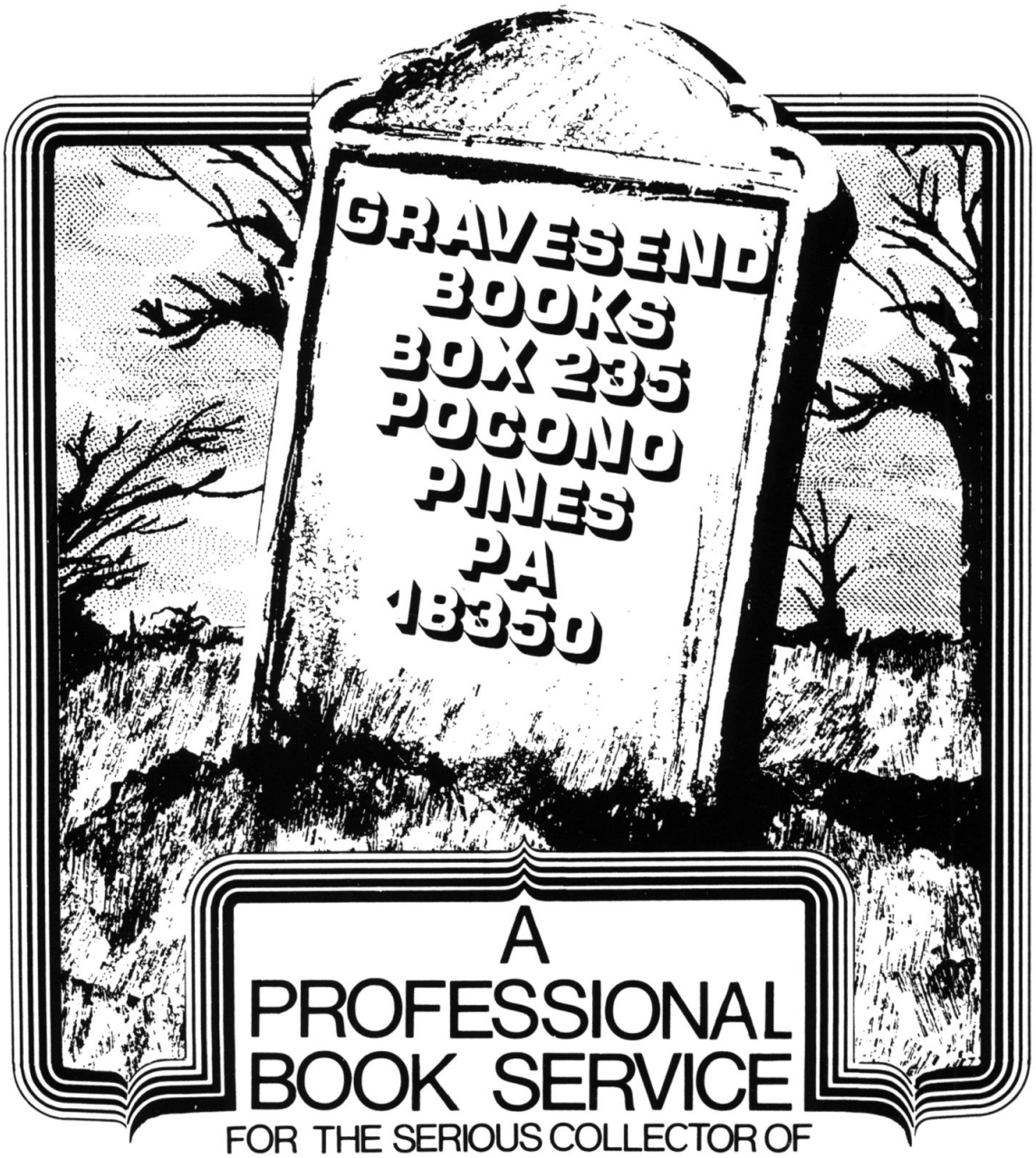
Volume 14 Winter 1981 Number 1 $4.00

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE



A PROFESSIONAL BOOK SERVICE

FOR THE SERIOUS COLLECTOR OF

MYSTERIES • THRILLERS • FANTASIES

AND ANALYTICAL MATERIAL ON THE GENRE

"Sherlockian Specialists"

WRITE FOR CURRENT CATALOGUE

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

PUBLISHER
The Mysterious Press

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Michael Seidman

MANAGING EDITOR
Otto Penzler

CONSULTING EDITOR
Allen J. Hubin

ART DIRECTOR
Dennis J. Grastorf

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Robert J. Randisi

Subscriptions to *The Armchair Detective:* $16/year in the U.S., $20 elsewhere. Subscription and advertising correspondence should be addressed to: TAD, 129 W. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10019, U.S.A. Submissions of material for publication are welcome and should be addressed to The Editor: Michael Seidman, 129 W. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10019.

Second-class postage paid at New York, New York, and additional mailing offices.

The Armchair Detective, Winter 1981. Vol. 14, No. 1. Published quarterly by The Mysterious Press, 129 West 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.

3 Ramon Decolta, a.k.a. Raoul Whitfield, and His Diminutive Brown Man: Jo Gar, The Island Detective
E. R. Hagemann

9 Opus in G Minor for Blunt Instrument: The Development of Motive in Detective Fiction
Raymond Obstfeld

14 *Dressed To Kill:* An Appreciation
Stuart M. Kaminsky

24 The Unique Mystery Magazine: Hugo Gernsback's *Scientific Detective Monthly* Part I
Robert A. W. Lowndes

31 Dickens's Last Book: More Mysteries Than One
Arthur J. Cox

37 Thomas Berger's Comic-Absurd Vision in *Who Is Teddy Villanova?*
David Madden

44 Classic Corner: Rare Tales from the Archives
Donovan of Whitehall by William Le Queux

57 The Armchair Criminal
Frank D. McSherry, Jr.

78 Murder by Client: A Reworked Theme in Dashiell Hammett
Christopher Bentley

86 The Importance of "C--ing" in Earnest: A Comparison of *The Maltese Falcon* and *Chinatown*
William D. Bottiggi

90 Patricia Wentworth Revisited
Nancy Blue Wynne

93 Interview with Tony Hillerman
Bruce Taylor

Departments

2 The Uneasy Chair

17 AJH Reviews

22 Rex Stout Newsletter
John McAleer

53 Current Reviews

71 Letters

74 Retrospective Reviews

The James Sandoe Retrospective Reviews

76 Checklist
M. S. Cappadonna

79 The Paperback Revolution
Charles Shibuk

80 Paper Crimes
Fred Dueren

82 TAD on TV
Richard Meyers

84 TAD at the Movies
Thomas Godfrey

88 Catalogue of Crime
Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor

96 Mystery Marketplace

THE UNEASY CHAIR

Dear TADians:

I've started typing this column four or five times now, taking a different approach with each shot and finding nothing but disappointment in each. I must admit, though, that it is the only thing about putting this issue together which has disappointed me. And, in fact, there are some things which have excited me greatly.

First, all the letters of support which have come from the regular contributors, people used to working with one man, with a particular editorial direction. Of course, each of the letters also asked about items which had been submitted and accepted by Al Hubin and whether they would still be used, whether the new editor meant a simultaneous shift in content. I have been unable to respond to all personally and so I want to take this opportunity to assure one and all that if it was good enough for Al, it's certainly good enough for me. I also want to extend my thanks for *your* good wishes. The support I'm receiving goes a long way toward making this chair a bit less uneasy.

Second, this issue offers items from three mystery pros who have not, as far as I've been able to find, contributed before. Perhaps I should amend that: Stuart Kaminsky was the subject of a recent interview; however, his essay on Brian DePalma's *Dressed to Kill* still fulfills, for me, the requirements of a "first." Also in these pages, Ross Spencer turns from his original and exciting detective novels to poetry, and Raymond Obstfeld—not as well known, but on his way—offers a look at the mean streets—the ones we live on as well as read about.

New contributors, people to help broaden a marvelous base. Without them, TAD (or any magazine) will stagnate. I know there are others out there, others with something to say to all of us, with fresh insights, with the ideas to keep this journal vital. Guess what, people...unless you submit that material to us, none of us will benefit. If you're not sure, send a query.

It's not just articles we need, either. You read the books, have opinions about them. So, share those opinions. Review a current book or talk about a rare find uncovered in a musty attic. Send us letters, send us art (illustrative material is always needed, or are you satisfied with covers and jackets?).

Finally, now that I've requested this onslaught of mail, it is fitting that we establish deadlines. If I am going to fulfill Otto Penzler's promise of regular appearance, we need everything in by the first of January, April, July and October. If we can stick to the deadlines, I think we'll be able to stick to a publication schedule.

That's it this time around. Now that I know when my next column is due, I'd better start on it immediately. In the meantime, keep in touch.

Best wishes to all,

Michael Seidman

MICHAEL SEIDMAN

Ramon Decolta, a.k.a. Raoul Whitfield, and His Diminutive Brown Man: Jo Gar, The Island Detective

By E. R. Hagemann

He is Jo Gar, The Island Detective—the Philippine Islands, that is. Chances are that he was baptized José García, although the more common nickname would have been Joe.

He was a young man, but he looked rather old. His hair way gray; he was medium in size, but because of the loose way he carried himself he appeared rather small. His face was brown—very brown. He had good teeth, a narrow lipped mouth, fine features. His eyes were slightly almond shaped, and they were seldom normally opened. They held a peculiar squint (WG, p. 52).[1]

This was the initial description of Señor Gar by Ramon Decolta (Raoul Whitfield) in the first of twenty-four stories in *Black Mask*, February 1930 through July 1933. As the series progressed, Decolta perfected and modified the physical description and repeated, often unduly, certain salient features. His eyes are blue-gray and pronouncedly almond-shaped. His body is short and small; his shoulders, narrow; his arms, short; his feet, small; and his fingers, stubby. He has a habit of running them through his gray hair. He has another habit: keeping his eyes nearly or almost closed. He speaks in a toneless voice as frequently as he smiles and shows his white, even teeth, for he is polite, above all else.

He chain-smokes brown-paper cigarettes which no one else cares for. He permits himself an occasional glass of warm of iced claret or iced lemonade. The betel nut is not for him. He will wear sandals when the weather demands and he will wear either a pith helmet or a Panama hat and very suitable clothing, favoring white duck and pongee, not always as clean as they might be. He carries a .45 Army Colt automatic in right-hand hip pocket; he uses it quite frequently. He is right-handed. He is often the intended target of a knife, and he has been known to wield one himself in self-defense (NK). He lives sensibly in the heat of the Western Pacific.

[He] relaxed his short body, kept his almond-shaped eyes almost closed. Now and then he lifted his brown-paper cigarette, inhaled. It was almost as though he slept between puffs... (MW, p. 81).[2]

He maintains a small, not particularly comfortable office "above Wong Ling's place," on a "narrow and curving" street, not far off the Escolta, the main business thoroughfare in Manila, and almost on the bank of the Pasig River (RH, p. 33; DDr, p. 83). He seldom locks it, for he keeps "little of importance" there and is seldom in it (SS, p. 43). A visitor who has climbed the narrow, creaking stairs is apt to see lizards crawling on the ceiling and be annoyed by flies. The three-bladed ceiling fan, whirling at slow speed, merely moves the tepid air around (MM, p. 91). If it is too hot, Jo will wave a palm-leaf fan. His proudest possession is a fan-backed wicker chair, "one of the finest ever made by the prisoners of Bilibid" (FBC, p. 58). He has a desk, another fan-backed chair, and a small cabinet where he keeps his meager files. His one luxury is a latter-day obtained jade paper knife "many years old" (FBC, p. 58). When he is not carrying his Colt, he keeps it in a desk drawer. The office has one other occupant: Jo's Siamese cat, of whom he is inordinately fond. He has no secretary, no receptionist, no assistant.[3]

Several times he had thought of moving into more desirable quarters, but there was something about his tiny, hot office in the old building that he liked. His fees were not big... and many of his clients were not rich. If he were to move ...he would perhaps not be able to accept cases that interested him, and his contacts would be different.

He had decided that he would lose more than he would gain, and had remained. . . . He liked the river sounds that reached him from the dark-watered Pasig, and the odors that drifted up from the small shops near the river—odors of spices and hemp and shell foods (CM, pp. 93–94).

Only very late in the series do we discover that Jo Gar owns a house with "a Spanish gate" and keeps a houseboy named Vincente (AF). He habitually rises early and therefore misses his siesta if on a case. He owns a small automobile but he "did not like machines [autos]; he preferred a pony hauled *carromatta* to the *cales[a]*. But a horse got along better in wind and rain" (SS, p. 46). He is a devotee of cockfights and magic performances. He knows a good deal about Siamese cats and pearls. "He thought of the [Randonn] pearls. They were the finest

I wish to thank the Research Committee, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Louisville, for a grant which aided me in the preparation of this article.

he had ever seen. He had looked at many, in the South Seas and the Orient. He was something of an authority on them" (NB, p. 104). It is too bad that we know nothing of his family, his education, his background.

He is a polyglot: he speaks English, Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese ("a tongue with which he had difficulty" [BC, p. 44]), Japanese, and Malay ("softly and not perfectly" [CM, p. 101]), precisely what he needs in polyethnic Manila in the early 1930s, then a city of only some 350,000, over ten per cent of whom were Chinese. (The population now, by the way, is over one and one-quarter million.)

"'In Manila—many people have tried to murder me,'" Jo calmly informs Benfeld, a deadly antagonist (BC, p. 38). And understandably so, for The Island Detective is an implacable foe.

> The point was—there were many enemies. Almost always, when Jo Gar caught a man, there was a conviction. The caught one remembered, and his relatives and friends remembered. There were many enemies. Señor Gar had a reputation—criminals were afraid of him and hated him (CM, p. 96).

And his reputation precedes him and follows him wherever he may go. In "West of Guam," the first story, the Army officers and enlisted men aboard the transport U.S.S. *Thomas* have heard of him. Colonel Dunbar, the C.O., testily requests that Jo set to and help solve the murder of Captain Jerry Lintwell, U.S.A., which of course he does. He approaches Private Burker, a suspect.

> "Don't rise," he stated. "I'm Mr. [*sic*] Gar—perhaps you know that."
>
> The private nodded. "Guess we all do," he stated. "You're that Manila soft-shoe—the guy that always gets his man." . . . Jo Gar shook his head.
>
> "Not always," he stated. "Two years ago I failed. China is a difficult country. A transport at sea has advantages" (WG, p. 55).

Incidentally, Jo is a passenger and is bringing back to Manila a criminal he apprehended in Honolulu.

Naturally, because of his work in The Pearl of the Orient, he brushes up against the local police force.[4] Five years ago, before he became a private detective, he had been on the police (DP, p. 49). His friend and comrade was Lieutenant Juan Arragon, now his friendly but suspicious antagonist. Poor Arragon—he is rarely right in his "solutions."

> The lieutenant. . . preferred action to thought. He was often too anxious. Thus, he had often failed where Jo Gar, proceeding in an almost sleepy manner, had succeeded. Jo suited his action to the climate of the Islands. Manila was not New York or San Francisco (SS, p. 49).

Nonetheless, Arragon is gracious in defeat, but there is Carlysle, who does not always appreciate the diminutive detective. There are times when solving a "crime, in Manila, [is] a delicate affair" (DP, p. 104), and Arragon never completely trusts Jo, who might favor a client instead of justice.

The two of them argue amiably but acerbicly. During an investigation, Arragon insists that Gary Landon, a second-rate theatrical performer, was a suicide. Gar insists that he was murdered.

> Arragon grunted in disgust. "You have been right too often, perhaps," he said. "You wish to be different."
>
> Jo Gar said: "You have been wrong so much, Juan, but you still wish to be the same" (ER, p. 31).

But when Arragon is killed pursuing jewel-robbers in Manila, Jo, shrugging off Carlysle's request for help, goes after the gang with only one thought in mind: revenge—but more on this later in the article.

Arragon is superseded by Lieutenant Sadi Ratan, immaculate, "very handsome and well built for a Filipino" (SG). For Jo, the situation is never the same again north and south of the Pasig.

> The Filipino [Ratan] looked hatred at the Island detective, and Jo Gar thought of the difference in this second-in-command to the American head (now Major Kelvey] of the Manila force—and the dead Juan Arragon. This man hated him. Arragon had disagreed with him, argued with him, but he had never hated (JM, p. 56).

Ratan is vindictive, insulting, nasty—and as consistently wrong as Arragon. "'You have always chosen to oppose me,'" Jo rebukes. "'It is a mistake to allow personal prejudice to enter matters of this sort, for in so doing you have often neglected important facts'" (MS, p. 122). Ultimately, Ratan executes a 180-degree turn and concedes that Jo is "very clever." He says they should work together more closely. "'I might even consider resigning in order to enter and strengthen your private agency.'" Jo has the last devastating word. "'I fear that the loss to the Force would be too great, Lieutenant'" (AF, p. 109).[5]

Jo's m.o. is as crafty as it is ruthless. He practices deceptiveness with gusto; indeed, his sleepy façade, his toneless voice, constitute a wile. Bluffing seldom pays, he admonishes Ratan (MS), yet Jo will often bluff about his knowledge of testimony or evidence and ferret out the murderer or the information he wants, or both. He will lie; he will bargain, but only to his advantage. He will threaten to kill. I cannot resist quoting two fine moments when The Island Detective is in action.

He demands that a corrupted Chinese chauffeur who has driven him into an ambush and near-death outside Honolulu take him to Tan Ying, The Blind Chinese.

> "If I take you to the place—they will kill me."
>
> Jo Gar shrugged. "And if you do *not* take me—*I* will kill you," he said. "It is a difficult position."

The driver said: "I am a poor man—"

The Island detective nodded. "Then you have less to live for," he replied. "Let us start" (BC, p. 45).

Don't lie—you are dying, Jo reproves a suspect, injured in a sampan explosion on the Pasig, having already promised that "'the saints will be kind'" if he talks. Santos Costios admits to killing a *calesa* driver, among other deeds. Thereupon, Gar cynically comments to Arragon that Costios only *thinks* he is going to die.

The Filipino was staring at Jo Gar and cursing in a stronger voice. He was accusing [him] of tricking him. He was not going to die, after all.

Jo Gar interrupted, sighing. "I should have said, you're not going to die yet," he corrected. "For the murder of the *cales[a]* driver—you will die, of course. You are pleased?"

Costios cursed in a weaker tone (CaM, pp. 101–2).

In another case, Jo directs his client, Lemere, to summon the police. Damn the police! replies the curio dealer. Damning the police does little good—call them, tell them the truth. "'They will do interesting things.'" Lemere reluctantly assents and then asks Gar what *he* will do. "'I shall talk and think. Counteracting a bad habit with a good one'" (JM, p. 54). Clients can be testy. One acidly remarks that *he* would prefer to ask the questions and have Jo answer them. Tonelessly, The Island Detective reminds Señor Wall that "'it is almost always simpler to ask questions than to answer them'" (BS, p. 97). And clients can be unacceptable: Miss Virginia Crale, for example. "'Hysterical ladies are not pleasing in the tropics. . . . [Her] life has been threatened so often, in her imagination, that her fees bored me beyond their value in cash'" (MS, p. 116). In this instance she was right—Jo, wrong. She is brutally murdered.

Above all, Jo Gar is stubborn and a fighter, the more so the more his life is threatened. Arragon offers that maybe it would have been wise if Jo *had* taken a sojourn from Manila.

The Island detective nodded. "I am like the cock Ramirez had at the Casa Club, two weeks ago," he said. "You remember—it was almost blind. It didn't seem to know just where to leap. But it would not be beaten" (SS, p. 44).

Jo's turf is Manila and its environs, although he sails to Nagasaki (Kyushu) on one venture, ends up in San Francisco on another, solves one up-country slaying, and one in Baguio (SH), the summer capital of the Philippines, 150 miles north of Manila, high in the mountains of western Luzon.

Manila, before World War II, was a place where racial and ethnic slurs and invectives abounded, or so Decolta would have us believe, and I think accurately so.[6] Distasteful as such reading may be today—and it is—derogatory remarks in print were perfectly acceptable in the 1930s, whatever the level of publication. We would be unwise to accuse Decolta of racial or ethnic prejudices; he presented Manila and its peoples as he saw them. In other words, his was an exercise in verisimilitude.[7]

To be blunt, using Decolta's language verbatim, Jo Gar is a half-breed; that is, he has "'the blood of the Spanish and the Filipino'" in his veins (DD, p. 90). Some half-dozen times in the *Mask* stories this comes up: twice Jo is called a half-breed, with modifying adjectives, to his face (SS, p. 51; DD, p. 90); twice Jo is obliquely disparaged (DP, pp. 104–5; CaM, p. 98); twice Jo's momentary companion is embarrassed because he goes too far. The Island Detective, always polite, handles himself impeccably.

On a bridge over the Pasig, he talks about the apparent suicide of Gary Landon with an American, Dean Price, the actual murderer.

"They've cut him down. White or—"

The American checked himself; his eyes held a confused expression. Jo Gar said quietly, smiling a little:

"Not brown like myself, Mr. Price. White—like yourself."

Price reached for a cigar. . . .

"I meant no offense, Señor Gar."

Jo nodded. "It is all very well," he replied tonelessly. "I imagine the man is dead, just as both of us will be some day" (ER, p. 26).

In "The Javanese Mask," Lemere mutters angrily about "'damned Chinks and Filipinos,'" then checks himself, "realizing that Jo Gar was a half-breed, and that there was Filipino blood in his veins. The Island detective said nothing" (p. 50).

Paradoxically, Jo is accused of being pro-American—too much so, for Lieutenant Ratan's liking. "'You are protecting an American [Markden, his client]. You have always protected them. You like them'" (MM, p. 92). Jo merely shrugs his narrow shoulders and says that he has not been paid *that* well, doubts he ever will be paid *that* well. But he does like Americans and he will distinguish, astringently, the Asians from them. Markden is a gambler (the Chinese do not trust him "and the Chinese were known as the wisest of the gamblers" [MM, p. 89]) who covers bets on cockfights. He is accused of murdering with a knife a magician, Cardoro the Great, because he did not pay his debts. Observes Gar: "'Markden is an American, and he would not kill and then boast about it as a Filipino or a Spaniard might do. He would not hate that much'" (MM, p. 96). To Jo's way of thinking, Americans would never strangle a victim with a rope—"'that is not the way of an American in killing,'" referring to young Carmen Carejo's demise (RH, p. 37). Nor would an American use a knife, while "'here in the Islands,'" he explains, "'it is most often the knife'" (AF, p. 101).

His attitude toward the Overseas Chinese in

Manila is ambiguous. He is friendly with some, shopkeepers, yet can cruelly claim that all fat Chinese look alike and that there are many fat Chinese in Manila. After a knife has been thrown at him outside his office, he ruminates:

> Two thoughts were strong—the knife thrower had been a Chinese, and he had thrown very poorly. He had thrown like a Filipino would shoot, missing at even a short distance (CM, p. 94).

On more than one occasion, Chinese are the murderers in Jo's cases, and they can be untrustworthy, wily, and dangerous. This does not prevent his defending them against Ratan's open scorn and contempt.

> Jo Gar said: "Lieutenant—you have learned a motive for the murder? His servant had reason to kill him [Delancey, a curio dealer]?"
>
> Lieutenant Ratan said sneeringly: "Chinese servants do not always need motives for murder. A sudden rage—"
>
> The Island detective smiled. "You are correct, of course," he said (JM, p. 54).

Lemere, companion and friend of the dead man, tells of the time that Gao, the Chinese houseboy, stole a carved Igorot spoon of little value.

> Jo said slowly: "The Chinese are usually quite honest. . . . They give the least trouble—"
>
> The police lieutenant said sharply: "There are some forty Chinese serving terms in Bilibid prison, Señor Gar."
>
> The Island detective bowed slightly. "You are undoubtedly correct, Lieutenant," he stated (JM, p. 55).

Ratan is insatiable in his desire to pin the murder of Delancey on Gao. He implies that he might also have stolen the wooden Javanese dance mask "'to show his contempt—the Chinese are strange people.'" Jo Gar chuckles and says, "'And the Manila police are strange people, also. Very strange'" (JM, p. 55).

Then there are the women of the islands as Jo sees them. He has as little interest in them as he does in his Western women clients, for he leads an utterly sexless existence. The native women are suspectible, deceptive, sometimes murderous, and Gar is less than complimentary about their phsyical attractiveness. He just doesn't care for them. In "Red Hemp" he asks Carejo for a picture of his missing daughter, Carmen.

> It was a clear snapshot; it showed a dark-haired, slender girl of about eighteen. She was rather pretty, in the way of the Islands, which was not a lasting way. She had large eyes and a rather thin face (p. 34).

In "Signals of Storm," The Island Detective interviews Rosa Castrone, who, it later turns out, is an accomplice in the kidnapping of Sam Ying, a wealthy, corrupt Chinese.

> [She] was a plump girl of perhaps twenty. She had blue eyes and blonde hair, but she was not the true Spanish type. She was half Filipino; her lips were too thick and her features too big (p. 45).

The nameless chambermaid in "The Siamese Cat" is involved in two murders. "She was dark haired, medium in size. She was good looking for a Filipino girl, slenderer than most of them. Her English was very good" (p. 37). When she is cornered, she spats obscenities at Jo "in a half Spanish, half Filipino dialect" (p. 38). Another nameless Island woman impersonates behind a veil the supposedly grieving widow, Clara Landon. Jo unceremoniously tears off the veil. "She was a *mestiz[a],* mostly Filipino. But Spanish or Anglo-Saxon blood had given her skin a white tint. She was small, very thin" (ER, p. 32). Jo threatens her with Bilibid Prison if she doesn't talk, and points out that many prisoners die there. She confesses.

But enough of this.

Lieutenant Ratan gives *his* solution to John Mallison's violent end in "China Man." Naturally, he is dead wrong, by now a familiar bit, but Gar is polite and patient with the man he knows hates him.

> Jo Gar nodded. "It appears to be very simple," he agreed.
>
> The police lieutenant smiled broadly. "Very," he agreed. "You waste your time, Señor Gar."
>
> The Island detective shook his head (pp. 98–99).

To Jo Gar, like any good detective, nothing is ever as it appears. "Things," are never as they appear. In the teeth of seeming evidence, he will pursue a case with dogged tenacity until he solves it—correctly. Admittedly, too much of his legwork and sleuthing is accomplished outside the boundaries of a story; at the end, therefore, the reader is suddenly "handed" data out of reach to him. This is decidedly a weakness in the series.

Another failing is what I call the "shoot-out" ending when Jo unlimbers his .45 from his hip-pocket or his side-pocket and goes into action; but even as I say this, I realize that the Code of the Pulps, e.g., *Black Mask,* dictated such a zip-bang, crash-bam finale. In a word, dear readers, it was *de rigueur.* Decolta knew The Code; he was not stupid.

Somehow these weaknesses are not bothersome. Nor is Jo's bluffing. Nor his unerring hunches. He is too fascinating a man to be the butt of such quibbling.

After Jo's wrap-up of Benjamin Rannis's murder, Juan Arragon has a word or two.

> "Death in the Pasig," he said slowly, "is always difficult." He smiled at Jo. "Not being a fool, I congratulate you."
>
> Jo Gar fanned himself slowly with his pith helmet. He smiled in return.
>
> "Perhaps I had the better opportunity," he said quietly. "But not being too modest—I am pleased" (DP, p. 111).

And so is the honest reader pleased. Pleased by him, pleased by his bearing and his conduct, pleased by his adventures.

Sixteen of them stand by themselves and range from death on a U.S. Army transport (WG) to death in an airplane (CD). More likely than not, murders happen off-stage or before a story commences. Knifings—Decolta has a thing about knives—shootings, and stranglings are favored, not to mention five suicides by the guilty ones, not to mention the five "humans"—one of Decolta's pet words—Jo either kills or wounds.

There are two serials made up of eight segments total. The first, and less interesting, is a tandem, "Nagasaki Bound" and "Nagasaki Knives." Here the diminutive Jo tracks down both the murderers of Randonn, a wealthy Englishman, and his valuable pearls which Howker and Deming have heisted. Hard-boiled action is handled very well by Decolta.

Jo's longest and most violent caper (a sextet) takes him from the blood-spattered streets of Manila to the suburbs of San Francisco as he chases stolen diamonds and the killers of Juan Arragon.[8] The story deserves a re-telling, for it is the high point of Decolta's series in *Mask*. Some of his best tough-guy style flashes time and again, and there are narrative passages and dialogic set pieces which compare with the finest in Hammett, Paul Cain, and Chandler.

A daring and death-dealing daylight robbery (two killed) of Delgado's jewelry shop in downtown Manila nets the gunmen the ten fabled Rainbow Diamonds, owned by Von Loffler and worth about $200,000. Arragon is killed by the gang and his body deposited in Jo's upstairs office. There is a good scene when he finds his dead friend and swears to himself to get "them." Some $15,000 in reward money is posted. Jo is approached by Delgado (whose son was killed) and Von Loffler. The Dutchman asks if Jo will work for them.

> [He] smiled with his thin, colorless lips pressed together. He parted them and said:
>
> "Yes—but I feel it will be difficult. This was not an ordinary crime. It may mean that I must leave the Islands."
>
> Delgado said firmly: "I want my son's killers—no matter where you must go." . . .
>
> Von Loffler said:
>
> "It will be dangerous, Señor. But that is your business."
>
> The Island detective looked expressionlessly at the room's ceiling.
>
> "It is so," he agreed. "It is my business" (DDr, p. 90).

From a dying Malay whom he has shot, Gar learns of "'the one who walks badly . . . always in white'" and follows Ferraro aboard a Japanese liner, *Cheyo Maru,* bound from Manila to Honolulu, kills him, and obtains one diamond (MW). From The Man in White, Jo picks up the trail of "'the blind—Chinese—Honolulu.'" Escaping an ambush in the Hawaiian countryside at night, he finally comes upon Tan Ying, The Blind Chinese; three deaths ensue in the finale but no diamonds (BC). A name, Mendez, was given Jo, and in "Red Dawn" the detective learns from the man that the diamonds were divided among the gang members. Mendez is killed in his own trap which he had set for Jo.

Once again aboard the *Cheyo Maru* (BG), now bound for San Francisco, Jo picks up five diamonds from gang member Eugene Tracy, who is shot and killed by the mysterious Woman in Black (Rosa Jetmars), also a gang-member. She has the remaining four Rainbows. She slips them through customs and passes them on to Raaker, the renegade Dutchman, mastermind of the caper, and whom Jo Gar had driven out of Manila some years before. Out near the Cliff House, outside San Francisco, the two men face each other.

> "You stayed out of Manila, Raaker—you couldn't risk coming back. You hired men. Some of them tricked you—and each other. The robbery was successful, but you lost slowly. All the way back from Manila, Raaker, you lost" (DD, p. 89).

In the shoot-out, Jo kills him. He now has the "diamonds of death," as he has dubbed them. He is so right: at least fifteen people are dead because of them.

> Jo Gar found a package in his pocket, lighted one of his brown-paper cigarettes.
>
> He said very softly to himself: "I have all—all the Rainbow diamonds. Now I can go home, after the police come. I hope my friend Juan Arragon—knows." . . . And he thought . . . of the Philippines—of Manila—and of his tiny office off the Escolta. It was good to forget other things, and to think of his returning (DD, p. 91).

Returning to the Pasig River, where the sampans moor, side by side; to The Bridge of Spain which spans its dark waters; to the Luneta where the Constabulary Band plays in the late afternoon; to the Escolta, with its mélange of peoples and a sprinkling of American soldiers on liberty; the *Intramuros,* its old walls dating back to the late sixteenth century; and the spectacle of the fan-shaped, blood-red sunset across the Bay, with Cavite always in sight from the Luneta.

Returning to where he belongs.

I have a question: Whatever happened to him when the Japanese invaded Luzon? He got along with them better than any Asians. Did he remain in the city? Did the Japanese throw him into Bilibid along with the others? Or did he join the American forces on Corregidor? Was he in Manila during the bitter fighting to liberate it in 1945?

He was last heard of in mid-1937. After that, silence.

Before Arragon's death, he and Jo were talking and Jo said, contemplatively:

"A poet once wrote: 'There is mystery in the black-watered Pasig.' I shall go towards the river, because the poet is accurate. It is so" (DP, p. 105).

Maybe he did . . .
Whatever . . . whatever, Jo—*Paálam! Mabuhay!*

Notes

1. For the sake of conciseness, I will refer to the stories by initials (see Key, below), followed by page numbers. For six of the stories, I use the text as reprinted in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*; for "Death in the Pasig," I use the text in *The Hard-Boiled Omnibus*; for the remainder of the stories, I follow the text in *Black Mask* and *Cosmopolitan*.

   For her help in certain portions of the this paper, Miss Erlinda G. Paguio earned my gratitude. *Salamat pô.*
2. It is interesting to observe the physical changes in Jo in the two inferior stories published under Whitfield's own name in *Cosmopolitan*. Now his eyes are either "gray-green" or "gray" and "slanted"; his figure is "tall, slim," and his fingers, "slender" (FBC, pp. 56, 57). Even more startling is his 98-percent Americanized physiognomy in the accompanying illustrations. I use the *Cosmo* only when absolutely necessary.
3. Again, it is interesting to know that in FBC he does have an assistant, Sidi Kalaa, half Malay, half Arab!
4. Arnold Carlysle, an American, heads the Manila force, composed of Americans and Filipinos (DP, p. 104).
5. Ratan does not resign. In FBC and GB, he is very much around, although his first name is now Hadi.
6. For all I know, this situation may obtain today. No one in this country can ever deny that the lot of Filipinos in California before 1941 was less than happy. They were considered *below* the Chinese and Japanese, and jokes about Filipino houseboys were standard nightclub routine. If one things there has been improvement, he is invited to tour the Filipino *barrio* along Temple Street in downtown Los Angeles.
7. No question about it, Decolta was an innovator in seriously using an Asian protagonist during this period. Sax Rohmer's Dr. Fu Manchu was an arch-villain; Earl Derr Biggers's Charlie Chan, while enormously popular, was essentially a comic figure. On 30 June 1934, Hugh Wiley introduced in *Collier's* James Lee Wong, a Yale-educated Chinese-American, who is a U.S. State Department secret agent. Wiley was followed by John P. Marquand, who introduced his Japanese detective, Mr. Moto, on 30 March 1935 in the *Saturday Evening Post.*
8. DDr, MW, BC, RD, BG, and DD.

N.B. I wish to thank, particularly, the staff of Special Collections, University Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles 90024, for their ever-faithful help in the research for this paper. The several members are, without doubt, the finest librarians I have ever worked with—or, better, whom I have ever worked *for.*

Key to Title Abbreviations Used in Paper

AF "The Amber Fan"
BC "The Blind Chinese"; III
BG "Blue Glass"; V
BS "The Black Sampan"
CD "Climbing Death"
CaM "The Caleso Murders"
CM "China Man"
DD "Diamonds of Death"; VI
DDr "Diamonds of Dread"; I
DP "Death in the Pasig"
ER "Enough Rope"
FBC "The Mystery of the Fan-Backed Chair"
GB "The Great Black"
JM "The Javanese Mask"
MM "The Magician Murder"
MS "The Man from Shanghai"
MW "The Man in White"; II
NB "Nagasaki Bound"; I
NK "Nagasaki Knives"; II
RD "Red Dawn"; IV
RH "Red Hemp"
SC "The Siamese Cat"
SG "Shooting Gallery"
SH "Silence House"
SS "Signals of Storm"
WG "West of Guam"

Roman numerals indicate "serial" parts

The Jo Gar Stories by Ramon Decolta in *Black Mask*

"West of Guam." 12 (February 1930), 50–57. First JG story.
"Death in the Pasig." 13 (March 1930), 49–56. Reprinted Joseph T. Shaw, ed., *The Hard-Boiled Omnibus* (New York, 1946), pp. 97–111.
"Red Hemp." 13 (April 1930), 33–44.
"Signals of Storm." 13 (June 1930), 41–52.
"Enough Rope." 13 (July 1930), 25–36.
"Nagasaki Bound." 13 (September 1930), 103–14.
"Nagasaki Knives." 13 (October 1930), 26–37. Sequel to "Bound."
"The Caleso Murders." 13 (December 1930), 92–102. The spelling is RD's; the acceptable spelling is *calesa.*
"Silence House." 13 (January 1931), 33–44.
"Diamonds of Dread." 13 (February 1931), 80–91. First of six sequential stories; reprinted *EQMM,* 13 (February 1949), 82–96, as "The Rainbow Murders Begin"; in a headnote, p. 81, *EQMM,* which reprinted the entire sequence, insists that the tales "do not constitute a serial; each tale stands on its own feet"; this is debatable, to say the least.
"The Man in White." 14 (March 1931), 111–22. Reprinted *EQMM,* 13 (March 1949), 81–94, as "White Duck."
"The Blind Chinese." 14 (April 1931), 112–22. Reprinted *EQMM,* 13 (April 1949), 37–50, as "Yellow Death."
"Red Dawn." 14 (May 1931), n.p.; issue wanting in UCLA. Reprinted *EQMM,* 13 (May 1949), 65–77, with same title.
"Blue Glass." 14 (July 1931), 78–89. Reprinted *EQMM,* 13 (June 1949), 52–64, with same title.
"Diamonds of Death." 14 (August 1931), 46–54. Reprinted *EQMM,* 14 (July 1949), 81–91, as "The Rainbow Murders End."
"Shooting Gallery." 14 (October 1931), 100–11.
"The Javanese Mask." 14 (December 1931), 49–60.
"China Man." 15 (March 1932), 93–103. Reprinted Ron Goulart, ed., *The Hardboiled Dicks* (New York, 1967), 133–50, under RW's own name.
"The Siamese Cat." 15 (April 1932), 39–49.
"The Black Sampan." 15 (June 1932), 95–105.
"Climbing Death." 15 (July 1932), 88–100.
"The Magician Murder." 15 (November 1932), 88–96. Reprinted *The Black Mask,* 1, Nr. 1 (August 1974), 57–66; ed. Keith Deutsch.
"The Man from Shanghai." 16 (May 1933), 115–24.
"The Amber Fan." 16 (July 1933), 99–109. Last JG story in *BM.*

The Jo Gar Stories by Raoul Whitfield in *Hearst's International–Cosmopolitan*

"The Mystery of the Fan-Backed Chair." 98 (February 1935), 56–58, 169–72.
"The Great Black." 103 (August 1937), 62–64, 122–25.

EQMM = Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine

OPUS IN G MINOR FOR BLUNT INSTRUMENT:

The Development of Motive in Detective Fiction

By Raymond Obstfeld

The vast and continuous exposure most of us in this country have had to detective stories, TV shows, and movies has produced in us a dual sensibility toward crime, criminals, and crime-fighters as sources of both entertainment and fear. We are brought up on crime with the regularity and intensity that former generations were brought up on Horatio Alger or the Bible. Whether we are reading *Helter Skelter, Curtain, All the President's Men,* or *Time* magazine; or watching *Serpico, Kojak,* or *Police Story,* our awareness of crime on all levels of society is a major consideration in our daily lives, not just as an abstract, but as a real and tangible threat—right down to the kinds of locks we buy and our reluctance to walk downtown after dark. Since the detective story's beginnings, that awareness has usually focused merely on the revelation and capture of the murderer. But there is much more to be appreciated about and learned from the rather rigid form of the detective story, much more to be understood about ourselves. Much of it rests on one element—motive.

Many of us have grown up viewing crime only as it's been filtered, laundered, interpreted, processed and moralized by the media. Even during my own gangbusting childhood, working in my father's delicatessen,[1] between refilling coffee cups and doling out extra pickles, I managed to lift the fingerprints from two dozen customers' cream soda glasses using pencil shavings and Scotch tape, before my father accidentally destroyed my files by smearing them with corned-beef grease. I've been keeping an eye on him ever since.

The complexities of good and evil completely escaped me. All I knew for certain was that We—meaning myself, my family, Jack Webb, and some of our customers—were Good; and that They—meaning killers, robbers, anti-Semites, and some of our customers—were Bad.

The portrayal of murderers and their motives in detective fiction began as simple-mindedly as that. Criminals in early detective stories were frequently portrayed as pure evil, almost the devil incarnate, or were portrayed as conveniently criminally insane, thereby freeing the reader—and the writer—from any confusing analysis as to why the crime took place at all. What was important to them was that a body be produced so the story could take place, and motive was later inserted like bookmarkers, a situation that still exists among many contemporary writers of detective fiction.

Maybe as a child the only concepts I could have handled were the easily-identifiable stereotypes of good and evil. Perhaps that applies to the detective story's infancy as well. Basically working within a new genre, whether consciously or not, there was not time for the intricacies of motive. Besides, wasn't it more important that good, in the guise of the detective, triumph over evil, never mind the excuses? It was the infallibility of the detective that readers wanted to experience which made the detective story so popular. His character, along with the puzzle, had to dominate the story, and any empathy wasted on motive would have undercut the heroics of the detective. After all, despite the detective's brilliant reasoning abilities, the murder victim remained dead.[2]

When a detective begins a murder investigation, there are three main elements he must establish: weapon, opportunity, and motive. Weapon and opportunity are physical considerations, problems of time and space, and are generally easily dealt with. It is the third element, motive, that is the most difficult to establish, for it deals with the unfathomable morass of human desire and disappointment. For all its difficulty—certainly because of it—motive is the most crucial to the success of such a work.

If we accept the detective story as essentially an account of a quest for a hidden truth, then we must first decide what that hidden truth is. Certainly who committed the crime is an important part of that truth, but it seems to me that much more important to the success of any work is why the murder was committed. And it is the failure to present that why—the motive—convincingly and effectively that causes so many detective stories to falter at the end.

If during the story's denouement, we discover that the killer was the doorman, who appears only once, and then merely to open the door for the detective, with motive being established as "money," the entire story becomes nothing more than a clever, though

disappointing, magic trick with all the depth of a crossword puzzle. The denouement must tell us more than who slew whom. It must reveal something of the why—something that conveys to the reader the depths of exasperation, fear, or greed that drive a person to commit the ultimate act of frustration—murder. Otherwise, the quest does not seem worthwhile, and the detective's suffering to uncover the truth does not seem justified.

For example, in Rex Stout's *Too Many Women,* Nero Wolfe and Archie Goodwin solve two murders. The murderer, Mr. Jasper Pine, turns out to be the head of the corporate board that hired Wolfe. The motive is contemptuously explained at the end by Pine's undevoted wife:

> "... It is true my husband killed Waldo, but that had nothing to do with me. He killed him because Miss Livesay had fallen in love with him [Waldo] and was going to marry him."
>
> I wasn't as good as Wolfe was. I jerked my head up at her. Wolfe merely muttered at her, "Jealousy."
>
> She nodded. "My husband had completely lost his head about her..."[3]

Pine later kills his wife's brother who was blackmailing him about the first murder, which he had learned about from Pine's wife.

What is important here is not the cliché aspects of the motive—almost any motive, if properly presented, is reasonable—but it is the flat tasteless way in which the motive is served, like a cold pot pie, that is annoying. Pine is not even present. Instead, his frustrations and desires are explained by his wife who is not especially fond of him anyway. In fact, the murderer rarely appears in the story at all, so we never really get a good portrait of the man. So why should we care that he did it? To adapt John Dickson Carr's description of the novice mystery writer, Stout, though no novice, hurls the motive into the story and then runs like a maniac, as though he had just thrown a bomb, leaving the reader with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction as though he has been, if not swindled, at least out-talked.[4]

The portrayal of the murderer and his motive has a lot to do with the society's attitude toward crime and the criminal. The dark narrow streets and the sweating-palms suspense has its origins in the Gothic novel. But the early detective-story writers such as Edgar Allan Poe managed to transcend the melodramatic limitations of the Gothics to develop something entirely new. Still, the detective story is really more a product of politics than Gothics, for it could not have been conceived outside of a democratic form of government.

For the detective story to command as much popularity as it did then, it was necessary for the readers to believe that criminals were basically evil and a threat to society. And it was just as necessary that they regard the police and the business of catching criminals as basically a noble and worthwhile profession. In countries where the roles of the police as crimefighters and protectors of society are mixed with their roles as political watchdogs, there is more fear than admiration. The roles of criminal and persecuted patriot become confused. Who then but the police would want to read about their exploits? In a story that is a quest for truth, there can be no admiration for those who also share the role of suppressors of truth.

But this belief in the police and the detective, and the revulsion of the criminal as some kind of intruder, works because the detective story is a literature for and about the middle and upper classes. Even though a detective's investigations may lead him through slums, gangsters, and ghettos, in almost every case the murderer is a member of the middle or upper class (usually upper-middle, where they have just enough money to be homicidal about protecting their position, especially if it took twenty years of scratching to get there). After all, it is their laws and their morality which must be protected.

In the detective story's beginnings, faith in the police was high. People seemed to know very definitely what was right and what was wrong. As I have stated earlier, the portrayal of the murderer in early detective fiction is mostly that of a demonic man of pure evil, or someone criminally insane. Neither explanation demands motive. For the demonic man, murder and crime are simply his nature. It is interesting how those characters of pure evil were always extraordinarily brilliant. As for the criminally insane, all that was required of them was that they maintain perfect composure until their identity was uncovered, after which they had to snarl a bit and laugh hysterically at their own capture.

