radio in the late forties?

4. Only one of the Sam Spades, two in films (Warren William, who played Shayne in the middle *Maltese Falcon* version, *Satan Met a Lady*, doesn't count), two in radio (excluding the several Bogart appearances on anthology shows in versions of *The Maltese Falcon*), and two in television, appeared regularly in another crime-related radio series. Who played the hero who was owner-manager of a Caribbean hotel?

5. Sherlock Holmes has been played by more different actors in films (more than 20 in English language and American or British silents) and radio (ten or more in America and Britain combined) than any other detective hero. Which radio Holmes also played different detective heroes in film and TV series?

6. Which among the three radio Michael Shaynes also appeared as Nero Wolfe's second banana Archie Goodwin on radio?

7. While we're on the Archies, who were legion, which of them also played a San Francisco police detective named Friday?

8. And which Archie Goodwin also was one of at least six actors to do the title role in the Mutual series *The Casebook of Gregory Hood*?

9. What actor played two different newspapermen detectives simultaneously on different networks?

10. Yet another of the Gregory Hoods (see No. 8, above) also replaced *The Adventures of Sam Spade*, one of the most popular shows on radio, as a very similar detective. Who was he?

TWO-DETECTIVE MYSTERIES: ANSWERS

1. Joseph Curtin.
2. Les Damon.
3. Dick Powell. (The radio series was *Richard Diamond, Private Detective*, whose new direction was that Diamond, unlike any previously prominent radio detective, was a crooner in films before he became a detective, actually was also the first radio Marlowe in Lux Radio Theater's hour-version of his film *Murder, My Sweet*, the first of three actors to play Richard Rogue on *Rogue's Gallery*, as well as appearing on countless non-mystery radio shows as vocalist or emcee. None of this, of course, need be part of your answer.)
4. Humphrey Bogart. (The show, co-starring Lauren Bacall, was *Bold Venture*.)
5. Tom Conway. (Before his stint as Holmes, 1946-47, Conway had replaced his brother George Sanders in the *Falcon* movie series, and with the advent of television, he appeared as Inspector Mark Saber on *Mystery Theatre*.)
6. Wally Maher. (This fine character actor originated the radio Shayne and was one of the dozen or more Archies—they changed from week to week and actors frequently would appear in successive episodes as villain, Archie, then radio-TV-movie Sgt. Joe of *Diagnose*. Lewis went on to much greater fame as a radio producer and director.)
7. Elliott Lewis. (He was the most famous Archie, and the Friday he played was Capt. Bart on *Adventures by Carlton E. Morse*, not Jack Webb's better-remembered radio-TV-movie Sgt. Joe of *Diagnose*. Lewis went on to play George Harmon Cox's Casey, *Cryme Photographer* on CBS.)
8. Elliott Lewis.
9. Staats Coisworth. (Coisworth was the longest-running David "Front Page" Farrell on NBC, meanwhile playing George Harmon Cox's Casey, *Cryme Photographer* on CBS.)
10. George Ferris. (He played *Charlie Wild* after the sponsor, Wildroot Cream Oil, whose slogan for years had been "Get Wildroot Cream Oil, Charlie!" dropped Spade because of unfavorable publicity attracted by series creator Dashiell Hammett.)

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

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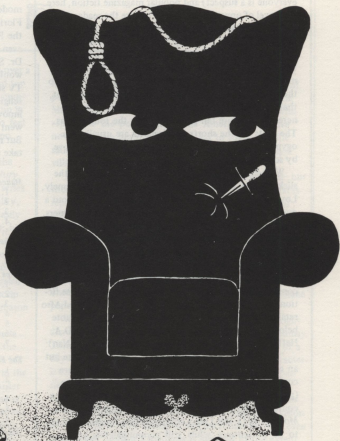
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A NOTE ON RUFUS KING'S SERIES SHORT STORIES

I understand that Rufus King (1893-1966) wrote two series of detective short stories about Colin Starr for *Redbook*, but only one of these was collected (*Diagnosis: Murder*, 1941). This collection was then King's sixteenth published book (since 1929), taking no account of the mystery plays he also wrote during the 1930's. Colin Starr is a second-generation affluent who has returned to the family manse in "Laurel Falls" (southeast Ohio) to practice medicine and detection among his American upper-class neighbors.

King was of course an Old Pro, but the Starr series has to deal with the built-in tension of the contradictory generic demands made by the purist mystery (where everyone is a suspect) and popular magazine fiction, here the novel of upper-class manners (where the reader wants sympathetic identification, i.e., he wants to know who the good and bad hats are). So the six Starr shorts in *Diagnosis* generally tip the reader whom he's supposed to mistrust. Clues are based on specialized points of medical science, revealed to the reader no sooner than to the killer. This suggests, contrary to common statement, that the slick magazine mystery short story was inherently no more fair-play than were the tough pulps. The plots for the shorts in *Diagnosis* are usually misogynistic, generally developing around a power move by some rich lady.