In describing the villain in Poe's "The Purloined Letter," the detective Dupin says: "He is that *monstrum horrendum,* an unprincipled man of genius."[5] But later he adds: "In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends."[6] In Poe's first detective story, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the murderer turns out to be an escaped orangutan. What could be clearer a crime without motivation than a crime committed by an animal? What better representation of crime and the criminal as the beastly intruder who is evil by nature?

In Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder," Sherlock Holmes describes the villain as: "A very deep, malicious, vindictive person... [with a] wicked scheming brain... [who] has all his life longed for vengeance. . . . It was a masterpiece of villainy, and he carried it out like a master."[7] Watson describes the same culprit as a "malignant creature" with "malignant eyes" who "whined incessantly."[8]

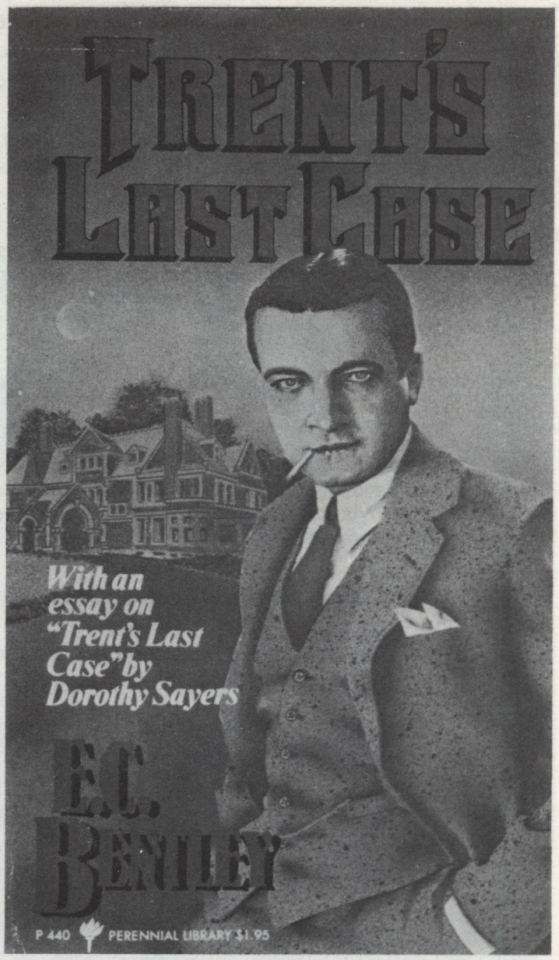
Although Holmes solves many cases of individually motivated crime, there was rarely any sympathy wasted on the guilty party. It is interesting to note that Holmes shows great respect for Moriarty's immense evil genius, while those who commit less brilliant, less evil crimes are often contempuously dismissed. The battle was simply that between good and evil, and never were the lines more rigidly drawn, with detective and criminal wearing their goodness or evil like uniforms.

This pattern remained pretty much unchanged with a few notable exceptions, such as the appearance of E. C. Bentley's *Trent's Last Case* in 1913, and the works of Dashiell Hammett in the late 1920s and '30s. *Trent's Last Case* is considered by many to be a landmark work in that it portrays the detective as an all-too-human and quite fallible individual. In it, the detective, a journalist, is wrong about the murderer's identity three times, though each time he "logically" proves the wrong man guilty. Yet, not only was it a landmark in the portrayal of the detective, it was also a landmark in the portrayal of the murderer. Forgetting motive for a moment, for in this case it is a matter of self-defense, the murderer turns out to be a very likeable old friend of Trent's. When Manderson, the victim, is officially declared a suicide, Cupples, the real killer, confesses his act while dining with Trent during the final chapter. Well, Manderson was a bastard anyway, and it was self-defense after all, so they merely laugh at Trent's inability to discover the truth and continue eating. Not exactly your snarling creature with malignant eyes.

Hammett went a long way in blending the distinctions between the criminal and the detective. He is fond of doting on the resemblance between Sam Spade and Satan in *The Maltese Falcon* and the Sam Spade short stories. Spade also seems void of any compassion, operating on a morality that must be followed, not because he believes in it, but because it exists. His own methods are always suspect; we can never quite trust him.

It was really Raymond Chandler, though, that made the difference. For him, good and evil seem part of the same dark ocean, one in which we are always trying to keep our heads above, one in which we'll do anything to stay afloat. Suddenly motives were not just for money for the sake of money. If someone killed for money it was because it represented more than just minks and Cadillacs. It often represented a means by which to buy back the past, or to keep it hidden. In his essay "The Simple Art of Murder," Chandler states that:

> The detective story... is usually about murder and hence lacks the element of uplift. Murder, which is a frustration of the individual and hence the race, may have, and in fact has, a good deal of sociological implication.[9]



Philip Marlowe, Chandler's famous private detective, ironically is as much an outcast as the murderers he tracks down. Although he is an alcoholic, killing time between cases with a bottle and a chess board in his ratty little apartment, he is still a man of unbending courage and conviction to the truth for its own sake. He is, as Chandler describes him, "a complete man and a common man yet an unusual man... a man of honor—by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and certainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world."[10] And it is precisely those characteristics that make him an outcast among the middle and upper classes, those people he is usually protecting. In the battle between good and evil, Marlowe is good enough to fight, but too good to be accepted by those he fights for.

The fiction of Ross MacDonald has taken the portrayal of the murderer and his motives even further. In many of MacDonald's stories the murderer is not trying to advance his position by committing murder, but rather he is just trying not to lose his position. Unfortunately, to get where he is usually meant doing something wrong along the way,

a wrong he has carefully hidden. Usually the sins of the father are then visited upon the heads of the children, and when the long-hidden truth threatens to destroy him, he is ready to do anything to save himself—even murder.

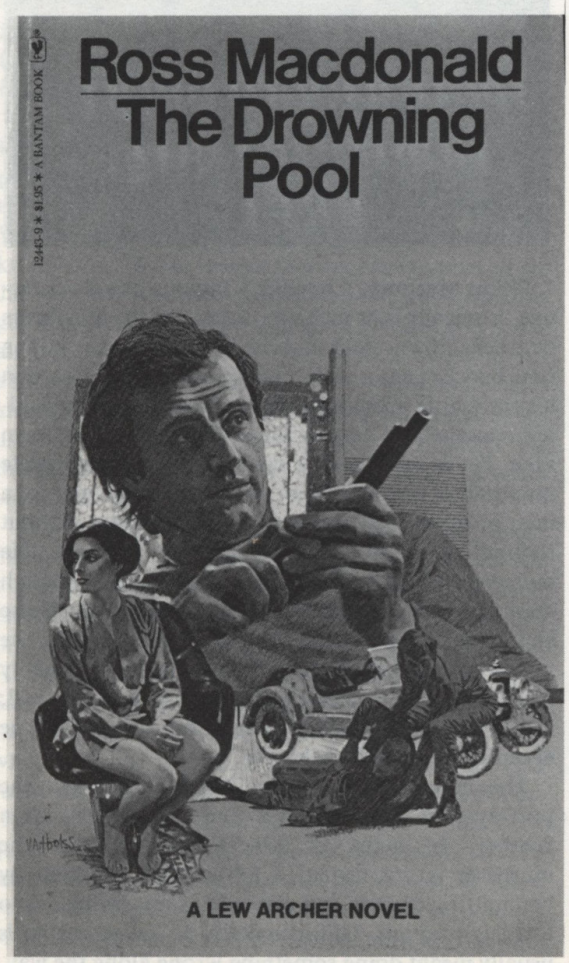
When asked in an interview why the murderers in his books so often turn out to be women, Ross MacDonald explained:

> Perhaps because, in our society, I regard women as having essentially been victimized. In nearly every case the women in my books who commit murders have been victims. People who have been victims tend to victimize.[11]

Later, when asked what makes a murderer, he replied:

> I think a murderer is someone who has been very severely injured, morally and emotionally. A murderer is someone who...has himself been murdered to the point where he strikes back blindly and self-destructively.[12]

What is significant here is that the question of what makes a murderer is even asked. No longer conveniently dismissed as the beastly, the demonic, or the criminally insane, the murderer is recognized as human, a neighbor, and a family member.



Now the question of good and evil are even less defined. To say that Society is the evil may be accurate, though it seems vague and evasive, the kind of answer I used to give my father when he wanted me to get my hair cut. Evil is not the kid raised up in poverty who eventually—or perhaps inevitably—kills someone. That is an evil, and he may be evil, but that is not the kind of evil that detective fiction is concerned with.

For the kid from the streets the middle-class distinctions of good and evil are blurred—they've been filtered down from people who could afford them. But the tragedy of the lawyer or the corporate executive who kills is that they have usually attempted to live their lives by those concepts. But something happened. Somewhere or at some time they went against those principles, and in trying to preserve what they had attained, or by trying to keep covered their past sins, they have committed murder.

Lew Archer, MacDonald's private detective, is not afraid to feel sympathy for the murderers he exposes. In some cases, Archer may even make his own decision about how justice will best be served. In *The Drowning Pool,* sixteen-year-old Cathy Slocum murders her grandmother, whom she blames for turning her father into a homosexual. By committing this murder she believes her parents will stop fighting and divide the inheritance; her mother then going off with Ralph Knudson, a local police officer she's been having an affair with, which allows Cathy's father and she going off together. But her mother commits suicide and her father embarks on an affair with a male poet. It is then revealed that Knudson, not Slocum, is Cathy's real father. Archer, believing, or maybe just hoping, that Cathy might someday adjust and become a useful person, and knowing prison would destroy any possibilities for her future, allows the real father and daughter to go off together.[13]

What it all comes down to after the page numbers have been cited and the famous men quoted is that we as the detective story audience no longer see, or pretend to see, good and evil as clearly defined as middle- and upper-class audiences once saw them, or wanted to see them. Like Raymond Chandler's and Ross MacDonald's victim/murderers, we find we no longer believe in the institutions we once did, whether it be the institution of marriage or the government institutions such as the FBI and CIA. Or even the Presidency.

And as our attitude toward the "good" institutions changed, so has our attitude toward the criminal. One of the main signs our attitude has changed is that the fastest-rising crime rate is among the white-collar workers. Shoplifting is an epidemic crime running into billions of dollars a year, and it is a crime

committed mostly by middle-class people who can afford to buy the items they steal. But they claim justifications: the hospital-like conglomerate department stores have been taking advantage of them for years with their outrageously marked-up merchandise and their bathrooms always out of toilet paper.

But white-collar crime also refers to the embezzlements, phony stock deals, land swindles, banking frauds and computer data thefts, and numerous other scams that require an educated and experienced mind.

Two other events that went a long way toward changing the attitudes towards criminals were the Vietnam War and the marijuana arrests. Before that it was generally considered that anyone with a criminal record was bound to be a hardened criminal for the rest of his life. But suddenly it was our sons and daughters being arrested, printed, photographed and booked. The number of otherwise-considered "decent" people being arrested and having criminal records became so large, attitudes had to change.

Yet, the police made all those arrests with such enthusiasm one could easily begin to lose confidence in their role as protector of the middle class. Suddenly they weren't protecting it, they were invading it. The middle and upper class saw themselves more and more as victims of those instituions they thought were established to protect them. Taxes levied increased, and to many of them it seemed to go directly from their pockets into the pockets of welfare recipients. And then there was the wave of white-collar layoffs during the early 1970s. All of these things helped prepare for an audience able to empathize with the murderer.[14]

But make no mistake. Though the attitudes have changed, they have only changed toward the middle- and upper-income criminals. The kid with the sweaty T-shirt on *The Rookies* who spits at one of the cops, calls him a pig, and makes a crack about his sister, seems more reprehensible to the detective story audience than the wealthy executive on *Columbo* who has murdered his best friend for putting a dent in his Rolls Royce. Even though he's been caught, rehabilitation for someone from his background is merely a matter of weeks. Couldn't our mischievous executive be convinced not to do it again? Certainly the expense of the trials and appeals should be ample punishment.[15] As for the kid in the sweaty T-shirt, we sympathize with the under-privileged and are confident that even he will be rehabilitated—after a few years in jail.

These things have had their effect on detective fiction. The modern audience is more capable of and willing to take on stories and characters of a more complicated nature. Though basically just as desirous to see the detective and good win at the end, they view the battle a little more wisely and with less confidence in the outcome. Much of the recent detective fiction, whether it be the books of Ross MacDonald and Roger Simon, or movies such as *Chinatown* and *Night Moves,* reflects this changing awareness. Perhaps we, the modern audience, can recognize our own fears and frustrations in the motives of others; maybe wonder if, under the right pressures and circumstances, we would not do the same. It does not mean we condone, just that we understand—that along with our condemnation, we are also capable of compassion and self-doubt.

Raymond Obstfeld's latest novel is Dead Heat *(Charter Books). He teaches at Orange County College.*

Notes

1. I refer here, of course, to Obstfeld's Jewish Delicatessen, 452 Market Street, Williamsport, Penn., for anyone traveling through in need of a good Reuben sandwich.
2. See Elliot Gilbert's note on this in his article "The Detective as Metaphor in the Nineteenth Century" in *The Mystery Writer's Art* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970), p. 293.
3. Rex Stout, *Too Many Women* (New York: Bantam, 1972), p. 162.
4. Except for the substitution of the word *motive* for *clue,* the quote is taken from John Dickson Carr's article "The Grandest Game in the World" in *The Mystery Writer's Art,* p. 230.
5. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Purloined Letter," *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (New York: Spencer Press, 1936), p. 284.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder," *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes,* William S. Baring-Gould, ed. (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1967), Vol. II, p. 430.
8. *Ibid.,* p. 431.
9. Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," *The Simple Art of Murder* (New York: Ballantine, 1972), p. 2.
10. *Ibid.,* p. 20.
11. Ross MacDonald in "An Interview with Ross MacDonald" by Ralph Bruno Sipper. *The Mystery and Detection Annual,* 1975, Donald Adams, ed. (Beverly Hills: Donald Adams, 1973), p. 54.
12. *Ibid.,* p. 55.
13. See Stephen R. Carter's interesting article, "Ross MacDonald: The Complexity of the Modern Quest for Justice," in *The Mystery and Detection Annual,* 1975.
14. One interesting sign of the change in middle-class attitudes toward crime and criminals is the appearance of open advertising, on radio, television and buses, by bailbondsmen. Once considered a sinister occupation, with which no decent citizen would come in contact, the Vietnam War protesters' and pot smokers' arrests quickly acquainted many middle-class families with the services of bailbondsmen. Now they appear on TV like used-car salesmen or credit dentists. Certainly advertising adds an air of respectability to everything.
15. Since most of us have been brought up under the paralegal tutelage of Perry Mason/Petrocelli/Kate McShane, even the average viewer is aware that the major flaw of *Columbo* is that the famous clue with which he uncovers the murderer at the end of each show is so circumstantial that it will never hold up in court.

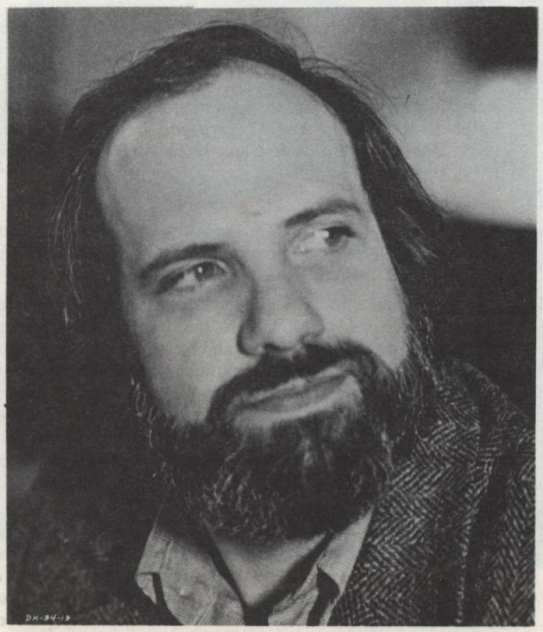
DRESSED TO KILL

An Appreciation

By Stuart M. Kaminsky

The films of Brian DePalma have frequently called attention to their debt to Alfred Hitchcock. This is particularly true of *Sisters,* including its Bernard Herrmann score, *Carrie, Obsession* and *The Fury.* But no DePalma film has been as closely tied to Hitchcock's work as *Dressed to Kill* is to *Psycho.* What interests me particularly about the Hitchcock/DePalma relationship, however, is that DePalma may be working in context few filmmakers in the United States have considered. (Peter Bogdanovich's referential Hollywood films may be part of a similar context.) DePalma is not simply imitating Hitchcock or paying homage, he is using the work of Hitchcock as a popular mythic mystery background, just as novelists and filmmakers have used fairy tales, mythology and history. In a sense it is like a musical variation on a theme or tale.

Brian DePalma



Let's look at a few of the similarities, then at the differences between *Psycho* and *Dressed to Kill.*

Both films open with a "sex" scene. Hitchcock's film opens in a hotel room in Phoenix. The camera comes through a window just after Marion and Sam have made love. DePalma's film opens with a sexual fantasy. We view the nude Kate (Angie Dickinson) and witness her fantasy of being attacked. A crucial difference exists in the two openings. For Hitchcock, sex is bypassed for a consideration of the problem of the lovers getting together. We arrive too late to see the sex act. Hitchcock presents Marion's frustration not a sexual frustration but a domestic wish. She wants to marry Sam, wants a "normal" relationship, domestic bliss, a wedded idea. Kate has wedded bliss, money. It is not a domestic ideal she wishes to attain but an "abnormal" relationship.

More than one-third of both films deals with and remains within the confines of the perception of the initial victim Marion/Kate. They either appear in the shots, are being looked at by someone, or we see what they are seeing (point of view shots). Marion steals money and flees. She feels guilt but is determined. People look at her. She feels their eyes on her: those of her boss, a policeman with mirror glasses, a used-car salesman and finally Norman Bates, her murderer. Without attaining her "normal" goal, she realizes that what she is doing is "wrong" and

Keith Gordon as an electronics genius and Angie Dickinson as his mother.

determines to return the money. In contrast, Kate achieves her fantasy, has a sexual encounter with a man she meets in the museum. She feels no guilt until *after* she gets what she wants. Only then must she face the eyes of the little girl and her own sense of guilt. Or is it even guilt she feels? There is as much evidence in her expression that she is feeling self pity. Kate dies because she goes to retrieve her wedding ring, the symbol of something Marion wants and never achieves. In a sense, Marion is punished for what she has thought and planned rather than for what she has done. In contrast, Kate is killed for what she has done, for sexual activity. Both positions are moral and somewhat conservative. Hitchcock's, however, is more Christian and self-righteous. Marion lies dead with a tear-drop of water in her eyes. DePalma's position is more Old Testament in nature. Kate dies for her actions, for the union of her fantasy with action. She pays for what she has done. Marion pays for what she has not had a chance to do.

In both cases, the woman with whom we are made to identify visually is killed by a man dressed as a woman. Marion is killed by Norman's "mother"; Kate by Dr. Elliott's "sister" (though it is not literally his sister). Both use sharp instruments, knife/razor.

Following the death of the initial woman protagonist, a radical change takes place in the films. In *Psycho,* initial perspective is given immediately but only briefly (less than five minutes) to Norman Bates, whom we later discover is the murderer. After Marion's car containing her body sinks into the muddy water, perspective and point of view (including presence in the frame) shifts to a number of characters—Marion's sister Lylah, Arbogast the detective; and Sam Loomis, Marion's lover. It does not really return to Norman till the end of the film. *Dressed to Kill,* likewise, begins dividing attention and perspective among Dr. Elliott, Liz and Peter, the victim's son. There are a few instances in the film in which action takes place without the presence or knowledge of one of these characters. For example, a young cab driver helps Liz knock down the pursuing "Bobbie" when Liz is already gone from the scene. We see it, but Liz does not. We could, of course, argue that "Bobbie" as Dr. Elliott is in the shot. The important point, however, is that in both films, specific identification is taken away once the initial woman with whom we are "identifying" is murdered.

Specifically, when Marion dies, we have a cleaning-up sequence in which we watch Norman wash up and dispose of the body and clues. In *Dressed to Kill,* it is not the murderer's home ground where the killing takes place. It is a public place. The elevator is a bloody mess. Liz is left holding the razor. Instead of an immediate move to the murderer's perspective as in *Psycho, Dressed to Kill* moves to the perspective of the potential second victim, Liz. The "cleaning up" attempted by Dr. Elliott is all psychological. He wants to make Liz and Peter "feel better." He wants to help Bobbie. In *Psycho,* we are made aware even before Marion's death (through the voyeurism of Norman) that Norman is not a conventional hero. In contrast, Dr. Elliott is presented even before Kate's death as potential hero. In *Psycho,* heroism passes from Arbogast to Sam/Lylah. In *Dressed to Kill,* heroism appears to be shared by Elliott/Liz/Peter. In both films, the woman remains essentially the real and potential victim. In *Dressed to Kill,* Kate is the victim of her sexuality and Liz the controller of her sexuality. But, in both films, written and directed by men, the real women are physically helpless in the face of male aggression. It is ironic that the murderers are false women, men who lose control.

While Liz is not Kate's sister, they form a duality. Liz is not, until the end of the film, presented as a victim of fantasy. On the contrary, she is a feet-on-the-ground businesswoman. Marion and Kate are

Nancy Allen is roughed up by a gang of subway toughs.

victims of female fantasies. Liz's goal is to use the fantasy of others to control her destiny. Complimenting Liz's pursuit of the killer is Peter's pragmatism, his control of the mechanical. Peter and Dr. Elliott are a rather traditional horror/mystery film set of contrasting positions. Dr. Elliott wants to get at the "truth" through the mind and Peter wants to get at the truth through technology. Suspicion of and even hostility toward psychiatry is the norm in popular culture. Hitchcock's psychiatrist (played by Simon Oakland) is a rather insensitive boor whose explanation is at least questioned by the voice-over we hear of Norman/mother at the end of the film. Dr. Elliott is highly sensitive and highly dangerous. The psychiatrist is equated with madness.

It is worth noting that *Psycho* ends with the fantasy of the murderer—Norman/mother in the cell—while *Dressed to Kill* ends with the fantasy of the potential victim, Liz. The ending of *Dressed to Kill* is remarkably similar to that of *Carrie* in which the "good" girl is haunted by the nightmare and ends weeping. The ending of *Sisters* (the scene before the final shot of Charles Durning on the telephone pole) is also similar, with the Jennifer Salt character, who like Liz is a pragmatist, as the victim of a male aggression which has left her weak and vulnerable. In short, Hitchcock, as is so frequently true in his films, is concerned about the guilt/response of the villain. DePalma is concerned about the guilt/response of the victim.

Both films reach a climax when the youg man and woman go to the house/office of the suspect to get information. In both cases, the woman enters the house and searches for the information.

In both cases, the woman goes into the room of the ultimate killer and finds nothing. Lylah is looking for Norman's mother to ask her about Marion. Lylah finds a box in Norman's room. She opens it and we never find out what, if anything, was in it. Liz finds the appointment book which will supposedly reveal the identity of the murderer. She finds a name, but the name is meaningless. What is meaningful is that both Lylah and Liz become potential victims who must be saved from a male dressed as and thinking he is a woman. A prime difference, however, is that Lylah is saved by the hero, Sam, while Liz is not saved by Peter but by a policewoman. A real woman saves Liz, who has provoked the attack.

We may assume from filmic convention that Sam and Lylah may get together romantically. *Psycho* includes several hints of the possibility—their registration at the Bates motel as man and wife, the deputy sheriff's belief that they are a nice couple—but there is nothing specific to assure the conclusion. In contrast, Liz goes home with Peter. Peter is a "good" boy, an intelligent boy, but a boy more similar to Norman than to Sam. After all both Peter and Norman have hobbies—taxidermy, computers. Both Peter and Norman lose their mothers. Both Peter and Norman feel themselves alone. Norman has, apparently, murdered his mother's lover. Peter quite clearly resents his stepfather, Michael. Twice in the film he responds angrily that Mike is not his father. But it is not Peter who has fallen victim to Oedipal rage. It is Peter who survives, triumphs and comforts Liz who is now fantasizing as Kate did before her. While Norman Bates was the villain of *Psycho,* his equivalent is the hero of *Dressed to Kill.*

Nancy Allen discovers a murder in an elevator.

A central moral difference between Hitchcock and DePalma is also evident in the explanation of the psychiatrists near the end of the film. Hitchcock's psychiatrist emphatically states that Norman is not a transvestite. The sexuality which drives the characters in *Psycho* is presented at a latent level. In *Dressed to Kill,* the sexuality is manifest. Dr. R. Elliott is a transvestite who wants to be a transsexual. Sexuality is something to be faced openly in *Dressed to Kill.* Liz faces it openly and Peter does too in the restaurant scene in which we watch an appalled older woman eavesdrop and become ill over Liz's description of a transsexual operation. For Liz and Peter there is not guilt or fantasy involved in sexuality, at least none presented to us until Liz's final fantasy, a fantasy which has a distinct waking end, but whose beginning is not at all clear.

The mystery/horror films of Brian DePalma are unique in their playing on and building a personal set of works from the films of Alfred Hitchcock. He is not simply continuing the style and tradition of Hitchcock. DePalma is creating new works of mystery acknowledging the importance of his mentor as few artists in any media have done in the past.

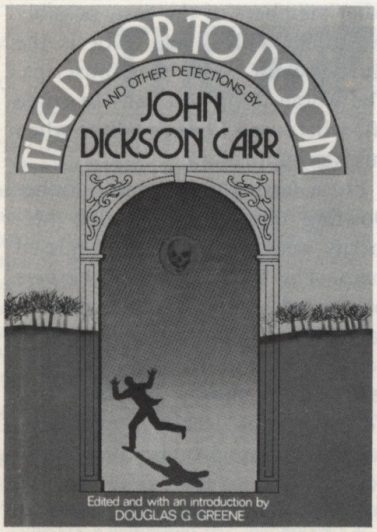
Stuart Kaminsky's latest Toby Peters novel is Never Cross a Vampire *(St. Martin's Press).*

AJH REVIEWS

Allen J. Hubin, Consulting Editor

Photo: Robert Smull

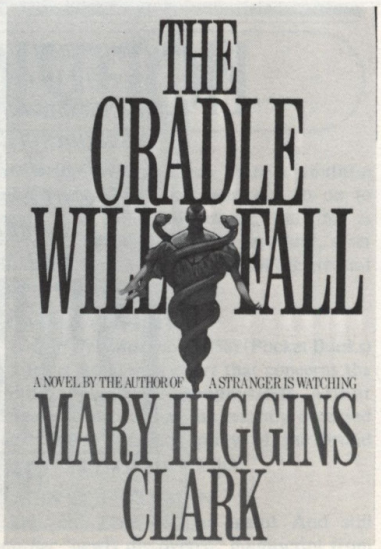
The long-awaited—at least by those who knew it was coming—last volume of John Dickson Carr's work has arrived: ***The Door to Doom and Other Detections*** (Harper & Row, $12.95). Although its editor, Douglas G. Greene, expects to be paid for his efforts, I'm sure he would agree that his was a labor of love: so great a fondness for Carr's style and inventiveness has he that he would track uncollected Carr tales to their lairs, resurrect *Suspense* radio scripts, and plead the case so effectively that publication was ensured. The wait *has* been worth it, for even in his first crime stories (four Bencolin adventures from Carr's college literary magazine) is Carr's ingenuity of plot, his mastery of mood, in evidence. The six radio plays were first published in EQMM (would that some of the numerous unpublished scripts had been transcribed and included here), and these are an especial pleasure to those of us who remember old time radio. Then follow three stories from the pulps, two short Sherlockian parodies enacted during MWA banquets in the '40s, two essays (including "The Grandest Game in the World") and a detailed bibliography (which includes all the radio scripts attributed to Carr in the U.S. and England). A very fine volume to savor and enjoy, to round out a Carr collection, even to meet Carr in for the first time.



Mary Higgins Clark's latest, ***The Cradle Will Fall*** (Simon & Schuster, $10.95), is surely polished and absorbing, and only set against the remarkable standard of her *Where Are the Children?* and *A Stranger Is Watching* does it pale slightly. Kate DeMaio, a young widow, is a prosecutor in New Jersey. Some menstrual difficulties lead to a car accident, which leads in turn to a short hospital stay, during which she witnesses—or thinks she does, in her drugged state—a murder. The killer, we soon learn, is a celebrated obstetrician, who suspects he was seen, who's making deadly sure his tracks are covered. And by whom Kate is scheduled for minor surgery. The web that the doctor weaves and its unravelling are the elements of this solid suspense novel, which is unobjectionably part of the woman-in-peril subgenre.

Mysteries set in Michigan are uncommon, and Amos Walker may be Detroit's first private eye. He appears in Loren D. Estleman's ***Motor City Blue*** (Houghton Mifflin, $9.95), wherein retired mobster Ben Morningstar hires him to find his missing ward, Maria. She dropped out of finishing school and—according to the evidence of a raunchy photo—into the pornographic picture racket. As in all private peeper capers, Walker's probing overturns a can of deadly worms, among them a pair of chummy brothers from the South, assorted lovelies of the porn trade, a charming local madam, the Feds, and a black labor leader deceased these many months. Amos is a likeable chap, a mix of rye and wry; and his creator has done well by him in this debut.

Brian Garfield's ***The Paladin*** (Simon & Schuster, $12.95) is a spirited and fascinating tale, with a good deal to say about the leveling effects—the pervasion of ends-justify-means thinking—of war. It purports to rest on fact: that Churchill recruited a fifteen-year-old boy to be his agent and killer. It's here I have trouble: true it may largely be, but the idea of these exploits by a mid-teens schoolboy is more than my swallowing mechanism can manage. So I pretended



Christopher Creighton was five years older and was swept into the narrative, which describes several years of episodes variously dire, devious and despicable, aimed first at Britain's survival and then her victory, with many a revealing glimpse of Churchill and others of note in the process.

B. M. Gill renders the British public school and its people, both young and adult, with fine, careful strokes in ***Death Drop*** (Scribners, $8.95). Twelve-year-old David Fleming died in rather bizarre fashion while on a field trip. His perambulatory father comes charging back from abroad stunned by the loss and determined to exact vengeance. Was David's teacher negligent; could there be active evil at Marristone Grange? The narrative answering these questions rises to a memorable finale.

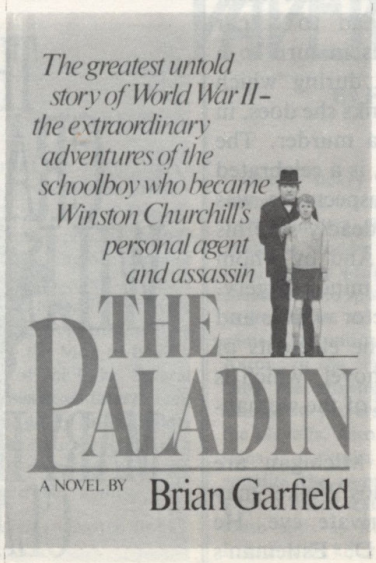
Jonathan Goodman has written and edited works of criminology—TADians may recall an article by him in these pages. One famous homicide he has explored was the Wallace murder ("The Killing of Julia Wallace"), and that case becomes the point of departure for his fourth crime novel, ***The Last Sentence*** (St. Martin's, $8.95). Delia Willis was butchered in her home while her antique-dealer husband was away chasing a phantom customer at a phantom address. James Willis, the likely—and only—suspect, is tried, convicted, and then released on appeal. The crime thus remains officially unsolved for thirty years—till a newspaper publishes the confession of the self-avowed killer of Delia Willis. This brings into action once more the writer of a booklength account of the Willis killing, now to poke around again in murders old and fresh. Well done, this tale, with a goodly (if not fairly clued) final surprise.

Patrick, the protagonist of MacDonald Harris's ***The Treasure of Sainte Foy*** (Atheneum, $11.95), is a young American academic who, having failed to achieve tenure, joins a local terrorist group in France in a raid on the religious treasures held in the remote Abbey of Sainte Foy. Marie-Ange is a guide at the church, and she and Patrick drift together as the caper drifts toward failure. Harris is unusually effective in portraying the casual commitment of Patrick and Marie-Ange, in bringing to quirky life a village and its policeman. And at the end, even though I didn't accept, didn't want to accept and believe, Harris had so drawn me into his story that the impact was powerful indeed. Many strong images and impressions here.

I missed Lucille Kallen's first novel about Massachusetts newspaper publisher Charles Benjamin Greenfield (*Introducing C. B. Greenfield,* 1979), but I have before me her second, ***The Tanglewood Murder*** (Wyndham, $9.95). This is a most agreeable tale, not because of virtuosity in plotting but primarily in character sketches and even more in freshness and wit of language. Greenfield, a music lover, goes to Tanglewood, in the northern part of the state, for a Boston Symphony festival. He drags along reporter Maggie Rome (the narrator) for purely selfish reasons—selfishness being one of his most highly developed faculties—and we're off. A plague of disruptions seems to have settled on the Symphony, culminating in murder. Leave it to Greenfield, after false starts in sundry directions, to ferret out whodunit.

I'm very fond of Michael Z. Lewin's novels about Indianapolis private eye Albert Samson, so ***Outside In*** (Knopf, $8.95) comes as a shock. Not because it's without Samson, but because it's a dud. Oh, the makings of a good idea are here: a mystery writer, in the throes of his latest thriller, is distracted by a real murder, into which he bungles, and we have alternating passages of his stumbling investigation and his fictional hero's rather more vigorous caper. But writer Willy Werth is in no wise interesting, nor are any other members of the cast, possibly excluding Willy's wife. Nor is the murder, nor Willy's manuscript. The whole thing just fails to come off; where was Lewin's editor when this was happening?

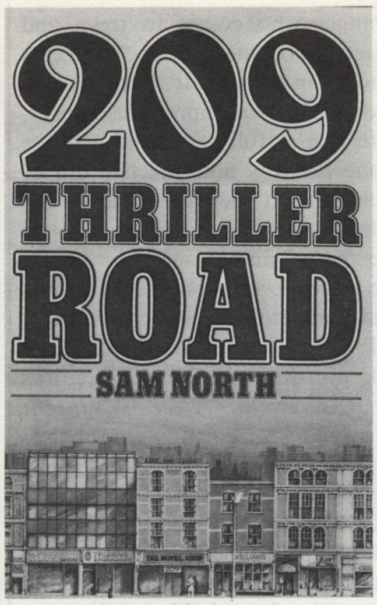
I've a feeling that the first Father Dowling mysteries by Ralph McInerny were well received; I missed them. The fifth is ***Second Vespers*** (Vanguard, [price?]), of which I have no strong positive impressions. Perhaps I read it badly—in very short, too short, patches—but *Vespers* seems jerky in narration, delivering more promise than execution, failing to put full flesh on Dowling. The Father, a recovered



alcoholic, serves the parish of Fox River, Illinois, a present hotbed of interest in its chief literary son, the late Francis O'Rourke. To an aroused local citizenry, turning over stones for O'Rourkian memorabilia, comes a nosy stranger, now-you-see-him, now-you-don't. More intrigues surface, then a body. And Dowling, with his good ear and friendship with Chief Keegan, spots a slip and identifies a not-so-surpising killer.

209 Thriller Road by Sam North (St. Martin's, $8.95) is a light bit of criminous British froth, but it does have a couple of original ideas and a certain backchat wit. Sam North (the character) opens his shop for business at the titular address. He offers to write and print novels on order: you want to be the hero of a hardboiled caper?—Sam's your man. Along comes Danny Plant, the gangster who runs London's scrap business. No hero role for Danny; he wants to be a master villain, and gives Sam a list of names to be worked into the story line. He expects delivery of the book on return from a trip to Bermuda, but next day's paper describes his hit-and-run death. Then various cold-blooded types start fighting over Plant's empire, with Sam (now in the role of unwilling private eye) and the list right in the middle of the mayhem. The ending will turn you on your ear.

I resist the idea of a mass murderer who functions as a "hero," who rides off into the sunset fat and happy. But such we have in a magnum-caper novel, ***The Night They Stole Manhattan*** by Lewis Orde and Bill Michaels (Putnam, $11.95). General Huckleby, his mind unhinged by personal losses, concocts a mad scheme to convince the U.S. that it is inadequately defended. He hires a mercenary, Peter Stiehl, who recruits sixty terrorists (twenty each from Ireland, Germany and the Middle East). The idea is to paralyze Manhattan, cut off its bridges and tunnels, and claim $1 billion in ransom—and do so



without loss of innocent life. But there are twists and turns which reroute the plot frequently, so that the result is a tale of blood and—it must be admitted—of surprise and suspense.

Hugh Pentecost has observed somewhere that thinking up believable plots for the confined setting of his Pierre Chambrun series is no easy task. Not too surprisingly, then, the fifteenth novel set in New York's Beaumont Hotel is ultimately not very remarkable despite the smoothness of an old pro's writing. In ***Beware Young Lovers*** (Dodd, Mead, $7.95), Sharon Brand, aging actress and old friend of Chambrun's, comes to the hotel to participate in a famous talk show to be televised from there. She has her young lover in tow, and he's the first murder victim. All are immediately reminded that the lover's predecessor, also young, disappeared without trace a few years before. Has someone launched a peculiar vendetta against Sharon? If so, why, and how is that talk show involved?

In Ellis Peters's ***One Corpse Too Many*** (Morrow, $8.95), we return to twelfth-century England and the second excursion into crime-solving by Brother Cadfael. Two cousins are warring over England's throne. The one, Stephen, captures Shrewsbury, a town adjacent to the abbey where Cadfael has taken holy orders after many years of worldly pursuits. After carrying the town, Stephen orders a number of his enemies killed in the amiable fashion of the day, and when it comes time to bury the corpses there's one too many. Cadfael finds much not strictly religious on his plate: several affairs of the other cousin, including a treasury and a winsome daughter; Stephen's hunt for both and a frustrated killer's search for the treasure; and his own determination not to let the spare corpse go unavenged. Rich in history and depiction.

Aaron Nathan Rotsstein, born in Israel, now a U.S. citizen and possessor of degrees in physics and law, debuts in our field with ***Judgment in St. Peter's*** (Putnam, $9.95). Here, against a backdrop of Rome and the Basilica, he sets Catholicism and the priesthood, terrorists both committed and tentative, and the hunt by a Jewish lawyer from New York for the Nazi Iron Guardist who butchered his family in WWII. Meanwhile, a police inspector, an unknowing assassination target himself, tries to put the puzzle together. Acceptable.

Ian St. James, described as a "millionaire before he was thirty" who "retired from business in 1977 to become a full-time writer" portrays with confidence the British world of finance in ***The Monkey Stones*** (Atheneum, $9.95). Mike Townsend is a rising young money manipulator, doing wonders for a bank, when he's lured into the private empire of Rupert Hallsworth. Mike's stock is rising by the minute when along comes Pepalasis and his island of diamonds ...the chance of a lifetime, to put together an underwriting framework to support this find. But strange things begin to happen around the edges, and Mike's control—if he ever had it—crumbles. Money could be the death of him... Sound suspense if you can forgive Townsend's incredible naïveté.

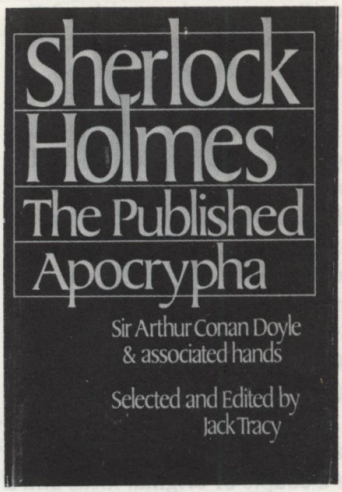
Although Douglas Terman's ***Free Flight*** (Scribners, $11.95) deals with "criminals" on the run from forces of "law and order," it is really only marginally in our genre. Time: late 1980s. Places: Vermont and Canada. Setting: shortly after the brief and atomic WWIII, with a loose coalition of Russians and local sadists in charge of a territorialized and totalitarian North America. Gregory Mallen, once an Air Force pilot, survived the blasts and radiation in rural Vermont. His free lifestyle and possession of weapons—now heinous crimes—come to the attention of the Peace Division. He's captured and interrogated—a high-technology exercise involving exquisite torment. He and a fellow prisoner escape and head for Canada on Mallen's aircraft—a hybrid sailplane equipped with a small engine. Pursuit is immediate: the implacable Officer McKennon—whose own survival is also at stake—sends heavily-armed helicopters into the air. The story of Mallen's flight for survival may not be the usual crime fiction, but it had me compulsively peeking pages ahead and is certainly a worthy successor to Terman's outstanding *First Strike* (1979).

Terrorists planning an ambitious assault on a strategic target may be nothing new these days, but in ***The Samson Strike*** (Atheneum, $9.95) Tony Williamson invests the idea with high tension, urgency and immediacy. A renegade SAS (Special Air Services) agent hires out to Middle East terrorists to seize a huge new North Sea oil platform and hold the world to ransom. Jonathan Stagg of SAS suspects what his old colleague is up to, but can't persuade his masters. So it's collision course in the frigid, storm-tossed North Sea, with many of the world's leading necks—not to mention Stagg's—on the line. Brutal, violent, very effective.

Shotgun by William Wingate (St. Martin's, $11.95) evokes well a small, insular Tennessee town, its transplanted (from New York) hoodlum boss, his bullies, the stranger who comes to town and upsets the balance, and the innocents who get in the way. It's strongly told and builds to impressive impact, with one artfully extended surprise along the way and effective use of violence. On the other side of the ledger, I can't see the protagonist as the "hero," and at one point late in the story the author's artistry deserts him completely in a wallow in sex.

Fred Zackel's San Francisco private eye, Michael Brennan, returns in ***Cinderella After Midnight*** (Coward McCann Geoghegan, $11.95). This is a long (334 pp.), complex tale, one whose plot seems to lack discipline, whose characters fail to stick in the mind, and whose raunchy settings fail to appeal. That summation is probably harsh; some will probably hail Zackel's arrival and this book. Zackel has perhaps over-reached himself here, but it will be interesting to see what he does in the future. An "upper-class" hooker hires Brennan to find her teenaged daughter, who proves to have taken to pornographic films and an abode with a lesbian in the Tenderloin. This seems straightforward enough until a wealthy philanthropist and California's woman U.S. Senator involve themselves; everyone wants to hire Brennan and the corpses start accumulating...

Notes in passing on books that deserve separate, extended reviews (any volunteers?)...***Secrets of the World's Best-Selling Writer*** by Francis L. and Roberta B. Fugate (Morrow, $12.95), exploring "the storytelling techniques of Erle Stanley Gardner" . . . ***Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha*** selected and edited by Jack Tracy and offering parodies, stories and plays (including two plays by William Gillette); from Houghton Mifflin ($11.95) . . . ***Detective Fiction,*** "a collection of critical essays edited by Robin W. Winks" (Prentice-Hall, $4.95 in the paperback edition); the introduction by Winks is new but the well-selected essays are all reprints . . . ***The Sherlock Holmes Book of Quotations*** compiled and



classified by Bruce R. Beaman (Gaslight Publications, $8.95) . . . ***R. Austin Freeman: The Anthropologist at Large*** by Oliver Mayo (Kellynch Pty Ltd., 56 Lockwood Road, Burnside, South Australia 5066; $10), a biography of Freeman concentrating on Freeman as scientist, thinker and optimist, setting Freeman in his social context and drawing upon many unpublished letters . . . ***Conan Doyle and the Latter-Day Saints,*** a revised and expanded edition of a work first published in 1971, by Jack Tracy (Gaslight Publications, $8.95) . . . ***A Talent to Deceive: An Appreciation of Agatha Christie*** by Robert Barnard, crime writer and professor of English literature (Dodd, Mead, $10) . . . ***"You Know My Method": A Juxtaposition of Charles S. Peirce and Sherlock Holmes*** by Thomas A. Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok (Gaslight Publications, $8.95) . . . and finally and most fabulously, a "companion volume" to *The World Bibliography of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson:* ***The International Sherlock Holmes*** by Ronald Burt De Waal (Archon, $57.50), a work which "provides a complete listing, with annotations or descriptions, of Sherlockiana appearing since 1971, as well as retrospective items not listed in *The World Bibliography*"; without this any Sherlockian worth his syringe cannot be!

—AJH

REX STOUT Newsletter

With the death of Ruth Stout, on 29 August 1980, at the age of ninety-seven, the last of Rex Stout's eight siblings has departed the scene. During the last month of her life Ruth spoke only in rhyming couplets and quatrains. She didn't realize that she was doing this, of course, but she would have loved it if she had. Life was meant to be *fun,* Ruth insisted. And she hated to do things the same way everyone else did. Dying with a difference would have suited her to a 't'.

* * * * *

On 25 November 1980, Garland published *Rex Stout: An Annotated Primary and Secondary Bibliography.* Edited by Guy M. Townsend, Judson C. Sapp, Arriean Schemer, and myself, this book, which runs to 226 pages and sells for $30.00, has been three years in preparation. A complete record of writings by and about Rex Stout, it includes his novels, short stories, collections of stories, articles, reviews, poetry, and broadcasts. Secondary literature includes interviews as well as criticism. Most items are fully annotated, making this volume a cornucopia of information for readers, researchers, and students of detective literature in general. Its publication was heralded with an autographing party at The Mysterious Bookshop on 6 December with 200 members of the Wolfe Pack, in NYC for the Third Annual Black Orchids dinner and Second Nero Wolfe Assembly, in attendance.

* * * * *

"If it must be Thomas, let it be Mann, and if it must be Wolfe, let it be Nero. But let it never be Thomas Wolfe."

—Peter de Vries, *Comfort Me with Apples*

* * * * *

The agenda at the Second Nero Wolfe Assembly, at the Biltmore, 6 December 1980, included talks by Tamar Crystal on Nero Wolfe's New York, Jean Thelwell on "The Legal Wolfe," William De Andrea on the style of the tales, David Anderson on Archie Goodwin, Judson Sapp on Stout exotica, and one by me on the Stout Collection at Boston College.

* * * * *

"Christmas Party" supplied the motif of the 1980 Black Orchids dinner at the Biltmore. On hand was Nero Wolfe, as bartender, in a Santa Claus suit.

* * * * *

Nero Wolfe is mentioned in Gabriel Marquez's *Last Days of the Patriarch.*

* * * * *

In *The Thief Who Came to Dinner* (Doubleday, 1971), Terrence Lore Smith uses a long quotation (63 words) from a Nero Wolfe story as an epigraph. Since the book contains several explicit scenes centering on sexual perversion, I asked Rex Stout how he had come to authorize the quotation. Rex told me: "I've never heard of the book or the man. Usually permission is asked to use a quotation of that length, but if legal action were taken many judges would call it 'fair use'."

* * * * *

David Rife, Professor of English at Lycoming College, Williamsport, Penna., has discovered that William Faulkner quoted Nero Wolfe in his Nobel address. I have verified this but shall leave the full disclosure to Professor Rife, who is now writing it up.

* * * * *

From my mailbag:

"One can't help but like Rex because he doesn't try to pretend to be anything other than he is. The fabric is one hundred percent Rex; homespun, no synthetics."

—Barbara Tuchman

* * * * *

When the late James Keddie, Sr., noted Holmesian, heard Rex Stout deliver his address "Watson Was a Woman" to the Baker Street Irregulars on 31 January 1941, he—even while owning that he had no appetite for violence, dutifully challenged Rex to a duel. On 20 April 1941, Rex wrote to Kiddie in reply:

"My reaction to the idea of a personal hostile encounter is strongly similar to your own, but I think I know where I can get hold of a guy who will fight my half of the duel if you can make similar arrangements for your

By John McAleer

half. I believe it should be held in some spot where you and I can occupy comfortable seats to watch the performance.

"But whether my dueling vicar is pinked or not, I shall remain stubbornly devoted to the truth. Irene Watson was Irene Watson. How can so plain a statement possibly be refuted? As for your question hinting at a relationship between me and Colonel Sebastian Moran [aide-de-camp to the infamous Professor Moriarty], so is your grandmother.

"Cordially yours,

"Rex Stout."

* * * * *

James Keddie, Jr., like his father also a noted Holmesian, has in his possession a First Day cover of the Edgar Allan Poe stamp issued by the U.S. Post Office on 7 October 1949. It is autographed by Manfred B. Lee (Ellery Queen), Leslie Charteris, George Harmon Coxe, Richard Lockridge, and Rex Stout. On 15 April 1948, Rex autographed two books for Jim. In *Not Quite Dead Enough* he wrote: "For Jim Keddie—Whom I do get to see now and then, but not quite often enough." In *Too Many Women* he wrote: "For Jim Keddie—There will never be too many Keddies." When, in April 1966, Jim wrote to tell Rex he was facing open-heart surgery, Rex replied: "I doubt if you're as tired as you think you are. Your sentences are not tired sentences."

* * * * *

The jacket of the first edition of *Fer-de-Lance* (Ferrar & Rinehart, 1934) has on the back flap a blurb boosting *The President Vanishes,* published anonymously at the same time. Rex, of course, was the author of both books.

* * * * *

Rex's distinction between cross-cousins and ortho-cousins was the subject of lively and approving discussion recently in Michael Gartner's "Wordsworth" column, a favorite with newspaper readers in Iowa.

* * * * *

In the November 1980 issue of *Travel & Leisure* (pp. 39–44), Joan Stephenson Graf does a superb wrapup on "Mystery Societies: Partners in Crime." To the Wolfe Pack, Joan Graf accords the pre-eminent position—a woman of true discernment. Surely Nero Wolfe would rise from his chair to greet her.

* * * * *

Shooting for the NBC Nero Wolfe TV series, starring William Conrad, got under way on 16 November with plans, at that time, for the premiere presentation to be given on 21 January 1981. Conrad reportedly will receive $550,000 for appearing in the first eight episodes which, unlike the radio series of the 1940s and 1950s, will be based on Stout's own stories. At this writing it's still uncertain as to whether or not Conrad's Wolfe will have a beard!

* * * * *

I've just located two Stout broadcasts which, until now, I had not realized had achieved publication. Both were "American Forum" broadcasts, though separated by seventeen years. The first, "Further Aid to Britain," a Mutual Broadcasting System radio broadcast, took place on Sunday, 24 November 1948. Participating with Rex were Senator Rush Holt of Virginia, Congressman Melvin Maas of Minnesota, and Ralph Ingersoll, editor of *PM*. It's Number 60, Vol. 2, of the Forum's printed series. The second, an NBC radio and TV broadcast, "The Author's Responsibility to America," Number 8, Vol. 20, of the Forum's printed series, occurred on Sunday, 5 May 1957. Sharing the limelight with Rex then were Cleveland Amory, Russel Crouse, and William L. Shirer.

* * * * *

The January 1965 Book-of-the-Month Club *News* (pp. 5, 13) has an article, "John Hersey," by Rex Stout. Rex then was president of the Authors League. Hersey was his strong right arm and heir apparent. They had been friends for twenty years. Nowhere has Rex paid a nobler tribute to a friend. Hersey was equally fond of Rex. In 1971, when Rex told a *New York Times* reporter that he was ready to die at any time but would like to live long enough to see Richard Nixon out of office, Hersey at once wired him, "You have given me the only reason I can think of for wanting to vote for Richard Nixon."

* * * * *

Construction of a vast new Convention Center is under way in NYC. It will swallow up much of West Thirty-fifth Street, including, as *The New Yorker* has pointed out, Nero Wolfe's brownstone. Right now, in fact, there's a yawning hole where the brownstone should be. In a million bosoms, however, it remains intact.

* * * * *

From Singapore, Dr. B. T. See writes to say that he belongs to that curious elite who carry in their bosoms a mirror image of the floor plan of the brownstone. Their ranks continue to swell, inspired no doubt by the knowledge that Ruth Stout herself was the first to own that she had fallen prey to this illusion. Or is it an illusion?

* * * * *

Currently I'm writing 12,000 words on Rex Stout for a forthcoming volume of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*.

* * * * *

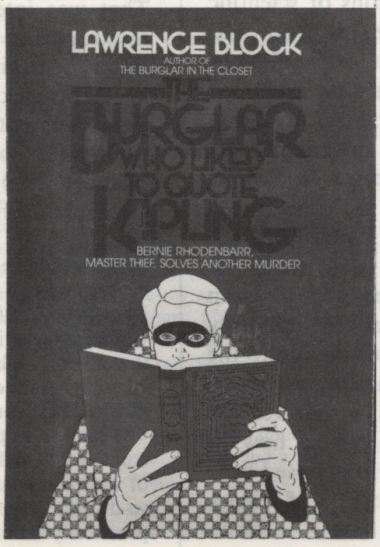
The New Yorker, 29 September 1980, under the heading "The Good Old Days," features an excerpt from Rex Stout's *The Broken Vase:* "Diego was gazing at him, speechless. He found speech only to pronounce in disbelief and withering scorn, a completely unprintable word." In fairness to Rex's peers today, Mark Haskell, in a recent Hugh Pentecost novel, in the Pierre Chambrun series, shows the same reluctance to put into print a word to him, in context, tasteless.

* * * * *

In August, at the request of the Stout family, I spent a week at High Meadow, making arrangements to transfer all of Rex's manuscripts, personal correspondence, books, and related memorabilia to Boston College, where they now have a place of honor as the nucleus of the College's detective fiction collection. The Stout family has asked me to serve as curator of the collection. In due time, several further books of interest to Nero Wolfe fans will be drawn from these papers.

* * * * *

Kayleen Sybrandt, of Wilmington, Dela., has established that on TV's "Omnibus" program, 9 December 1956, Alistair Cooke presented a play, "The Art of Murder?" in which a murder occurred and was then solved in different ways by famous detective-story writers and their heroes. The script was prepared by Sidney Carroll. The cast included James Daly as narrator, Felix Munso as Edgar Allan Poe, Herbert Voland as M. Dupin, Dennis Hoey as Conan Doyle, Robert Echois as Nero Wolfe, Gene Reynolds as Archie Goodwin, and Rex Stout as himself.



* * * * *

Peter E. Blau, Washington, D.C., has come up with the true identity of "Paul Chapin," whose "Volcano" is in the February 1976 issue of *Fantasy and Science Fiction*—Philip José Farmer. Thank you, Peter.

* * * * *

Margaret Farrar, widow of John Farrar, the publisher who convinced Rex Stout he should undertake the Wolfe series, tells me that Lawrence Block's *The Burglar Who Liked To Quote Kipling* is being considered by 20th Century-Fox for treatment as a two-hour TV movie. Since Margaret and I both were on the committee that picked Block's novel as winner of the first Nero Wolfe Award, in 1979, we feel now that our selection has been seconded enthusiastically. By the way, I did a 3000-word treatment of Block, as Nero Wolfe Award winner, for the Chicago *Tribune's* "Book World," 19 October 1980.

* * * * *

My novel, *Unit Pride,* a Doubleday February release, is now being readied for publication in ten foreign editions. *Unit Pride* is based on the experiences of a bank robber who has since been murdered. No. Not by me. At my insistence his widow is getting an even share of the profits. Since she's one of the finest people I know, I hope she makes a million. Hmn. That would mean I'd make a million, too. Well, why not?

* * * * *

At High Meadow, Czarna, Rex Stout's Labrador retriever, now 13, keeps watch outside Rex's office, empty these five years. Crippled with arthritis and now more grey than black, Czarna never relaxes her vigil, her loyalty an example to us all.

* * * * *

I have recently succeeded Philip Asdell as editor-publisher of *The Thorndyke File,* a journal, now in its sixth year, devoted to the writings of the admirable English detective story writer, R. Austin Freeman (1862–1943). Since Rex Stout held Freeman in high esteem, I see no conflict of interests in taking on this new responsibility. The *File* comes out twice a year. The subscription fee is $5.00 in the U.S., $6.00 elsewhere. If you think you can broaden your interests to include Thorndyke, please put a check in the mail for the appropriate amount, made out to me, and send to Mount Independence, 121 Follen Road, Lexington, Mass. 02173. In any case, keep your letters coming to me at that same address so that this Newsletter can continue to be a true source of news for the friends of Wolfe and Archie.

The Unique Mystery Magazine:

Hugo Gernsback's *Scientific Detective Monthly*

By Robert A. W. Lowndes

Part I

To radio, television, and electronics enthusiasts, Hugo Gernsback (1884–1967) is remembered as the man who established the first mail-order radio house in the world and designed the first radio set you could build at home.[1] It was he who introduced the word "television" to Americans, and he became the publisher of many manuals and periodicals dealing with the entire range of invention and do-it-yourself mechanics, as well as describing "radar" in detail before 1914.

And to most oldtime lovers of science fiction, Gernsback is the admired father of the science-fiction magazine: *Amazing Stories,* first published in March 1926, dated April, was the beginning of the specialized magazine in that field of fiction.[2] At that time, many of its readers and enthusiasts were also in the category mentioned above.

Throughout his publishing career, Gernsback held to one ideal: his magazines (with a few exceptions—most of them humor) would be educational and instructional. They would offer the public either general education in the elements of some science, or specific details of practical applications of scientific principles—or, as was frequently the case, both. His fiction magazines ran stories about extrapolations rooted in scientific principles, which were explained in simple terms during the course of a story. Obviously, no one could build a spaceship from reading narratives in *Amazing Stories* or *Science Wonder Stories*—but one could get the general idea of the types of problems that were involved, as well as reasonable speculation on how they might be solved.[3] Gernsback firmly believed that human existence could be greatly enhanced by not only science and invention itself, but by instilling into the public the basic facts and understanding of sound scientific principles in every area, so that readers could understand and intelligently choose how to improve their lives and themselves. He opposed both irrational fears of science and the worship of science as some sort of deity.

In 1929, Hugo Gernsback experienced one of the strangest bankruptcies in history. He was not broke, but the bankruptcy laws at the time permitted any three creditors whose payments were overdue to combine and require a debtor to settle at once or go into bankruptcy. Gernsback woke up one morning to learn that his publishing company had thus been forced into liquidation. He paid his creditors $1.04 on the dollar.[4] At once, he set up a new publishing operation. *Amazing Stories* was no longer his; he replaced it with *Science Wonder Stories* and *Air Wonder Stories,* as well as bringing out his radio magazine under a different title. His public benefitted, certainly—at least the science fiction enthusiasts. Now, instead of just one title every month, they had three science-fiction magazines, plus the quarterlies—for *Science Wonder Quarterly* appeared at the end of the year.

The January 1930 issues of *Science Wonder Stories* and *Air Wonder Stories* appeared in December 1929, and readers saw a full-page announcement of yet another fiction title: *Scientific Detective Monthly.* That was interesting. There were many detective, mystery, and crime magazines on the newsstands. What lay behind the new venture; what would make it a Gernsback magazine and, knowing the Gernsback ideal, different from all others to be found?

On page 5 of the January 1930 issue (Volume One, Number One), under the title "Science vs. Crime," Gernsback sums it up in an editorial, starting thus:

> In the firm belief that science in its various applications will become one of the greatest deterrents to crime, *Scientific Detective Monthly* has been launched.
>
> It is my conviction that, sooner or later, it will be found that all criminals can and should receive scientific treatment whereby their criminal impulses and tendencies may be diverted into constructive channels.
>
> While it is possible that we will always have crimes committed on the spur of the moment, due to the outburst of walled-up passions, I confidently believe that in the not-so-distant future the professional criminal will become practically extinct.

The editorial continued to note the increasing use of science and scientific research in the detection of crime, pointing toward a future in which criminals would simply be unable to cope with the constantly improved methods of detection.

> As its name implies [Gernsback says further along], *Scientific Detective Monthly* will publish no stories unless science in some way enters into their make-up, either in exploiting the detection of crimes or showing how the criminal uses science in the perpetration of his crime.[5]
>
> I sincerely believe that *Scientific Detective Monthly* will not only prove to be a creative force in this type of literature, but actually help our police authorities in their work...
>
> I feel particularly happy in the acquisition of Mr. Arthur B. Reeve, one of the originators of the scientific detective, as the Editorial Commissioner of this magazine. . . . Until further notice, *Scientific Detective Monthly* will publish a monthly story by Mr. Reeve, who will also supervise all stories that we publish in the new magazine.

What Gernsback did not say was that the "monthly" story by Mr. Reeve would be a reprint.[6] Arthur B. Reeve's detective, Craig Kennedy, had been immensely popular; nonetheless, a new generation was growing up, largely composed of members who had *not* read the short Craig Kennedy stories. The odds remained that most of such buyers of *Scientific Detective Monthly* would be reading those stories for the first time.

The January issue opened with a short article by Reeve, "What Are the Great Detective Stories and Why?" He gives high marks to Edgar Allan Poe, and finds no fault with any of the Sherlock Holmes stories; Gaboriau (Monsieur Lecoq) and Maurice Level (Arsène Lupin) come in for special praise, as does Austin Freeman (Dr. Thorndyke); nor are female mystery story writers neglected: he has good things to say about Anna Katherine Green (Violet Strange) and Mary Roberts Rinehart. But how strange! Of Rinehart, he says: "Mrs. Rinehart's detective tales are splendid stories, but no outstanding detective character in them captures the public. This seems to be true of all the women writers of detective fiction."

Lord love a duck! That editorial was written in 1929; by 1929, there had been five Hercule Poirot novels (including the controversial *Murder of Roger Ackroyd*), as well as a collection of short stories featuring him; and there had also been four Lord Peter Wimsey novels, including the very powerful *Unnatural Death,* as well as a collection of short stories. But Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers are not mentioned, even casually. Reeve concludes his comments, saying,

> Once I thought this was an age of science, and that, consequently, the mechanism of detective stories had undergone a considerable change since the time of Poe and Gaboriau; in fact, that a modern detective story, if it at all aimed at popular favor, should be based on scientific lines. Later on, I departed from that idea. But I wonder which is right?

That helps to explain, partly, why the bulk of the Craig Kennedy stories in *Scientific Detective Monthly* are reprints. The early stories, following the example of Edwin Balmer and William MacHarg's scientific detective, Luther Trant, are indeed based on scientific lines. It isn't only that the publisher may have saved a little money by getting them at reprint rates (which might have been lower in those days), but that Arthur B. Reeve wasn't writing that type of story any more. With *Amazing Stories,* Hugo Gernsback issued a type of magazine whose time he hoped had come—the all-science-fiction magazine—partly because that form of fiction had largely disappeared from the general magazines. No one could be sure in 1926 whether his science-fiction venture would prove to be a lasting innovation or a failing attempt to rescue something whose time actually had past. By 1927, he could be sure; and now he hoped that the same thing was true with the "scientific" detective story.

The opening story in the January issue is Reeve's "The Mystery of the Bulawayo Diamond." In discussing that story, and many of the rest of the tales in *Scientific Detective Monthly,* I'm going to have to commit what I've always considered a crime myself: reveal the solution and sometimes name the culprit. Many readers of mystery-story discussions do not consider that a crime at all, rationalizing it on the grounds that, why, of course, anyone who's reading an analysis of an author or a story has already read the story. Not so; I'll never forget that a passing remark by Dorothy L. Sayers in her introduction to her first *Omnibus of Crime* (1929) told me exactly what I didn't want to know about the controversial case of Roger Ackroyd. I plead for mercy from those of you who agree with me, in principle, on the grounds that hardly anyone these days is going to find a copy of *Scientific Detective Monthly,* or read a collection of Craig Kennedy or Luther Trant stories for the first time. If you're an exception, and own any of this material but haven't read it, be warned: read it before going on with my comments.

The criminal-catching scientific device in "The Mystery of the Bulawayo Diamond" is described thus in the final scene:

> Kennedy, with Sapala still in the doorway of the den, and me behind him, seemed to be looking at the little instrument he had brought in the hat-box, which he was adjusting as Nancy served him his coffee.
>
> "Please, Nancy, put your head down here, again."
>
> Surprised, the colored girl did so, her eyes avoiding any of us.
>
> "This is a new bolometer, a heat-measuring device of hitherto unknown delicacy," Kennedy was now hastening to say. "I have the heat of this room perfectly and evenly

adjusted by the thermostat and the automatic heater. Purposely I have no fire in the fireplace. Perhaps you don't know it, but this little bolometer is so delicate that it will measure the heat of even a blush. Did you know that a colored girl blushes just like her white sister? Well, this bolometer will measure even the heat of a colored girl's blush. Nancy—"

And, of course, it was Nancy who put the diamond in the ashes that the automatic heater delivered to the ashcan; where it was recovered by the girl's master in crime, whose identity she now reveals without intending to.

"The Campus Murder Mystery" by Ralph W. Wilkins is somewhat more complex. There have been bomb threats against various colleges, and one morning a tremendous explosion is noted at Roger Williams College. None of the buildings is damaged, but "in a remote corner of the campus, near the Physics Laboratory, the shattered fragments of a human body indicated that after all the affair was not a joke." Armand Macklin, Professor of Police Practice and Crime Investigation at Roger Williams, investigates. His secretary is the narrator.

The day was one of those clear, bright days of October, with a clean, keen wind blowing the leaves about in merry circles. A tang of burnt powder was in the air, and some wisps of smoke were still rising, seeming to be trying to gain the altitude of the great captive balloon of the Physics department, which hung high in the air, filled, as I knew, with instruments of all kinds for the gathering of scientific information. That there was, and this besides: the fragments of a human body, literally smashed into a thousand fragments. There was a great quantity of liquid lying about, which puzzled me, and I remember wondering at the seemingly great quantity. The body was shattered beyond all hope of recognition. There was not even a whole limb.

In addition, not a single fragment of the body is covered by clothing, although, as Macklin notes, "There is clothing here, it is true and properly torn clothing, and all that, but is it likely that any explosion would have so carefully denuded the body?" There is also a complete absence of blood. The narrator turns to point at what he had imagined to be blood, to find that the liquid is gone.

The identity of the victim is a problem, which is soon solved; but the main mystery remains: Precisely *what* did occur? Why were no human fragments plastered against a nearby wall?

One drawback of that sort of puzzle in a detective story is that it requires a scientifically trained (or reasonably knowledgeable) reader to solve the mystery. The average layman has little chance to match wits with the detective, because there's rarely a matter of wits at stake. It's simple scientific savvy that is required; and the reader who had gone so far in the story at hand already had all essential clues. Today's general reader would have a much better chance of spotting the conclusion, simply because we have all become, if not more science-minded than general readers of the late '20s, certainly more sophisticated about technology and technical possibilities.

The victim was stunned, stripped, and his body plunged into a container of liquid air—instant fresh freezing. Macklin explains:

"The professor, as you men are aware, has a captive balloon flying over the campus, which he hauls down each night, in order to extract esoteric knowledge from the graphs and charts his instruments make for him. On the night before last, however, when the balloon went up, it was weighted with a great glass box, more than a quarter full of liquid air in which was submerged the body of Professor Kapek."

Our culprit, Professor Grieg, whose wife found Kapek more cuddly than Grieg approved of, also had a device that dripped an eroding chemical on the metal band which held the glass case to the balloon.

"Professor Grieg knew exactly how long it would take for the quantity in the container to eat away the metal band. He had, no doubt, experimented very often. We know now, also, that it took until exactly 10 A.M. At 10:10 this morning the metal band parted and the glass case came hurtling to the ground. The glass case struck the earth with terrific force and was shattered into a thousand pieces. The body within, lying in the liquid air, was also of the consistency of glass, and shattered like a great China doll."

Another timing device involved chemically eroding a container of explosive powder, and the chemical set off the impressive-sounding explosion that everyone heard, at exactly 10:10 A.M. Professor Grieg considered himself safe because he was sure that the body would be unidentifiable. However, Professor Macklin gathers the fragments and puts them into liquid air for safe keeping; enough of the head and face is put together so that Kapek is identifiable, even without fingerprints.

Present-day critics of old magazine science fiction—particularly the sort found in the Gernsback and other magazines of the time—note that in science fiction, experiments always work out; while in real scientific history there are more failures than successes—think of 606, and Dr. Ehrlich. In this tale, we find that Professor Grieg ("undoubtedly," says Macklin) has made many experiments preliminary to his taking action; but it all does seem a bit pat; and the speed with which Macklin not only solves the case but makes it seemingly airtight for prosecution is somewhat breathtaking. But if you're going to have a really good "scientific" mystery, it would be fudging it to have bugs in the device.

Oh yes, there was one element of sheer bad luck against the culprit—something he realized could happen, but had to risk: someone *saw* the glass case falling, although the witness did not know precisely what he had seen.

The "Luther Trant" stories, by Balmer and MacHarg, were not only reprints in *Scientific Detective Monthly*; Gernsback had reprinted some of them earlier in *Amazing Stories*. "The Fast Watch," however, was not among those.

The scientific device in that story is the galanometer (lie detector), which

> consisted merely of a little dial with a needle arranged to register on a scale an electric current down to hundredths of a milliampere. Trant attached two wires to the binding posts on the instrument, the circuit including a single cell battery. Each wire connected with a simple steel cylinder electrode. With one held in each hand, and the palms of the hands slightly dampened to perfect the contact, a light current passed through the body and swung the delicate needle over the scale to register the change in the current. Walker, and even Captain Crowley, saw more clearly now how, if it was a fact that moisture must come from the glands in the palm of the hand under emotion, the changes in the amount of current passing through the person holding the electrodes must register upon the dial, and the subject be unable to conceal his emotional changes when confronted with guilty objects.

That is the basis of the scene that John Ruger uses for his cover illustration. It shows a suspect seated in a chair, his hands gripping the two contacts attached. A policeman's extended right arm is shown, holding a newspaper before the suspect's eyes, while another policeman, with hands on knees, bends forward to scrutinize the anxious expression on the subject's face. Behind the chair, red-headed Luther Trant, in a white suit, is watching a meter and taking notes.

I agree with J. Randolph Cox's opinion that the Luther Trant stories are written more artistically than the Craig Kennedy stories—at least, those that I have read of both. A more interesting thing to note is that some of the Craig Kennedy tales that Gernsback reprinted in *Scientific Detective Montly* make use of the same scientific devices as the Trant stories he had reprinted in *Amazing Stories*.

Captain S. P. Meek, U.S.A. was a Gernsback discovery, his first published story being "The Murgatroyd Experiment" in the Winter 1929 issue of *Amazing Stories Quarterly*, published January 1929. His "The Perfect Counterfeit" is among the early tales in his series of detective stories featuring Dr. Bird, chief of the Bureau of Standards, and his friend and colleague, Inspector Carnes of the Secret Service.[7] The stories are all told in the third person.

The tale is science-fiction mystery, as the secret of the "perfect counterfeit" is a matter-duplication machine, and is very possibly the first appearance of that theme in magazines.

R. F. Starzl is another Gernsback discovery, first appearing in *Amazing Stories Quarterly*, Summer 1928, and copping the cover in the process. However, "The Eye of Prometheus" deals with a plausible-sounding use of scientific principles and material already to hand, rather than a speculation of possible scientific discovery. Unlike the Meek story, it can't legitimately be classified as science fiction.[8]

The Eye of Prometheus is

> a stickpin of unusual design. Its center was a small pill of platinum sponge sunk in a tiny socket surrounded by minute emeralds. From this radiated a spiderweb pattern, richly varied, to an outer rim of white metal, representing a serpent with its tail in its mouth. The whitish centre, surrounded by green, resembled nothing less than the eye of an evil cat.

The victim is wearing that stickpin when he is killed in a seemingly impossible explosion. Detective Klise finds that the platinum has been used as a catalyst:

> "...It depends for its effectiveness on the well known catalytic action of platinum [a footnote gives technical details], the ability of this metal to induce chemical union when two readily affiant chemicals are brought into its presence. Here we have alcohol fumes and the oxygen of the air. When Phillip Scott died, he died because he carried the Eye of Prometheus into an explosive atmosphere..."
>
> "Some person," continued the detective, "hoping to gain the death of Phillip Scott, and knowing that he would not visit his wine cave for a week or more, poured a quantity of calcium carbide, down the ventilating pipe of the cave. There was no chance, of course, that anyone else could get

in, because there was only one key for each lock. As you all know, carbide will release large quantities of acetylene gas under the influence of moisture. This person was clever enough to realize that the carbide would draw moisture from the damp floor. . . ."

Gernsback science-fiction tales were noted for explanations in which the examiner tossed in an "as you know" to listeners who very probably didn't know it.

Whether Monsieur H. Ashton-Wolfe of the French Sûreté wrote the "scientific actuality" department article in this issue especially for Hugo Gernsback (a possibility, as Gernsback had connections in France and Germany as sources for his publications) or the article was translated and reprinted, is not specified. At any rate, M. Ashton-Wolfe is identified as "the former assistant of the famous Monsieur Bertillon and his collaborator, Edmond Locard. . ."

The article, "A Message from the Ultra Violet," deals with a forgery which, when examined under ultra-violet reveals how an authentic letter was altered to profit the culprit (a 1911 date was changed to 1917, making an old will appear to be the final one, superceding a 1913 will). Chemicals are also employed to bring out a message written in blood, but no longer decipherable as writing.

The final fiction offering in the January 1930 issue is part one of *The Bishop Murder Case* by S. S. Van Dine. Just why it was reprinted, aside from the possibility that the publisher was able to obtain a "big name" at acceptable price, and that the story *does* contain some discussion of higher mathematics, remains obscure. Perhaps those are all the reasons necessary. At any rate, I've often wondered how many more potential readers of *Scientific Detective Monthly* than myself had already read the story in the *American* magazine a couple of years earlier and did not bother to buy Gernsback's new magazine until the reprint had concluded.[9] It ran in three parts, and the only further comment about it that is relevant is that the "scientific" parts of interest to Gernsback and science-fiction enthusiasts are irrelevant to the solution of the mystery. (It is, however, among the best of the Philo Vance novels and stands up well today, if you enjoy that type of whodunit, as I do.)

The rest of the issue is devoted to departments and ads. In the department "How Good A Detective Are You?" the reader is asked to scrutinize an illustration showing a robbery for exactly two minutes, then turn to the back of the book, where there are 35 questions to answer. I'd say that the department was mislabeled: it should have been called, "How Reliable A Witness Are You?" as the only faculty being tested is observation and memory—few of the questions require the reader to make any deductions from the evidence.

The other departments are "The Reader's Verdict," "Crime Notes," "Detective Play Reviews," and "Book Reviews."

In case you're wondering whether the "letters from readers" *must* have been staff-written, since they appear in volume one, number one of the magazine, the explanation is simple: Gernsback sent out form letters to everyone on his subscription lists, describing the new magazine, listing the intended contents of the first issue, and soliciting subscriptions months before the initial issue was closed. He knew, from past experience (with *Science Wonder Stories* and *Air Wonder Stories,* for example), that he would not only receive subscriptions but letters of comment on the idea of the new magazine. From the selection published, Gernsback obviously did have a following of interested and intelligent readers. Here are some examples:

Mrs. N. C. L., Ill.,[10] writes,

I feel that circumstances and environments make people what they are. No one is born a criminal. Education and discipline teach us self-control, and it is merely lack of these that create the law-breaker. We, all of us, at times, have instincts to perform criminal acts. Without education and discipline, we would obey these instincts, and thus fill more jails than there are schools.

What made the Gernsback magazines' letter departments more interesting than those one saw elsewhere was that in nearly all instances the editor commented upon the letters. Frequently, as in this instance, readers would be invited to write in expressing why they agreed or disagreed with the opinion of the reader in question. The editor notes,

". . . There is a large school of thought that regards environment and training as the essential and *only* elements in the manufacture of character and behavior. On the other hand, Dr. Foster Kennedy (M.D., F.R.S., Edin.) and Lewis Stevenson, B.A., M.D., regard certain abnormal instincts, such as kleptomania, as forms of neurosis which are born in unfortunate people. They think that these criminal instincts arise from mental weaknesses existent at birth.

Mr. M. S. W., Conn., writes in to say, "As for my dislikes regarding the editorial policy of the new magazine, I do not care for the usual reprints of stories that have been published elsewhere." On the other hand, J. M., Mich., wrote: "I would like to see reprints of famous mystery stories in your magazine, particularly those in which scientific methods of detection are illustrated."

Both here, and in the science-fiction magazines of the time, there was a running battle between those readers who approved of reprints, and requested particular ones, and those who seemed to think that any "reprint" *had* to be a story that he or she had already read—and had even saved for re-reading in some instances. For some of the magazines, using

reprints meant saving the price of new stories, and was thus economically desirable, particularly since—as it turned out—a very small percentage of the responding readers had read the reprinted tales before. (That applied even to "classic" reprints, theoretically available in any public library.)

Mr. J. M., Mo., had a comment to make on the proposed reprint of Philo Vance: *The Bishop Murder Case:*

> ...I shall be willing to see these stories if I am convinced that Van Dine has made his character reason logically. For example, he makes Vance solve crimes by comparing them with the mentalities of the different suspects. You will remember that this happened in *The Canary Murder Case.*
>
> Before I accept psychological deduction as practical, I want to read up on this subject myself. Vance talks of inherited and acquired mentalities, or instincts—I forget the exact phrase he uses. Where can I read about this in an authoritative text book?

That was the sort of letter Gernsback treasured. In his reply, he recommended

> *The Science of Human Behavior,* by M. Parmalee, (Macmillan, New York, 1913). Chapter XI, and pages 197-226.
>
> *The Analysis of Mind,* by Bertrand Russell, (Allen and Unwin, London, 1922). Pages 41 to 57.
>
> *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist,* by J. B. Watson, (J. P. Lippincott, 1919). Pages 291-294.

The editor further notes: "As a matter of fact, the modern experimental psychologist is not able to find any dividing line in behavior between the conscious and the unconscious, the mental and the physiological; they overlap constantly."

In response to a reader who suspects that the scientific instruments described in stories to be published will be "made up," the editor replies, "All instruments referred to, or used by characters in *Scientific Detective Monthly* stories are actual, practical, and definite scientific apparatus."

Like the "matter duplicator" in "The Perfect Counterfeit"? I'll you remain in suspense for a moment as to whether that incautious assurance above was picked up and presented to the editor later—or, more exactly, whether any such letter from a reader was published.[11]

The "detective plays" reviewed are "Remote Control" by Clyde North, Albert C. Fuller, and Jack T. Nelson, which had a run at New York's 48th Street Theater, and "Subway Express" by Eva K. Flint and Martha Madison, which was mounted at New York's Liberty Theater.

The books reviewed are *The Alchemy Murder* by Peter Oldfield (Ives Washburn, New York); *Yonder Grow the Daisies* by William Lipman (same publisher as above); *The Three Amateurs* by Michael Lewis (Houghton Mifflin and Company); *Dr. Krasinski's Secret* by M. P. Shiel (Vanguard Press, New York); *You Can Escape* by Edward H. Smith (modern instances of prison escapes to rival the classic ones—The Macmillan Company, New York). The first three volumes sold for $2.00 per copy; the other two at $2.50.

And, finally, "Science Crime Notes" tells of the first talking, filmed murder confession.

Aside from a very well done portrayal of the explosion scene in "The Eye of Prometheus" by Gernsback's science-fiction artist, Frank R. Paul, and a portrayal of the discovery of the inventor of the matter-duplicator in "The Perfect Counterfeit," chained to a wall in a cellar, the artwork for this issue is best described as forgettable and unexciting. The scene chosen for part one of *The Bishop Murder Case,* wherein Philo Vance, Markham, and Van Dine are looking at the corpse of the first victim, with an arrow sticking out of his chest, could have been very strong; but it's so characterless as to take away most of the dramatic value. (I might have felt differently had I not seen the excellent portrayals in the earlier *American* magazine serialization.)

Very probably, Gernsback wanted to avoid "exciting" illustrations and concentrate on more scientific (but bland) looking ones. If that was his aim, one can call the artwork generally successful.

Notes

1. My father built our first radio set, *circa* 1924, from a Gernsback instruction manual.
2. A recent fad among some science-fiction writers and critics is to consider Hugo Gernsback a disaster to science fiction. The fad will pass.
3. A number of people who have made signal contributions to the exploration of outer space had been science-fiction enthusiasts, introduced to the subject by the Gernsback magazines.
4. I have read and have been told several versions of the story, and the exact amount Gernsback's creditors received on the dollar has varied from $1.04 to $1.08, but all agree that the creditors came out ahead on the deal. A recent researcher, in line with the present downgrading of Hugo Gernsback among science-fictionists, has thrown doubt upon that – but hasn't come up with any solid proof that the creditors received less than $1.00 on each dollar of debt owing.
5. Apparently the author did not realize the contradiction here, not foreseeing that criminals' unrestrained use of scientific devices would give them advantage over the police.
6. There was one exception: According to the ads in *Science Wonder Stories, Air Wonder Stories,* and *Science Wonder Quarterly,* "The Mystery of the Bulawayo Diamond" was written especially for the first issue of the new magazine. That is why J. Randolph Cox could find no record of earlier publication (*Armchair Detective,* January 1978).
7. The Dr. Bird and Inspector Carnes series appeared mostly in Clayton's *Astounding Stories,* but some were published by Gernsback. The series is as follows, in order of publication:

   "The Cave of Horror," *Astounding Stories of Super Science* (hereinafter *Astounding*), January 1930.

   "The Perfect Counterfeit," *Scientific Detective Monthly,* January 1930.

   "The Thief of Time," *Astounding,* February 1930.

   "The Radio Robbery," *Amazing Stories,* February 1930.

   "Cold Light," *Astounding,* March 1930.

   "The Ray of Madness," *Astounding,* April 1930.

   "The Gland Murders," *Amazing Detective Tales,* June 1930.

   "Stolen Brains," *Astounding,* October 1930.

   "The Sea Terror,"* *Astounding,* December 1930.

   "The Black Lamp,"* *Astounding,* February 1931. (With that issue, the title of the magazine was shortened to *Astounding Stories.*)

   "The Earth's Cancer," *Amazing Stories,* March 1931.

   "When Caverns Yawned,"* *Astounding,* May 1931.

   "The Port of Missing Planes,"* *Astounding,* August 1931.

   "The Solar Magnet,"* *Astounding,* October 1931.

   "Poisoned Air,"* *Astounding,* March 1932.

   "Vanishing Gold,"* *Wonder Stories,* May 1932.

   "The Great Drought,"* *Astounding,* May 1932.

   The early stories cannot be put in any strict chronological order, with one exception: At the end of "The Thief of Time," Dr. Bird says that he has a counterfeiting case to look into. That surely must be "The Perfect Counterfeit," published a month earlier.

   Stories marked with an asterisk (*) refer to those wherein the main "villain" was the insidious Ivan Saranoff, a sort of Soviet Fu Manchu, and they can be considered as having run in chronological order, except for "Vanishing Gold."

   The series ended abruptly, without any final confrontation between the protagonist and the antagonist. Some thirty years later, when I was corresponding with Meek (then Col., retired), he told me that the series ended abruptly because the "fellow travelers" had gotten to Harry Bates (or possibly the publisher) and convinced him that it was wicked to run stories so slanderous of the progressive and peace-loving U.S.S.R. An equal case can be made out for their discontinuance on the grounds that readers were getting tired of them, as evidenced by letters published in *Astounding's* "The Readers Corner."

   The reason for some of the earlier stories appearing later lies in the fact that both *Amazing Stories* and the Gernsback magazines not only paid (slowly and at low rates, at best) upon publication, but might hold an "accepted" story for two years or longer. It's entirely possible, then, that all Dr. Bird stories *written* after Capt. Meek got his first prompt check @ 2¢ a word from Clayton Publications, were sent to *Astounding Stories.* "Vanishing Gold" might have been rejected, Harry Bates having decided to accept no further "Saranoff" tales beyond "The Great Drought." That would indicate that Meek sent it to Gernsback, who got it in to print earlier than usual for his publications, and coincidentally, the same month that the final tale appeared in *Astounding.*

   Col. Meek is no longer with us, so I can only offer the speculation above as possible, and reasonably probable.
8. That is, according to my definition of "science fiction." However, there is no generally-accepted definition of the term, and *The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (Harmony Books, 1977) lists *Scientific Detective Monthly* as a science-fiction magazine. I maintain it wasn't, although individual stories can be listed as science fiction. In these days, however, when the enjoyable weird, occult, and supernatural adventures of Jules de Grandin are blithely labeled "science fiction" by the publishers of the soft-cover series, I'm probably fighting a losing cause – particularly when de Grandin does use current scientific implements to combat some supernatural manifestations, such as sucking up psychoplasm with a vacuum cleaner.
9. A decision I regretted some years later. It wasn't until 1956 that an opportunity to obtain *SDM* came along when I had the money. I realize now that I was extremely lucky to get the five issues, in near mint condition, at $3 each. Last year (1978), I saw mint copies of the first two issues being offered at $85 and $80 each.
10. The names and cities or towns are spelled out in full (though not street addresses); there's no need to spell them out here, however.
11. Either no one noticed, or objecting letters weren't published. I suspect the former; Hugo Gernsback was never afraid of admitting to that type of error when it was pointed out to him.

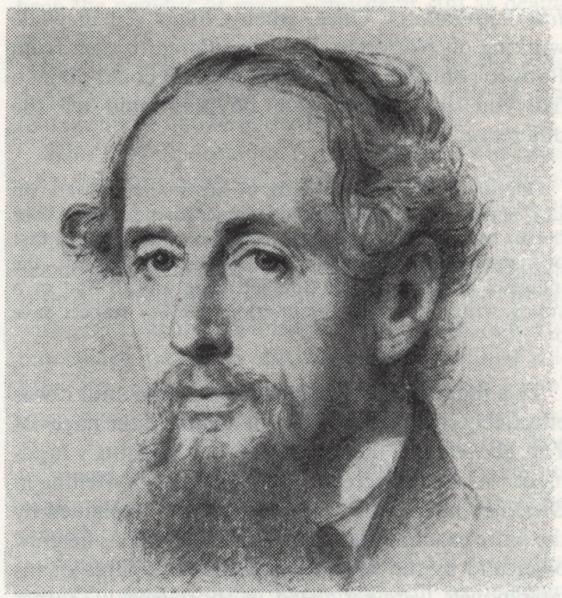
A Bit of Inspiration from Denmark

By Bjorne Nielsen

In a hotel an elderly bellman
said to Hammett: – You're writing so well, man
it should be OK
if you wrote a play.
Said Hammett disgusted: – Like Hell, man.

Said Chandler one day to his mate:
– This oil-business lingo I hate.
Detectives for rental
are more continental.
In their language a spade is a spade.

Dickens' Last Book: More Mysteries Than One



By Arthur J. Cox

When the man who now is generally considered the greatest novelist in the English language died in June of 1870, he left behind a half-finished mystery novel. This has proven to be very puzzling (in more senses than one) and somewhat disappointing. A *mystery* novel... In the sprawling, elaborate and often melodramatic plots of his long serials, there was nearly always a mystery element, an element that we not only have tolerated as a concession to his popular audience but have perhaps enjoyed; but it is not for it that we have acclaimed *Bleak House, Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend* as great novels. And so we may regret that Charles Dickens should have isolated this element and have made it the major, if not the sole, ingredient of his last book, that he should have crowned his life's work and risked his accumulated reputation on such a paltry and trivial undertaking as *The Mystery of Edwin Drood.*

"Surely," writes George Gissing, from whom I took the above adjectives "paltry" and "trivial"; "surely, it is unfortunate that the last work of a great writer should have for its theme nothing more human than a trivial mystery woven about a vulgar deed of blood..."

This would be true even if *Drood* were a "great" mystery novel of the popular sort, such as *The Moonstone* is commonly considered to be—even such a book as that would be beneath Dickens's dignity as a serious writer. With *Edwin Drood* and *The Moonstone,* complains V. S. Pritchett in *The Living Novel* (1946), "we begin the long career of murder for murder's sake, murder which illustrates nothing and is there only to stimulate our skill in detection and to distract us with mystery." It is of course possible for murder to illustrate something, as Mr. Pritchett implies. *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* immediately come to mind ...but it is precisely in relation to Dostoevski's dark classics that *Drood's* deficiencies have been so sadly noted by Gissing, Edmund Wilson and Julian Symons.

No, Dickens's last novel does not belong in the company of *The Brothers Karamazov*; it is fit companion only for *The Moonstone* by...to mention now that name which every writer on *Drood* must mention, sooner or later: Wilkie Collins—for the book is usually viewed as an intrusion by Dickens into an area that Collins had long claimed as his own. In fact, to repeat the standard judgment, with which the subject is at once invoked and dismissed: Dickens was evidently trying to out-do his friend at his own game.

The relationship of Charles Dickens to Wilkie Collins has itself been something of a mystery, and one of a rather troublesome kind, in the history of Dickensian scholarship and criticism. "It was not merely a friendship in the ordinary sense," says the puzzled J. W. T. Ley in his book, *Dickens and His Circle* (1918): "he came under Collins's spell to a remarkable degree..." He praised and defended Collins's books, offered him criticism and advice,

recruited him onto the staff of his magazine on liberal terms and collaborated with him on several second-rate literary projects, such as *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices.* Once, when Collins fell ill while working on *No Name,* Dickens offered to rush from Paris to complete the book for him: "I could do it so like you, in a pinch, that no one could tell the difference."

> One of the most astonishing of literary facts [went on Ley] is the influence which the younger man exercised over the art of one who was famous and the acknowledged first of living novelists before he himself had left school... the influence of Fielding and Smollett gave way to that of a young writer who was his inferior in every respect save one...

This judgment prevailed for some time until it was effectively challenged by K. J. Fielding in the pages of *The Dickensian.* The thrust of Dr. Fielding's argument was that the greater economy of story-telling in Dickens's later books is more plausibly explained by the more exacting standards he set himself as he grew older and by the very relevant fact that three of his later novels were serialized in short weekly, rather than in long monthly, installments. "From first to last," he concluded, "there is no reason to think that Dickens owed anything in his development as a novelist to Wilkie Collins"—a statement with which we can only agree. Granted, Dickens's last book may owe something to *The Moonstone,* but there is no evidence, there is no respectable argument, that the great novels of his last two decades owe anything to the younger man. And, actually, it would seem unlikely that the ingenious Dickens would have to be taught anything by a man who, after all, wrote only four readable novels and one "first rate" short story during his entire career: it would be the equivalent of the Sorcerer learning from the Apprentice. Yes, we can safely dismiss such a notion from our minds...