Women become the more traditional victims of the slick mystery in the book's one novelet, called "A Lonely, Lovely Lady" in its (later) magazine form. This is about a once comfortable manor-lady who has to take in roomers. She finds characters from the Detroit gang-world being drawn into her manse and area by their connection with her daughter. Aside from this change in sexual empathy from the shorts, there is one academic-critical point I can make, without retelling King's plots for him: this is the connection of *Diagnosis* with the contemporary prose fiction of Faulkner. I have in mind not so much the aged Afro retainers of "Lady" as the style of the passage I quote below (from the key confrontation scene involving D.A. Heffernan, the heroine Lily Elser, and her daughter Nan):

"It was not a man, he meditated, who was in there but an elemental force, a power and strength which were cunningly motivated by the obverse of logical reason." (p. 252) It is not so much that King was reading the contemporary stories that were collected as *Go Down, Moses* (1942). But I see a common King-Faulkner effort to be portentous, while still communicating (melodramatic) plot and characterization. American magazine fiction was a much more powerful and continuing influence on Faulkner than post-World War II academics are willing to admit, perhaps because they remain unfamiliar with authors like Melville Davison Post and Ernest Haycox and stories like those that make up *Diagnosis: Murder*.

The Colin Starr Series

Diagnosis: Murder (Doubleday, 1941)

1. The Case of the Radiant Refugee
2. The Case of the Three Balaful Brothers
3. The Case of the Prodigal Bridgroom
4. The Case of the Sudden Shot
5. The Case of the Imperious Invalid
6. The Case of the Buttoned Collar
7. The Case of the Lonely Ladies (novelet)

Uncollected (*Ellery Queen, Saint Mystery Magazine* reprints)

1. The Seven Good Hunters (2/75, retitled, EQMM)
2. The Case of the Fragile Flower (2/65, StMM)
3. The Adventure of the Y-Shaped Scar (9/52)
4. The Case of the Muted Violin (11/62, StMM)
5. The Case of the Pleasant Stranger (6/63, retitled)
6. The Case of the Jet-Black Sheep (4/50, EQMM)
7. The Case of the Peculiar Precautions (9/51)

Because of their more recent date and accessibility—in EQMM and StMM—the Florida procedural short stories about Stuff Driscoll are probably more familiar to King's modern fans than the older Starr series. This "Halcyon, Florida" series concerns a rich Catholic-retiree section of the Florida Gold Coast. King's Florida murderesses are even more prominent here than in the old shorts about Dr. Starr in Laurel Falls. The location and atmosphere would seem to make the Driscoll stories as suitable for a TV series as the Travis McGees appear to be. The explicit religious background would, one might guess, become an innovative plot source as American Catholicism underwent its particular Johannine stresses during the 1960's. But no, King always treats the Church too cautiously to take advantage of this.

The Stuff Driscoll Series

Malice in Wonderland (Doubleday, 1958)

1. Malice in Wonderland (10/57, EQMM)
2. Miami Papers Please Copy (10/56, EQMM)
3. The Body in the Pool (2/55, EQMM)
4. To Remember You By (8/57, EQMM)
5. Let Her Kill Herself (5/56, StMM)
6. Agree—or Die (12/57, EQMM)
7. The Body in the Rockpit (10/55, StMM)
8. Pills of Lethe (3/58, EQMM)

Steps to Murder (Doubleday, 1960)

1. The Seeds of Murder (8/59, EQMM)
2. The Patron Saint of the Impossible (12/58 EQMM)
3. Murder on Her Mind (12/57, *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*)
4. A Little Cloud . . . Like a Man's Hand (5/59, EQMM)
5. Rendezvous with Death (8/58, EQMM)
6. A Borderline Case (12/59, EQMM)
7. The Tigress of the Chateau Plage (3/59, EQMM)

The Faces of Danger (Doubleday, 1964)

1. The Faces of Danger (11/60, EQMM)
2. Gift for the Bride (5/62, EQMM)
3. Each Drop Guaranteed (3/58, EQMM)
4. The Caesar Complex (9/63, EQMM)
5. Happy Ending (10/58, EQMM)
6. The Gods, To Avenge (6/63, EQMM)

Uncollected

1. Stairway to Murder (3/57, StMM)
2. The Bluebird Persuaders (5/60, EQMM)
3. The Perfect Stranger (9/64, EQMM)
4. Anatomy of a Crime (12/66, EQMM)

What some more knowledgeable TAD subscriber might perhaps add to this would be the *Redbook* dates for the Starr stories and a reliably complete list of their titles.