But when we turn to those four readable novels to test this idea, we make a shocking discovery: that Dickens, in writing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* has plagiarized *The Woman in White* (1860), *No Name* (1862), *Armadale* (1866), as well as *The Moonstone* (1868); and we discover also that there are echoes and traces in *Drood* of two of Collins's lesser-known and less-readable works of the 1850s, *Hide and Seek* (1854) and *The Dead Secret* (1857). Plagiarized? Well, if not that, he has looted them, plundered them, ruthlessly carried away from them (such is our first startled impression) whatever he wanted for his own novel; not only at least one basic idea and several major characters but also various minor characters and incidents and even phrases—anything and everything (it would seem) that struck his fancy. It is as if he had determined to present to his readers the distilled essence of Collinsianism; and yet—and this is what amazes us most of all, or should—and yet the book is completely his own. Every line speaks his name. Every line extends or connects with something from his own previous books or his own life. He has adapted Collins to his own interests, ideas and experience; he has digested him, processed him, made him truly his own. If this be plagiarism, it is not the sort of plagiarism that results from paucity of invention or from uncritical admiration and acceptance. The word "influence" is invariably pressed into service whenever critics and biographers speak of Dickens and Collins; but, although Dickens would appear to be the influenced one here, we note that he is not passively so. Rather, there is something aggressive, almost predatory, in the manner in which he has received certain notions from Collins. They have not flowed into him: he has grasped them, seized them—perhaps (if *I* may be allowed to seize upon something which the stonemason Durdles says of himself in chapter 5 of *Drood*), he has grubbed them up by the roots when they didn't want to come.

This extensive indebtedness of *Drood* to Collins has gone for the most part unobserved—indeed, it will come as a surprise to some of the most knowledgeable of Dickensian scholars—although there is, always, the passing comparison to *The Moonstone,* the grounds for which are these: that both of these very early mystery novels have characters who are opium addicts; that both have characters who are professional philanthropists, presented to the reader in the most unflattering terms; and that both have a strong strain of orientalism—manifestly in the case of *The Moonstone,* which tells of the efforts of three Hindu "devotees" to recover a precious gem stolen from the forehead of their idol, and latently in *Drood,* chiefly in its incidental imagery and associations.

But there is another similarity between the two books which is more suggestive (and more puzzling) than any of these.

After Dickens's death, John Forster set forth in the final volume of his *Life of Charles Dickens* what he knew of the unfinished work, saying that its originality "was to consist in the review of the murderer's career by himself at the close, when its temptations were to be dwelt upon as if, not he the culprit, but some other man, were the tempted." In other words, it would seem that the story was to be that of a crime committed by a man with that now-familiar disability, "a double-consciousness," a separate identity unknown to his waking self. But this is hardly an original notion, even for that time—especially for that time, we might say, for we are forcibly reminded of that novel which lies so close to *Drood* that it almost touches it. *The Moonstone* was not only published merely a year before Dickens began work

on *Drood,* it was published by Dickens himself in his magazine, *All the Year Round.*

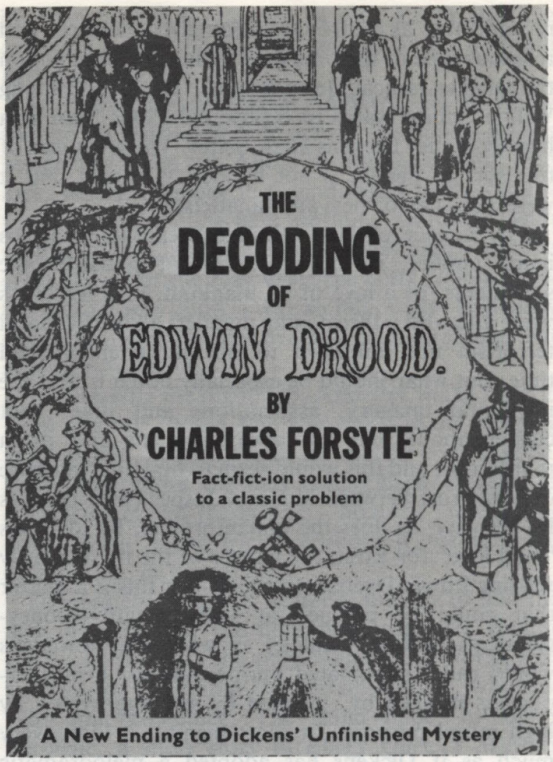
The crucial incident of the Collins novel is the theft of the Moonstone from the bedroom of the heroine, Rachel Verinder. The hero, Franklin Blake, is very diligent in his attempt to detect the culprit and recover the gem, but he is not assisted in this effort by the plundered Rachel, who displays, to his astonishment, a sudden cold contempt for him. She treats him as if he were the culprit...and so he is. On the night of the crime he had unwittingly taken a dose of opium and, moving in a trance, had entered her bedroom where (observed by her) he had taken the Moonstone, which he had then (unobserved by her) handed to the hypocritical philanthropist Godfrey Ablewhite for safekeeping. All this is proved when the "morally innocent" Franklin Blake is again given some opium which causes him to re-enact the events of that night.

Surely, we think, Dickens wouldn't simply "lift" the leading idea of Collins's latest book and reproduce it in a work of his own published shortly thereafter. Surely not...and yet he seems to have done so. Of course, we cannot help observing that he handles it with a grasp so much surer and a touch so much lighter than that of Collins. I am thinking particularly of the explication to the reader of the double-consciousness rationale, upon which the significance of so much of the action of both books depends. Collins labors this very heavily, devoting several chapters to its "scientific" justification. What a contrast is afforded by Dickens's treatment of the same matter! He does it all in just a few lines—neatly, elegantly, humorously, in that passage about the prim schoolmistress, Miss Twinkleton, which was passed over by generations of readers as nothing more than a touch of whimsical characterization:

> As, in some cases of drunkeness, and in others of animal magnetism, there are two states of consciousness which never clash, but each of which pursues its separate course as though it were continuous instead of broken (thus if I hide my watch when I am drunk, I must be drunk again before I can remember where), so Miss Twinkleton has two distinct and separate phases of being. Every night, the moment the young ladies have retired to rest, does Miss Twinkleton smarten up her curls a little, brighten up her eyes a little, and become a sprightly Miss Twinkleton whom the young ladies have never seen.

The whole of Chapter 10 of the Third Narrative of Collins's novel is reproduced in that throwaway parenthetical remark!

But, recognizing this, we are left where we were: for even if Dickens has handled this matter so much more deftly than has Collins, does that greater dexterity justify what looks very much like unscrupulous expropriation? Especially if, as it seems, he has annexed this and other elements merely to use them



in a similar work of his own devising, a book that may be more streamlined and amusing than *The Moonstone* but which is, finally, merely another mystery novel?

One of the expropriated elements suggests a possible answer to this question.

Everyone has noted that both *The Moonstone* and *Drood* have villainous philanthropists, but no one has ever made anything much out of that fact. Both philanthropists are presented as being very prominent in their fields, both are the trustees of orphaned minors, and both are hateful; but Dickens's bullying Luke Honeythunder does not personally much resemble Collins's blandly hypocritical Godfrey Abelwhite, and the reader may reasonably feel that his duplication of this element is rather pointless. But it may be the difference between the two that is significant. Honeythunder is a more detestable figure than Abelwhite because he is so much more menacing and yet he is, by his own lights and by ordinary standards, absolutely honest. Godfrey Abelwhite steals the money entrusted to him for the young man whose guardian he is; Honeythunder scrupulously hands over the full and correct sum at the required date—Dickens is very explicit about this—but, while doing so, he uncharitably denounces his former ward as a murderer on the basis of no reliable evidence whatever. He is a monster, but of "virtue," not vice. And he is a more plausible character than Abelwhite or, anyway, a more representative one, being easily

recognizable as a strongly-ideologized political and religious type of the time (and is, in fact, based upon the Quaker radical, John Bright). The free-thinking Wilkie Collins wants to expose the Pious Man as a hypocrite, but Dickens knew better. The great vice of this sort of person is not hypocricy (would that it were!) but narrowness and fanaticism.

The essence of Honeythunder's character, as his name implies, is the profession of philanthropic sentiments, of a love of all mankind, in a ferocious voice and with a threatening manner: a kind of moral terrorism not unknown to our more enlightened time. But what should be especially noted is that the incidental imagery, associations and jokes that cluster about him are always violent and often murderous, and this would seem to hint at an alliance of some sort between him and Jasper (who justifies his ferocity, as does the philanthropist, by love: his "mad love" for Rosa, the fiancée of the mysteriously missing Edwin Drood). In short—for this is a matter that could be pursued at some length—Honeythunder's violent ideology is what we nowadays would call a sublimated murderousness: a murderousness masked by, justified by and aggravated by high moral purpose. In short (again), it looks very much as if Dickens has adopted a melodramatic character from Collins, a mere creature of the plot, and has drawn him into an inward connection with the subject of his novel. If so, it is very promising, for it suggests the possibility that there may be something to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* after all, despite the second-hand look of so much of its contents. Dickens may really have known what he was doing and may not have failed us in this, his last test—his very exacting last test: for there is only one consideration that would justify a writer's borrowing the inventions, or, more accurately, the devices patented by usage, of another writer, and that would be if he were pressing them into some higher service—such as Herman Melville did when he transformed Douglas Jerrold's comic melodrama *Black-Ey'd Susan* into *Billy Budd.*

Encouraged by this hope, we naturally look to the other borrowings from Collins to see if we can determine what in each case Dickens was doing. I find, after reviewing the possibilities, that we must pass over the one element that everyone has recognized as unmistakably connecting *Drood* with *The Moonstone,* as it would commit us to too lengthy a discussion: it being enough to say, perhaps, that Dickens, in his treatment of opium, picturesque and amusing though it is, is attempting to supply the antidote to that noxious dose administered in the other book by Ezra Jennings, who chants a veritable hymn of praise to that "all potent and all merciful drug." No, resisting all temptations to diversionary side-glances, I shall go directly to a borrowing that is the most puzzling in the whole book—the most puzzling because seemingly the most pointless. I mean Neville Landless.

If Wilkie Collins had written *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* he would have made Neville Landless the hero. This may seem a strange statement to make, inasmuch as Landless is merely a secondary figure in the book as written by Dickens and seems to have no very strong points of interest. True, he is well enough "realized," but he is essentially, like Godfrey Ablewhite in *The Moonstone,* merely a creature of the plot. We see only too well what his function is in the story: he is meant to divert suspicion from the unmistakably sinister John Jasper. Jasper has so contrived matters before and immediately following the disappearance of his nephew Edwin Drood as to convince others that Landless has done away with the young man. Jasper's machinations are completely obvious to the reader, and those characters who suspect Landless are either completely unsympathetic, such as the pompous Sapsea and the bullying Honeythunder, or have been depicted as rather limited and foolish. "No manner of doubt," wrote Richard A. Proctor, "can be entertained, by anyone who has read the story, that Jasper is guilty and Neville Landless innocent. *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* does not turn in any way on that point."

Still, I persist in saying that if Wilkie Collins had written *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* he would have made Neville Landless the hero. Landless is the typical Collinsian hero. He somewhat resembles the hero of *Basil* (1852), somewhat resembles Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White,* and even more strikingly certain post-Dickensian characters; but the chief representation of the type and the chief source of Neville Landless is Ozias Midwinter in *Armadale.* Like Neville, Midwinter is dark-skinned and of mixed racial background. Like him, he is of violent temperament and suspect character, with a personal history of cruel oppression and neglect. Like Neville, with his "yellow haggard face" (ch. 17), Midwinter, with his "haggard yellow face" (Book I, ch. 1), is much given to "suffering": that is, to a resentful and guilty self-pity. And, like him, he has a mentor and advisor, a clergyman who lectures him in rather the same tone as the Reverend Septimus Crisparkle does Landless, but the clergyman's name is not Septimus.—It is Decimus. . . Decimus Brock. And Midwinter is like Landless in that he, thinking that his friend is to marry the woman he loves, puts a knapsack on his back and goes away on a two-week walking trip (Book II, ch. 13), just as Neville Landless puts a knapsack on *his* back and goes away on a two-week walking trip (on December 25th: at midwinter, mind you!) for the identical reason, in chapter 15 of

Drood: goes away because he, Midwinter, is struggling, as he thinks, against murderous impulses directed against his friend, the young, the good-natured, the Edwin Drood-like Allen Armadale. But of course there are also differences between the two. Midwinter is unlike Landless in that he does not come from the East Indies. He comes from the West Indies. And he is unlike Landless in that he has an income, derived, as is implied by his original family name, Wrentmore, from landed property there... whereas poor Landless, as his name implies, has no property, in the East Indies or elsewhere—a difference that seems too pointed not to have been contrived once we note that "rent more" is the opposite, or one of the opposites, of "land less."

What, to ask the inevitable question, did Dickens mean by this "lifting" of a character, almost whole and intact, from Wilkie Collins? That is, what part does Neville play in his story? There is only one expectable answer: Landless is the False Suspect, the unjustly-accused young man. And there you have it. Dickens, that great master of effortless and overflowing characterization, has kidnapped a character from Wilkie Collins merely to press him into a routine and mechanical service!

Or so it would seem.

In order to resolve this perplexity, I must introduce into our discussion a topic that is more than a little suspect and which, furthermore, although it concerns an element that is present in Wilkie Collins, is, for once, not borrowed from him. We are all, even those of us who haven't read the book, familiar with the notion that mesmerism is somehow involved in *Drood*—a notion that was given wide currency by Edmund Wilson in what is probably still the most famous single piece of writing on Dickens, his essay "Dickens: The Two Scrooges" in *The Wound and the Bow* (1941). And yet, although we are intrigued by the suggestion, we don't quite feel comfortable with it...not when we turn from Wilson's very persuasive essay to the novel itself. It is not that we dispute it—we don't. Who would want to argue with Edmund Wilson? It is simply that we cannot seem to make any real sense of it, humanly speaking. Andrew Lang once complained that mesmerism was out of place in a novel that was otherwise pleasantly domestic, and Wilson himself expressed some contempt for what he called that "whole machinery of mystification" with which Dickens, as he said, tried to divert his middle-class audience because he dared not explore "the theme of the criminal" with that directness and courage shown by Dostoevski. But our inability to see what animal magnetism could mean in this story, in terms of ordinary human experience and ordinary human feeling, may be, as I shall try to indicate here, though as briefly as possible, because we have a grossly misleading conception of what animal magnetism meant to Dickens.

We are today conscious only of the most naïve element in animal magnetism, the belief in the magnetic and electric fluids; but mesmeric theory had a silent partner that since has dropped silently out of our consciousness, and that is the belief in what has been called the Doctrine of Sympathy. This was a moral, or, as we would say, psychological, philosophy that had been given its classical formulation by David Hume in the eighteenth century and which had become so widespread in the popular culture of the nineteenth that it was not often asserted and very seldom questioned. It had the widest metaphysical, moral and political significance, and it bore upon the narrower province of animal magnetism in this way: It was thought (by Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Charlotte Brontë, Bulwer Lytton, Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, to name but a few) that before one person could magnetize another there had to exist between them some physical, temperamental or moral "sympathy"—that is, *likeness*. Edmund Wilson's idea that Neville Landless's sister, the beautiful and resolute Helena, would be able to "hypnotize" Jasper because her "will" is stronger than his would have struck the magnetists as largely irrelevant. She would have to be like him (that is to say, morally like him) before she could magnetize him, regardless of the strength of his will or of hers. If sufficient sympathy existed, they could form a "magnetic union," and in that union one "partner" would be "active" and the other "passive," but that would be the only distinction between them.

What this means to *Drood* is that, in endeavoring to determine whom Jasper could magnetize and who could magnetize him, we must look to see who most resembles him in this or that important respect; whoever is significantly like him may be, or could be, his "partner"—in other words, his accomplice, henchman or kinsman. We have already observed that the philanthropic Honeythunder has points of resemblance to Jasper, and it might be argued that the same is true of the fatuous magistrate, Sapsea, but we have no further cause to suspect the presence of animal magnetism in his relations with these men. And, actually, there wouldn't need to be. They are his natural allies in his campaign against his victim, the pathetic, the much-harrassed, the unjustly accused Neville Landless.

But of course—if the reader will allow me at this point simply to cut the Gordian knot rather than attempt to unravel it further—it is this victim himself whom the predatory Jasper most resembles.

When we glance back through *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* we are amazed to see, by the

backward light shed by this recognition, how evident Neville's guilt is. To recognize his resemblance to Jasper—their shared jealousy of the more fortunate Edwin Drood; their common secret, dark indulgence in rage—is to recognize his complicity. And yet, as we read the book, we were blind to it. It seems marvellous now, how, without any strain of repressive effort, we did not see, we simply would not see, that Dickens meant what he was telling us and showing us of the character of Neville Landless. It is my belief that if Dickens had lived to finish this book, every modern reader would know, by hearsay or by that occult process of literary osmosis by which we learn all about books we haven't read, of Neville's guilt and, sitting down at last to read through *Drood,* would see it from the beginning. He would see that it is Neville's "secret sympathy" with Jasper that enables the other man to magnetize him into taking part in the murder of Edwin Drood. He would not in the least doubt that it is Neville, not Jasper, who has the "double consciousness," and he would look forward to that famous scene in which the distraught Neville in the condemned cell confesses the crime "as if not he the culprit, but some other man, were the tempted"...and he might well wonder how the author thought he could succeed in deceiving any intelligent reader. But *we* can testify that he did succeed; and, as Edwin P. Whipple said at the time of the lesser mystery of the source of Pip's income in *Great Expectations* (a mystery which baffled its first readers, although we can scarce credit that now), it was all done by artistry and not by trickery.

We now can understand what Dickens was doing in lifting an idea, *the* idea, from the neighboring *Moonstone.* He was criticizing it and, in effect, replying to the novel of which it is a part. He was giving his truer version of *The Moonstone's* central incident: the guiltless crime of the "morally innocent" Franklin Blake. But for his new and better purpose, the light-weight and pallid Franklin Blake himself would not do. To achieve the most expressive use of the material, to obtain the greatest possible impact, he needed a darker crime—the darkest—and therefore a darker character; and this supplies us with an answer to that question we earlier asked ourselves as to what Dickens could have meant when he transferred a personage so largely intact from the pages of *Armadale* to those of his own book. Ozias Midwinter is beautifully suited for what Dickens had in mind: he combines naturally with the "double-consciousness" plot idea; for his character-type, weak and passive, nursing grievances, frequently tempted to outbreaks of violent rage while fretfully denying his accountability, is peculiarly liable to what we nowadays would call the "dissociated personality" syndrome. Dickens, in making this connection ("Only connect," said E. M. Forster), presents the reader with what is essential to Collins's two previous novels and, to strike a Leavisian note, morally "places" it and them.

I have withheld till now the quotation from T. S. Eliot, which, however familiar, is too apt for my purposes not to be invoked—especially, that second sentence:

> To anyone who knows the bare facts of Dickens' acquaintance with Collins, and who has studied the work of the two men, their relationship and their influence upon one another is an important subject of study. And a comparative study of their novels can do much to illuminate the question of the difference between the dramatic and the melodramatic in fiction.

What I have tried to do in these pages is to show, however sketchily, how Dickens has taken an element from Wilkie Collins, the double-consciousness plot, one that would seem to promise nothing but melodramatic possibilities, and has elevated it into the realm of drama. He has transmuted Collins's fancy into imagination; and it could be argued—I would myself be willing to argue—that he has not confined his alchemy to this one base element but has in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* produced an elaborate imaginative critique of the conventions of the mystery story (the ingenious hiding place, the baffling disguise, and such like) in the form in which those conventions were being developed by, realized in, or funnelled through the work of Wilkie Collins.

The Dickensian scholar Philip Collins has complained that some commentators on *Drood* think the book was written by his namesake. I would say that the most salient single fact about the book is that it was *not* written by Wilkie Collins. Need I add that that is not the only important fact? That one can read it with comprehension and enjoyment without ever having heard of Wilkie Collins, just as one can enjoy *Northanger Abbey* without having read a "horrid novel"? That it has, in fact, another large side, one that faces in the direction of Anthony Trollope? And that it also has, independently of both of those writers, fascinating moral, political, religious, biographical and literary aspects which have by no means been adequately explored? No, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* was written by Charles Dickens—that same Dickens, I believe, who wrote *Bleak House, Little Dorrit* and *Great Expectations.*

My own conclusion—which, in ending, I shall state as firmly as I can: "not dogmatically but deliberately," as Dr. Johnson once said—my own conclusion is that Dickens's last novel is not merely the greatest mystery novel in the English language, it is the only great mystery novel in the English language; it being the only one from the description of which we can drop the word "mystery" and still insist that it is a great novel. And, further, that it is a work fully worthy of Dickens's genius...one that would allow him to greet the author of *Crime and Punishment* unashamed.

Thomas Berger's Comic-Absurd Vision in *Who Is Teddy Villanova?*

By David Madden

To date, Thomas Berger's critical reputation is based primarily on his immensely successful *Litle Big Man* (1964) and to a lesser extent on his "Reinhart trilogy" (*Crazy in Berlin,* 1958, *Reinhart in Love,* 1962, and *Vital Parts,* 1970). Often referred to by that oblique term, "black humor," Berger's fiction has more accurately been described by Ihab Hassan as one with a "comic-absurd vision...continually presented under the aspect of hyperbolic, surreal, or grotesque irony..."; it is a vision extending over twenty-two years and ten novels. One of the most accomplished of these works, and ironically one of the most ignored, is his 1977 parody of the hard-boiled detective novel, *Who Is Teddy Villanova?*

In choosing the form of the detective story, Berger places his work in the company of other contemporary ironic detective fictions such as Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet,* Norman Mailer's *An American Dream,* Thomas Pynchon's *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49,* Richard Brautigan's *Dreaming of Babylon: A Private Eye Novel 1942,* Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo,* and John Hawkes's *The Lime Twig.* By imitating, and at the same time inverting, many of the hard-boiled detective story's conventions, Berger manages to sustain his unique comic-absurd vision and illustrate the artistic and cultural disparity between the values of the writer of detective fiction and those of the novelist in post-World War II America.

Although *Who Is Teddy Villanova?* owes debts of gratitude to such disparate figures as Racine, Henry James, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Ross MacDonald, and Dashiell Hammett, Berger relies most strongly on the hard-boiled tradition perfected by Raymond Chandler. For this reason, then, I would like to begin this discussion with a brief examination of Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely* to establish some of the hard-boiled detective story's conventions and to create a framework within which to compare Berger's ironic imitation.

To begin, the setting in *Farewell, My Lovely* is Los Angeles and its suburb Bay City (a pseudonym for Santa Monica), favorite symbols for Chandler of the decadence and corruption of modern American life. Each of the novel's characters may be defined in terms of this setting, and each offers testament to the golden dream gone sour. Theirs is a place of glamour and danger, where the rich and influential own the city, the police, and almost every citizen.

Against this ubiquitous corruption stands the lone figure of the cynical, world-weary, but honorable Philip Marlowe, private eye. Unlike the amateur detective Dupin, in Poe's classic tale of ratiocination, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Marlowe is a professional who willingly chooses his life of loneliness, because he simply cannot accept the various modes of existence his environment offers. He remains in this world for the fundamental reason that there is nowhere left to go.

In most ways, Marlowe is an ordinary man, lacking the element of genius that distinguishes a man like Dupin; nevertheless, he solves his cases through dogged persistence and dedication. He accepts as inevitable the diffuse evil of the area and manages, through the strength of his personality, to move freely through all social levels. However, unlike the denizens of the city, Marlowe is the novel's one truly and intensely moral man, living by a self-created and self-sustaining moral code. He is the last the honest, rugged individualists and refuses to permit money, sex, or friendship to deter him in his investigation.

Marlowe, whose name reminds one of the author of the Arthurian legends, stands as a modern knight,

searching, before all else, for the Truth, and the novel records that quest. He avenges the wronged, protects the weak, defends the innocent, and always maintains his own tough, slightly (but only slightly) tarnished integrity. He encounters and accepts pain stoically and answers it flippantly. The novel is told in his voice, and its style is taut, lean, and rich in witty and elaborate metaphors.

In *Farewell, My Lovely,* the plot details Marlowe's search for a former nightclub singer after her ex-boyfriend, the gigantic Moose Malloy, stops him on the street and coerces him into conducting the investigation. Moose has been incarcerated and now wants to locate his "Little Velma." After a series of interviews with former colleagues and friends, Marlowe determines that Velma has vanished forever.

Simultaneously, he is employed by the precise, effeminate Lindsey Marriott, to act as a bodyguard in the return of some stolen jewels. After he is knocked unconscious and Marriott is murdered, Marlowe interviews the owner of the jewels, the sexually flamboyant Mrs. Lewin Lockridge Grayle. Although she poses as a temptation and a threat to the detective, Marlowe remains uninvolved with her.

Conversely, he is extremely involved with his case and must pay the inevitable price for this involvement. At one point he is drugged and beaten by a Hollywood spiritualist, then turned over to the corrupt Dr. Sonderberg and two Bay City policemen, who continue to drug him until he eventually escapes. The novel closes with Marlowe's journey to a gambling ship anchored off shore, where Moose Malloy has been hiding after a pair of recent murders. There Malloy confronts Mrs. Grayle (the lost and now discovered Little Velma), who shoots Moose and then flees. Marlowe tells us that she reappears in Baltimore, where she worked again as a nightclub singer, shot a detective, and then killed herself.

The novel's plot is tortuously intricate and at times confusing, and because the story is told from the protagonist's point of view, the audience shares in his confusion and gropes desperately with him for the solution to the story's many puzzles. The work observes such classical detective plot conventions as the audience's introduction to the detective (in this case to a man who inhabits a broken-down office and cheap flat), the presentation of the crime and clues, the investigation, and the announcement and explanation of the solution. There are, however, a pair of essential differences, which John G. Cawelti explains by noting:

> Significant differences appear in the way this pattern is worked out in the hard-boiled story. Two are particularly important: the subordination of the drama of solution to the detective's quest for the discovery and accomplishment of justice; and the substitution of a pattern of intimindation and temptation of the hero for the elaborate development in the classical story of what Northrop Frye calls "the wavering finger of suspicion" passing across a series of potential suspects.[1]

It is this quest for justice which underscores the hard-boiled detective's moral position in the world. His commitment goes beyond the classical detective's interest in merely solving a challenging puzzle, to one of an actual ethical and emotional bond with his clients or those he feels most in need of his help. Philip Marlowe is also unlike Dupin in the way he assumes both a moral stance against the criminal and attempts to mete out an improvised form of justice that the incompetent, corrupt police force cannot effect.

It follows, then, that the criminal and his accomplices continually seek to thwart or mislead the detective. To this end, Marlowe is drugged and beaten by a pair of quacks and by some crooked cops. Mrs. Grayle, seeking to maintain her new identity, tries unsuccessfully to seduce the detective, and other, more honest, police try to dissuade Marlowe from continuing the investigation because of the widespread corruption he will reveal. In spite of their threats or coercion, the hard-boiled detective always remains firm and incorruptible, as he continues his quest for justice in one small corner of a degraded world.

To speak now of what happens in *Who Is Teddy Villanova?* is rather difficult. By turns the novel is extravagant and prolix and contains repeated changes in actions, identity, and meaning; at the same time, it records the attempts of one highly educated man to create order and rationality in a world that continually eludes and frustrates him. The story opens with his introduction, "Call Me Russell Wren," which signals not only the narrative perspective but also the ironic intentions of the author. Wren, a former graduate student and instructor of English, is a rather ineffectual shamus, whose impoverished means force him to sleep in his office, thereby avoiding his apartment and the prospect of paying his long-overdue rent.

In the first chapter he meets an immense thug, Gus Bakewell, who represents one Junior Washburn and warns Wren to "tell Teddy Villanova to lay off Junior Washburn."[2] After Bakewell threatens him, Wren finds the giant's corpse first in an elevator, then on the couch in his office, and later in the bathtub of his apartment. A pair of imposter police beat Wren in his office and take the body, and subsequently other officers ransack his apartment and further threaten him. In the interim, Donald Washburn II appears and gives Wren a handsome retainer to investigate the sexual proclivities of his errant wife, Freddie.

During an investigation that takes him to a Greenwich Village yogi, who claims to have never heard of Fredericka Washburn, Wren is arrested by still another cop, posing as a cabbie, and is just as quickly freed by a gay goon squad (the Gay Assault

Team), who righteously proclaim, "We protect *any* man from the police. Men have always been the niggers of society..." (124). Wren next proceeds to sleep fourteen hours on a sidewalk in a discarded "Barca-Lounger," awakens to trade articulate ripostes with a wino (whom he labels "the Diogenes of muscatel"), encounters once again the first pair of fraudulent police, who are quickly gunned down by another black cop, now posing as a pimp.

When Wren retreats to his girlfriend's apartment, he is sexually teased by her roommate and discovers a nude Washburn in the bathroom. Bakewell then appears, and the two inform Wren that there is no Teddy Villanova and they have been seeking, like the criminals in Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon,* a lost, erotic statue by Leonardo da Vinci. Feeling a gun at his back, Wren finds his girlfriend, Natalie Novotny, now a gay Treasury Agent; after Washburn and Bakewell leave, she reveals her plan to entrap the two in a counterfeiting ring. After she too confirms there is no Teddy Villanova, the couple leave the apartment, Natalie is arrested, and Wren is picked up by a busload of child prostitutes and a Russian vice squad chauffeur.

They travel to Wren's apartment, and after further confusion, the detective eventually discovers that his landlord, Sam Polidor, is Teddy Villanova and has been trying to frighten Wren out of his lease in order to sell the building for an astronomical sum. He explains that all the principals involved have been actors making a film in which Wren plays an unwitting part. Nevertheless, just before he and his secretary, Peggy Tumulty, end the novel by romping in bed, Wren receives a phone call from someone in Bavaria claiming he is Teddy Villanova. At this point neither Wren nor the befuddled reader has any answer to the question posed by the novel's title.

For Wren, however, the answer seems to reside somewhere in the New York City he inhabits. Reminiscent of Marlowe's Los Angeles, Wren's New York is a world of seeming corruption and decadence in which danger lurks everywhere. Where Marlowe responds to his city with the cynicism of a soured romantic, Wren accepts his world and rationally attempts to describe and evaluate its multiple features. His attitude is composed more of bemusement than of bitterness, and this response is clearly illustrated when Wren steps off a curb to hail a cab.

> Whatever, when I reached First Avenue, in civilization's contemporary Western capital, depraved, debased, degraded, and declining though it be, and under constant Vandal seige, I stepped into a gutter full of filth and lifted my arm, not to wave an oriflamme but rather to hail a taxi (191).

The contrast here between the signalling of a cab and the waving of a standard of the early kings of France perfectly demonstrates Wren's logical, erudite assessment of his environment. A description of a pay phone offers another opportunity not only to confront directly a declining world but to view the way the cultivated mind deals with this decay.

> Averting my eyes, I slunk to the corner, where one of the new public-phone arrangements stood: two instruments hanging on a panel exposed to the weather. Involved in a conversation, you might have your pockets picked—or, in certain areas (and this might well be one, many deviates being diet cranks as well), be quickly, deftly sodomized while making an apology for dialing a wrong number. Paranoid fantasies, perhaps, but New York is a bad place in which to offer the unguarded spine (111).

It is traditional that detective stories set a chaotic outer world such as this against the quiet, isolated one that the detective inhabits. Usually this ranges among a romantic garret room, estate, or even office; however, for Wren, that isolated place comprises the world of the individual mind. Berger continually demonstrates the ways an overly precise, scholarly, refined intellect attempts to handle and make some sense of a world that is beyond definition or understanding. Accordingly, Wren is less at home in the world of New York than he is in the private world of the intellect, a world shaped by elegant and luxurious verbal constructions.

His love of language, as shown in his many careful, verbal arabesques, defines a major difference between this detective and a man like Marlowe. Where Marlowe speaks in an essentially terse, idiomatic way, Wren is loquacious and annoyingly articulate and takes extreme delight in precious linguistic structures. He is not, like Marlowe, a man of the streets, a product of the world; rather, Wren is a product of the isolated world of the university. There is absolutely nothing tough about him. His prose is indirect and euphemistic; witness, for instance, this description of his first meeting with Bakewell:

> He spoke in a singular manner, scarcely opening his oral aperture; yet I suspected, from the swelling above and

below, that his upper row of teeth was nowhere near the lower; that is to say, not in the malocclusion of the "tough" style of address, but in the uncertain suspension of poorly fitted dentures. It was impossible for me to estimate the age of a man that large (7).

Later, after he is threatened, rather than tell us, as Marlowe would, that his assailant "slugged my mouth into my ass," Wren summarizes, "...then he asserted that on further interruption by me he would kick me so vigorously as to bring my mouth and my rectum into juxtaposition, though to be sure he used different locutions to construct that vivid image" (11).

Wren does, like his seventeenth-century architect-namesake did in constructing elaborate English cathedrals, construct his own vivid images and in so doing reminds us further of the disparity between his style and that of Chandler's hero. Marlowe's characteristic stylistic devices are the ornate metaphor and "the slangy, hyperbolic simile."[3] For example, when he first sees Moose Malloy, Marlowe remarks, "Even on Central Avenue, not the quietest dressed street in the world, he looked about as inconspicuous as a tarantula on a slice of angel food."[4] Wren also tries his hand at the exaggerated metaphor, but like all his verbal formulae, it is highly self-conscious. For instance, on finding Bakewell's body, he comments:

If he was not as dead as the cold lasagna on which the tomato sauce has begun to darken, I was a Dutchman. The gaudy and, in the absence of blood, inappropriate metaphor actually came to mind at the moment, as a willed ruse to lure me away from panic—the fundamental purpose of most caprices of language, hence the American wisecrack—but it failed (20–21).

Additionally, the novel teems with literary allusions which Wren tosses off with self-congratulatory delight. These many allusions and this complicated, often derivative, style have led one reviewer to remark:

Berger's style, which is one of the great pleasures of the book, is something like S. J. Perelman's—educated, complicated, graceful, silly, destructive in spirit, and brilliant—and it is also something like Mad Comics—densely, sensuously detailed, unpredictable, packed with gags. Beyond all this, it makes an impression of scholarship—that is, Berger seems really to know what he jokes about. This includes really not only Hammett and Chandler, but also Racine, Goethe, Ruskin, Elias Canetti, New York and the ways its inhabitants behave. Essentially, then, Berger's style is like itself insofar as it is like other styles. And his whole novel—in its wide ranging reference to cultural forms both high and pop—is like a huge verbal mirror. Its reflections are similar to what we see in much contemporary literature—hilarious and serious at once.[5]

As I suggested earlier, one of the basic differences between the classical and the hard-boiled detective results from the amateur status of the one and the professional status of the other. Wren is a professional in name only; like Marlowe, he comes to his job after failing elsewhere, and also like his counterpart, he lacks the magical intuition of the classical detective. However, he fails to match Marlowe's ability to move freely throughout the corrrupted world he inhabits and ultimately solve the novel's mystery. Ultimately, Wren is the quintessential schlemiel; he is bested by criminals and victims alike, and even his wise-cracking secretary is better equipped to deal with the complex network of clues than her employer.

Lacking Wren's paranoid perspective, Peggy is capable of seeing the world and the mystery's clues with clarity and distance. Eventually realizing some conspiracy is afoot, she surrepticiously tails the private eye and forces him to accept her as a partner rather than as a secretary. Wren suffers indignities, insults, beatings from criminals, police, derelicts, gay girlfriends, and imitation yogis and is forever incapable of bettering any of these figures. He is the perpetual victim, everyone's patsy.

Yet throughout it all, Wren manages to maintain, to a limited degree, something of Marlowe's rigorous moral code. He is, basically, trying, in his own desperate, ridiculous way, to discover the truth at the heart of the mystery. Unlike anyone else in the novel, Wren conscientiously attempts to bring to this chaotic world some small measure of order. Although he eagerly accepts the money that Marlowe would normally reject, Wren is also motivated by compassion and protection. For instance, when he thinks Boris, the vice-squad cop, fondles Peggy's exposed thigh, Wren protectively barks, "This wench is my ward... Toy with her fine foot if you like, but eschew her quivering thigh and the demesnes that there adjacent lie" (217). Later, after the mystery appears solved and he is congratulated for his part in the film's production, Wren modestly answers, "The character is essentially a moral leper, yet human like us all, *mon semblable, mon frere*" (239). Finally, for all his scholarship and erudition, Wren remains a fundamental innocent; his is the innocence of the gullible, the unwitting, the irrepressibly trusting.

All of this is to say that Wren is a hopeless romantic, a quixotic figure who relentlessly fights his many empty and paradoxically significant battles. As Cawelti points out, "...below his surface of alienated skepticism and toughness, [Wren along with his hard-boiled counterpart] tends to be as soft as they come."[6] Wren is a marshmallow and admits as much when he compared himself to the stereotype of the tough detective.

Actually I am a complete maverick in the bourgeois world and in no way conform to its mores and norms.

However when viewed dispassionately, as I realized later, Peggy's assessment of me was dead accurate. The only real

maverick is the criminal, and like most people I am but the occasional breaker of minor ordinances (31).

Pitted against this all to vulnerable hero is not the master criminal of the classical story or a vile and corrupt member of the community's ruling forces. Instead we have Sam Polidor (a.k.a. Teddy Villanova), a paunchy, brash, middle-aged, parsimonious landlord, who forever intimidates Wren into grudgingly accepting the building's decrepit conditions. Initially, Sam appears as little more than a cynical New Yorker declaiming against society's abundant ills, speaking with the harsh directness and grittiness that Wren lacks. At one moment, when complaining about the building's condition, he moans, "Your winos come and go like a fart. You can't count on them. That's why I lock the inside door. See, it's open again. You people never listen to nothing" (23). Because he feels exploited, Sam is completely willing to exploit others and explains his ethic to the naïve Wren, "Take my word for it, you don't come into a buck in this day and age without getting a little shit on your hands" (236).

In an ironic reversal of the typical detective story, *Who Is Teddy Villanova?* ends with the criminal, the mastermind behind the mystery, carefully explaining the complications of his intrigue to the dumbfounded detective. Thus we learn that Sam has actually tried to coerce Wren into leaving the building and terminating his lease. He has sold the building for a few million dollars but must force Wren out before he can collect. Nearly all of the novel's characters, with the exception of Peggy, have worked in concert with the landlord as actors, simultaneously satisfying Sam and filming Ziggy Zimmerman's *The Reformers,* which includes an unsuspecting Wren. After he agrees to settle with Wren for six thousand dollars, Sam admits that he is Teddy Villanova, a name he took from a police show walk-on on "Teee-Veee!"

Unlike the traditional criminal in the hard-boiled story, Sam Polidor neither has "some connection with a larger criminal organization" nor is he "particularly vicious, perverse, or depraved," but a simple man, trying desperately to make a quick buck.[7] He is, however, similar to the hard-boiled criminal in running, albeit loosely, a gang of cohorts and thugs, and he does appear to control the police (in this case, actors) to further his own ends.

One of those cohorts, the gargantuan Gus Bakewell, enters like Moose Malloy, beats the detective, and involves him in the unfolding mystery. Like many such members of gangs in hard-boiled detective stories, Bakewell functions as the strongman, both a physical Atlas and an intellectual pygmy. He is, naturally, the ultimate tool, carrying out the boss's dirty work and finally becoming the fall guy.

In his dilettantish, vaguely effeminate way, Donald Washburn II is the novel's Lindsey Marriott. He fulfills the role of sending the detective on a deceptive mission, one which will deflect the private eye's interest from the story's fundamental mystery. Washburn's desire to have his wife investigated corresponds closely with Marriott's attempt to secure the stolen jewels. In each novel, the detective's deceptive investigation eventually leads him, in the most circuitous manner, to the central crime. Washburn also operates as a comic and intellectual foil for Wren. Throughout their encounters, the two play games of verbal one-upmanship. A comic example of this occurs when Washburn hires the detective to investigate his wife. "'Excuse me for what might appear as impertinence,' I said to Washburn. 'But does your wife happen to be Teutonic?' 'Too *tonic?*' he replied in what seemed genuine bewilderment. 'Your queries have now, I'm afraid, taken a definite turn towards the cryptic, Wren'" (53).

As in the traditional hard-boiled detective story, the police in his novel are certainly competitive and hostile, but rather than simply symbolizing the inadequacies and limitations of the institutions of law and order, these men are accomplices of the master criminal. Besides the two initial policemen, who are later gunned down on Fifth Avenue, the fiction presents such investigators and patrolmen as Zwingli, Knox, and Calvin.

Detective Zwingli (who introduces himself by proclaiming, "'I'll show you my identification, if you'll show me yours, as Henry James might say'") affects Wren most profoundly by sparking the private eye's intellectual competitiveness. Quoting Percy and Hopkins, he challenges Wren to a quote identification quiz in an attempt to verify his educational credentials. Zwingli also manages to draw a confession from Wren after praising his unfinished play.

> I was touched. In fact, I was devastated. . . . No one, not even the liberal-lawyer's wife, had so lavishly praised my work. In fact, but for Daphne Leopold, for such was her name, no one had ever made upon it a judgment that could actually have been as in any way favorable (84).

Zwingli further surprises Wren by admitting he is a heroin addict and will drop murder charges if the private eye hands over his suspected cache of the drug. At this moment Wren's secretary enters and vouches for his integrity; Zwingli takes the detective aside and smirks, "Looks like a hot piece of poontang" (98). His addiction and lechery are complimented by his assistant, Knox's, physical cruelty. During their interrogation, Knox gleefully avails himself of every opportunity to punch, slap, and kick Wren into bruised submission. Their patrolman flunky, Calvin, searches the apartment and unnerves Wren by "assum[ing] a darky accent when talking to his colleagues" (94).

Taken together, these three figures represent the nadir of the official corruption that Hammett and Chandler anatomized in their novels, and the ironic use of their various names underscores their moral characteristics. Named after Swiss, English, and German leaders in the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation, they possess little of the ethical and spiritual zeal that changed religion, societies, and history. As a dope addict, a sadist, and a pimp-killer, these men typify the corruption of authority which marks, as Wren at one point overstates it, "this Sodomist time and Gomorrhean place" (62). Their ironic dimensions are broadened even further when the audience learns, at the work's close, that they act as advisers on the biographical film, *The Reformers.* They are, as one critic has noted, not merely "stupid or incompetent, [they] are brutal and degraded."[8]

Sexual temptation, the other traditional obstacle which thwarts the detective's investigation, comes in the form of Wren's lover of three weeks, Natalie Novotny. Although he is puzzled, even slightly disturbed by her less than enthusiastic ardor during lovemaking, Wren is positively crushed by her admission that she is neither an airline stewardess nor a heterosexual. Cawelti is again helpful in defining this aspect of a detective novel when he writes:

> Sex tends to be represented in a double-edged way in a hard-boiled story. It is an object of pleasure, yet it also has a disturbing tendency to become a temptation, a trap, and a betrayal. . . . The function of the woman in the hard-boiled formula then is not simply that of appropriate sexual consort to the dashing hero; she also poses certain basic challenges to the detective's physical and psychological security.[9]

This is certainly the case with Wren; he has been karate-chopped, turned over to a pair of assailants, and finally sexually discarded. The enormity of his betrayal is too much for him to comprehend and he pleads:

> "Tell me it isn't so, Natalie! . . . I refer to your asserted Sapphism. Confirm my sense that you spoke in jest—strange japery, but these are unique terms, in which truth eludes the direct aim, but is reached by torturous irony, yes? By bad taste, even: I mean no offense in my impersonal characterization of the age. Honest feeling is dumb unless it speaks through the mask of guile and other negative tempers" (185).

The other woman in his life, his secretary, also gets the best of him. Wren creeps about his office in the fear that she will demand her long overdue back pay, and he must later accept Peggy's demand that she be instated as a full partner in the firm. Neither polite nor articulate, she annoys and intrigues Wren, and he regards her as a stereotype of the middle-class, Irish Catholic spinster, all the while fantasizing about her sexuality.

> . . . [U]nless she had lost her *fleur* while competing in the high hurdles as a parochial school-girl, she was yet in formidable possession of it. My theory was that Peggy believed in her entering my chamber [office] might be constructed as a suggestion, even though she carried a file of unpaid bills, that in reciprocation the temple of her body might be invaded (3–4).

Though he finds her relatively plain and thoroughly chaste, Wren cannot avoid noticing her "elaborate pair of breasts" which, when later thrust forward, "cause [Zwingli] to recoil in more fear, I think, than lustful awe" (4 & 97). In this way, Peggy resembles the customary "desirable and disturbing female [who] is usually presented as blonde and big-breasted, or rather . . . aggressive-breasted, since the favorite metaphorical description has the woman's large breasts thrusting against her clothing."[10]

Usually the chaste, semi-idealized female can never act as the detective's sexual partner in a hard-boiled mystery. But in Berger's complicated and incongruous world, Peggy provides the novel's last in a string of surprising and hilarious ironies. Lying nude on Wren's couch, she cajoles him:

"I've given this a lotta thought, Russ," she said from the supine. "I think it's the only thing that will make a man of you. . . . Come *awn,*" Peggy complained, horse blinding herself with her hands. "I've got a Mama Celeste Deluxe pizza in the oven, and its done in twelve to fifteen minutes, depending on if you want the crust crisp or chewy" (246).

The astonished Wren can only obey and conclude the story by reflecting:

I draw the curtain across the episode that followed—requiring neither the huzzahs nor the jeers of a bawdy audience—except, perhaps ungallantly, to lift the fringe and reveal the only absolute fact (as it was the most startling) yet established in the Villanova case: Peggy was not, as the pizza went to cinder, serving her novitiate in venery (247).

At this point, the audience questions, if it has not begun to do so before this, the veracity of Wren's perceptions. Each chapter offers a new and conflicting twist to the multiple mysteries in the novel, and with each of these puzzles comes another of the detective's tortured attempts to rationalize the coincidental. Ultimately, we are left with the strong suspicion that most, if not all, of these events are the creations of Wren's frustrated, but certainly fertile, intellect. Peggy, in fact, speaks for many of the work's characters when she chides, "Are you being weird again, Russ? Just tell him the facts. Nobody's asking for Shakespeare" (97).

But Shakespeare is exactly what Wren is looking for. In a world that is as threatening, deceptive, chaotic, and absurd as this one, Wren seems to insist that only the imagination, in all its whimsy and inventiveness, can effectively offer some solace. As Walter Goodman explains, "The rational mind can find no purchase in a civilization gone out of control. Where accidents are the rule, where each event is problematic, existence becomes precarious."[11] Confronted by such circumstances, Wren demonstrates the need for the imagination to take over, and if it cannot supplant the reality that assaults it, the imagination can at least compete, wildly and extravagantly, with that reality.

In his attempt to show the twisted, degraded, irrational side of existence, Berger's novel offers a series of existential attitudes that indicate the importance of the parodic mystery for him. In his hands the hard-boiled mystery becomes a fitting fictional vehicle for presenting his readers with a vision of a corrupt, contemptible world, at least partially redeemed by, as Raymond Chandler put it, "a man of honour. . . [who] must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world."[12] Berger differs quite markedly from Chandler, however, by disagreeing that such a man can utlimately discover "hidden truth," for in the figure of Russell Wren, Berger comically reveals the elusiveness of truth. In the end, Wren fails to discover exactly *who* Teddy Villanova is, although we do sense that he has at least tried gallantly and failed just as gallantly in the search. In a world, like Wren's New York, one which overwhelms and threatens the individual so often and so completely, there can exist no ultimate and discoverable truths. And if there is any apprehendible truth, it is the one of the individual's own creation, the truth of the imagination.

By choosing the parodic method, Berger, like his sympathetic and crazed detective, attempts to fashion something out of the chaos of creation. The self-reflexive and self-conscious quality of the novel emphasizes the self-reflexive and self-conscious aspects of its hero, and finally his use of the parodic mode places Berger in that tradition of American literature established by Hawthorne: the romance tradition. Just as Richard Chase defines it in *The American Novel and Its Tradition,* such novels express "dark and complex truths unavailable to realism" through such means as alienation, exaggeration, coincidence, and incongruity.[13] As such, each work is an exploration, an attempt to move beyond the strictures of fictional forms and the thinking that traditionally underlies those forms. It is a fictional mode whose significance G. D. Kiremidjian explains best when remarking, "In a culture where usurpation of function and confusion of polarities are the rule, the very instability of parody becomes a means of stabilizing subjective matter which is itself unstable and fluid, and parody becomes a major mode of expression for a civilization in a state of flux."[14]

Notes

1. John G. Cawelti, *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1976), p. 142.
2. Thomas Berger, *Who Is Teddy Villanova?* (New York: Dell, 1977), p. 11. Further citations will come from this edition and be noted parenthetically in the text.
3. Cawelti, p. 175.
4. Raymond Chandler, *Farewell, My Lovely* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1940), p. 1.
5. Leonard Michaels, Review of *Who Is Teddy Villanova?* in the *New York Times Book Review* (March 20, 1977), p. 1.
6. Cawelti, p. 150.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
8. George Grella, "Murder and the Mean Streets," *Contempora* (March 1970), p. 10.
9. Cawelti, pp. 153–54.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Walter Goodman, "The Shamus as Schlemiel," review of *Who Is Teddy Villanova?* in *New Leader,* 60 (May 23, 1977), p. 13.
12. Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," in *Pearls Are a Nuisance* (London: Penguin Books, 1950), p. 198.
13. Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York: Doubleday, 1957), p. xi.
14. G. D. Kiremidjian, "The Aesthetics of Parody," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art,* 28 (1969), p. 242.

CLASSIC CORNER
Rare Tales from the Archives

DONOVAN of WHITEHALL

By William Le Queux

An extraordinarily prolific writer, William Le Queux turns up with surprising regularity in used book shops, in English editions, American editions, and even in those very cheaply produced "Popular" and "Cheap" editions which look as if they couldn't have survived five years, much less fifty. Still, if you look for specific titles, the hunt is more demanding, and a certain few of those present the greatest challenge of all. One such volume is *Donovan of Whitehall.* While Ellery Queen, in his pioneering bibliography, *The Detective Short Story,* lists twenty-two collections, mainly espionage tales, he failed to note this slim volume, though Allen J. Hubin, in his definitive checklist of crime fiction, included it among the nearly 200 of Le Queux's works. Published in 1917 by the London firm of Pearson, it is typical of the sort of thriller Le Queux could write with such facility: The hero—handsome, cosmopolitan, devil-may-care (even in the face of imminent disaster), patriotic, fearless; the heroine—chaste and lovely and delicate; the villains—devoid of any quality whatever except cunning. A different time, a simpler one, and a consequently simpler type of fiction, of which "Within Four Walls" is a scarce and yet very typical example.

—Otto Penzler

HUGH DONOVAN, in his old brown velveteen coat, much rubbed at the elbows, a coat in which he took his ease when at infrequent intervals he was at home in his chambers, was lolling before his fire, seated in a deep leather armchair—one of those luxurious club-chairs which he had purchased when that exotic association called the Thousand Club had gone bankrupt. He was idling over the war-news as put forward to the public in the newspaper he held in his hand.

The gay devil-may-care cosmopolitan, who knew the world from Dover to Delhi, or from Hammerfest to Hammersmith, better than any living man, smiled as he glanced from column to column. As an official of the correct-dealing, but much-maligned Foreign Office, he was able to discriminate between the truth of the progress of our arms, and the picturesque fictions as given to the Press in accordance with War Office and Admiralty instructions.

He sighed as he stretched his legs toward the fender. Then he reached out for one of his beloved Petkoff cigarettes which he had bought in the Nevski in Petrograd only a fortnight before, lit it, and again settled to the article which whitewashed certain politicians, and told an agape public that all was going well, that the Germans were starving, and that the horrors of

1870 in Paris were merely very slight trials of the flesh as compared with those happening daily in Berlin.

Bettinson, his man, a gaunt, lame fellow, but a thoroughly trustworthy servant withal, entered, saying in his low voice:

"Captain Churston on the telephone, sir."

His master rose quickly, and passed out to the little cupboard in the hall wherein the instrument was installed.

On returning to his room the King's Foreign Service Messenger stood for a moment with his back to the fire, stretched his long arms above his head, and yawned wearily.

"Phew! Another journey, I suppose. I wonder what's up now?"

A quarter-of-an-hour later Bettinson re-opened the door, admitting a grey-haired man in naval uniform, and announcing:

"Captain Churston, sir."

"Come in, old chap!" cried Donovan cheerily. "Lucky you caught me, for I was just on the point of going to dine and sleep at my sister's out at Wyvenhoe. Sit down. Have a cigar?" and he held out the big silver box to his friend.

Captain Charles Churston, D.S.O., was an old friend of Hugh Donovan's. Before the war, in the days when the popular Charlie Churston was captain of His Majesty's first-class cruiser *Tetronious,* the smartest ship in the Second Cruiser Squadron, he had often been on board, sometimes as guest in a foreign port, and once when, bearing very urgent Foreign Office dispatches, he had been a passenger by the *Tetronious* from Plymouth to Lisbon.

Charlie Churston, fine sailor that he was, had graduated from the old *Britannia* days to a D.S.O., and now held an appointment as Assistant-Director of the Intelligence Department of the Admiralty War Staff, a post which he occupied with great distinction, though compelled to curb somewhat his bluff sailor's *bonhomie* now that he sat in a square and rather cramped office, smaller than his own artistic after-cabin in the *Tetronious.*

"Jolly glad I found you, Hugh," the Captain said, as he carefully clipped the end of his cigar.

"Well?" asked Donovan. "What's the trouble?"

"A lot," was his friend's reply, his grey brows slightly knit, and his keen, clean-shaven face shrewd and alert. "I was out at Lord Chiddingford's yesterday, consulting him, and he suggested you as the only man who might be able to carry the thing through."

"Right-ho! Explain away," and Hugh, taking a fresh cigarette, threw himself into the depths of his own armchair.

"Well," began the Captain, "the affair is a most important and highly confidential one. As you know, my Department gets to hear of some very curious things now and then."

"Without a doubt," laughed Hugh. "You, as Assistant-Director of the Know-all Department, must hear a lot—most of which, I suppose, is unreliable—eh?"

"A very great deal, my dear Hugh. But this matter is not one for joking, I assure you. Listen, and I'll explain as briefly as I can. First, I believe you know Bucharest—the Roumanian capital?"

Donovan smiled quietly.

"Bucharest!" he echoed. "The merriest capital in all Europe before the war. Sterlet at the Boulevard Hotel ten leï the portion—drives in those victorias with coachmen in black velvet and scarlet sashes—the prettiest dark-eyed women in all the world, except in England—shops more expensive than the Rue de la Paix, and phew! those gay suppers and dancing at the Villa Regała—once a royal park. Bucharest!" he added, slowly emitting a cloud of tobacco-smoke towards the ceiling. "I've been there thirty or forty times with dispatches, and I believe I know the place as well as I do St. James' Street. Once I played poker at the Jockey Club with the Roumanian Minister of War—a long-moustached old chap, whose name I now forget. I gave him a good run for his money, but he took a hundred-franc note out of me."

"Good! You fellows ashore always have a good time. I only wish, Hugh, that I'd had half your experience of men and things."

"Bosh! If you had had them you'd be just as infernally world-weary and *blasé* as I am to-day," declared the other with a sigh. "Well—proceed. I take it that Bucharest is the centre of

this new affair, and you want me to go there—eh?"

The man in uniform nodded.

"A very nice inviting journey just now," laughed the careless cosmopolitan, as he drew heavily at his cigarette. "When the Orient express ran from Ostend I used to do it in three days. Now, with the Hungarian, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Black Sea frontiers closed, one must go across Russia," he went on, contemplating the end of his cigarette; "Christiania, Stockholm across to Hango, in Finland, on board that old tub, the *Alexandrovna*—h'm! don't I know its ghastly smells! then rail to Petrograd, on to Moscow, south by the 'snail-train' to Kharkof and on to Odessa. Afterwards on to the Danube to Galatz, Focsani, and at last the gaieties of Bucharest!"

"Yes—a pretty tough journey, Hugh," Churston agreed. "How long would you take to reach Roumania—if you decide to go?"

"A fortnight—perhaps three weeks. I don't, of course, know the state of the railways in Russia. But I haven't yet decided to go. First, tell me what is actually the trouble."

"We'll send you over on a destroyer from Hull to Bergen," Churston remarked.

"Through the new mine-field! How jolly comfortable!" Donovan laughed, but next second he settled himself to listen to the words of the Assistant-Director of Naval Intelligence.

"Briefly, the facts are these," he said. "About three years ago a clever young German engineer, employed in the Zeppelin works at Friedrichshafen, designed a new device for the steering of aeroplanes. Count Zeppelin and other aviation experts to whom the invention was submitted, discarded it as being unadapted for the light-aeroplanes which were at that time being built. It would, they all admitted, be of a great use for heavier machines. In consequence this young man, Heinrich Grierstein, came to London and laid his plans before our people. Unfortunately, however, the latter were of the same opinion as Count Zeppelin, and eventually he was paid a fee and sent away. Now we are trying to discover his whereabouts, as it is believed that his invention means practically everything in our Air-defence."

"He's in Germany, I suppose?" Donovan remarked shrewdly.

"No. We have established the fact that German secret agents discovered him when in London and found that he was offering the British Government the plans. While he was over here observation was kept upon him by our own people, and what they found out alarmed him. He declared that he dared not return to Germany for fear of prosecution, and sailed for New York. His movements have—after enormous difficulty—been traced, and we have discovered that in Chicago a year ago he was in love with a certain Mademoiselle Leonescu, a Roumanian singer of Tzigane songs. That lady has now returned to Bucharest, where she is still residing, and it is believed that if you could manage to see her personally you might possibly acertain her lover's whereabouts."

Hugh was silent for several moments. He held his breath.

"I see. We want to get in touch with this Grierstein fellow again, and buy his plans. Is that so?"

"Exactly. We are ready to purchase them for practically double the price he asked previously—in fact, you have authority to go to anything up to, say, well, twenty thousand pounds without reference home."

"Pretty nice proposition," remarked Hugh, smiling and reflecting upon the tedious journey before him. "Of course, in the days when he offered this idea of his there was no suspicion of war, and heavy battle-planes and seaplanes were quite unthought of."

"Of course."

Donovan of Whitehall again remained silent. Thorough-going cosmopolitan that he was, he saw rocks ahead.

"I'm ready to set out, of course, my dear Charles, if the Chief wills it so; but who, in Heaven's name, is this Mademoiselle Leonescu?"

"Ah! That we don't know. Her Christian name is Helen, and the only information I have is that she lives in a pretty apartment facing the chief post-office, and next to a fashionable photographer's named Spirescu."

"Oh! I know Spirescu's—a big new shop. He's the Court photographer," replied Donovan quickly. "Will Sir George—our Minister to Roumania—help us?"

"No. Don't go near the Legation. You may be watched. Remember that Bucharest is just now overrun by Steinhauer's agents."

"My dear Charles," laughed the King's Foreign Service Messenger; "those persons don't worry me in the least, I assure you."

"Well—will you go?" asked Churston with a sailor's bluntness.

"Frankly, I don't at all relish the job," declared Donovan with equal openness. "This man Grierstein may still be in America, for all we know."

"No, I don't think he is. Why—you'll ask me? Well—we've been into the matter very thoroughly, and there seems more than a suspicion that, having failed to make money out of his invention in America he—being a fellow of good appearance and plausible manners—allied himself to this dark-haired Roumanian, and became a crook."

"A crook!" echoed Donovan. "Ah! ah! Now the proposition becomes a little more interesting. Heinrich Grierstein—*alias* something or other, no doubt—is a crook, and his accomplice is this mademoiselle whom you mention—this singer of those gypsy songs of the Carpathians. Gad! I know those songs! I've sat and listened to the itinerant troupes in the Villa Regala at three o'clock in the morning!" And, casting back his head upon the green cushion, he added: "By Jove, Charles! You chaps who plough the seven seas haven't any idea of the fun there is on land—if you know where to go and look for it."

"Then you'll really make the journey—eh?"

Hugh Donovan nodded assent, but said:

"I must go down to Wyvenhoe to-night. I've promised to meet somebody down at my sister's!"

"Somebody who lived in Berlin till war broke out—eh?" laughed his visitor. "Ah! I quite understand, my dear boy. Right—when will you be back?"

"Monday afternoon. I'm going to golf over the week-end."

"If you'll leave London for Hull by the 5.45 train from King's Cross on Monday I'll order the destroyer to sail from Hull at midnight. I've arranged all with Lord Chiddingford. Is that a bargain, Hugh? Remember, you are the only man who can help us out of this difficulty."

"Rotten job!" declared Donovan. "But I'll try and get through with it."

Then, ten minutes later, his visitor rose and left.

Hugh cast away his cigarette, and with his hands clasped behind his head lay back in his chair for a long time, reflecting deeply.

"Devilish funny, that! How small the world is!" he exclaimed aloud to himself at last. "Helen Leonescu! How curious that I should be asked to go and find her—of all women on this earth. I wonder if she'll tell me anything concerning the whereabouts of this son of a German hog, Grierson. No—I fancy not, after what has already occurred. And yet—"

He paused, and his lips curled without concluding his sentence.

Then suddenly he rose and went out. When, two hours later, he returned to Half Moon Street, he ordered Bettinson to pack his bag, and later on he descended the stairs to the taxi which his man had hailed.

As he entered the vehicle a pale-faced, dark-haired, plainly-dressed girl, who had the appearance of a worker in one of the establishments of the fashionable dressmakers in the vicinity, passed him, glancing sharply into his face for a second, at the same time overhearing him give the order to drive to St. Pancras.

She continued her walk as the taxi drove off, but as soon as the cab had disappeared round the corner she turned back again hurriedly into Piccadilly, and was lost in the crowd.

At Wyvenoe Hall that evening Hugh met his well-beloved, Mabel Metcalfe, who, with her father Sir Lionel, was a member of the merry week-end party.

Dinner—at which Hugh sat next to Mabel chatting with her, and telling her of the long roundabout journey he was about to undertake—was followed by bridge, and then, when at eleven the ladies retired, the men adjourned for billiards.

"I say, Donovan," exclaimed the ex-Ambassador to Berlin, "did I overhear that you're going to Bucharest?"

"That's so," was Hugh's cheery reply, as he busied himself in chalking a cue. "I'm crossing to Christiania in a destroyer from Hull at midnight on Monday—a confidential mission—a rotten one."

"I wish you'd take a letter for me to my old friend General Lahovary. You know him, don't you?—used to be War Minister," said the diplomat.

"Most certainly I will," replied Hugh.

"Then I'll go and write it now, before I forget it," and Sir Lionel went along to the library, returning a quarter-of-an-hour later and handing Donovan a letter which he placed in the inner pocket of his dinner-jacket.

"Right," he said. "I won't forget to deliver it."

At that moment Franks, the fat and rather pompous butler, entered, and crossing to Donovan whispered something, whereupon Hugh exclaimed:

"Take my cue for me, Sir Lionel, will you? Somebody wants to see me."

He followed Franks out, but though the others waited a full hour he did not return.

When at length the butler entered to see if they wanted anything more, Sir Lionel pounced upon him, asking:

"Franks, where has Mr. Donovan gone?"

"I don't know, sir," was the reply. "Somebody called to see him, and he ran upstairs, changed hurriedly into a blue suit, and went out with his visitor."

"Who called to see him?"

"A young person, sir—appeared to be a lady."

"Ho! ho! Hugh's gone off with a lady in the middle of the night!" laughed one of the men. "Dear old Hugh! He's always so horribly erratic!"

"Yes," remarked Sir Lionel, much puzzled, and scenting mystery. "But it's rather strange, is it not, that he should leave us like this—without a word?"

"Someone will remain up to let Mr. Donovan in, sir," the funereal Franks said in his cold, solemn tones.

And then the gathering broke up, each man going to his respective room.

Next day Hugh Donovan had not reappeared at Wyvenhoe, and some anxiety being felt, his sister telephoned to Half Moon Street, but Bettinson replied that he had not been there. Mabel was distracted when the strange incident of the previous night was related to her by one of the guests, for it seemed very much as though Hugh had disappeared. Though it was Sunday she telephoned to the St. James' Club, to the "Junior" in Charles Street, and to the Foreign Office, but all to no avail.

Franks was bombarded with questions regarding the young woman who had called to see Donovan, but all the butler could reply was that she seemed to speak with a slight foreign accent. She was dark, good-looking, and possessed very fine black eyes. "Rather Spanish or Italian-looking," he declared.

She had, it seemed, whispered something to Donovan which had evidently caused him the greatest surprise, for he started quickly, and, showing her into the small room in the hall, closed the door and then rushed up to change his clothes.

That very fact showed he intended to go somewhere with her.

Inquiries in the village elicited the fact that a strange motor-car, a closed one, had passed through towards Wyvenhoe just about that hour, and returned, travelling in the direction of London, half-an-hour later.

That was all. Hugh Donovan had walked out into the night and mysteriously disappeared.

The fast destroyer *Lynx* lay in the Humber on Monday at midnight ready to cross to Christiania, but as no passenger arrived the Lieutenant-Commander reported the fact by wireless to Captain Churston, who, in great surprise, rang up Bettinson, and was thus told the story of Hugh's curious disappearance.

The Foreign Office and the Special Branch of Scotland Yard were already active by three o'clock that morning, but all was shrouded in mystery.

Donovan of Whitehall had walked down the stone steps of that country mansion in Hertfordshire and disappeared.

When Lord Chiddingford, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, was informed next day, he sat for some time in his private room at the Foreign Office pondering seriously. He knew that Hugh Donovan had been frequently followed on his journeys by unscrupulous agents of Germany, and was wondering whether he had at last fallen into some clever trap prepared for

him. So, in order to discuss that point, he telephoned to Churston, and they sat for an hour in earnest consultation.

Soon the gossip ran through the clubs that Donovan of Whitehall was missing, and within a week the mystery got into the papers. Further, there came to Sir Lionel Metcalfe a letter from a working man giving an address in Kentish Town, enclosing the letter for Bucharest which the ex-Ambassador had given to Hugh on the night of the latter's disappearance. The working man had found it in a train between the Upper Holloway Station and Junction Road.

It appeared crumpled and dirty, as though it had been opened roughly, crushed in the hand, and then flung away. The police promptly saw the man at his home in Kentish Town and discovered that the letter had been found on the day following Donovan's disappearance, but had been laid aside until its finder could make time to write to Sir Lionel—whom, by the way, he had addressed as "Mr. L. Metcalfe."

Thus the mystery of Hugh's whereabouts deepened, though from this last fact, it would appear that he had come to London.

Mabel was, of course, inconsolable, for she had a fixed idea that something had happened to the gay, easy-going cosmopolitan she loved so well. She had a terrible foreboding that he was dead—killed by the hand of one of those many secret enemies whom she knew had so often dogged his path up and down Europe. She and her father had returned to Draycott Place, and she had personally seen the head of the Special Branch at Scotland Yard, who assured her that all possible inquiry was being made, which, after all, was but very little consolation.

One afternoon, nearly three weeks after Hugh's disappearance, while she was seated alone in the drawing-room trying to divert her apprehensions by reading, a maid entered with a note, addressed in a woman's bold hand. The girl said that there was no answer and that it had been left by a boy-messenger.

Mabel tore it open leisurely after the maid had retired, when there dropped from the envelope half of a man's visiting card—a card which had been roughly torn across in a diagonal direction.

The girl sprang to her feet, as though she had received an electric shock. Then, rushing upstairs, she unlocked her jewel-box and took from its velvet-lined bottom, beneath the trays, a similar piece of visiting-card.

She at once placed the two together. They fitted exactly!

Then, turning the card upon its blank side, she saw her lover's signature written in a firm hand across it.

One day long ago, when they were together in the Embassy in Berlin, Hugh had written across the back of his card, and having torn it in half, had given half to her with a laugh, saying:

"If ever I happen to be in a tight corner, dearest, and cannot communicate with you, I will try and send you this missing portion of the card. When you get it you will know that there are reasons why I cannot write—and, above all, do not tell a soul that I have communicated with you."

She placed the two torn portions together on the dressing-table, and as she gazed upon them her heart beat quickly when she recollected those strange words.

Hugh Donovan was, she now knew, in some tight corner—as he had put it—and he dared not write to her.

Her first impulse was to go down to the library and explain to her father. But Hugh's words had been most emphatic. She must not tell a soul.

On that very same day, up and down the long open railway platform of Elizabethgrad, in the Russian Government of Kherson, there was walking just before noon a tall, dark-eyed, rather handsome-looking peasant, awaiting the arrival of the train to Odessa, three hundred and ten versts distant. Owing to war disorganisation the train was already three hours late, but the peasant, as is the habit of the patient Russian who bows ever to the iron hand of uniformed officialdom, had waited, consuming cigarette after cigarette, seated alone upon a bench and leaning upon a small sack made of carpet, which evidently contained all his personal possessions.

The bearded railway officials, in their peaked caps and long grey overcoats—local

notables of that flat, uninteresting Russian town, with its mean houses and domed churches—had glanced at the patient passenger and put him down as one of the hundreds of refugees who were passing to the south.

Upon the platform there had gathered a crowd of people, mostly of the unwashed, many being in sheep-skins, for Elizabethgrad was the last stage of the long journey from Moscow to Odessa, over those great plains by way of Olviopol and Balta. At last the train came thundering in, and amid the excitement the patient, long-legged peasant, with his sack, entered a carriage crowded with flat-faced men in peaked caps, and women with red and black handkerchiefs tied over their heads.

"Phew!" gasped the man beneath his breath, as he threw down his sack upon the floor, and, with a sigh, added in English: "Gad! When will this rotten journey end?"

Then he looked around at his fellow-passengers wearily, and, folding his arms, pretended to sink into a sleep.

His fellow-passengers chatted rapidly in the low, musical Russian tongue, and took no heed of that lonely figure, yet any member of the St. James' Club, in Piccadilly, would have recognised him as the ever-popular Donovan of Whitehall.

He was on his way to the Roumanian capital in search of that handsome singer of Tzigane songs—Mademoiselle Helen Leonescu.

Three days later, dressed in a tweed suit that was rather creased—for, with his plush Homburg hat, it had been hidden in the little sack for the past three weeks—he entered the handsome Boulevard Hotel in Bucharest, one of the most perfect and most expensive hotels in all the world.

The fat, fair-bearded hall-porter recognised him instantly, and exclaimed in French:

"Ah! M'sieur Donovan! Back here in Bucharest—eh? All your friends have gone, I fear, M'sieur. *Mon Dieu!* This terrible war! The Legations used to reside here, but now we have none—only our own military."

"Anything for me?" asked the King's Messenger.

"This telegram. It has been here about a fortnight," and the *concierge* handed Donovan a blue envelope.

The man from Whitehall tore it open, and, having read it, crushed it angrily in his palm.

"Fool!" he whispered viciously to himself. "Churston ought to have been more careful. All my precautions may be upset by this! Nobody can be trusted in this city of reckless extravagance."

Hugh, after registering at the bureau, ascended to his room, washed, shaved, and then went forth into the pleasant, sunlit streets, where the shops vied with those of Paris, both in up-to-dateness and in price. There he purchased a new kit, including a smart, ready-made overcoat, a suit-case, shirts, and other things, all of which he ordered to be sent to the Boulevard Hotel.

That afternoon he sauntered round to that building of many stone columns, the head post-office, and glanced up at the windows of a certain apartment close by.

In two or three quarters in the vicinity, speaking perfect French, he made careful inquiry, but while strolling back to the hotel he, without apparent reason, turned suddenly upon his heel and hastened in the opposite direction. If the truth be told, his sharp eyes had recognised a certain man whom he had no desire to meet in Bucharest.

What sounded suspiciously like a fierce imprecation escaped his lips, but presently, taking a roundabout route, he again ascended to his room in the hotel.

"I wonder if Mabel has had my message?" he remarked to himself aloud.

Then for some time he stood at the window gazing thoughtfully down into the great animated square below, where the cabs were passing driven by men in picturesque black kaftans and sashes of crimson silk.

At ten o'clock that night a rather stout maid, in a wonderful frilled cap of stiff linen, ushered Hugh into a small cosy little pale-blue-and-gold salon, where a very handsome, dark-haired woman of thirty-five rose to meet him with a pleasant smile upon her lips.

She wore a low-cut gown of black *crêpe-de-chine* of the latest mode of Paris, while upon her white wrist was a fine diamond bangle, which sparkled as she moved. Her beauty was of that

type often seen in Roumania, the olive skin, the long, dark hair, and luminous black eyes of the gypsies of the Carpathians, that wandering race whose craftsmanship in filigree silver is so remarkable, and whose music is so unspeakably weird and yet so tuneful.

"Ah! Helen!" exclaimed Donovan, as he bent gallantly over the white hand of the handsome woman before him. Then he said in French: "So we are friends still—eh?"

"And pray why not, M'sieur Donovan?" she asked with feigned surprise, as she pointed to a soft divan, upon which her visitor sank among the blue silk cushions.

The Englishman knew that a difficult task lay before him. Helen Leonescu was not his friend—there were strong reasons why she should not be. Yet his quick eye had seen that his hostess expected him, and he therefore cursed inwardly that unfortunate encounter in the afternoon.

"On the last occasion that we met, the conditions were scarcely so pleasant as to-night, eh?" remarked Donovan, purposely recalling their final meeting three years ago. "You deceived me, Mademoiselle—deceived me very badly, you'll recollect!"

The handsome woman frowned slightly and shrugged her half-bare shoulders.

"Now," he said very calmly, "I know that you and I are enemies. You, and your precious friend Meyer, tried to get hold of the dispatches that night on the boat from Constanza to Constantinople—and, by Gad! you very nearly had them, too! But you didn't get off quite scot free, did you, eh?" he laughed.

"Have you come here to Bucharest to reopen all that?" she asked, facing him in fierce resentment.

"Not in the least, Mademoiselle," was his reply. "I'm here to know the reason why your confounded accomplice, that scoundrel Mellini, is so constantly watching me in London? His girl was outside my house in Half Moon Street the other day, overhearing me give direction to a taxi-driver. Now, I've come here to learn what's your little game, eh?" demanded the Englishman in a hard voice. "*And I mean to know!*"

The woman laughed defiantly.

"Meyer is here—I saw him to-day—and he, of course, told you of my arrival," Donovan went on. "You and your infernal crowd are pretty busy nowadays—of course, with unlimited money from Berlin. I admire your ingenuity in going to America and posing as a Tzigane singer! You had with you a young fellow named Grierstein—an aviator from Friedrichshafen. Where is he?"

"Likely that I should tell you, of all men, the whereabouts of any of my good friends," growled the woman.

"Well, I'm going to find him," replied Donovan of Whitehall firmly. "I don't want to give him away to the police—oh, no, don't think that. I really want to pay him good money."

"Pay him money!" echoed the woman Leonescu, opening her eyes widely. "What for?"

"Well, for some plans of a new steering invention for aeroplanes."

"What? To buy those plans that he once offered to your people?" she remarked.

Donovan nodded, much surprised however that the woman should know of the transaction.

"Grierstein is dead," she said abruptly.

"He is not. And, moreover, before I leave here I intend to have his address from you. Now you understand perfectly my intention—eh?" he added.

"Then you don't leave here alive!" cried a man's rough voice in broken English. Instantly Donovan turned to find a big black-bearded man standing behind him, covering him with a heavy automatic pistol.

Donovan, quite unperturbed, laughed and nodded slowly.

"Ah! so this is the trap—is it?" he remarked in French to the man who was none other than Meyer, the fellow whom he had met earlier in the day. "I'm very glad I know it, m'sieur, because both you and my friend Mademoiselle will now end your unenviable careers in a really dramatic fashion," and with exquisite politeness he bowed to the woman before him.

Helen Leonescu exchanged a quick, apprehensive glance with her accomplice.

"Oh, shoot away if you wish! It will be the same. The victory remains with me," declared the Englishman quite coolly. "You are both prisoners at this moment," and he glanced at his

watch. "Below Levitski, Chief of Secret Police, and his men surrounded the house. It is already ten-thirty. They are due here now. I take no risks with you, you know! So shoot away as hard as you please!"

The murderous hand of the man with the black beard dropped inertly. Donovan's *coup* was entirely unexpected.

"Ah!" said the Englishman. "Now you are, I see, ready to listen. Well, tell me where this Grierstein can be found, and I will lay no information against you. Is that a bargain?"

Then, turning to the handsome, dark-eyed woman, he went on:

"You mentioned those plans. Tell me—tell me the truth, remember, or I'll withdraw my promise of secrecy. Were those plans real, or was the whole job a put up one by your friend Steinhauer on behalf of the German Air Service so as to get Grierstein into our employ? I mean, were those plans real, or were they only specially prepared for Whitehall?"

The woman, one of the cleverest secret agents that Germany possessed, remained silent. She saw that Hugh Donovan held the trump card, yet she was disinclined to betray her employers who paid her so well.

For some moments the dead silence was unbroken save for the ticking of the clock.

"Come, answer me," demanded Donovan firmly.

At that moment there came the tramp of heavy feet, followed by a loud knocking at the door.

"The police!" gasped the man with the pistol. "Hush!"

In a second the woman's face went pale as death. Her lips blanched instantly.

"You—you've guessed aright, M'sieur Donovan!" she said in a low, hoarse voice. "It was a plot to place Grierstein in London. The plans of the aeroplane steering-gear were specially prepared. I assure you that I speak the truth. Go and see Heinrich for yourself," and she gave Donovan the address he wanted—an address in the Kalverstraat in Amsterdam.

"If you've told me a lie, Mademoiselle, then, by Heaven, you'll repent it bitterly!" he declared. Then, going to the door, he met Levitski upon the threshold and descended the stairs with him.

And as the door closed the woman clenched her hands, and through her set teeth growled fiercely:

"Once again!—once again he has escaped us!"

One afternoon, three weeks later, Donovan was back again in Half Moon Street, where Churston was seated with him. He had reported the interesting result of his inquiries in the Roumanian capital, when his friend eagerly demanded to know why he had so suddenly disappeared without a word to anyone.

"Well, it was simply this, my dear fellow," replied the easy-going cosmopolitan as, with a laugh, he reached across for one of his favourite Petkoff cigarettes. "I'm awfully sorry to have been compelled to alarm you all, but, finding that infernal spy Mellini had me under observation, I saw that to get out of England by ordinary methods might be very unsafe, and I probably would not arrive at my journey's end; or, if I did, I could not hope to succeed in carrying out my mission. So I merely arranged with a rather clever girl, the daughter of an old friend of mine, to call at Wyvenhoe and fetch me mysteriously, bringing me, at the same time, some kit I'd already bought for the purpose.

"Dressed as a workman I got up to London, purposely dropped in a railway carriage the letter Sir Lionel had given me, and with all my papers in order left for Bergen by the ordinary boat, so that while Mellini—hearing the gossip and reading the papers—believed I was missing, I was already well on my slow journey through Finland and Russia in the guise of a refugee. Helen Leonescu is a particularly clever and dangerous woman, and there was but one way—to take her by surprise. Had she been warned previously—as they no doubt would have warned her—I should never have been able to get at the truth."

And afterwards Hugh took a taxi round to Draycott Place, where, as he sat alone holding Mabel's tiny hand in his, he made the same explanation, and their lips met again in one long and rapturous caress.

CURRENT REVIEWS

Program for a Puppet by Roland Perry. Crown, 1980. $9.95

Program for a Puppet will delight readers who are either fascinated by or terrified of computers. Those who are interested in the more human aspects of spying will probably be bored. Lasercomp, a giant computer corporation with a more than coincidental resemblance to IBM, is supplying the KGB with computers, quite illegally. A woman journalist who is investigating this story is murdered in a particularly brutal fashion on the first page of the novel. Her lover, a dashing journalist, is drawn into the investigation which takes him into Russia, where he is seduced by spies and tracked down by computer. Meanwhile, back in the United States, Lasercomp is awaiting the fulfillment of a long-term project, a computer program that will control the outcome of the next presidential election. With their own man in the White House, Lasercomp will be able to sell their computers to whomever they please. On the whole the book is rather gimmicky and marred by such dialogue as: "I've never made love to a spy... nor someone with such a hairy chest..."

—Mary Cappadonna

* * * * *

The Murder of the Maharaja by H. R. F. Keating. Doubleday, 1980.

In his review of *Filmi, Filmi, Inspector Ghote* (TAD Vol. 12, p. 370), Thomas Godfrey accurately remarks on both the fascination of Inspector Ghote and the irritation of reading his cases. Keating's latest effort pulls a double switch. There's no Inspector Ghote, and the plot moves along at a relatively quicker pace. We still have a stroll through life at the royal court of the Maharaja of Bhopore, but there is enough activity to keep it from drying up. The murder of the Maharaja occurs among a party of mixed notables gathered for the ceremonial opening of a new dam. The Maharaja was a vicious and accomplished practical joker, well-deserving of the antagonism of his guests.

Detective Superintendent Howard provides a competent piece of traditional British detection as he muddles among the suspects and servants of the palace. The human, amusing characterizations of the suspects are some of the best in the past decade. But watch out for that innocuous schoolteacher helping D.S.P. Howard—he has a surprise for you at the end. *Maharaja* is a pleasure, exhibiting the variety that can erupt when an author breaks away from his usual series.

—Fred Dueren

* * * * *

The Mystery of Cloomber by A. Conan Doyle. Gaslight Publications. 195pp. $11.95

In literature, as in life, failure has its own fascination. The worst book of an admired writer makes us wonder why talent misfires. Knowing the surer artistry and wider popularity of the author's later career, one can smile at the faults of an early, unsuccessful book which flounders as awkwardly and absurdly as a trout in a glass of milk.

In the case of Conan Doyle, that novel would be the one which occupies the middle, transitional ground between *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of the Four.* But few Doyle fans know what that work is.

Out of print since 1912, *The Mystery of Cloomber* (1888) is Doyle's rarest novel, and easily his worst. Its new publication marks the advent of Gaslight's eight-volume Conan Doyle Centennial Series, the sum of which will bring us a side of ACD seldom seen by Holmes-only readers.

Why has editor Jack Tracy elected to start his distinguished series with a clunker like *Cloomber?*

First, of course, is the curiosity value of a book which practically no one has ever heard of, let alone read. Then, too, there is some good to be found even in Doyle's admittedly poorest performance. "All the author's promise is there," Tracy maintains in the spirit of charity. "As an index to his personal attitudes, it is the most deliberately symbolic piece of fiction he ever wrote. His brilliance at characterization has been all but perfected. And his narrative powers burst through occasionally with startling vividness..."

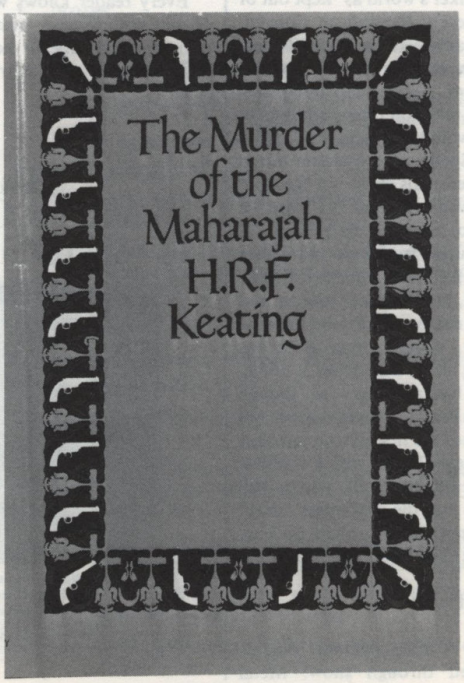
But it is as the preparation for *The Sign of the Four* that *Cloomber* has its chief interest, and Tracy's "Afterword" on that subject is an original contribution to Doyle criticism.

How bad, then, is *Cloomber?* Bad enough. You can get through it in a night, but you may not respect yourself in the morning.

Cloomber is a creaky, insipid melodrama about noble Hindus pursuing an old British Army miscreant who is hiding out in the lonely wilds of Scotland. Its plot, obviously "borrowed" from *The Moonstone,* has none of the charm or suspense of the original, and it limps at last into the unsatisfying "explanations" of the occult. (Doyle was to make the same mistake years later in his equally unhappy Professor Challenger novel, *The Land of Mist.*)

Of peculiar fascination to mystery fans, however, is the fact that *Cloomber* offers the most inept, defective detective Doyle ever created. What a contrast to Sherlock Holmes is John Fothergill West! Not only does he fail to solve the mystery, he doesn't even get inside Cloomber Hall, the scene of the mystery. Holmes would have had a word for a sleuth like West. It would not have been a kind word.

We can think more kindly of *Cloomber,* if only because its weaknesses were a preparation for subsequent storytelling strengths.



Less than a decade after its commercial and critical failure, its author was the undisputed king of Victorian popular novelists. If Conan Doyle erred in allowing *Cloomber* to be published in the first place, Jack Tracy has made no mistake in reviving this lifeless, ludicrous novel. Reading *Cloomber* with an eye on what lay one book ahead, one suspects that that is pretty much the way Doyle wrote it. And if we have *Cloomber* to thank for *The Sign of the Four,* then it is vain to wish that it might have been a better book.

—Howard Lachtman

* * * * *

Motor City Blue by Loren D. Estleman. Houghton Mifflin, 1980. $9.95

Loren Estleman, having successfully pastiched Sherlock Holmes on two occasions, has turned his hand to the "hard-boiled" genre. Successfully again.

Amos Walker (aimless Walker?), a private detective, stumbles onto a Vietnam War officer he once served under. The officer ignores him. There follows a kidnapping which in economy of words coupled with an effectiveness of meaning would do credit to Chandler. To Walker, it's obvious—old hat, but curious. He has been on a stakeout of a man making an injury claim. The change of events leads to a stream of consciousness racing through military intelligence, a trailer camp, a house of ill fame, the Syndicate and union politics. Sounds like an amalgam of 1930s and '40s. Sure, but it's not really old-fashioned. It has enough about drugs and sex so you know that in the "old days" it wouldn't have passed the censor. And it is about late 1970s Detroit.

Detroiters will not care for the down-at-the-heels image given the city. The publisher's blurb refers to Walker's world as "kept out of sight during the recent Republican Convention." But Estleman's hero is not a Renaissance man, he is a survivor. He lives in and off his environment. Other than occasional electronic aids, he relies on things and moves in circles which would be natural to Miles Archer and Sam Spade. The cynicism mixed with "honor" is there. His client is a "retired" Mafia don who wants to find his ward—a gorgeous girl who seems to be posing for pornographic pictures. In the search, bodies pile up; Walker is followed, punched, threatened, bamboozled, lied to, made love to, but *never* ignored. All roads seem to lead his way.

Its the writing, though, that does the important leading here, and from a sometimes seemingly hesitant start as though backing into the milieu, Estleman reaches full speed quickly. Amos the first-person narrator describes his car as a Cutlass with a Cadillac engine that "can hit 65 while you're still closing the door on the passenger side." Equally so for the writing. It picks up bite, and by page 40 it is a book you won't put down.

An example of the later prose should suffice.

"She hesitated. A door slammed outside and feet crunched through snow. Metal rattled. Then she reached up...and shook loose her black-black hair so that it tumbled over her shoulders in disheveled waves. That was the [girl] I knew, the stunner in the graduation photo... The battle worn jacket, jeans and boots gave her a wickedly erotic look: Ilse, She-Wolf of the SS..."

Probably we shall read more of Walker. Holmes, Estleman does well, but Amos Walker is his creation. There is pride as well as strength and atmosphere in *Motor City Blue.*

William Kienzle and Loren Estleman are both writing about and calling attention to Detroit. Kienzle, in his 40s, and Estleman, 28, bid fair to make of the Motor City in the '80s what New York was to the crime fiction of the '20s and '30s.

—Peter Spivak

* * * * *

The Agatha Christie Who's Who by Randall Toye. Holt, Rinehart. 264 pp. $12.95

"It is no good thinking about real people," Agatha Christie said about the difficult task of originating and developing fictional characters, "you must create your characters for yourself. Someone you see in a tram or a train or a restaurant is a possible starting point, because you can make up something for yourself about them."

Christie was as expert in creating characters as she was in concealing clues. She could portray personality in a phrase, speak volumes in a single sentence—Colonel Abercrombie, for example, that xenophobic snob who looks at you "with an air of one considering some noxious insect," or sinister Guy Pagett, who has "the face of a fourteenth-century poisoner, the sort of man the Borgias got to do their odd jobs for them."

Every reader knows who Agatha Christie is, but not even the most devout "Agathian" can possibly hope to keep track of all the quaint and colorful Christie characters who inhabit that rambling English country house of the writer's imagination.

Dame Agatha invented enough family histories to fill an almanac, enough names to fill a telephone directory. To accurately recall who's who and what's what in her 66 novels and 147 tales, one would require the services of a computer. A more convenient memory bank exists, however, in Randall Toye's new biographical guide, *The Agatha Christie Who's Who.* This informative volume lends credibility as well as delight to "the grand game of detection."

If you have trouble telling Colonel Race from Colonel Mustard, if you are one of those who have the unfortunate habit of confusing the archdeacon with the undergardener, and if you think that the red-faced Member of Parliament for West Kidleby is even more suspicious than the ashen-faced butler with the limp (whose name you can't recall either), then this book is definitely for you. At $12.95, it's a better bargain than a computer; not only will it pull together all those Christie classics on your mystery shelf, but it will point the way to others you may wish to investigate.

From "Mr. Aarons," the drama expert, to "Madame Zuleika," the preposterous fortune-teller, here are 2,000 of Christie's significant characters, alphabetized and cross-referenced for the convenience of readers who want facts and faces at their fingertips. All the characters come complete with the kind of capsule descriptions that will leave no doubt in your mind as to who they are, what they do, how they appear, and where they belong.

Eye-catching illustrations enliven the research, and a splendid cover portrait depicts Dame Agatha herself, seated primly among the weapons and suspicious types of an English country estate that looks (quite rightly) as if it were made to order for the scene of the crime.

Toye's book is itself a monument to "the queen of crime," another unmistakable sign of Agatha Christie's hold upon the hearts of contemporary readers. What's the secret of her enduring storytelling magic?