J. M. Purcell

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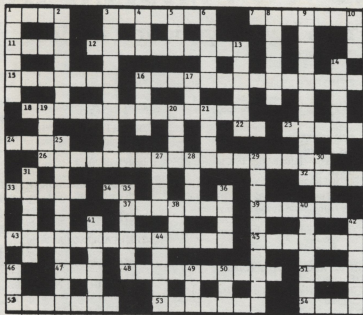
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CRIME CROSSWORD



Solution on page 384

Ten of the answers in this puzzle are the full or part titles of mysteries by a well-known author. Clues involve anagrams and other such devices used in the popular "English" crosswords.

ACROSS

1. O' much too scrambled without, Ouch! it's an inscrutable shamus. (4)
3. "----- Wonder," inconstant stay about end. (3,4)
7. "Cops and -----" (Westlake) (7)
11. "----- the Pink Horse," dire confusion finishes Hughes title. (4)
12. "----- Crime." Orlando's Face? Yes, but not so. (8,2)
15. After crazy Nile comes a new ear. This is a family tree? (7)
16. "The -----" Reynard is homicidal? (8,2,1,3)
18. "-----" A Lancer first. (1,5,2,6)

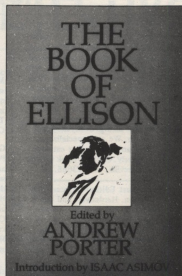
22. "----- Many Steps to Death." (Christie) (2)
23. "Law and -----" (Uhnak) (5)
24. Give this hoodlum a Teddy Hug. (4)
26. "-----" Only one box left in the old theatre district? (5,5,4,4)
32. Loco Gus puts this in his gat. (4)
33. See 39 Down. (5)
34. "----- Walks by Night." (Carr) Hawaiian plant walking west? (2)
- 37 & 39. This movie actor aka Martin Kane, portrayed the detective hero of 3, 12, and 16 across in the forties. (7,6)
43. "-----" A multi-ended feline? (3,2,4,5)
45. "----- Sea." (musical with optimists not obelists) (5,2)
47. Don't get bogged down with this deducible don. (3)
48. This actor was the first to portray (on screen) the detective played later by 37 across. (6,4)
51. "----- Sing Nights." (Keeler) (4)

52. "----- and Shrouds." (Latimer) Gentlemen are located somewhere about North by Northeast. (7)
53. "A Man -----" Flash-Crazed Ax-man Collared-Removal of Roman Ascot Reveals Ken Thurston! (6,1)
54. "The ----- Tailors." (Sayers) Orinane inane without a card- (4)

DOWN

1. This lady sleuth says there's a pearl in me but no Emerald. (6)
2. Look to your love re a turtle then excessively indulge. (7)
3. "The -----," How sad it is and oh where, when and (7,2,1)
4. Born to be on my knee. (3)
5. Conjunction for Mr Mrs North. (3)
6. Crazy grease without end is a Kennedy vehicle, Father. (6)
8. "The ----- of Evil." Igor's groin confused. (6)
9. An alternate nom de plume. See 26 across. (7,4)
10. This scion misses Central Intelligence. (3)
13. Directors sans reel feelings in reverse are escapers. (6)
14. Get the brew, Nikki! (6)
16. A merciless vase? (4)
17. Did you read Spiegel article about a Red heading West? (3)
19. Poker for a horny horse? (4)
20. "The ----- of Running Water." (Sloan) or a headless bush? (4)
21. Pull it in, Virginia! (4)
25. "The ----- Mystery." A spartan sarcophagus? (5,6)
27. Secure a redecorated lanai without an article in it. (4)
28. Garment for a safari without Fire Arms. (4)
29. "The -----" A sadness that marks the spot. (7,2,1)
30. A riot sale in Lanchester? (4)
31. Keeper of the peace returning from a Viet Nam wall. (6)
35. Theodore embracing victory, correction: embraced. (4)
36. The author of "The Riverside Villas Murder" has many French friends. (4)
38. Endless leap for a meadow. (3)
40. This actor played Inspector Piper in the flicks. With 33 across. (5,7)
41. "Concerto in -----" Sounds Grieg to me; no drinks for this one. (1,5)
42. A cheap smoke for a stooge with Intelligence but no Organization. (6)
44. Wear your blouse! There's a tic going around the United Nations. (5)
46. "Able ----- I ere I ..." Old saying. (3)
47. Abner Diamond. Before and after. (3)
50. Stereo Console returned to Tucker. (3)

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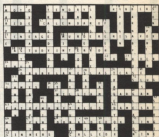
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