Toye's own theory is simple and plausible: "The world that Agatha Christie created and that generations of readers have come to love was a world in which the good triumphed and the bad did not. . . . And it was a world in which men and women were eventually held accountable for their actions."

Randall Toye would certainly be held accountable for his own actions if he committed the unpardonable crime of revealing the identity of any guilty party to readers who have yet to read the books. But Toye is sensible enough not to spoil the fun. *The Agatha Christie Who's Who* will tell you everything—except *whodunit.*

—Howard Lachtman

* * * * *

Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers edited by John M. Reilly. St. Martin's Press. $50

Much can and will be said about this work, but "magnificent achievement" and "indis-

pensable reference" come most commandingly to mind. This 1568-page masterpiece provides biographical sketches, bibliographies and essays on more than 600 crime writers, plus a long and informed introduction by Reilly and a valuable 10-page "Reading List." I've spent many hours lost in its pages, soaking up new information and insightful comment, and I can see myself depending upon it for years to come.

This project was born in John Reilly's mind and his energy and determination carried it to completion. His approach was this: drawing upon a panel of 21 advisors (of which I was one), he selected the authors to be treated and the nature (major or minor in terms of essay length) of their treatment. Then the services of 128 knowledgeable folk were obtained to provide the individual critical essays on selected authors. I suspect Reilly did much of the bibliographical work himself, and certainly it is his fine editorial hand that ensured the quality of writing and uniformity of approach.

The bibliographies are particularly noteworthy for their scope: they attempt to list *all* published works, both short and booklength, both criminous and non-criminous, by selected authors. The listing of uncollected short stories is especially gratifying, although the strategy employed is unfortunate in that it calls for the omission of early short stories in a number of instances.

A work of this magnitude is bound to contain errors, but they seem relatively few and mostly trivial (everyone will mention the confusion of Jack Webb the writer and Jack Webb the actor as the major howler). The easiest criticism to level relates to selection criteria: why include, for instance, such writers as William Wiegand, P. B. Yuill, Emma Page, Robin Maugham, Brown Meggs, Henry Klinger, Ivy Litvinov, Wallace Hildick, Stuart Jackman, Samuel M. Fuller, Ray Russell, Nevil Shute and Allan Prior? Why exclude Howard Browne, Herbert Adams, Cecil Freeman Gregg, Gavin Holt, E. R. Punshon, Guy Boothby, Michael Butterworth, Jonathan Craig and Spencer Dean? But this is rather much to carp; *someone* had to make the final selections, and, as in my own case with the *Bibliography of Crime Fiction,* the final tally is not likely to fully please anyone, including the selector.

One other minor criticism: just occasionally the commentator on a given author displays embarrassingly his superficial acquaintance with that author's work.

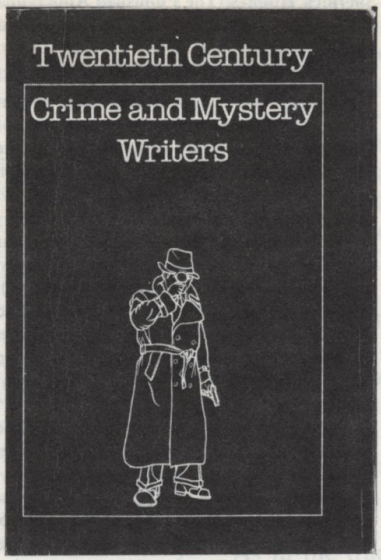
In summary: beg, borrow or buy a copy of *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers!*

—AJH

* * * * *

Mingled with Venom by Gladys Mitchell. London: Michael Joseph, 1978.

Highly regarded in Great Britain, Gladys Mitchell's novels have never really cracked the American market, though a few have been published here, most recently two that appeared a few years ago under the McKay



imprint. Both had good selling hooks—*Watson's Choice* as a Sherlockian item and *Winking at the Brim* for its involvement of a Loch Ness Monster-type apparition in Scotland—but McKay has stopped publishing detective novels, and none of the novels about Dame Beatrice Bradley published since have crossed the water. Having begun her crime-writing career in the late '20s, Mitchell rivals Mignon G. Eberhart for longevity.

The present novel involves the complicated relationships of a family (and its hangers-on) living in three houses in Cornwall. All of the group's fortunes are tied up in the whims of an elderly matriarch whose will is a constant source of speculation and greed, largely as a result of her own efforts to run people's lives and use her money as a lure. Introducing a breath-taking number of characters in the early pages, Mitchell manages to keep them and their relationships all well-differentiated in the reader's mind, an ability that is among the most important attributes of a formal detective novelist. In addition, Mitchell is a master of locale, giving a vivid picture of Cornwall. And once the inevitable murder takes place, the inquest and conversations are in a solidly classical tradition.

In this novel, Gladys Mitchell does something else that shows a determination to move with the times. She introduces a black character, a young man named Gamaliel Leek (or as he prefers to call himself, Greg Ubi), an adoptive son of one of the family's couples. He is a sixteen-year-old student of great intelligence and self-confidence who admires Muhammad Ali and wants to be a champion boxer. Mitchell is both sensitive enough to avoid a condescending or patronizing attitude to her black character and courageous enough to endow him with faults as well as virtues, in short to make him a complete character and not a stereotype. This is still unusual in British detective fiction, and coming from a septuagenarian Golden Age practitioner, it is enormously refreshing.

The conclusion of the novel is oddly satisfying and reasonably clued, with a touch of the old detective-plays-God tradition of the '20s and '30s. There are some coincidences, improbabilities, and strained motivations, but the overall effect is good.

Dame Beatrice Bradley, a Home Office psychiatric consultant, may be the most prolific female detective in fiction in point of full-length cases. Her total passes the half-century mark, usually achieved only by male sleuths—e.g., Perry Mason, Maigret, Peter Clancy, Mike Shayne, Fleming Stone. As a responsible professional woman, rather than a Miss Marple-ish spinster, she is somewhat of a pioneering female sleuth, and she is provided with a female Watson as well in secretary Laura Gavin.

—Jon L. Breen

* * * * *

Fault in the Structure by Gladys Mitchell. London: Michael Joseph, 1977.

Mitchell is an author who always appears to be having a good time writing her novels, and such enjoyment is apt to be infectious. This one is an oddly disjointed affair. The main plot, involving a villain who is born A. C. Swinburne and legally changes his name to T. E. Lawrence, has its moments but is solved in rather perfunctory fashion in the end, with no particular effort to surprise. However, midway through the book, the author embarks on the description of an amateur operatic and theatrical group putting on a production of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera,* with Dame Beatrice Bradley's secretary, Laura Gavin, taking the part of Mrs. Peachum. The satirical picture of the group's jealousies and politics is delightful, and I for one didn't mind a bit that it apparently has only a tenuous relationship to the rest of the story. The production culminates in one of the best theatrical murders outside of Ngaio Marsh.

Not having read any of the author's novels from the Golden Age '30s, I can't say whether they were more satisfactorily plotted than her recent books. They may well have been. But I feel confident they were not any more charmingly written.

—Jon L. Breen

* * * * *

Angel of Death by James Anderson. London: Constable, 1978.

Several years ago, James Anderson penned one of the best of the mock-Golden Age detective novels, *The Affair of the Blood-stained Egg Cosy*. For some reason, he has not been published in the U.S. since (at least, to my knowledge), though he has produced at least two more novels. The one at hand is also a job in the classical tradition, though with a contemporary setting. A variation on Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* (alluded to in the text under its inflammatory British title of *Ten Little Niggers*), it involves a cruise on the private yacht of a Greek shipping magnate. Among the travellers is ex-Scotland Yard detective Alec Webster, hired

by the yacht's owner to protect his daughter, who may be the target of a kidnap attempt. At a party on the ship, the twelve passengers drink champagne and then find an anonymous note informing them that six of their number have been poisoned and will die in about four hours. Thus, the victims as well as the murderer are in doubt, and Webster may well be engaged in solving his own murder.

The book is a highly readable and ingenious one, culminating in one of those long explanation scenes warned against in how-to manuals of mystery writing but so very welcome in books by Ellery Queen, John Dickson Carr, Philip MacDonald, and other classicists. The suspects are a well-drawn lot, and there is much good talk. Ultimately, however, the book is far from being in a league with *The Affair of the Blood-stained Egg Cosy*. For one thing, the murderer is too obvious and logical a candidate to be truly surprising, however nicely the pieces fit together.

—Jon L. Breen

* * * * *

Blackstone on Broadway by Richard Falkirk. London: Eyre Methuen, 1977.

For whatever reason, the novels about Bow Street Runner Edmund Blackstone stopped appearing in the United States after the first four. The series goes on in Britain, however, and this account of the search for Captain Kidd's treasure and Blackstone's visit to New York in the 1820s is the sixth in the series. The book is strong on atmosphere—first of the London underworld and then of New York at a time when gaslight was new, a boon to footpads and attributed by some to the devil. This is a good, fast-reading adventure as always, but the novel belongs in the travelogue mystery category, with the background a good deal more interesting than the thinnish plot. Principal historical personage to appear in John Jacob Astor—was his fortune based on Kidd's treasure?

Anachronism hunters will have fun. The feminist heroine seems to me much too advanced for the 1820s, as does Blackstone's musing that women should have equality. His speculation that some day there might even be a woman Prime Minister simply doesn't ring true. Somehow I doubt that "doing my homework" and "crowd control" are early-nineteenth-century terms, though someone better versed in history may dispute me on this. A reference to Aaron Burr's death in 1836 in a book supposedly set in the '20s seems rather sloppy and careless.

There are sidelights on the sport of ballooning, which seems to turn up in many recent mystery novels, both contemporary and historical. And Blackstone fights a duel, preceded by some nostalgic and philosophical wanderings that seem perfunctory, unconvincing, and rather out of place.

In sum, this is not the best Blackstone, but it is good enough to make his fans wish it could find an American publisher.

—Jon L. Breen

* * * * *

Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and associated hands. Selected and edited by Jack Tracy. Houghton Mifflin, 1980. $11.95

As every well-read schoolboy and devout Baker Street Irregular knows, the saga of Sherlock Holmes ends with the last of the four novels and fifty-six short stories written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Or, then again, does it?

The Holmes mania of recent years has spawned stage revivals (*Sherlock Holmes*) and new dramas (*The Crucifer of Blood*), new feature films (*Murder By Decree*) and cinema retrospectives honoring the memories of Nigel Bruce ("Amazing, Holmes!") and Basil Rathbone ("Elementary, my dear Watson").

And then there are the neo-Holmesian and pseudo-Sherlockian novels. Typically presented as the "lost memoirs" or "newly-discovered diaries" of Dr. Watson, these overtly sensationalistic forgeries have introduced Doyle's sleuth to characters he would never have invited up for tea or consultation at 221B.

Instead of Moriarty, Milverton, and Moran, we now have Dracula, Mr. Hyde, and The Ripper. Ludicrous in subject and tedious in style, most such "serious" pastiches quickly become unintentional parodies. Conan Doyle's crisp craftsmanship, easy wit, and insouciant charm are not easily copied; examples of success (August Derleth's "Solar Pons" tales; H. F. Heard's "Mr. Mycroft" novels) among post-Doyle imitators are so rare that you can count them on the fingers of one hand and still have fingers to spare.

Given the current number of Baker Street burlesques, fantasies, and travesties, it is no wonder that purists tend to insist on the primacy of the Doyle originals. After all, the Sacred Writings (as the old stories are reverently called) can still be trusted to evoke the spirit of Victorian romance and adventure. They can be counted on to transport willing pilgrims back in time to that fabled avenue where slow-moving hansoms and slower-moving fogs pass at leisure before the window of London's most eminent consulting detective and his faithful, if obtuse, companion.

For those who want "more Holmes"—but only if he comes created or sanctioned by Conan Doyle's own hand—here is a volume of delights that expands the otherwise rigid boundaries of Baker Street.

The Published Apocrypha offers eleven after-the-fact adventures, written by Doyle or else endorsed by him as a kind of silent collaborator. All carry Holmes one step beyond the official canon, but not too far for comfort. Sherlock is still Sherlock, Watson still Watson, and it is still 1895, not 1980's idea of what 1895 should be. The magic, in other words, is intact.

Carefully collected and thoughtfully introduced by Jack Tracy, author of the award-winning *Encyclopaedia Sherlockiana,* these apocryphal adventures have a peculiar fascination. While they may not reveal anything new or startling about the private life or public career of Sherlock Holmes, they do shed a great deal of light on Doyle's own personal and professional attitudes toward his most celebrated literary creation.

Doyle teased Holmes and Watson in two amusing little parodies ("The Field Bazaar" and "How Watson Learned the Trick"). He wrote two fine detective stories ("The Lost Special," "The Man with the Watches") for the purpose of showing that even Holmes could be absolutely wrong on occasion (Sherlock appears in both tales as an unnamed "amateur reasoner of some celebrity"). And he wrote Sherlockian plays that range from wonderful (*The Speckled Band*) to woeful (*The Crown Diamond*).

To these genuine apocrypha from Sir Arthur's own hand, Tracy has added an affectionate parody by J. M. Barrie; the four-act play which made William Gillette famous as the first great stage Holmes; and the comedy Gillette later wrote to poke good-natured fun at his alter ego.

The case for including these works is a strong one. Doyle was so fond of the Barrie parody that he quoted it in full in his memoirs. Gillette was a close friend and colleague, and appears to have based some of his four-act success on a lost five-act effort of Doyle's that was considered unsuitable for production.

The collection is rounded off with a fragment of an unwritten Holmes story about murder on stilts (the fragment proves that Doyle was wise not to pursue the plot), and with the curious business of "The Case of the Man Who Was Wanted." The latter was a Sherlock Holmes story which Doyle purchased in 1910 from an unemployed architect named Arthur Whitaker and promptly threw into his drawer. Years later, the story was discovered by his heirs and sold in good faith to a magazine which embarrassed itself by publishing the tale as a genuine adventure. It is not a bad story, and the fact that Doyle read it, bought it, and kept it is indicative of his own small interest in it.

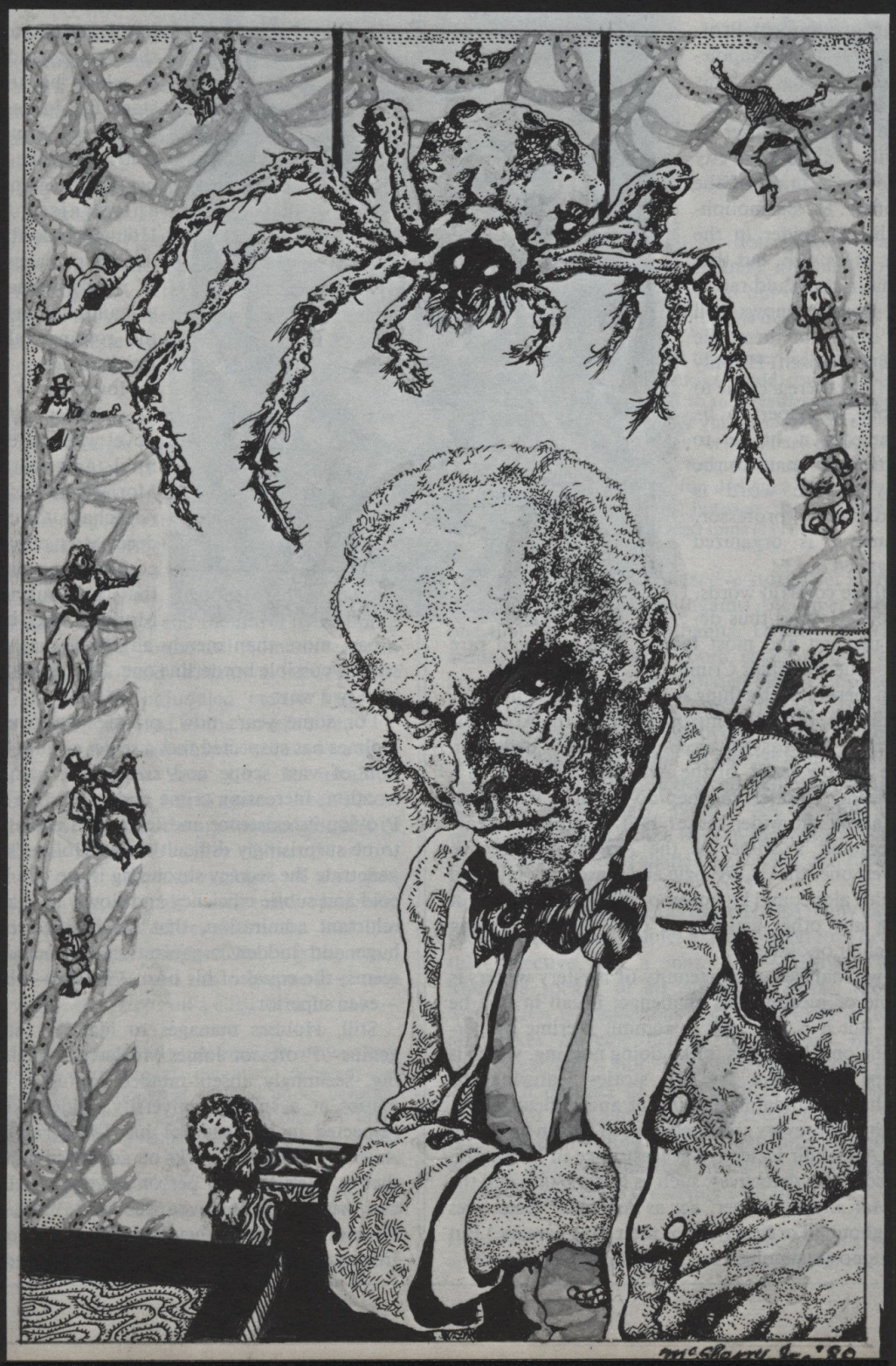
Is this the last of Holmes? By no means. Tracy tantalizes us by confiding that two works still remain unpublished. One is merely an early version of *The Speckled Band.* But the other, *The Angels of Darkness,* is a three-act play written in 1890 and set in San Francisco (thus bringing Watson and Holmes to California!).

Conan Doyle had misgivings about some of the apocrypha which found their way into print. His heirs are sitting tight on the unpublished works. "My father did not wish it published," Dame Jean Conan Doyle has recently explained, "nor did my brothers, and nor do I."

And there the matter rests. In the meantime, however, Tracy's offbeat and engaging anthology of apocryphal surprises will provide more than enough entertaining moments for readers eager to accompany the logical detective and the good doctor on their further adventures.

—Howard Lachtman

THE ARMCHAIR CRIMINAL



THE ARMCHAIR CRIMINAL

by Frank D. McSherry, Jr.

He does nothing himself—

"He only plans,"[1] the Master said of his most dangerous opponent, Prof. Moriarty—"this Napoleon-gone-wrong,"[2] "this great consultant in crime."[3]

"He is the organizer of . . . evil . . . in this great city . . . He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the center of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of them. He does little himself. He only plans . . . Is there a crime to be done, a paper to be abstracted . . . a house to be rifled, a man to be removed, the word is passed to the professor, the matter is organized and carried out."[4]

In these colorful words, Sherlock Holmes thus defined the first and most fearful of a new and rare breed—the Armchair Criminal.

Can there be such a thing as an Armchair Criminal—the exact opposite, the mirror-image, of the Armchair Detective? It is easy to accept the Master's definition in the narrow sense, of the Armchair Criminal as a gang-leader who lets his men do the dirty work; but what about the wider sense? Is it possible to create and commit a crime, as the Armchair Detective unravels one, that is, by logic and reason, by talk and thought; alone, and by power of mind alone, without taking any other action and even without leaving one's chair or office?

As we shall see, the ingenuity of mystery writers is capable of meeting this challenge; it can in fact be done. But it is not easy to commit a crime by performing only legal acts, or by doing nothing, which is perhaps why there are few stories featuring the Armchair Criminal in his sinister and difficult glory, though nearly every great detective of fiction has acted as an Armchair Detective at least once in his career. (Indeed, some detectives, such as Nero Wolfe and the Old Man in the Corner, act as Armchair Detectives throughout all or nearly all of their long careers.) But their opposite numbers are vanishingly few.

Nor is Moriarty—that "poisonous, motionless creature"[5]—the first of the Armchair Criminals. For in the three stories—two short stories and a novel—in which he appears onstage, the sinister professor leaves his armchair and study to take the field personally against his great antagonist, Sherlock Holmes. Indeed, the meeting that climaxes their duel of minds is one of hand-to-hand combat high above the roaring falls of the Reichenbach.

However, in one tale, *The Valley of Fear,* a novel which precedes that final and fatal clash, Moriarty acts as the classic Armchair Criminal. Indeed, it is only Holmes's concluding remarks in that case, suggesting that Moriarty may have taken a part more than merely advisory, that makes the story a possible borderline one. And even they can be read two ways.

For some years now, private detective Sherlock Holmes has suspected that a secret criminal organization of vast scope and size exists, somewhere in London, increasing crime and protecting criminals. Proving its existence and tracing its extents turn out to be surprisingly difficult tasks; Holmes's efforts to penetrate the secrecy shrouding it are blocked with a cold and subtle efficiency and slowly he realizes, with reluctant admiration, that the brain directing that huge and hidden organization is, incredible as it seems, the equal of his own. Perhaps—who knows?—even superior . . .

Still, Holmes manages to identify that guiding genius—Professor James Moriarty, a genial, charming, seemingly absent-minded professor of mathematics at a smaller university, widely known and respected in his field for his *The Dynamics of an Asteroid* and other works on advanced mathematical theory. He's the last person anyone would suspect, and without proof even Scotland Yard, aware of Holmes's powers as they are, have their doubts. (Yet Inspector MacDonald is beginning to wonder; on the

wall of Moriarty's study hangs what is surely an Old Master, and how can anyone afford that on a professor's salary?)

Holmes perseveres and finally succeeds in penetrating the organization: an informer, high in the inner circles but in desperate need of cash, sends him brief warnings of coming crimes.

Holmes and his associate, Dr. John Watson, have just received the latest, telling of danger waiting for someone named Douglas at Birlstone Manor, when Inspector MacDonald arrives to ask their aid—a man named Douglas was murdered last night, shot to death at Birlstone Manor, apparently by a burglar interrupted at work.

Holmes goes down to Sussex to investigate and finds that the case is not quite so open and shut as the local police seem to think. Why would any burglar, to whom silence is vital in his work, carry with him one of the noisiest weapons ever made—a double-barrelled, sawed-off shotgun, its triggers wired together so that both barrels will fire at once? Why would a killer, after removing his victim's rings, keep an inexpensive wedding band but put the two other, obviously far more valuable, rings back on the victim's finger?

And there's another thing, one that seems far more significant to Holmes than to the men of Scotland Yard. The victim was an athletic man who exercised regularly—yet there is only one dumb-bell in the murder room where he routinely worked out—and none elsewhere in the house. What kind of athlete exercises with only one of a set of dumb-bells?

Holmes's investigation of the killing in quiet, green, tree-shaded Sussex involves, among other things, a crime that began in the roaring, fire-shot darkness of the iron and steel foundries of America's Vermissa Valley; the United States's first private detective firm; and the pursuing, relentless fury that hires the skillful hand and murderous brain of Professor Moriarty.

"These Americans..." says Holmes, "Having an English job to do...took into partnership...this great consultant in crime. From that moment their man was doomed. At first he would content himself by using his machinery to find their victim. Then he would indicate how the matter might be treated. Finally, when he read in the reports of the failure of this agent, he would step in himself with a master touch."[6]

And, despite everything even the Master can do to prevent it, a man is swept off a ship on the high seas during a violent storm...

First published in 1914, *The Valley of Fear* has tended to be somewhat underrated by most Holmes fans, largely because nearly half of the book consists of a long flashback recounting the killer's story, with Holmes and Watson absent until its end. Nonetheless, it is a fine, solid detective story, and no less a critic than John Dickson Carr ranked it among the world's ten best detective novels.

Is this the first account of an Armchair Criminal? While Professor Moriarty was certainly the model for the armchair criminal of fiction, that model possibly might not have gone into production. I say "possibly," for Holmes's concluding remark that Moriarty "would step in himself" can be interpreted in two ways. The obvious, and more likely, meaning, of course, is that the professor simply ordered his criminal organization to do the job. What is the point of having a secret criminal group of "a hundred broken fighting men, pickpockets, blackmailers and card sharpers,"[7] if not to do such little chores for one?

However, Holmes used words with more precision than most people, and his comment that Moriarty "step[ped] in himself" may well mean exactly that—Moriarty personally committed the killing. And we know that Moriarty did in fact step in himself on some occasions, at least once—the famous combat at Reichenbach Falls—with the intent of murdering a man with his bare hands.

Perhaps, then, we should class *The Valley of Fear* as a borderline case.

But if Professor Moriarty is not fiction's first armchair criminal, who is?

"Do you have a criminal lawyer in town?"

"Waal, stranger, we've always thought so, but we've never been able to prove it."

Randolph Mason, the first crooked lawyer to appear in mystery fiction as the central character ("hero" is not quite the right word) of a series of

stories, seems at first glance a likely candidate for the dishonor. Mason first appeared in a collection of six stories entitled *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason* (Putnam, 1896). A muscular man in his middle forties, with glittering ink-black eyes and a big nose, Mason possesses an unpleasant, cynical, sneering personality combined with a towering, egotistical faith in an intellect that calculates as capably and efficiently as a computer.

It is a wholly justified faith; in the first chess game he ever plays, Mason defeats the international chess champion, Admiral Du Brey, in a game in which Mason's seemingly foolish opening moves turn out to be an unexpectedly clever and devastating trap.

"Where in Heaven's name, man," said the old Admiral, thunderstruck, "did you learn that masterpiece?"

"Just here," replied Mason. "To play chess, one should know his opponent. How could the dead masters lay down rules by which you could be beaten, sir? They had never seen you"; and thereupon he turned and left the room.[8]

Mason uses that icy brain to tell his clients how to commit any crime in such a way that they cannot—legally—be punished for it. Knowing all there is to know about the letter of the law, Mason doesn't believe the spirit of it even exists—"The word moral," he says, "is a merely metaphysical symbol"[9]—and he would be genuinely shocked if told that he and his clients were criminals.

"No man who has followed my advice," Mason claims, "has ever committed a crime."[10] "Crime is a technical word. It is the law's name for certain acts it is pleased to define and punish..."[11] Any act that does not fit that definition is, therefore, not a crime. It follows, then, says author Melville Davisson Post in his foreword to the book, that "if one knows well the technicalities of the law, one may commit horrible wrongs that will yield all the gain...of the highest crimes, and yet the wrongs perpetrated will constitute no one of the crimes described by the law ...even murder...may be committed in such manner that although the criminal is known and the law holds him in custody, it cannot punish him."[12]

The point is proven in the first and most famous of the Randolph Mason stories, "The Corpus Delecti." Here Mason tells his client how to commit murder and get away with it.

A gold miner kills his partner in a quarrel over his partner's Mexican wife. At the urging of the clever, unscrupulous widow, he impersonates the dead man, going back east to claim his victim's fortune. He's the same age as his victim, resembles him slightly, knows much of the family from which the victim has been separated for many years; the impersonation is a success.

The murderer rises rapidly in the world of high society—until the widow demands not only money but marriage—and backs up her demand with documents that are damning, that will subject him to the most intense, if brief, physical pain society has ever been able to devise—the electric chair.

What am I to do? he asks Mason.

Kill her, of course, Mason says simply; and gives him a short lecture on the law. To prove murder the law must show two things: that someone is dead, not merely missing; and that he or she got that way due to a criminal act. If there were a way to kill, in secret, and dispose of the corpse, in secret, in such a way that it could not possibly turn up again...so that the law could not prove the victim dead instead of missing, or how the victim died...

And Mason shows him—and the reader—how.

Taut, ingenious, and—for its time—shocking, the story aroused controversy that brought it and its author a fame that has lasted to the present day. Critics complained that the story presented, in effect,

a blueprint for getting away with murder; anticipating the objection, Post pointed out in a foreword that "if he instructs the enemies, he also warns the friends of law and order,"[13] a claim that seems justified, for many of the Randolph Mason stories caused the loopholes in the law they were built on to be changed and corrected.* (And of course it is impossible to correct a flawed law without pointing out to people that the flaw exists.)

In another short story, "The Men of the Jimmy," members of a criminal gang seek Mason's help: they need four thousand dollars, immediately, to bribe their boss's way out of jail. How can they get it?

For the last few days, newspapers have been headlining a millionaire's reward offer for news of his kidnapped son. Recalling this, Mason creates a confidence game: first, tell the millionaire you'll give him that information, for four thousand dollars—and, second, tell him, honestly, you haven't got the information to give...Later, in a deposition to the judge, Mason shows why no crime has been committed, in an interesting story that Ellery Queen calls "a 'sleeper'...probably the strangest story of kidnapping ever written."[14]

Is Randolph Mason, then, the first Armchair Criminal? No—for in both these stories he takes the field himself, appearing in court as attorney in the first for the murderer and submitting a deposition in the second for the confidence swindlers who carried out his instructions. He does more than merely advise or comment; he has to act, and act in person. (Though his personal action in the second story is so light, if crucial, and largely off-stage to boot, that Randolph Mason too may well be classed, like Professor Moriarty, as a borderline case. There are three collections of Mason stories, however, and possibly in these others which I have not read Mason may have acted as the classic Armchair Criminal. Could any reader familiar with these other, largely rare, stories inform us?)

Despite the possibility that either Professor Moriarty or Randolph Mason is the major malefactor we've been seeking, the first clear-cut example I can find in fiction of the classic Armchair Criminal is—ironically—a completely innocent man: Oliver Armiston, the Extinct Author.

One morning, Armiston, the world's best-selling author of crime stories, meets a kindly, helpful stranger on the train. The stranger is reading one of Armiston's stories, published in a magazine so elegant that "It was the pride of this magazine that no man on earth could read it without the aid of a dictionary,"[15] about his great scientific thief, the Infallible Godahl, whose exploits have made Armiston rich and famous.

How to do you like the story? Armiston asks. He is flattered when the stranger replies "this fellow Armiston is to be ranked as the most dangerous man in the world"[16]—what if he turned that mind—that brilliant mind of his—to real crime? To stealing, say, the fabulous white ruby of Java belonging to the wealthy William Wentworths!

No danger, Armiston protests; Armiston's criminal schemes are so complicated that only a scientific genius like his fictional thief Godahl could carry them out.

Well, this one would stump even Godahl, the stranger says. For one thing, only the famous and wealthy, the socially prominent, are allowed in the house; how can a professional thief case the place? Nor has Mrs. Wentworth ever told anyone exactly where in the house the jewel is hidden, so Godahl will face a doubly difficult task: he must first act as detective to find where the jewel is; secondly, he must act as thief to steal it. No—no—probably not even Armiston's great mind could solve *that* problem—and the stranger leaves the train.

And leaves Armiston afire with temptation. For Armiston has been one of the exclusive few invited to that guarded, citadel-like home near Central Park, and later, when his hostess dares him to plan a successful robbery of her house—not even the Infallible Godahl could steal her ruby!—it's too much. Armiston sets his clever mind to work, for his next story will be about the theft of a fabulous white ruby from a house exactly like the Wentworth mansion; deducing where the ruby is, *must* be; working out a way to steal it from the huge house built like a fortress, from the room that locks without a key—indeed, apparently even without a lock—and solving the problem of why Mrs. Wentworth hires only deaf butlers.

And then, when it's finished, he'll send a copy of it to the man he met on the train, with a modest little note signed Armiston.

But there are some surprises due for Armiston himself, for his intelligence is the creative and analytical kind, not the street smarts type, and only when the police arrive for a grim interview does an appalling light dawn.

Written with wit and a light touch, "The Infallible Godahl" by Frederick Irving Anderson is ingenuious and full of surprises for both its characters and its readers. First published in the *Saturday Evening Post* for February 15, 1913, this short story still reads well despite its age. Ellery Queen described Anderson's stories correctly as "spider-slow, spider-patient...we

*This is reported in Charles A. Norton's *Melville Davisson Post, Man of Many Mysteries* (Bowling Green Popular Press, 1973), although details are not given. A loophole in California law potentially permitting an admitted murderer to escape scot-free was closed after Erle Stanley Gardner showed it might do so, in fictional form, in *The Bigger They Come* (Morrow, 1938), the first of the Donald Lam-Bertha Cool novels. This is a subject that deserves an article by itself.

like... his wealth of detail... his subtle indirection of style,"[17] and calls them "unforgiveably neglected by contemporary anthologists."[18]

It seems hard on Armiston to refer to him as a criminal, when in fact he was the innocent victim of one—(though there are two points of view about that, as his friend Deputy Police Commissioner Parr points out, calling him "the guiltiest man unhung"[19]; but there is no doubt about the sly, icy villainy of Edward Burton, an English businessman who lives and works in Japan, in W. Somerset Maugham's short-short, "A Friend in Need."

When a feller needs a fiend—oops, friend—call on Mr. Burton, such a nice man; why, as his friends will tell you, he wouldn't hurt a fly. (Of course, that's what Heinrich Himmler's friends and neighbors said about *him*...)

Today, Lenny Burton (no relation) has, to ask him for a job, one Lenny badly needs. Lenny is a former university athlete, gone to seed a bit from drink and easy living, out of condition now—"The girls wouldn't have thought so much of him," Mr. Burton thinks, "if they'd seen him then"[20]—who's been living on a little money from home and a wee bit extra picked up by playing bridge. But now the money from home has stopped; switching to poker to make up for it, Lenny has lost heavily. He's flat broke now, out of credit everywhere and about to be thrown out of his hotel room in a foreign country whose language he can't speak. If he can't get a job, there's only one way out—suicide. Surely Mr. Burton can help a fellow countryman down on his luck?

Well, Mr. Burton asks, smiling, can you do anything besides play bridge?

Lenny, who had a gentleman's education and was never trained for anything except sports, replies desperately that he swam for his university.

"I got some glimmering of what he was driving at," Mr. Burton later says. "I've known too many men who were little tin gods at their university to be impressed by it... Suddenly I had an idea."[21] There *is* an opening at the firm, he says, and it's yours if you'll just do a small thing for me first, a little thing, a perfectly proper thing... just a little swimming...

Is it possible to murder a man just by talking, without lifting a hand against him or hiring someone else to do so? Author Maugham shows that it certainly is, in an unforgettable story that is one of the two or three finest crime short-shorts ever written.

"He's a lonely old eagle," Raymond Chandler once said in a perceptive evaluation of him. "I don't suppose any writer was ever more completely the professional... the greatest [of all his gifts] is not literary at all, but is rather that neat and inexorable perception of character and motive which belongs to the great judge or the great diplomat... He can convey the setting for emotion but very little the emotion itself. His plots are cool and deadly and his timing is absolutely flawless... He never makes you catch your breath or lose your head, because he never loses his. I doubt that he ever wrote a line which seemed fresh from creation, and many lesser writers have. But he will outlast them all with ease, because he is without folly or silliness. He would have made a great Roman"[22]; and this short-short is as hard, as cold, as classical, as Roman marble.

If we exclude *The Valley of Fear* as a borderline case, perhaps the first novel to feature an Armchair Criminal is Ellery Queen's *The Door Between* (Stokes, 1937). Murder is the novel's major crime, and murder of an unusual kind, as Ellery points out to the killer in their final confrontation: "'Now do you understand,' demanded Ellery softly, 'how a man might kill a woman from a very great distance?... It's a queer sort of murder... mental murder, murder by pure suggestion, but murder it is...'"[23] but it is not the worst crime uncovered by his investigation of the Karen Leith case.

Tragically, death strikes at Karen Leith, doll-like, American writer raised in Japan, at the height of her success, both literary and personal. She has just been awarded America's highest literary prize for her novels of Japanese life, as exquisite and sensitive as herself; she is shortly to be married to a world-famous scientific genius, Dr. John MacClure, himself the recipient of a great award, the Nobel Prize, for his work on cancer; and in only a few weeks she will inherit, on her fortieth birthday, a small fortune.

Eva MacClure, the doctor's adopted daughter, comes to visit Karen one hot afternoon, waiting alone for half an hour outside the sitting room door. Worried when a ringing telephone inside goes unanswered, she enters—and finds Karen, wrapped in a gold and black kimono, lying on the floor, blood pouring from a cut throat. It's murder, Eva realizes, there's no sign of a weapon; and the killing must have been done within the last few seconds—but except for her and the now dead woman there is no one in the sunlit sitting room, elegant with Japanese screens, silk painting and an empty birdcage for her pet jay. Unbelievably, the triple oriel windows are barred on the inside with iron, the door across the room is locked and barred on the inside, and the only other door is the one Eva's been sitting in front of, the one she knows none but herself has used for half an hour...

How did the killer get in? And how, once in, did he or she get out again? It's a mystery to Eva, but not to the police, whose silent, accusing eyes turn coldly onto Eva...

Fortunately for Eva, one of the guests at Karen's home is Ellery Queen, son of Inspector Queen of Homicide; for he alone believes that her story, impossible though it seems, just might be the literal truth—and conducts his own investigation.

The search involves a mysterious death years ago in Japan; a private detective who says he loves Eva but whose attempts to aid her by altering evidence get her deeper into danger; a missing Japanese bird; the scientific genius who finds himself falling in love for the first time at fifty-three; a locked room problem; and some strange puzzles about Karen herself—why did she have bars placed on the windows of her second-floor room? What—or who—was she afraid of? What was the meaning of the unfinished letter she was writing to her attorney a few moments before her death: "...of the utmost importance, and extremely confidential. I know I can trust you to expo—"[24]

Shorter, more romantic, lacking the intricate complications of plot, fair play and clues of his Golden Age novels, *The Door Between* is still one of Queen's better and more intriguing works. Tricky and ingenious, it not only presents a locked room mystery with not one but two solutions—each equally valid!—but more than one Armchair Criminal who can commit killings by talking, and—perhaps most unusual of all—a murderer who is every bit as baffled by the details of the crime as are the police and Ellery!

Are you tired? Bored? Fed up with retirement? And, maybe, needing a little extra cash? If such is your situation, you might wish to consider the unique profession dreamed up for himself by little Mr. Schmid, a foxy grandpa type with starched Herbert Hoover collar, to solve just such problems: "Let Me Help You With Your Murders," a short-short by T. M. McDade in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* for September 1949.

When a detective story writer needs a set of exotic clues to build his story on, Mr. Schmid will provide them, for a fee—"Clues and alibis arranged... Vivid, dramatic, insoluble,"[25] says his ad in the *Saturday Review of Literature.* Or clever gimmicks to stimulate inspiration—including such tricks as showing how a bullet can go through a hole in shatterproof glass smaller than the bullet—how to see through the blank surface of a panel of frosted glass—and how a man can drown while sitting at his desk, high in a downtown office building...

Unfortunately, not all of Mr. Schmid's clients are telling him the truth when they claim they need help for their fictional murders...

Told with ingenuity and wit, and with a punchy last line, this short-short rises above most gimmick tales, and was a first story prize-winning entry in Ellery Queen's Fourth Annual Contest in 1948.

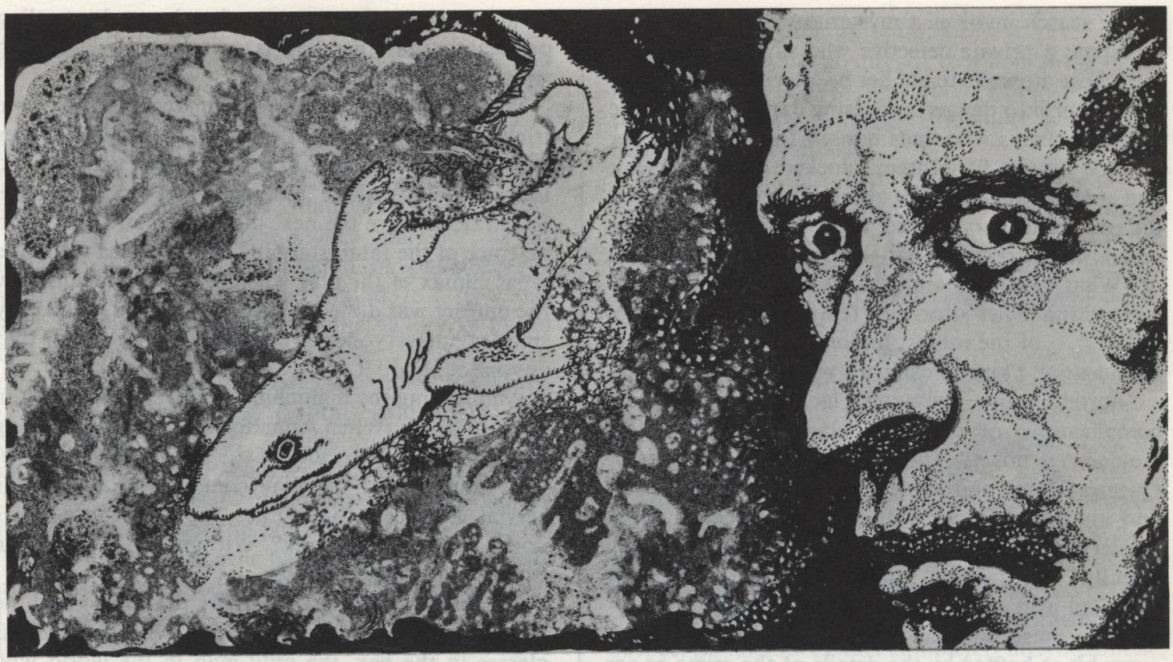
Another EQMM Contest prize winner glitters with a clever variant on the theme of the involuntary criminal. Aah—there he is—Paul Annixter, the famous playwright, whose girl has just told him to get lost and stay that way, easing the pain at the bar. But don't feel sorry for Annixter; right in the middle of all the boozing, he's suddenly gotten the idea for his next murder drama, one of such utterly startling originality that the play is certain to be a smash Broadway hit.

With drunken enthusiasm Annixter tells the whole trick to the hard-eyed little man in the rimless glasses beside him at the bar. About the endangered girl who locks herself all alone in a windowless room—and is found dead there the next morning, murdered, with no trace of the fatal, stabbing weapon used—and the great climax of the play when the hero explains how the murder was done, a way so blindingly, brilliantly simple that everyone has overlooked it, so simple that anyone could do it—

And leaving the nightclub, Annixter walks right in front of a taxi. When Annixter wakes in the morning in a hospital, all memory of the murder trick is gone. Everything about the play comes back as clear as crystal, all except the last act—*how* the murder was done. What is the trick? Without it, without the explanation, he has no play.

Desperately, Annixter searches the city to find the man who knows, the little man with the rimless glasses in the bar, the only man in the world who knows how to commit the perfect murder, who can help him remember "The Blind Spot" by Barry Perowne, a short story in *Ellery Queen's Mystery*

"...the White Ruby of Burma!!!"



"The eyes were the result of an error on the assembly line. They had been intended for a shark..."

Magazine for November 1945. Basically a gimmick story, but a memorable one, one of the most memorable ever written.

All our previous Armchair Criminals have, willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or unknowingly, broken the law in some way. All could be brought to court (if not necessarily convicted) on a variety of charges ranging from murder to criminal conspiracy, or sued on grounds ranging from malicious mischief to malpractice. (Even the slick Randolph Mason could find himself facing a few heart-to-heart discussions with the Ethics Committee of the American Bar Association, and even so expert and quick-thinking an attorney as Donald Lam got his license lifted for a year when he did innocently what Mason did knowingly—on a bet, Lam promises to tell a client of a loophole in the law that will let anyone commit a murder, admit it in open court and get off scot-free. The client turned out to be a gangster who, unknown to Lam, meant to use the knowledge to kill a rival hoodlum, and if the Bar Association's grievance committee had believed for one minute that Lam could deliver on that promise his license might have been lifted permanently. Nevertheless, Lam does not qualify as an Armchair Criminal, since his scheme, which he puts personally into effect at the climax of his first case, *The Bigger They Come* [Morrow, 1938] involves considerable activity in the field.)

But our next example of the Armchair Criminal is different. Indeed, this criminal is unique—the purest, most classical example of the Armchair Criminal in fiction—for this murderer kills without breaking the law. "I had come across at last," says the famous detective Hercule Poirot, tilting his egg-shaped head with its waxed, majestic moustaches, "at the end of my career, the perfect criminal, the criminal who... *could never be convicted of crime.*"[26]

Curtain by Agatha Christie was written in the middle 1940s and was meant to be the last story about detective Hercule Poirot, presenting him in a wheelchair, almost helpless from old age, but in a tremendous case intended to climax his long and famous career. After all, Poirot was old enough to be retired from the Belgian police force when he first appeared in 1920, a refugee from World War I Belgium, in his first case, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles.*

But by 1940, Poirot had become one of the best known—and best-selling—fictional detectives of all time, starring in a sparkling series of novels of such startling originality of plot and technique as *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, Murder on the Orient Express, The A.B.C. Murders* and *Death on the Nile* (to name only a few of the more famous). Ending the adventures of such a popular character would have been killing a proverbial goose that had laid some very golden eggs indeed, and naturally her publishers objected.

Mrs. Christie had recognized the problem of Poirot's age as early as the second or third Poirot novel—"Now I saw what a terrible mistake I had made in starting with Hercule Poirot so *old,*"[27] she said later; and finally, much to the relief of her publishers, put the manuscript of *Curtain* safely away with instructions that it should only be issued

after her death. Mrs. Christie, who had spent so much of her life surprising her legions of loyal readers, meant to leave a gift of one more surprise after her death. The Poirot series continued, the question of his age being dealt with by simply ignoring it.

Once again, however, the popularity of Poirot altered her plans. A film, *Murder on the Orient Express,* made from her 1934 novel of that name, became a world-wide box-office success in 1974, perhaps the most profitable British-financed film ever made. Almost overnight it created a new mass audience for Poirot. Now, her agents felt, was the right time—the ideal time—to make an advantageous sale of *Curtain,* and finally Mrs. Christie agreed. (The paperback rights alone went for slightly under a million dollars.) The novel was published in 1975.

It was worth waiting for. Not only was the eccentric but brilliant Belgian back, with his old friend and Watson, the faithful if slow-thinking Captain Hastings, they had returned to Styles House, the scene of their first meeting—to hunt a multiple murderer.

Visiting Poirot at Styles, now a somewhat run-down retirement home, Hastings is shocked to find his old friend confined to a wheelchair, so physically weak that he must almost be cared for like a baby, although his mind is as razor-sharp as ever. Why is Poirot, a rich man now, staying at such a second-class place?

Because there is work to be done, Poirot explains. Press accounts of five recent murders have brought the retired detective to Styles. They all seem open and shut cases, the killer known in all of them and convicted in three (the fourth ended in acquittal and in the fifth, a mercy killing, no arrest was made due to insufficient evidence, though the identity of the killer seemed clear). All routine...

Yet Poirot's keen brain has seen something strange about those seemingly obvious cases. In all five cases the killers had the same person as a friend. The chances against this are astronomical, Poirot points out. How often does the average person meet and befriend five murderers in almost as many months? "No, no, *mon ami,*" Poirot says, "it is not possible, that."[28]

Yet this person had no known motive in any of the five cases, and in at least one case was hundreds of miles away from the scene of the crime when the murder occurred.

Are we, Poirot wonders, really seeing the handiwork of a diabolically clever multiple murderer—one who kills by psychology, by tricking others into killing for him? A person with a passion for pain, a murder addict? If this is so, then someone will die soon, and die violently, at Styles, for that same person is here, now, a friend to the guests and patients here...

But should the killer strike again, this time it will be different; this time Poirot and Hastings will be forewarned and waiting. Poirot—old now, in a wheelchair; but with his little grey cells that have been the nemesis of many a murderer still as deadly as ever.

But this time he is facing what may be the most dangerous criminal of his long career—indeed, one that it may be impossible to stop.

Who is the murderous friend? wonders Hastings, who has not been told for fear his inability to dissemble will alert the killer. Retired Col. Luttrell, who enjoys game shooting in the woods where accidents may so easily happen; nervous Dr. Franklin with the irritable neurotic wife he'd like to do without; Norton, the bird-watcher whose powerful binoculars sometimes watch more than animal wild life; the handsome but corrupt Allerton who's interested too much in Hastings's inexperienced but pretty teen-aged daughter; or perhaps the hot-tempered big-game hunter Sir William Carrington, whose career as Governor of a province in India made him used to being all-powerful?

Plots spin their webs in the old stately house that has seen murder done before and will see it again. Counter-plots, too, as Poirot's room key mysteriously disappears and Hastings realizes too late that he has become the next target of a murderer skilled at killing at long range, by psychology; who never touches the gun or the poisoned cup in person.

Story-telling and plot, not characterization, are Mrs. Christie's strong points, and both are abundantly evident in this, one of her best works. Published shortly before her death, in Dame Agatha's eighty-fifth year, this novel provides a fitting and mysterious curtain for the last act of the lives of both Poirot and herself.

Poirot's antagonist was unique in not actually breaking any laws; more in the Moriarty pattern is the criminal genius faced by New York's beer-drinking, orchid-growing, fat private detective, Nero Wolfe, in the novel *In the Best Families* by Rex Stout (Viking, 1950).

One pleasant Saturday morning Wolfe gets a surprise package—not the gourmet sausage he loves and expects, but a tear gas bomb. Following it is a phoned warning: the package could have held something far more deadly; quit the case you've just accepted.

Wolfe has heard that voice, cold as Arctic ice, before. The last time it ordered him off a case the voice had also given a demonstration to prove it wasn't fooling—tommygunners had blown Wolfe's penthouse and fabulous orchid collection to bits and shreds. Wolfe had soon discovered the voice's identity—Arnold Zeck, whom he calls "the most dangerous man in America."[29]

Zeck is the creator and organizer of a secret, wide-

spread criminal group that will commit any crime for a price, that's constructed in such a way that most of the people who have worked for it for years do not even know the name of the mastermind they're working for. And mastermind is the right word—Wolfe, no modest man, rates Zeck as the intellectual equal of himself. When we clash, he tells assistant Archie Goodwin, there can be one and only one outcome—death for one of us; for convicting Zeck of anything is close to impossible. Like the instigator of the Watergate crimes, the wealthy and influential Zeck is an Armchair Criminal who acts only through agents; those who actually do the job do not even know he gave the orders. It will be a fight to the finish.

Ironically, it started over a case Wolfe didn't want in the first place. Mrs. Barry Rackham, a glitteringly rich but pathetically homely woman, has married a good-looking, charming younger man with champagne tastes and Coca-Cola income. Outside of his weakness for money, he is an ideal husband and Mrs. Rackham has been careful to keep her checkbook out of his hands. But lately he has somehow been getting huge sums of money, and Mrs. Rackham want to know from where and for what? Surely it can't be legally gotten; she is afraid Barry is getting into something ugly, way over his head, maybe something dangerous. Will Mr. Wolfe find out where the money's coming from? It's for Barry's protection as well as mine.

This is a little too close to divorce work, which Wolfe never touches, and he's about to say no. But the firm's short of cash at the moment, and besides, there's the way the damned woman puts it: "I just want to know. You've not ugly and afraid and neurotic like me, you're big and handsome and successful and not afraid of anything...I don't want to expose him, I just have to know. You are the greatest detective on earth, and you're an honest man...You can't possibly say you won't do it."[30]

It's too much. "Confound it,"[31] Wolfe mutters, and takes the case. "Your notebook, Archie."[32]

Archie goes to the Rackham estate, pretending to be investigating an unsolved, month-old poisoning of a prize dog at nearby Hillside Kennels, owned by Mrs. Rackham's cousin, Calvin Leeds—and soon learns just how rough the road can be for anyone opposing the mysterious Zeck. After meeting and quizzing family and guests—including Pierce, the up-and-coming, charismatic politician; Leeds, the dog breeder, who likes them better than people; Lina, his lovely secretary, who pretends to be dumber than she is; the gorgeous daughter-in-law of Mrs. Rackham, who, like her, has a deadly Doberman pinscher attack dog as her constant companion—Archie is woken in the middle of the night by a pain-filled whining outside the door. He and Leeds find Mrs. Rackham's Doberman on the front steps, a knife deep in his side, dragging himself painfully toward Leeds, his former owner. The attack dog dies as they watch. Behind him stretches a trail of blood back to the woods—and to the dead body of Mrs. Rackham, killed with the same knife.

When Archie gets back to New York the next night, he sees a sight he's never seen before—Wolfe's door wide open, light streaming out—and Wolfe himself is gone. Vanished.

Plans made long ago, on both sides, are being put into action, and at the climax of the long fight Archie finally meets Zeck face-to-face. "I had a good view of him at ten feet...The eyes were the result of an error on the assembly line. They had been intended for a shark and someone got careless. They did not now look the same as shark eyes because Arnold Zeck's brain had been using them to see with...and that had had an effect."[33]

The end is violence, as Archie and Wolfe show Zeck that Armchair Criminal techniques can be used by others; and in a surprise ending show also that they have not forgotten the problem of who murdered Mrs. Barry Rackham.

In the Best Families is conspicuously missing from every list Stout fans have ever made of the best Wolfe novels, probably because somewhat melodramatic, violent physical action is a little out of character for the quarter-ton Wolfe, basically an armchair detective who usually leaves the action to Archie. The melodramatic nature of the plot also clashes with the more intellectual appeal of the typical Wolfe story. (Another Wolfe novel with much the same flaws, *The Black Mountain,* which shows the fat detective traveling overseas to Montenegro to climb mountains and engage in knife fights, has also rated low among Stout fans, probably for the same reasons.)

Nevertheless, the book is well written, smoothly told, and has a good example of a Stout specialty—the use of the reader's vanity to blind him to the correct meaning of a vital clue; and as an important point in Wolfe's career (if not of the fiction written about it), it is of considerable biographical and psychological interest.

All our previous Armchair Criminals had to speak to commit their crimes, or communicate something in some way. Is it possible to commit a crime by simply doing or saying nothing? Is it possible to murder by doing absolutely nothing? Like Moriarty, sitting "motionless, like a spider in the centre of its web...[of] a thousand radiations,"[34] as the Master put it?

Well, let Dr. Richard Breed, the famous specialist on earthquakes, show us how it's done, when he receives an invitation to his old high school class's "Reunion," a short story in *Analog Science Fiction and Science Fact* for April 1976.

The invitation comes at a critical point in Breed's life. He has just made a great scientific find, one long sought in vain by many physicists, engineers and geologists—how to accurately predict earthquakes. Breed knows—not guesses, knows—exactly where and when the next one's going to hit, almost to the block and minute, and boy it's going to be a biggie, right in the middle of a huge chemical and oil refinery complex centered in a medium-sized town—the town, and the time, at which his high school class will be holding their reunion. If a major quake hits there, the whole place will fireball; Breed's warning, when his paper is read a week from now at a scientific convention, will save many lives—including those of his high school class.

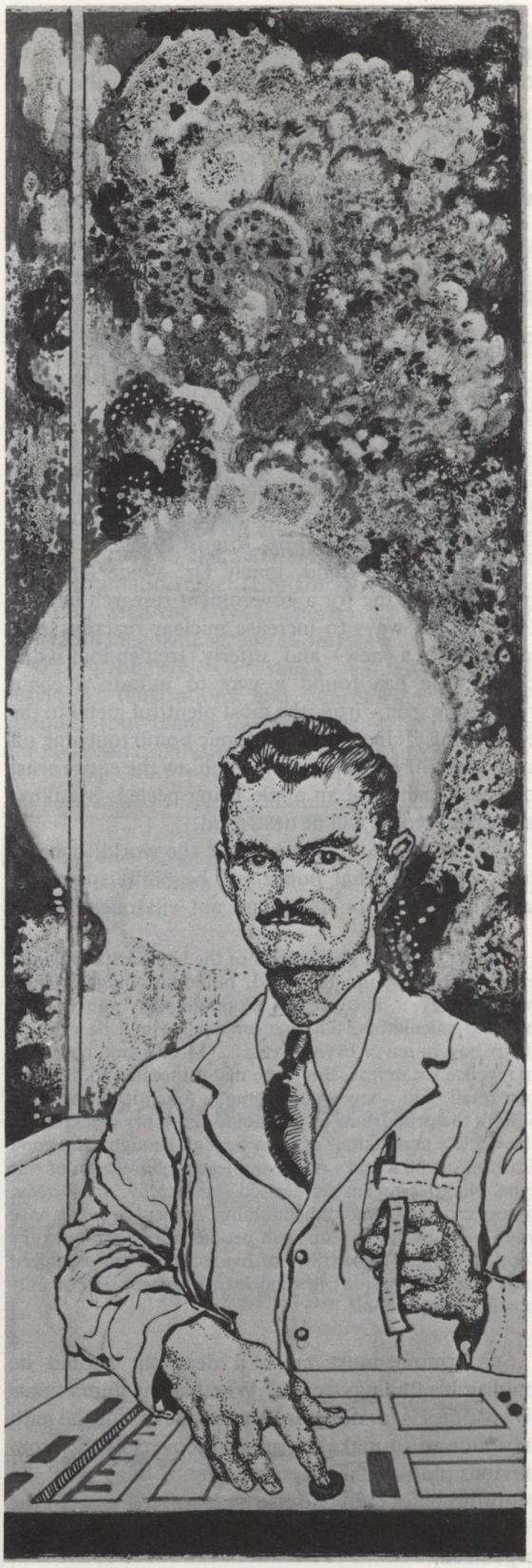
His old high school class...suddenly Breed remembers that old high school class. The one that called him Fatty, Specs, and Four Eyes; that sneered at his acne as a sign of masturbation; that never invited him anywhere except as a cruel gag. The football hero whose crude practical jokes had all the girls laughing at him. The class beauty who called him a frog in public and told him to leave her alone...

Suddenly Breed is faced with an unexpected problem: does he really want to announce his discovery of the formula for predicting earthquakes *now*—or does he want to wait—wait until a few weeks after the class reunion? Lives hang in the balance as Breed looks into his past—and his soul—to make a vital decision...

Author Paul J. Nahin is relatively new to the writing of fiction, and this short story shows it, but his picture of high school life will seem unpleasantly real to many. Someone once commented that outside of military service, high school is the only time in your life that you are forced to associate with people not of your own choosing. On the job, in college, most of the people around you have something in common with you or they wouldn't be there. In addition, transfers to other classes or cities or positions can often be arranged—but in high school, you're stuck.

Writing of the 1958 high school environment that helped mold mass murderer Charles Starkweather, who shot and killed ten people in one eight-day reign of violence in Nebraska, William Allan, himself in high school then in Dallas, said, "the old high school days seemed like a nightmare. Except for basic training, it had been the worst time of my life."[35] Violence was everywhere.

Fist fights, knife fights, gang fights—the south side had them all. They didn't happen every day but were always in the wings...some carried zip guns and pistols to school...[36] Violence was a necessary, integral part of being a pseudorebel. Most of us hated the reality of it... But we loved the idea of violence."[37]



"L. Sprague de Camp: "Judgement Day".

Adult intolerance of teenagers intensified the strain and the institutions those adults set up did little to ease it.

Adolescence is a period when we find identities for ourselves, but we need guides and models, and in retrospect I could see that the options my friends and I had were few. Most of our parents had limited horizons—mine wanted me to drop out of high school and have a career in the Air Force—our neighborhood was poor and culturally impoverished, our school was like a prison and the teachers guards.[38]

The reader might well wonder if, under such circumstances, he too might make the same decision that Dr. Richard Breed makes.

Nahin's story would be more impressive if it were not a variation on a theme expressed much better much earlier, in a science fiction classic, "Judgment Day," a novelette by L. Sprague de Camp in *Astounding Science Fiction,* August 1955.

For repressed, timid, lonely Dr. Wade Ormont, physicist working for a government research laboratory seeking ways to increase nuclear reactons, has also made a new—and utterly tremendous—discovery. He has found a way to initiate a chain reaction in iron—iron, the most plentiful metal in the earth's crust. One, just one atomic bomb touching off such a chain reaction in iron will blow the entire crust off the planet, like an apple being peeled. Mankind and all his works will be destroyed.

Ormont has no illusions about the world; once he tells men how, that bomb will be built, sooner or later; and sooner or later, some nut will touch it off.

"I don't think the government of the United States would ever try to blow up the world, but others might. Hitler might have... The present Commies are pretty cold-blooded calculators, but one can't tell who'll be running their show in ten or twenty years... Most would not, even in revenge for defeat. But some might threaten to do so as blackmail, and a few would actually touch it if thwarted. What's the proportion of paranoids and other crackpots in the world's population? It must be high enough, as a good fraction of the world's rulers and leaders have been of this type. No government yet devised—monarchy, aristocracy, timocracy, democracy, dictatorship, soviet, or what have you—will absolutely stop such people from coming to the top. So long as these tribes of hairless apes are organized into sovereign nations, the nuclear Ragnarok is not only possible but probable."[38]

So Ormont must make a decision: should he publish his findings or not? Whether the human race lives or dies is his decision, and his alone, for the path he followed to make his great discovery is far from obvious and if he says nothing it may well be centuries before anyone else finds it—centuries in the future when humanity may be saner and better organized.

But a new thought comes to Ormont—*should* humanity be kept alive? Is humanity worth it? How have people in general treated *you* in your lifetime? Alone in his secluded study, Dr. Ormont thinks back over his lonely life and the people he has known, remembering how they treated him...the high school classmates who hated him for his high intelligence that let him solve quickly the problems they had to sweat over for hours, who persecuted him because he would rather read than watch football games; the parents who sent him to military school "to make a man out of him"; the prison-like school where he was bullied and humiliated daily until in self-defense he repressed his emotions so much that years later he cannot relax and be human, causing the painful collapse of his marriage.

Should the human race be allowed to live? "It took me a long time to decide whether to let the earth live," Ormont says. "Some might think this an easy decision. Well, it was and it wasn't."[39]

Frightening because of its grim plausibility, this story generates considerable power from the emotionally reserved, almost documentary tone in which Ormont characteristically describes his lonely life, with the old repressed anger burning through it.

The story is based on events in the childhood of the author, whose parents sent him to military school at a tender age and who also developed a resulting emotional shell of dulled indifference and icy coldness that he later found hard to break. The work is strikingly different from anything he ever did before or since. Isaac Asimov says somewhere that the work of most authors is the opposite in character of their own personalities as seen by others. The writer who is always clowning in public, laughing, joking, making outrageous puns, is the one who always writes deadly serious tales of Grim Import, with nary a giggle in them; while the writer of dignified mien and formally courteous propriety writes the screwball yarns.

This conclusion certainly applies to de Camp, a man of distinguished appearance and conventionally proper behavior, who first gained fame as a fiction writer for works of hilarious humor, whose wild characters jest, juggle and caper on a framework of underlying logic as strong as high-alloy steel. Today, reviewers routinely compare any work of humorous science fiction or fantasy with those of de Camp, whose stories set the standard. But once—just once—he did a story without a single joke or touch of humor anywhere in it, and the unexpected result was a classic of the field.

If you were in Dr. Ormont's place, what decision would you make? How has humanity—friends, neighbors, government, and—ah, in-laws—treated you? Remember, it's humanity as a whole we're talking about, not just individual members, whose life or death rests in your hands... Has humanity treated *you* well enough to deserve life?

Or, to put the question another way—what if it's your neighbor, or your in-law, that has the power to make that decision about you? How well have *you* treated *them?* What decision would they make about you?

The question is more than a merely theoretical one, more than a parlor game, for such Armchair Criminals exist. As Sherlock Holmes tells Inspector MacDonald in *The Valley of Fear,* Moriarty is another Jonathan Wilde, and explains the reference:

> "Jonathan Wilde...wasn't in a novel. He was a master criminal, and he lived last century—1750 or thereabouts... Everything comes in circles—even Professor Moriarty. Jonathan Wilde was the hidden force of the London criminals, to whom he sold his brains and his organization on a fifteen per cent commission. The old wheel turns, and the same spoke comes up. It's all been done before, and will be again."[40]

Wilde, whose large-scale criminal career lasted from roughly 1713 to the day of his hanging in 1725, organized a huge gang of professional thieves in London, who brought their stolen goods to him. Wilde would then return those stolen goods to their owners—out of the goodness of me heart, ma'am, desiring as I does to 'elp the poor and unfortunate—and then collect for them—oh, not a reward, ma'am, bless you, 'eaven forfend, merely a small compensation for me time and trouble; *if* you insist, ma'am—and soon Wilde acquired an impressive reputation in London as a great thief-taker or private detective.

Others had had this idea before, of course. Mary Frith (better known as "Cutpurse Moll") had had something of a large organization of this sort a hundred years earlier; but none had ever operated on the great scale Wilde did; he organized the entire underworld of London.

Throughout most of his criminal career he simultaneously and successfully posed as the country's leading light of law and order. There were good reasons for the success of his criminal schemes. A believer in specialization, Wilde divided London up into sectors, assigning each to a different type of thief. Pickpockets would work only in one sector, church robbers another, etc. He paid the highest rates to his men and protected them from the law, guaranteeing them against conviction and punishment. Those who did not join his ring he arrested in his role as a great thief-taker. He was, as popular historian Patrick Pringle put it, "director general of a corporation of thieves."[41]

The colorful Wilde cannot be classified as an Armchair Criminal, however much some of his professional activities may have epitomized the profession, for he himself took the field regularly. (Once, when two of his men had been caught red-handed and every usual way of saving them from conviction and the gallows had failed, Wilde invited the only two witnesses against them to a tavern for a drink on the morning of the trial—and drugged the drinks. When the witnesses woke, with the evening shadows long in the streets, the trial had been over for hours and the charges dropped for lack of evidence.)

However, it is not difficult to find examples of the Armchair Criminal in the past and in the present—criminals who, having reached a certain level of

"Jonathan Wild, General of Crime."

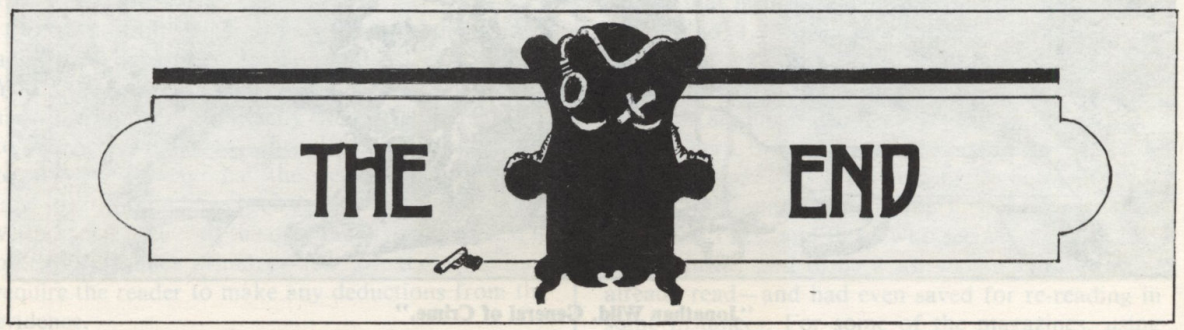
power, delegate the dirty work to hirelings—dictators, El Supremos, generals, Mafia dons, spy agency heads with their "covert operations," some oil company presidents and boards of directors, and even a certain United States President—and surely they will exist in the near future.

And when they arrive at those positions of power, thanks to modern technology they will have at their disposal far more awesome means of mass murder, torture and oppression than the human race has ever known in any previous century. Attila the Hun, for all his military might and power, could devastate and control only a tiny part of the world, a part of Central Europe and Western Russia; what could a modern Attila do with intercontinental atomic missiles? A criminal mentality, in control of a major, technologically advanced, industrialized nation, might mean the end of the human race. Indeed, it may well be that the Armchair Criminal will be the last criminal the human race will ever know: the criminal who breaks no laws whatever.

Thus these comparatively few stories about Armchair Criminals, written entirely for entertainment, may provide us with some unexpected food for thought about our lives and our laws, our deepest wishes and our darkest dreams.

Notes

1. A. Conan Doyle, "The Final Problem," in *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (Garden City, 1938), p. 544.
2. Doyle, *The Valley of Fear,* in *ibid,* p. 913.
3. *Ibid.,* p. 1018.
4. Doyle, "The Final Problem," p. 544.
5. Doyle, *The Valley of Fear,* p. 912.
6. *Ibid.,* p. 1018.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 913.
8. Melville Davisson Post, "The Corpus Delicti," in *13 Ways To Dispose of a Body,* ed. Basil Davenport (Dodd, Mead, 1966), p. 43.
9. Ellery Queen, Introduction to "The Men of the Jimmy" by Melville Davisson Post, in *Rogues Gallery,* ed. Ellery Queen (Random House, 1945), p. 350 (passage quoted in).
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Post, "The Corpus Delicti," p. 41.
13. *Ibid.,* p. 42.
14. Melville Davisson Post, "The Men of the Jimmy," in *Rogues Gallery,* ed. Ellery Queen, p. 351.
15. Frederick Irving Anderson, "The Infallible Godahl," in *Rogues Gallery,* ed. Ellery Queen, p. 227.
16. *Ibid.,* p. 228.
17. Ellery Queen, Introduction to "The Jorgenson Plates" by Frederick Irving Anderson, in *The Female of the Species,* ed. Ellery Queen (Little, Brown, 1943), p. 375.
18. Ellery Queen, Introduction to "Blind Man's Buff" by Frederick Irving Anderson, in *101 Years' Entertainment,* ed. Ellery Queen (Little, Brown, 1941), p. 753.
19. Frederick Irving Anderson, "The Phantom Alibi," in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (November 1947), p. 87.
20. W. Somerset Maugham, "A Friend in Need," in *The Complete Short Stories of W. Somerset Maugham,* Vol. 2: *The World Over* (Doubleday, n.d.), p. 168.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Dorothy Gardiner and Katherine Sorley Walker, eds., *Raymond Chandler Speaking* (Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 86.
23. Ellery Queen, *The Door Between* (World [reprint edition], 1946), p. 119.
24. *Ibid.,* pp. 312–13.
25. T. M. McDade, "Let Me Help You With Your Murders," in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (September 1949), p. 75.
26. Agatha Christie, *Curtain* (Pocket Books [reprint edition], 1978), pp. 253–54.
27. Agatha Christie, *An Autobiography* (Dodd, Mead, 1977), p. 268.
28. Christie, *Curtain,* p. 253.
29. Rex Stout, *In the Best Families* (Viking, 1950), quoted on dust jacket.
30. *Ibid.,* p. 12.
31. *Ibid.,* p. 13.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.,* p. 187.
34. Doyle, "The Final Problem," p. 544.
35. William Allan, *Starkweather: The Story of a Mass Murderer* (Houghton Mifflin, 1976), p. 7.
36. *Ibid.,* p. 3.
37. *Ibid.,* p. 6.
38. *Ibid.,* p. 7.
39. L. Sprague de Camp, "Judgment Day," in *A Gun for Dinosaur and Other Imaginative Tales* (Doubleday, 1963), pp. 182–83.
40. *Ibid.,* p. 181.
41. Doyle, *The Valley of Fear,* p. 912.
42. Patrick Pringle, *The Thief Takers* (London: Museum, 1958), p. 37.



LETTERS

From William K. Everson:

It is with some trepidation that I write this note, since I am a rank amateur in the field of detective fiction, and I have always been positively overawed by the incredible erudition of your readers. However, I am bolstered by the thoughts that if the information herein has value then I am vindicated, and if —as seems likely—you are swamped with scores of letters, then my presumption will never be known.

T. J. Shamon asks if the term "hawkshaw" can be dated back prior to its reference in the 1913 novel *Trent's Last Case.* He was a character in at least one nineteenth-century play by Tom Taylor, *The Ticket of Leave Man.* I say "at least one" because while I know of no others, he is referred to in such reverential tones that miscreants presumably are expected to throw in the towel when they know he is on the case. He was referred to only as Hawkshaw The Detective, with no Christian name given, and while only a subsidiary character, he was nevertheless a key figure in solving the crime. *Ticket of Leave Man* was essentially a Victorian melodrama rather than a mystery, and it was filmed twice, both times in Britain where the play originated. In the 1918 version, Aubrey Fitzmaurice played Hawkshaw, and it was remade in 1937 as one of a series of tongue-in-cheek versions of old melodramas starring Tod Slaughter, although this one was played relatively straight. Robert Adair played Hawkshaw this time around, and affected a very Holmesian garb.

I have a 16mm print of the 1937 version, which I would be happy to loan to you if any of your local readers would be interested in making Hawkshaw's acquaintance.

* * * * *

From Peter Christensen:

I cannot help him with his second or third questions, but T. J. Shamon may be interested to know that the term "hawkshaw," now used generically for a policeman or a detective, originated as "Hawkshaw," the detective in Tom Taylor's play *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* (1863).

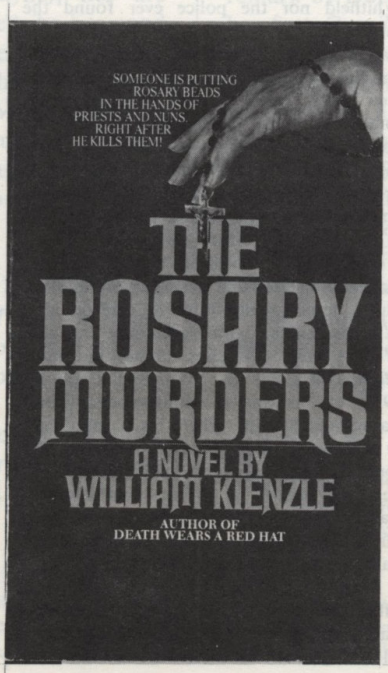
Almost unknown today, Taylor was extremely popular in his time, as the adoption of his character's name into the language would attest. Taylor was possessed of real dramatic gifts, but he was the kind of writer who found it easy to write for the popular taste of his time, and his plays date very badly. *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* remains readable today, but, like most Victorian crime drama, it is melodramatic in the extreme.

One other point: the British phrase "ticket-of-leave man" means much the same thing as our "parolee."

* * * * *

From Robert Blake:

I have an answer to two of T. J. Shamon's questions in TAD 13 #3. In *The Development of the Detective Novel* by A. E. Murch, the term hawkshaw originated with Eugéne François Vidocq in his *Mémoires.* On p. 45 Murch states that many detectives of fiction inherited from Vidocq "such characteristics as great physical strength, patience and endurance; skill in disguise and an insight into criminal mentality; their reputation for inevitable success and their moments of dramatic personal triumph. 'I am Vidocq!' the phrase which, over and over again, dumbfounded a captured criminal in the *Mémoires,* re-echoed down the years to become 'I am Hawkshaw the Detective!' in *The Ticket of Leave Man,* Tom Taylor's popular melodrama... The play was produced in May 1863. Hawkshaw, 'the smartest detective on the force,' uses various disguises to outwit a group of forgers until he obtains all the evidence needed, tears off his disguise and triumphantly declaims: 'I am Hawkshaw, the Detective' which forms the climax of the plot..."



For question 3, I referred to Ellery Queen himself, *In the Queen's Parlor,* pp. 65–67. "Ellery" was derived from a given name of a boyhood friend of one of the Queens. They later discovered it was an Anglo-Saxon place name meaning "on the island where the alders grow." Queen was chosen after many combinations were tried because the two sounded right.

It may be interesting to note that two other names were tried and discarded—"James Griffen" and "Wilbur See." *The Adventures of Wilbur See?* Maybe. Who knows?

I eagerly await TAD each quarter and hope to see the early issues in print again.

* * * * *

From Jack Ramsey:

Regarding T. J. Shamon's inquiry in the Summer 1980 issue (p. 239), Hawkshaw was a character in the first melodrama giving a good role to a detective. The play was *The Ticket of Leave Man* by Tom Taylor, which opened in London and New York in 1863. Hawkshaw was played in London by J. F. Hagan. See *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection.*

In 1935, *Ticket of Leave Man* was published as a novel based on the play. The author was Cecil Henry Bullivant, an English novelist best known for his book *Garnett Bell: Detective.*

* * * * *

From William X. Kienzle:

I am in admiration of the mind that published a review of my first novel, *The Rosary Murders,* along with a picture of the jacket of its sequel, *Death Wears a Red Hat.* You have created another mystery.

And I am grateful for Jacques Barzun's (presumably) *nihil obstat* for *Rosary.* I would have thought a person of his eminence would deal in the *imprimi potest* category.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Mea culpa.* Herewith, the proper art:

* * * * *

From John Hall:

I'd like to request the help of TAD readers in completing an index of original sources for mystery stories aired on the U.S. TV series *Thriller.* The show, hosted by Boris Karloff, had a mix of mystery and horror episodes. The following episodes are the mystery ones I haven't been able to track, with plot synopses from Gerani and Schulman's *Fantastic*

Television and character names where known.

"The Twisted Image." Advertising man antagonizes psychopathic office boy. Characters are Alan Patterson, Lily Hanson, Merle Jenkins. One reference indicated this might have come from a story by William O'Farrell.

"The Guilty Men." Mobster-turned-legitimate is attacked by his ex-associates; his brother's a doctor. Characters are Charlie Roman, Lou Adams.

"The Fatal Impulse." Psychopath slips bomb into woman's purse; police try to find her before it goes off. Characters are Elser, Walker Wylie, Jane Kimball, Lt. Brian Rome. Scripted by Philip MacDonald, so it may be based on one of his novels or stories.

"The Poisoner." Writer-painter-critic murders his mother-in-law and crippled sister, then moves on his wife. Characters are Thomas Edward Griffith, Mrs. Abercrombie.

"The Last of the Sommervilles." Man and his cousin scheme to murder woman for her money. Scripted by Richard Lupino. Characters are Rutherford Sommerville, Aunt Celia.

"A Third for Pinochle." Man murders his wife and uses nosy neighbors as witnesses on his side. Character is Maynard Thespin.

"The Bride Who Died Twice." In 1914 Mexico, an evil colonel covets his captain's fiancee; she dies. Characters are General de la Verra, Colonel Sangriento, Consuela.

"The Specialists." Experts break up a ring of international jewel thieves. Scripted by John Kneubuhl.

Thanks for your help in this project.

* * * * *

From William F. Nolan:

For some while now I have been gathering material for a profile of Raoul Whitfield; I was in no hurry since Whitfield data is hard to come by, and no previous work had been done on this writer. Imagine my surprise at encountering E. R. Hagemann's "Raoul Whitfield: A Star with the *Mask*" in your summer issue (Vol. 13, No. 3). Mr. Hagemann's informative and well-crafted piece is a welcome addition to *Black Mask* lore. Because of it, I have abandoned the idea of writing a Whitfield profile. Instead, I shall avail myself of this opportunity to add certain data (as well as opinions) regarding Whitfield and his work. (I have incorporated some of this material in my new biography, *Hammett: The Real Story,* but the book won't be out till late 1981.)

First, as researcher Frank McSherry discovered, Whitfield *did* write for pulp markets beyond *Black Mask*. He had at least two stories in *Adventure* ("Hell's Angel" in the Oct. 1, 1928 issue; "Mistral" in the Dec. 15, 1931 issue) and another ("The Sky Trap") in a 1934 issue of *Battle Stories*. As for additional *Black Mask* stories beyond Mr. Hagemann's listing, I can add two: "Roaring Death," Aug. 1926 and "Flying Gold," Sept. 1926.

In all, writing actively for eight years (1926 through 1933), Whitfield produced no fewer than 100 stories—an average of one per month. And indeed, as Hagemann points out, Whitfield was a dapper fellow, inclined to be photographed holding custom-leather gloves and with a rakish scarf at his neck; he sported a fashionable cane, parted his dark, slicked-back hair in the middle, had a cleft chin and a neatly-trimmed moustache. As the nephew of Andrew Carnegie, he was every inch the social gentleman.

Mr. Hagemann does not mention Whitfield's other marriage to twice-divorced socialite Emily Davies, the former wife of William H. Vanderbilt and Sigourney Thayer. The *New York Times* placed her among "the leaders of New York's social intelligentsia." In *Pentimento,* Lillian Hellman described Emily as "a handsome, boyish-looking woman [seen] at every society-literary cocktail party. . . . A few years after her marriage [to Whitfield] she was murdered on a ranch they bought in New Mexico, and neither Whitfield nor the police ever found the murderer."

Whitfield was, of course, close friends with Dashiell Hammett. When Hammett moved to New York, early in 1930, Whitfield soon joined him there. They attended plays and got drunk together in Manhattan bars. (It is interesting to note that Hammett set the first draft of *The Thin Man* in Whitfield County—and also named a race horse "Ruthless Raoul" in an earlier *Black Mask* story.)

Regarding Whitfield in Hollywood, Mr. Hagemann states that despite a *Black Mask* blurb, he personally found no evidence that Whitfield signed with Paramount in 1932. Well, I have two clips supporting *Black Mask:* One states that "Whitfield is now [in 1932] on his way to Hollywood to enter Paramount Studios, where his novel, *Death in a Bowl,* will be filmed." And the film journal *Variety* declared that "Raoul Whitfield has landed a writing contract with Paramount." (It is possible that his novel *was* filmed, under another title, but at least he was paid to work on a screen adaptation.)

Private Detective 62, Whitfield's only official screen credit, may indeed have been based on one of his *Black Mask* stories, as Mr. Hagemann tells us, but this film also owes a large debt to Hammett, who worked on the original concept as a starring vehicle for William Powell, under the title *Private Detective.* In fact, when Hammett left the project, he may well have suggested that his pal Whitfield be hired to draft the final screen treatment. (Hammett received no credit on the finished film.)

Whitfield had a strong critical reputation in the early '30s, and Mr. Hagemann is correct in stating that he was "a respected peer of Hammett." In fact, certain reviewers of the period actually (and incredibly) considered his books to be superior to those of his close friend and rival novelist. The well-known mystery critic of the New York *Herald-Tribune,* Will Cuppy, rated *Green Ice* above *The Maltese Falcon,* calling Whitfield's novel "by several miles the slickest detective job of the season." In the El Paso *Times,* critic Eugene Cunningham linked Whitfield and Hammett together as the two "stars of the genre," calling *Death in a Bowl* "the best mystery novel of 1931." (Hammett's *The Glass Key* was published that same year.) Cunningham added: "Hammett and Whitfield know the underworld, know real detectives and their methods... Their bulls and detective sergeants and agency ops are the real thing."

Another reviewer of *Death in a Bowl,* writing in the New York *Herald,* declared that, "Excellent as *The Glass Key* is in its staccato, hard-boiled way, the Whitfield book outranks it in just the realms for which Hammett has become a household word in America." And Curtis Patterson, in a 1931 issue of *Town & Country,* penned a long piece praising these two writers: "Personally, I think Mr. Hammett and Mr. Whitfield are as important in the history of picaresque fiction—of which the murder-mystery is obviously a part—as are Cezanne and Matisse in the field of art... One of my missions is to point out how genuinely important I consider their work."

Also, it is an often-overlooked fact that Whitfield, beyond his crime writing, was one of the pioneer developers of pulp-aviation fiction, and that in the 1930s his high-flying adventure tales earned high marks with critics. Reviewing the collection *Silver Wings,* the *New York Times* ranked these stories as "among the best within our ken of juvenile aviation fiction...compact, crisply told, highly exciting, yet never exceeding the bounds of credibility."

However, despite all these glowing words from the '30s, Whitfield remains today a lost name in popular fiction, his books uncollected and out of print. Certainly the factors of his illness and the abrupt termination of his career are partially to blame for his present-day obscurity—but it must also be admitted that most of his work simply does not hold up in terms of quality. The quoted passages from Whitfield's stories in Hagemann's piece are pulpish and heavy-handed, lacking polish and depth of thought. Stylistically and philosophically, Hammett was leagues ahead of him.

I have not read a large amount of Whitfield's shorter fiction, but what I *have* read

fails to impress me. The four Jo Gar tales that I sampled were, in my judgment, flat and unconvincing—and what I encountered of his hard-boiled stuff in *Black Mask* was lurid and thinly written. At his worst (and Whitfield was often at his worst, due to his careless speed of production), he was just a bare notch above the truly-dreadful tin-ear pulpster Carroll John Daly.

Whitfield was particularly inept in attempting to mix toughness and humor. In successful hard-boiled fiction (Cain, Hammett, Chandler), the toughness is always natural; it cannot be forced or self-conscious. In much of Whitfield, it is both. You don't really appreciate the tight-rope act involved in the creation of genuinely tough fiction until you watch a writer fall off the rope. Raoul Whitfield was constantly taking the fall.

I have, in my library, all three of his published crime novels, and rate *Green Ice* as the best. It is brittle, artificial and mannered, yet the book is filled with narrative drive, color and incident—a compelling piece of hard-boiled writing which is actually more enjoyable in a second reading (when you are no longer put off by the over-written style).

Death in a Bowl is only sporadically interesting, with much of it overdone in terms of pulp melodrama (a fault that Hammett almost always avoided). The Hollywood setting is well established, but the characters are little more than cardboard cutouts.

His final novel, *The Virgin Kills,* is an outright disaster: dull, sappy, and totally lacking in narrative tension. It staggers on, chapter after dim chapter, showing no hint of the pace and energy exhibited in *Green Ice.*

In retrospect, and despite Mr. Hagemann's earnest voice to the contrary, I feel that Whitfield's work *deserves* the obscurity into which it has fallen. He was a writer of his time, and while his books and stories pleased the undemanding, sensation-seeking public of the '20s and '30s, they offer today's reader nothing beyond pulp-paper nostalgia.

Raoul Fauconnier Whitfield was a man of his time; Dashiell Hammett, in his depth and genius, transcended it.

* * * * *

From A. Martin:

I am a fairly new reader of TAD and perhaps less serious about the genre than many of your subscribers. Still I wish to comment on something in the letter from Richard S. Meyers which appeared in your Summer 1980 issue. Although I am a history buff, I claim no expertise in the late Victorian Era so I cannot comment on the existence of the Star Chamber at that time—although it was an institution of some portent in an earlier era. But I do feel it unlikely that the court had any responsibility in the death of the Duke of Clarence (and Avon)—to give him his full title. Also in the biographies which I have read of his grandmother, Queen Victoria; his father, The Prince of Wales later Edward VII; his mother and his fiancee, who later married his brother and eventually became Queen Mary, the official cause of death is given as influenza. That the Duke of Clarence and Avon was a dissipated young man cannot be denied, and he may well have had syphilis, but what I am saying in a rather lengthy way is that he was second in line to the throne, and although the Crown was becoming less and less powerful it seems unlikely that any kind of death sentence could be brought against him. (I also admit to being of the school of thought that the Duke of Clarence and Avon was not bright enough to have been Jack the Ripper—unless he was some king of idiot savant in anatomy.)

I would be interested in Mr. Meyers's sources of information about the Star Chamber which, according to the only ready reference I have, was a criminal court without a jury and was abolished in the mid-seventeenth century. The only other thing which I remember about it was that, at the time of its creation, it was not a criminal court concerned with crimes against the people. It was used against the enemies of the King and his party.

My principal interest in your magazine is not in finding fault with your letter writers but in finding enough authors with enough output to satisfy my house full of voracious readers. Therefore I am especially interested in the reviews and use the checklist to keep up to date with the latest from favorite authors. I also have Al Hubin's marvelous *Bibliography,* but there is a gap between the end of the period covered by the bibliography (1975) and the first checklist (July-September 1977). Can anyone help me fill the gap?

I would like to join Linwood C. Marley in asking if there is any pressure we can apply to get new paperback editions of older books. I, too, face the frustration of reading about books from the '30s and '40s, but our excellent public library may fall short, and if I would wish to own one of these books, forget it.

One last question. Is there any source of information on the detective movies of the '30s and '40s? When such movies turn up on the late, late show it's hard to know whether it's worth the effort of trying to see so many unknown quanities.

This letter has run on rather longer than I anticipated, so I will close now. Thanks for your patience and your excellent magazine.

* * * * *

From Earl F. Bargainnier:

Someone goofed in the printing of my article "The Playful Mysteries of Peter Dickinson" [TAD 13:3]. Could you please indicate in the next issue that the two paragraphs beginning in the second column on p. 190 should be before the last paragraph in the second column on p. 191. Also, the last three lines of the essay as printed should be deleted. I am not angry, but the article seems a mishmash, and I would like readers to know that I am not responsible.

As AJH's review of *One Foot in the Grave* makes evident, in spite of his statements, Dickinson decided to return to Jimmy Pibble after my article was written and accepted—one of the unavoidable traps of writing about living authors.

* * * * *

From George Tuttle:

I'm a student at Southern Illinois University. I'm an enthusiast of the hardboiled school of detective fiction and enjoy reading TAD and the articles dealing with Daly and other hardboiled writers. Being an enthusiast, I thought that some fellow enthusiasts might be interested in the following articles which appeared in *Writers Digest:*

Daly, Carroll John. "The Ambulating Lady," April 1947. (Autobiographical and very interesting.)

Bellem, Robert Leslie. "Break It Up," July 1944. (Bellem talks about dialogue, using his story "Murder at Auction" for examples.)

Weisinger, Mort. "A Yank at Yale," Sept. 1946.

Rogers, Joel Townsley. "Singing in the Wilderness," Aug. 1944. (Rogers states that he was first choice over Shaw for editor of *Black Mask.*)

Lenniger, August. "Black Mask," Oct. 1929.

I thought I would mention these articles since I wasn't sure if people were aware of their existence.

Also, can anyone answer this question. In chapter 4 of *The Thin Man,* Nick Charles is asked, "'I don't suppose you know Jorgensen.'" Charles answers, "'I know a Nels Jorgensen.'" Is it just coincidence that there was a Nels Jorgensen who wrote for *Black Mask?*

* * * * *

From Nigel Morland:

Regarding Edwin Drood, which I noticed in one of the past issues of TAD, Charles Collins (a closely family friend, then), younger brother of Wilkie, married CD's daughter Katie, a great admirer of my great-grandfather. CC sort of stood in with CD over the ideas for Drood and in one of the letters to my family told of the progress of the story and that CD said all along that John Jasper was the guilty one—this for what it's worth. And, while we're on such things, I remember walking with family friend and closest intimate, Edgar Wallace, and Arthur Conan Doyle many years back. They were talking of Sherlock Holmes, and when EW asked about where the fabled rooms were, ACD told us they were well down Baker Street towards Portman Square and well away from where moderns are so fond of saying SH lived.

* * * * *

From Bill Pronzini:

Have just finished reading E. R. Hagemann's excellent piece on the life and career of Raoul Whitfield in the Summer issue of TAD, and thought I'd pass along some little known (obviously little known or it would have been included in the article, or in your *Bibliography*) information on Whitfield's work.

In addition to the books mentioned by Mr. Hagemann, two other novels by Whitfield were published in the early '30s by Farrar & Rinehart. Both of these appeared under Whitfield's second pseudonym, Temple Field;

and both are mysteries originally published as *Black Mask* serials under Whitfield's own name. The first, *Five* (1931), is evidently the novel published in serial form as "Laughing Death"; it features the adventures of Sanford Greer (Gary Greer in *Black Mask*), a prosecuting attorney, and has a well-realized airplane background. The second is *Killer's Carnival* (1932) and, in fact, is the serial mentioned by Mr. Hagemann as "the trite Skyline Murders, with millionaire bachelor sportsman and clubman Alan Van Cleve as hero." In both cases, almost nothing appears to have been changed for book publication except the author's byline.

* * * * *

From Greg Goode:

I thought Margaret J. King's article on cross-cultural detectives (TAD Summer 1980, p. 253) was important and timely. I am also interested in cultural and cross-cultural themes in detective literature. May I appeal to TAD readers to recommend to me titles that Ms. King did not mention?

I am especially interested in stories set in the Caribbean/South-Atlantic area, anywhere from Africa (*The Steam Pig*) to Latin America (Manuel Puig's *The Buenos Aires Affair*), including the islands in between (*Finding Maubee*; Patricia Moyes's *The Coconut Killings*). Also, there are important and interesting cultural themes in Ed McBain's *Calypso,* which features Trinidadian and Puerto Rican cultural elements in the U.S.

Can anyone suggest others?

* * * * *

From Marvin P. Epstein:

I was very interested in Peter Stern's letter regarding his dealings with Judy K. Reynolds, as I, too, have purchased books from her. Although my experiences have not been as deplorable as Mr. Stern's, they have been serious enough to cause me to stop buying books from Ms. Reynolds.

I felt, early on, that many of the books I bought were not up to their glowing descriptions. I did not base this only on my own thoughts, but I asked a number of other collectors and dealers their opinions. (In all fairness, I must also admit that I returned a book for credit, although I was reminded of this fact a number of times thereafter.)

But the final incident involved the British first edition of *The Department of Dead Ends* by Roy Vickers. Because I like Vickers's work very much, and because I like this book especially, I had been seeking a spectacular copy to put in my collection. I had already passed a few lovely copies, and returned a copy to a dealer because the condition was not up to my standard. Then, in Ms. Reynolds's catalogue, I saw a copy with the following description: "Very F in F dj (very light jacket chipping") and with a price of $40. (Incidentally, she also said "F means fine, very nice, very collectable.") Although $40 was the highest price I had seen for this book, I ordered it because of the "Very F" description. However, having seen books over-described before, I took the precaution of enclosing a note stating that I had been looking for a "truly beautiful" copy of this book. I hoped that this would give her pause if the book was not as described. And, of course, I sent payment (including postage) in advance, as required.

I received the book with a note that said, in effect, that the book was not described as "beautiful," but that it was "as described." It added that she does not send books on approval, and that I should not ask for books to be sent on approval. Having read the note, I was eager to examine the book. What I saw was a book in very good condition, at best, with the previous owner's name on the endpaper. The jacket was quite chipped, soiled, and somewhat worn. In short, I had refused copies of this book in better condition at a lower price.

But, of course, there was no point in trying to return this book, because the jury had described the condition, and the judge had decided that the jury's description was accurate. Unfortunately, judge and jury were the same person. In such circumstances, my only recourse was to refrain from future purchases. That I have done.

* * * * *

RETRO REVIEWS

Dixon Hawke's Case Book No. 19. D. C. Thompson & Co. and John Leng & Co., no date [late 1940s].

This collection of "21 Thrilling Detective Stories" is part of a series of twenty paperback Dixon Hawke case books which were published (Robert Adey informs me) from the middle 1930s to the late 1940s. The advertisements included in the book ("The young man of ambition seeks promotion and more money") clearly indicate that the market for the series was young workmen whiling away an hour at midday or on the underground heading home. In reading the nineteenth of Dixon Hawke's collected adventures, my first reaction was that Hawke was a belated British rival to Nick Carter. He is a characterless, indeed nearly featureless, private detective assisted by his admiring "young assistant, Tommy Burke." The titles of the individual stories sound like thrillers: "Three Ways To Die," "The Strangler Strikes To-Night!" "The Poisoner Died Too Late," and so on. But unlike Nick Carter (at least in many of his cases), Hawke is of the tradition of cerebral detectives. His deductions may not always be profound, but he does solve his cases by thinking rather than by fisticuffs and hairbreadth escapes. Indeed, although most of the Hawke stories are rather transparently plotted, a few of the tales have very clever ideas. "The Artist with the Lying Eyes," for example, has an interesting gimmick, though it's too bad that the title reveals what the anonymous author probably planned as a surprise ending. "The Case of the Bashful Forgers" has an original, if highly improbable, solution to the problem of why forgers might want to buy counterfeit money with genuine currency.

Dixon Hawke must have been a man of independent income, for he never seems to be paid for his efforts. Inspector Swann of Scotland Yard comes to him for help, and Hawke is always glad to oblige. Hawke happens upon the scene of a crime an extraordinary number of times, and quickly gives the solution to the obtuse police. Damsels in distress are especially prone to ask Hawke's assistance. In short, knowing that he is fighting for law and order seems to satisfy Hawke, though occasionally a grateful government recognizes his contributions: "One morning about a month later Dixon Hawke was summoned to a Government office to receive personal thanks." For Dixon Hawke, it must have been enough.

—Douglas G. Greene

* * * * *

Sandoe Retro Reviews

Hammett, Dashiell

The Thin Man by Dashiell Hammett. New York: Vintage Books 1972, c.1933, 1934

4 p.1, 3–180 1 p.

Biographical note: p. 181

"To Lillian" 3rd. prelim. leaf

A burrowing scholar seeking particularly among the few humorous short stories Hammett wrote might find some anticipatory hints of this novel. Certainly there is none in any of the other novels and none in the best known or most characteristic short stories.

Its greatest surprise is its lightly comic air, its assured jauntiness and the wry central presence of Nick Charles who tells it. He is six years free of a job as private eye, he is

seven years married (to the delicious Nora) and 41 years old (6). His father was a Greek (14, 22) which leads Nora to sundry affectionate observations. (He was with the Trans American detective agency, 11, if you yearn for facts.) Their amiable schnauzer bitch, Asta, is their only care (4, 9, 10, passim and 135) until somebody kills a former client's secretary while the Charleses are in New York escaping from Christmas in San Francisco with relatives. Thereafter, like it or not (and prodded by Nora) the complex affairs of the Wynant family crowd everything else out of the scene. (Nora, by the way, is 26, p. 12.)

This is a fairly set detective story, brisk if never as wildly active as the incessant Falcon which conceals its surpise superbly and springs it splendidly.

Nick is rarely without a drink in hand nor, for that matter, are most of the cast. A number of their fellow party goers are mentioned often (including Levi Oscant, who plays piano, 97, 101 and Larry Crowley, a press agent, 124) but only the quarrelling Quinns are more than peripherally involved and Hammett has been content to leave them as familiar names.

The investigating cop, Guild, is an old acquaintance and a pretty shrewd cop (43, 73, 95, 113, 145, 167).

In the Falcon Sam tells Brigid an apparently irrelevant story which is later made useful. Here the insertion (from Duke's Celebrated Criminal Cases of America) of the story of Alfred (properly Alford) Packer (p. 61–66) has no apparent connection with anything save young Gilbert Wynant's myopic understanding of it.

One point: Wynant (the thin man, 9, 170) is universally described as a kook but nobody is on any occasion very specific or convincing as to how.

It'll be interesting to see if the young find the wisecracks or the wisecracking attitude of the Thirties funny as we did (and do: I detect no fading here) and whether they want to draw any parallels with the British casts of mysteries in their leisure and in their country houses.

There is a line misset in this edition p. 109. 133: What happened to the erection or was it never more specific than this? Probably not, come to think of it. Times have changed and the spelling out of these things.

Dead Yellow Women by Dashiell Hammett . . . selected and edited by Ellery Queen. New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc. c.1947.

191 p. (Dell book, 421)

A letter from Ellery Queen (3–6) on Hammett's use of "realistic words" and how he outfoxed an editor with "gunsel" together with subsequent usage of that word by others.

"Dead Yellow Women" (6–72) The Op investigates murders at the Peninsula home of the trim "modern Chinese-American heiress, Lillian Shan." Much of the action (of which there is plenty) takes place in Chinatown among its mazes. Nicely spun and with a waggish, wise old Chinaman, Chang Li Ching whose ornate conversation sets the Op some pretty challenges.

"The Golden Horseshoe" (72–119) The Op

recalls (p. 73) that he was "a young sprout of twenty or so" when he first joined Continental, adding that "fifteen years had slid by since." Here he is on the trail of an English expatriate. The plot moves from San Francisco to Tijuana. How much complication is fitted without cramming into a small space.

"Hotel Dick" (119–139) begins when three dead men spill out of a hotel wardrobe. Oddly easy to forget from that point on. Dick Foley "the Agency's shadow specialist" (128) is mentioned. The Op himself by the way is filling in for the regular house dick—more precisely for the next one.

"Thou Art the Man": EQ's notes on the possible name and the origin(al) of The Op (139–141).

"Who Killed Bob Teal?" (141–163) Two years out of college and a fresh but not foolish Op. The place and method reminded me of Miles Archer's death. Neat, nicely screwed little yarn with a small investment of private rage since Teal was liked. The Old Man, manager of the SF branch for one (142–3).

"The Tale" (144) was written as a "true crime" report and appeared in *True Detective,* November 1924 (140).

"The Green Elephant" (163–175) is next, short, wry and about lucky, stupid Joe Shupe with a lot of accidental loot that is beyond his witless ability to cope with. From *Smart Set,* 1923.

"The Hairy One" (176–191) Set on a South Sea island and neat both in tension and amusing solution.

The Return of the Continental Op by Dashiell Hammett. New York: Lawrence E. Spivak, publisher c.1945.

127 p. (A Jonathan Press Mystery J 17)

Contents. Introduction, by Ellery Queen (3–5) an account of the trilogy before it grew, a reminder of the ML introduction by Hammett which marks reuse of material from two of the stories and a prediction that this paperback series will be remembered as, emphatically, it has.

"The Whosis Kid" (7–48): The Kid is gunman not gunsel and the confrontation and frisking scene is closer to the Falcon than the Kid. For the rest it is a nonstop inquiry which teases the Op and tests his capacities for courage and ingenuity as well as his judgment in not getting "mushy" with a dame as phoney as the colour of her poodle. There is a nice summing up of crisis, p. 33 where the Op lists the assembled cast about to blow up into a climax. After it's all over we find out what it was about.

"The Gutting of Couffignal" (49–78) would probably be laid in Tiburon (see any map of the San Francisco area). The Op (for age, experience and apologia see p. 75) is guarding wedding presents at one of the wealthy homes in the tight, rich tiny community when all hell breaks loose with bank explosions and jewelry shops blowing up and the population in an uproar. It is a stormy night which adds to the colour and the confusion before the Op tells a cop he knows who is responsible and then goes off to get the final gang member on his own. In a remarkable exchange he lists a dozen clues, hears how the heist came about and (refusing the lady's charms and bribe of loot) concludes a very good yarn with a memorable deed and an even more memorable line. It's rather difficult to see much of the Falcon in this in spite of Hammett's observation.

"Death & Company" (79–86) is about the kidnapping for ransom of an undistinguished housewife, her murder in spite of cautious surveillance and an answer (with a surprise) which we may have expected. I doubt the romantics involved.

"One Hour" (87–98) is all it takes to help in the case of the disagreeable Chrostwaite whose stolen car (he says) has killed a man. The Op spots the truth long before we do and has a very tight time as a consequence. Compact, baffling (in spite of clues) and fiercely active.

"The Tenth Clew" (99–127) with the observation that three of these five tales are long stories (novella?) rather than short. This time the Op is calling at the Gantvoorts to see the elder Gantvoort who has been threatened by a Bonfils out of his past when young G is advised that his father is dead. What follows is cunning three ways, first is bewildering us with clews, then in dismissing them all, then in building the "real" case with one stunning surprise but into a pretty dubious if neat finale. Here is where Julian Symons' argument about a deeper knowledge of the people makes for a deeper (or at very least more credible) tale.

So that's pretty solemn and so what *do* you want? Well, I find that I want it Symons' way which is not necessarily surprise be damned but surprise prepared. Symons' latest doesn't bring it off by his way of fancying and Hammett, working by different rules, has that splendid astonishment that leaves us knowing that since we're no brighter than that solid Op we couldn't have known either.

Might be a good story for useless debate. Meantime, if you start it you'll finish it.

CHECKLIST

By M. S. Cappadonna

MYSTERY, DETECTIVE AND SUSPENSE FICTION PUBLISHED IN THE U.S. JULY–SEPTEMBER 1980

Abrahams, Peter: **The Fury of Rachel Monette.** Macmillan, 10.95

Allbeury, Ted: **The Alpha List.** Methuen, 9.95

Ashford, Jeffrey: **Recipe for Murder.** Walker, 8.95

Aubrey, Edmund: **Sherlock Holmes in Dallas.** Dodd, 9.95

Audemars, Pierre: **Now Dead Is Any Man.** Walker, 9.95

Banks, Oliver: **The Rembrandt Panel.** Little, 9.95

Bruce, Leo: **Case for Sergeant Beef.** Academy Chicago, 9.95

Bruce, Leo: **Case with Ropes and Rings.** Academy Chicago, 9.95

Bruce, Leo: **Cold Blood.** Academy Chicago, 9.95

Bruce, Leo: **Neck and Neck.** Academy Chicago, 9.95

Burley, W. J.: **Wycliffe in Paul's Court.** Doubleday, 8.95

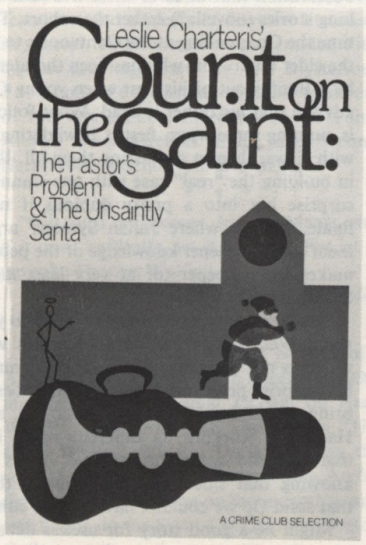
Carkeet, David: **Double Negative.** Dial, 9.95

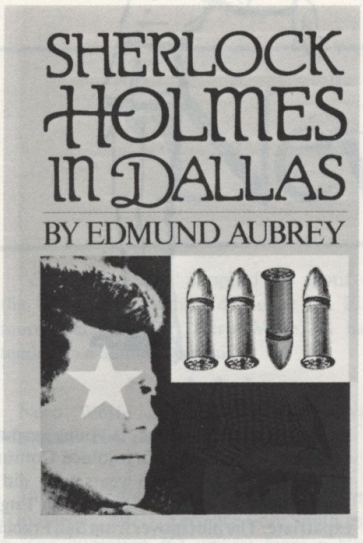
Carr, John Dickson: **The Door to Doom.** Harper, 12.50

Charteris, Leslie: **Count on the Saint: The Pastor's Problem and The Unsaintly Saint.** Doubleday, 8.95

Cochran, Alan: **Two Plus Two.** Doubleday, 10.00

Condon, Richard: **The Entwining.** Marek, 12.95





Coppel, Alfred: **The Hastings Conspiracy.** Holt, 12.95

Craig, Alisa: **A Pint of Murder.** Doubleday, 9.95

Crane, Caroline: **The Girls Are Missing.** Dodd, 8.95

De Andrea, William L.: **The Lunatic Fringe.** Evans, 10.95

Drabek, Jan: **The Lister Legacy.** Beaufort, 13.95

Dunne, Lee: **Ringleader.** Simon, 9.95

Estleman, Loren D.: **Motor City Blues.** Houghton, 9.95

Follett, Ken: **The Key to Rebecca.** Morrow, 12.95

Footman, Robert: **Once a Spy.** Dodd, 8.95

Forsyte, Charles: **The Decoding of Edwin Drood.** Scribners, 10.95

Freed, Donald: **The Spymaster.** Dutton, 12.95

Freeling, Nicolas: **Castang's City.** Pantheon, 9.95

Freemantle, Brian: **Charlie Muffin U.S.A.** Doubleday, 10.95

Gilbert, Michael: **The Killing of Katie Steelstock.** Harper, 9.95

Gill, B. M.: **Death Drop.** Scribners, 8.95

Greeley, Andrew M.: **Death in April.** McGraw, 10.95

Haddad, C. A.: **The Academic Factor.** Harper, 11.95

Hammill, Joel: **Limbo.** Arbor, 9.95

Hardwick, Michael: **Prisoner of the Devil.** Proteus, 9.95

Harrington, Joyce: **No One Knows My Name.** St. Martin's, 9.95

Heal, Anthony: **Man in the Middle.** Scribners, 9.95

Hillerman, Tony: **People of Darkness.** Harper, 9.95

Holme, Timothy: **The Neapolitan Streak.** Coward, 10.95

Holt, Victoria: **The Mask of the Enchantress.** Doubleday, 10.00

Hoyt, Richard: **Decoys.** Evans, 8.95

Hunt, E. Howard: **The Hargrave Deception.** Stein, 10.95

Jacquemard-Senecal. **The Body Vanishes.** Dodd, 8.95

Johnston, Velda: **The Stone Maiden.** Dodd, 8.95

Kallen, Lucille: **C. B. Greenfield: The Tanglewood Murder.** Simon, 9.95

Kaminsky, Stuart M.: **Never Cross a Vampire.** St. Martin's, 8.95

Land, Myrick: **The Dream Buyers.** Norton, 9.95

Landers, Gunnard: **Rite of Passage.** Arbor, 10.95

Leather, Edwin: **The Duveen Letter.** Doubleday, 8.95

Leigh, James: **The Ludi Victor.** Coward, 11.95

Linington, Elizabeth: **Consequence of Crime.** Doubleday, 8.95

Lockridge, Richard: **The Old Die Young.** Harper, 10.95

Love, Edmund G.: **Set-Up.** Doubleday, 10.00

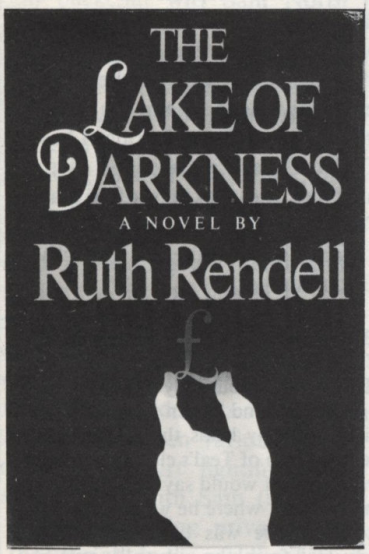
Lovell, Marc: **The Spy Game.** Doubleday, 8.95

Lyall, Gavin: **The Secret Servant.** Viking, 9.95

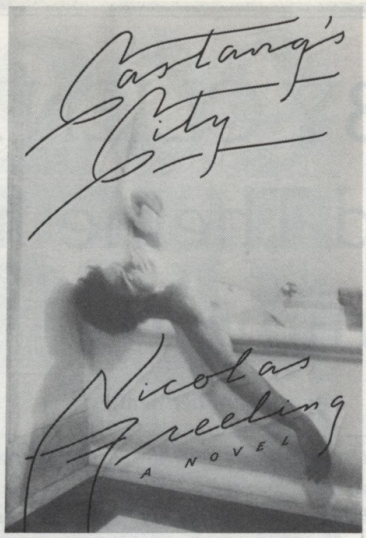
McCauley, Kirby, ed.: **Dark Forces.** Viking, 16.95

McDonald, Gregory: **Who Took Toby Rinaldi?** Putnam, 9.95

MacLean, Alistair: **Athabasca.** Doubleday, 9.95
McLeave, Hugh: **No Face in the Mirror.** Walker, 8.95
Melchior, Ib: **The Marcus Device.** Harper, 9.95
Michaels, Alan: **Diamonds.** St. Martin's, 10.95
Norman, Frank: **Too Many Crooks Spoil the Caper.** St. Martin's, 9.95
Pentecost, Hugh: **Death Mask.** Dodd, 8.95
Perry, Ritchie: **Grand Slam.** Pantheon, 8.95
Philips, Judson: **Death Is a Dirty Trick.** Dodd, 7.95
Queen, Ellery, ed.: **Ellery Queen's Circumstantial Evidence.** Dial, 9.95
Rendell, Ruth: **The Lake of Darkness.** Doubleday, 10.00
Rutherford, Douglas: **Turbo.** St. Martin's, 9.95
Smith, David: **The Leo Conversion.** Dodd, 9.95

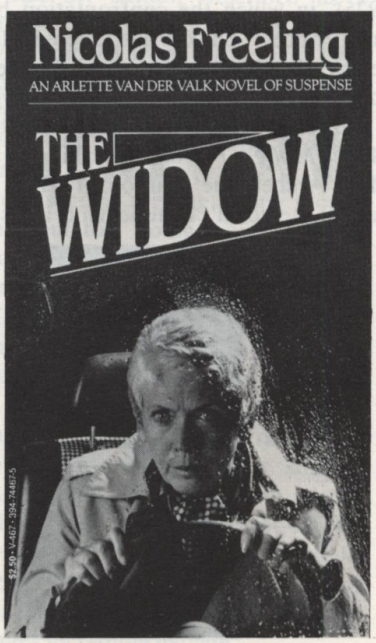


Smith, Frank: **Dragon's Breath.** Beaufort, 12.95
Stein, Aaron Marc: **The Cheating Butcher.** Doubleday, 8.95
Sullivan, Eleanor, ed.: **Alfred Hitchcock's Tales To Fill You with Fear and Trembling.** Dial, 9.95
Symons, Julian: **Sweet Adelaide.** Harper, 9.95
Tine, Robert: **State of Grace.** Viking, 10.95
Underwood, Michael: **A Clear Case of Suicide.** St. Martin's, 8.95
Wheatley, Dennis: **Who Killed Robert Prentiss?** Mayflower, 17.95
Wilcox, Collin: **Mankiller.** Random, 8.95
Winchester, Jack: **The Solitary Man.** Coward, 10.95
Winslow, Pauline Glen: **The Counsellor Heart.** St. Martin's, 8.95
Wiser, William: **Disappearances.** Atheneum, 11.95
Woods, Sara: **They Stay for Death.** St. Martin's, 8.95
Zackel, Fred: **Cinderella After Midnight.** Coward, 10.95



Paperbacks

Bagley, Desmond: **Flyaway.** Fawcett, 2.25
Barnard, Robert: **Death of a Mystery Writer.** Dell, 2.25
Bentley, E. C.: **Trent's Own Case.** Perennial Library, 1.95
Bruce, Leo: **Case for Three Detectives.** Academy Chicago, 4.50
Charteris, Leslie: **The Saint Meets the Tiger.** Ace, 1.95
Chase, James Hadley: **No Orchids for Miss Blandish.** Penguin, 2.50
Christie, Agatha: **Crooked House.** Pocket, 2.25
Christie, Agatha: **Mrs. McGinty's Dead.** Pocket, 2.25
Christie, Agatha: **Ordeal by Innocence.** Pocket, 2.25
Christie, Agatha: **There Is a Tide.** Dell, 1.95
Clark, Gail: **The Baroness of Bow Street.** Pocket, 1.75
Ebersohn, Wessel: **A Lonely Place to Die.** Vintage, 2.50
Estleman, Loren D.: **Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Holmes.** Penguin, 2.95
Follett, Ken: **Triple.** Signet, 3.50
Francis, Dick: **Flying Finish.** Pocket, 2.25
Francis, Dick: **Trial Run.** Pocket, 2.50
Freeling, Nicolas: **The Widow.** Vintage, 2.50
Gifford, Thomas: **Hollywood Gothic.** Ballantine, 2.50
Goulart, Ron: **Hail Hibbler.** DAW, 2.25
Guild, Nicholas: **Old Acquaintance.** Jove, 2.50
Halpern, Jay: **The Jade Unicorn.** Avon, 2.50
Harris, Timothy: **Goodnight and Goodbye.** Dell, 2.25
Heald, Tim: **Blue Blood Will Out.** Ballantine, 1.95
Heyer, Georgette: **Death in the Stocks.** Bantam, 1.95
Hodel, Michael P. and Sean M. Wright: **Enter the Lion.** Playboy, 2.50
Hynd, Noel: **False Flags.** Bantam, 2.25
Iles, Francis: **Before the Fact.** Perennial, 1.95
Langley, Bob: **Death Stalk.** Penguin, 2.75
Lathen, Emma: **Double, Double, Oil and Trouble.** Pocket, 2.50
Lutz, John: **Lazarus Man.** Berkley, 2.50
McDonald, Frank: **Provenance.** Avon, 2.75
McGhee, Edward: **The Last Caesar.** Pinnacle, 2.50
MacKenzie, Donald: **Raven Settles a Score.** Berkley, 1.95
Marsh, Ngaio: **Death at the Bar.** Jove, 1.95
Melchior, Ib: **The Watchdogs of Abaddon.** Bantam, 2.50
Patrick, Vincent: **Pope of Greenwich Village.** Pocket, 2.75
Radley, Sheila: **Death in the Morning.** Dell, 2.75
Rosten, Leo: **Silky.** Bantam, 2.25
Sanchez, Thomas: **Zoot-Suit Murders.** Pocket, 2.50
Sayers, Dorothy L.: **Lord Peter.** Avon, 6.95
Snyder, Gene: **The Ogden Enigma.** Playboy, 2.50
Stanwood, Brooks: **The Glow.** Fawcett, 2.75
Stout, Rex: **Three Doors to Death.** Bantam, 1.95
Stout, Rex: **Three Men Out.** Bantam, 1.95
Swanton, Scott: **Sweetheart.** Bantam, 2.25
Tarrant, John: **The Clauberg Trigger.** Tower, 1.95
Van de Wetering, Jan: **The Maine Massacre.** Pocket, 2.25
Van Dine, S. S.: **The Greene Murder Case.** Scribners, 2.95
Van Gulik, Robert: **Monkey and the Tiger.** Scribners, 2.50
Van Gulik, Robert: **Murder in Canton.** Scribners, 2.50
Warner, Mignon: **A Medium for Murder.** Dell, 2.25
Winslow, Pauline Glen: **The Brandenburg Hotel.** Dell, 2.25



MURDER BY CLIENT: A Reworked Theme in Dashiell Hammett

By Christopher Bentley

Dashiell Hammett was less given to re-using his short stories for his novels than was Raymond Chandler.[1] Nevertheless, *The Maltese Falcon* (1930) contains several reworkings of characters and situations from some of Hammett's Continental Op stories. Hammett himself stated that the eponymous criminal of "The Whosis Kid" (*Black Mask,* March 1925) was a sketch for the homosexual boy-gunman, Wilmer, in *The Maltese Falcon.*[2] William F. Nolan points out that the character of the novel's heroine, Brigid O'Shaughnessy, draws on that of the girl variously known as Elvira and Jeanne Delano in "The House on Turk Street" (*Black Mask,* April 1924) and "The Girl with the Silver Eyes" (*Black Mask,* June 1924); and that the end of the latter story, where Jeanne attempts to seduce the Op into freeing her, anticipates the final scene between Brigid and Sam Spade in *The Maltese Falcon.*[3] Nolan observes that this scene is also anticipated in "The Gutting of Couffignal" (*Black Mask,* December 1925), in which the confrontation between the Op and Princess Zhukovski "offered Hammett a final rehearsal before he was to pit Spade against Brigid for their memorable *Falcon* showdown."[4]

However, it should be noted that the chief mystery of *The Maltese Falcon,* the killing of Spade's partner Miles Archer, the solution of which is the essential part of the novel's denouement, is also adapted from

an earlier Hammett story, "Who Killed Bob Teal?" (*True Detective,* November 1924). This Continental Op story is unusual in several respects: it was not published in *Black Mask*; it was bylined "by Dashiell Hammett, of the Continental Detective Agency"; and an early paragraph asserts the truth of the story, though "the city, the detective agency, and the people involved all had names different from the ones I have given them." Bob Teal had been a colleague of the Continental Op, and "had the makings of a crack detective in him." The Op is given the details of his murder by the Old Man (the Continental Detective Agency's San Francisco manager):

> "He was shot with a .32, twice, through the heart. He was shot behind a row of signboards on the vacant lot...at about ten last night. His body was found by a patrolman a little after eleven. The gun was found fifteen feet away.... The rain last night wiped out any leads the ground may have held, but from the condition of Teal's clothing and the position in which he was found, I would say that there was no struggle, and that he was shot where he was found, and not carried there afterward. He was lying behind the signboards, about thirty feet from the sidewalk, and his hands were empty. The gun was held close enough to him to singe the breast of his coat. Apparently no one either saw or heard the shooting."[5]

This description should be compared with details from the much more extended account of Miles Archer's murder:

> [T]he alley was bounded by a waist-high fence, horizontal strips of rough boarding. From the fence dark ground fell away steeply to the billboard... In the notch between boulder and slope Miles Archer lay on his back.... "Got him right through the pump—with this." He took a fat revolver from his coat pocket... "The blast burnt his coat." "Who found him?" "The man on the beat... The fog's got the ground soggy, and the only marks are where Miles slid down and where this here gun rolled." "Didn't anybody hear the shot?"..."Somebody must've heard it, when we find them."[6]

The gun with which Bob Teal was shot is "a small automatic pistol, fairly new-looking in spite of the mud that clung to it"; in *The Maltese Falcon,* "Mud

inlaid the depressions in the revolver's surface."

In both the short story and the novel the murderer stands in the same relationship to the victim, and the murder is committed for identical reasons. Both detectives are killed premeditatedly by their clients who intend that a criminal associate who has become a nuisance to them will be blamed for the murder. In both cases the murder weapon had been previously obtained from the associate, and the victims are both killed at night and in similar locations. The Op establishes that Bob Teal was killed by Ogburn, the Agency's client, in an attempt to frame Herbert Whitacre, his partner in a crooked farm-development firm:

"I knew that the question *Who killed Bob Teal?* could only have one answer. Bob wasn't a boob! He might possibly have let a man he was tailing lure him behind a row of billboards on a dark night, but he would have gone prepared for trouble. He wouldn't have died with empty hands, from a gun that was close enough to scorch his coat. The murderer *had* to be somebody Bob trusted, so it couldn't be Whitacre."[7]

The Op is explaining to a police officer, after the murderer has been arrested. Much more effectively, Sam Spade offers his very similar exposition to the killer herself:

"Miles hadn't many brains, but, Christ! he had too many years' experience as a detective to be caught like that by the man he was shadowing. Up a blind alley with his gun tucked away on his hip and his overcoat buttoned? Not a chance. . . . But he'd've gone up there with you, angel, if he was sure nobody else was up there. You were his client, so he would have had no reason for not dropping the shadow on your say-so, and if you caught up with him and asked him to go up there he'd've gone...and then you could've stood as close to him as you liked in the dark and put a hole through him with the gun you had got from Thursby that evening."[8]

The pattern of relationships between victim, killer, and avenging detective has become much more complex in *The Maltese Falcon*. The Old Man's single-minded determination to get Bob Teal's murderer ("I'm determined to find him and convict him if I have to let all regular business go and put every man I have on this job for a year") reappears vestigially in Spade's dogged assertion that "When a man's partner is killed he's supposed to do something about it"; but in the short story there is no anticipation of Spade's contempt for the partner he has cuckolded, Miles Archer being apparently a very different man from Bob Teal, and probably less of a loss to his profession. Above all, there is no hint in the short story of the appallingly ambivalent relationship that develops in the novel between the detective and the killer. In "Who Killed Bob Teal?" the issues are kept economically simple and the focus remains on the detection process; the larger scope of *The Maltese Falcon* allowed Hammett to develop his characters more fully and to study the ambiguities of their interaction.

Notes

1. Chandler's "cannibalizing" is discussed by Philip Durham, Introduction to Raymond Chandler, *Killer in the Rain* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1964).
2. William F. Nolan, *Dashiell Hammett: A Casebook* (Santa Barbara: McNally & Loftin, 1969), p. 36.
3. Nolan, pp. 31–32. Nolan also suggests that the gangsters Tai Choon Tau and Hook Riordan in "The House on Turk Street" prefigure, respectively, Casper Gutman and Wilmer.
4. Nolan, p. 38.
5. "Who Killed Bob Teal?" in *The Dashiell Hammett Omnibus* (London: Cassell, 1950), p. 785.
6. *The Maltese Falcon* (New York: Knopf, 1930), pp. 16–18.
7. "Who Killed Bob Teal?" p. 797.
8. *The Maltese Falcon*, p. 256.

THE PAPERBACK REVOLUTION

By Charles Shibuk

VICTOR CANNING

Birdcage (1978) (Charter) starts slowly with an attempted suicide that fails, and gathers momentum as further plot ramifications include a secret British organization and its attempts to halt the career of a highly-placed peer. This is a curious work: an almost actionless thriller that emphasizes characterization, and shows the plotting influence of William Haggard and the ethical values of John le Carré's spymasters.

JOHN DICKSON CARR

He Who Whispers (1946) (Charter) represents Dr. Gideon Fell (and his creator) in very good form. There's an "impossible" murder by fright, an enigmatic heroine (or is she a villainess?), a mysterious face that appears at the window—sixteen feet above the ground, and a few other bizarre incidents to puzzle the ingenious Dr. Fell—and the reader.

Captain Cut-Throat (1955) (Charter) is a well-above-average Carr historical whodunit set in France in 1805. Napoleon is poised on the brink of invading England, but his own encampment is infiltrated by a serial murderer. Captive British spy Alan Hepburn is given one week to remove this menace—*or else!*

LESLIE CHARTERIS

In a newly-written introduction for the Charter reprint of *The Saint Meets the Tiger* (1928), the author tells us that he considers this work nothing more than a youthful indiscretion. True, the Saint did go on to bigger and better adventures, but this is where the exuberant saga began, and, after all, the Saint is, at his best, one of the greatest creations in crime literature.

AGATHA CHRISTIE

Ordeal By Innocence (1958) (Pocket Books) is a lesser non-series effort that concerns the uphill struggle of geophysicist Arthur Calgary to prove that the recently deceased Jack Argyle was not guilty of the brutal slaying of his adopted mother.

LOREN D. ESTLEMAN

Oh, oh! Here we go again! And still *another* "newly discovered" manuscript from

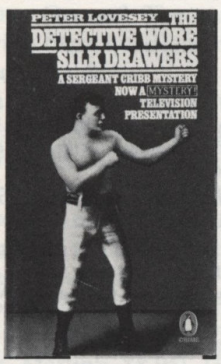
the prolific pen of the famous Dr. Watson has surfaced. Conjure Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale of horror told from an Irregular point of view, and you have *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Holmes* (1979) (Penguin). It's entertaining, fast-moving, and highly readable.

DICK FRANCIS

Trial Run (1978) (Pocket Books) is cold and uncharacteristic Francis, and lacks the crackling excitement and suspense of his previous work. It is also closer to the detective novel than the thriller form. However, the author's professionalism and readability are well in evidence in this tale of an ex-steeplechase rider sent to a well-observed Moscow by a royal personage in order to determine if it will be safe for his brother-in-law to compete in the forthcoming Olympic Games.

NICHOLAS GUILD

Raymond M. Guinness works for a U.S. government agency, and is noted for his skill as an assassin. In *Old Acquaintance* (1978) (Jove), he finds himself in South Carolina in the middle of a devious assignment to prevent the kidnapping (and murder) of a nine-year-old child—who is his own daughter. Long, thoughtful, often static, this novel does send up fireworks at its conclusion. (Note to astigmatics: print size in this edition leaves much to be desired.)



MICHAEL P. HODEL and SEAN M. WRIGHT

Enter the Lion (1979) (Playboy Press) is an uneven mixture at best. Its exciting balloon climax and the antics of British statesmen Gladstone and Disraeli cannot really mitigate a lethargic pace. It is a good idea to use Mycroft Holmes of the Foreign Office as the central character in this slightly absurd tale of a conspiracy to annex the U.S. back to England in 1875. It's an even better idea to add Mycroft's kid brother to an already colorful cast of characters.

STUART KAMINSKY

You Bet Your Life (1978) (Charter) concerns private eye Toby Peters's attempts to straighten out a mobster's claim for $120,000 against Chico Marx. This is standard fare enlivened by its well-limned setting in 1941 Chicago, a cast of amusing characters that includes the Marx Brothers and Ian Fleming, its fast pace, and four killings.

PETER LOVESEY

The distinctively-titled *The Detective Wore Silk Drawers* (1971) (Penguin) is set in 1880 against the background of the highly illegal and dangerous sport of bare-knuckle boxing. This is Lovesey's second novel, and it's a skillful performance that finds the astute Sergeant Cribb called upon to investigate the murder of a headless corpse.

JOHN LUTZ

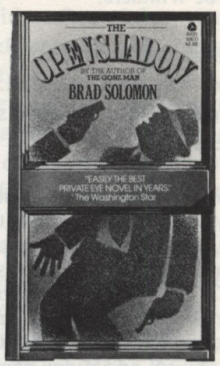
Something monstrous emerges from the lakeside area near the small Ozark hamlet of Colver and kills unwary tourists. What is it? No one seems to know—especially shrewd sheriff Billy Wintone whose job it is to find out—and the pressure mounts. *Bonegrinder* (1977) (Berkley) is an effective suspense novel with a very well realized setting and characterizations to match.

NGAIO MARSH

A friendly game of darts played in a seaside pub climaxes in homicide in *Death at the Bar* (1940) (Jove). This oft-reprinted work was published at the end of the great golden age of the detective story, and is a welcome reminder of the positive values of that era from the pen of one of its most outstanding practitioners.

BRAD SOLOMON

My lamentable lack of knowledge about the existence of *The Open Shadow* (1978) has been remedied by Avon's recent reprint. This novel starts with a dress manufacturer's distraught wife seeking aid from private eyes Fritz Thieringer and Maggie McGuane because her husband is being menaced by a Wilmer Cook-type gunman. *The Open Shadow* is a long, complex, and involving novel from one of the better performers in the hard-boiled field.



PAPER CRIMES

By Fred Dueren

Legacy of the Lake by Michael Smith. Avon, 1980.

Jack Olsen ended up at Lake of the Ozarks in rural Missouri when he was put on extended leave from the Chicago Police Department for alcoholism (and a possible breakdown). While peacefully fishing one summer evening, he witnessed the murder of a local conservationist. Jack and his girlfriend Kate are drawn into the investigation, turning up a drug ring and a plan by the Mob to build a sex-and-gambling hotel on the Lake. Several deaths and a few mistakes later, Jack eliminates all but the guilty in a mildly contrived finale. The lake resort area makes a good background but is portrayed a bit too idealistically for complete believability.

Blind Side by Dave Klein. Charter Books, 1980.

Overly heavy on football details and strategy and the ups and downs of the New York Panthers, *Blind Side's* suspense stems from the random attacks of a psychopathic killer. Sports writer Butch Lewis is the main character who spots the pattern of slayings in various cities on nights prior to Panthers games. He enlists the aid of Capt. Buddy Aarons of the NYPD, all the while chronicling the growing tension and dissension among the players as the team gets closer to the playoffs. Also woven into the complications is narcotics dealer Lem Forrest who supplies the team members with pills and girls. A brutal sexual conclusion wraps up the loose ends as Butch learns which of his friends is the killer.

Case for Three Detectives by Leo Bruce. Academy Chicago Ltd., 1936.

If you don't have access to the *New York Times* or missed its earlier review of *Case for Three Detectives,* it is something that should be called to your attention. It is an enormously successful parody of three of mystery fiction's super sleuths (Wimsey, Poirot and Father Brown). The problem is narrated by nondescript Townsend, one of several guests of Mary and Dr. Thurston at their country home. Suspects include a blackmailing butler, a long-lost stepson who will inherit, a chauffer with a record, a slightly mad vicar, the family lawyer and a scheming maid. The victim is Mary Thurston, in a locked room. Townsend's light tone and realization of his place in a murder investigation sets a humorous atmosphere for the three detectives to

construct their theories. Sgt. Beef (who does not play completely fair with the clues) also presents his ideas, wanting mostly to get back to his beer and darts game at the local pub. This minor classic deserves broader recognition for its appraisal of the extravagances and pleasures of the Golden Age novels.

Murder Takes a Wife by James A. Howard. Raven House Mystery, 1958.

As part of Raven House's first releases, this reprint from over twenty years ago holds up well. Jeff Allen, the narrator, is a professional killer, specializing in unwanted wives and domineering mothers. After a successful job in Seattle, he moves on to Fort Worth, Bing Scott, Amal Oil Co. and a chance to go legit. But first he has has to honor a couple of commitments to Bing's brother Tom and a friend, Jerry Mulloy. Interest and suspense build nicely as Jeff tries to juggle all the balls. His own psychological make-up is startlingly revealed by his actions and comments. The final scenes wrap up an admirable tale that leaves us satisfied but saddened by its ironic justice.

Murder in the Hellfire Club by Donald Zochert. Penguin Books, 1978.

Ben Franklin's visit to London in 1750 led, we're told here, to his involvement with one of London's most scandalous clubs. The Hellfire Club was organized by Francis Dashwood to ward off boredom and provide adventure for the jaded. After one of their more outrageous excesses, Dashwood received a letter threatening them all. He turned to Franklin for help, but the members began to die. There is a clever use of electricity as a murder weapon here, and an artful misdirection of the motive. The only flaw is a style that makes it difficult to follow the action.

Comes the Blind Fury by John Saul. Dell, 1980.

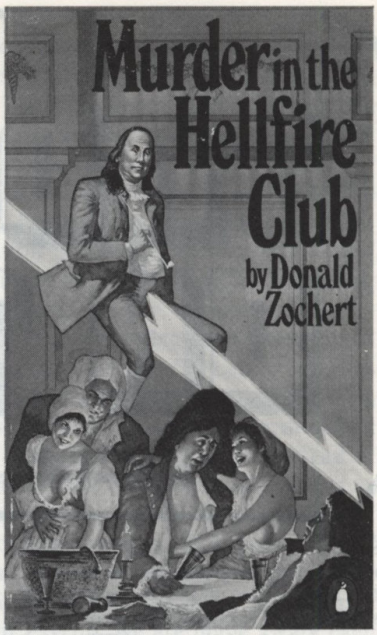
For the horror-occult fans, *Comes the Blind Fury* provides a diverting few hours. Michelle Pendleton, twelve years old and a newcomer to the New England town of Paradise Point, is the main character. Shortly after moving into their house, an old mansion on the point of a sea cliff, she finds an old doll that might have belonged to Amanda Carson one hundred years before. Amanda was blind and had fallen off the cliff while being teased by other children. When Michelle begins "seeing" Amanda, her new friends reject her. And then the other children begin dying...

Sweeps by Bill Granger. Fawcett Gold Medal, 1980.

Although the murder of Simon Kinzie, an aging newsman who was blacklisted in the McCarthy era, is one of the major plot elements, it is not enough to carry this slightly overlong novel. Jeremy Heron's position as anchorman on the Evening World News is threatened by network politics and maneuvering to gain power. Heron's possible involvement in Kinzie's death adds fuel to the growing struggle. Meanwhile, Lea Heron, Jeremy's daughter, finds herself in conflict with her boyfriend Rudy, who works at the network, and policeman Gill, investigating the murder.

Music from Another Room by James Kelly. Leisure Books, 1980.

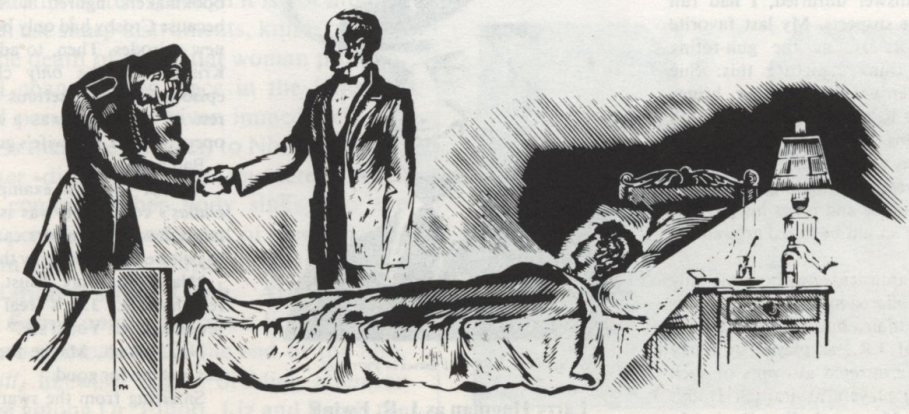
A Mexican hacienda run by two aging homosexuals provides the background for



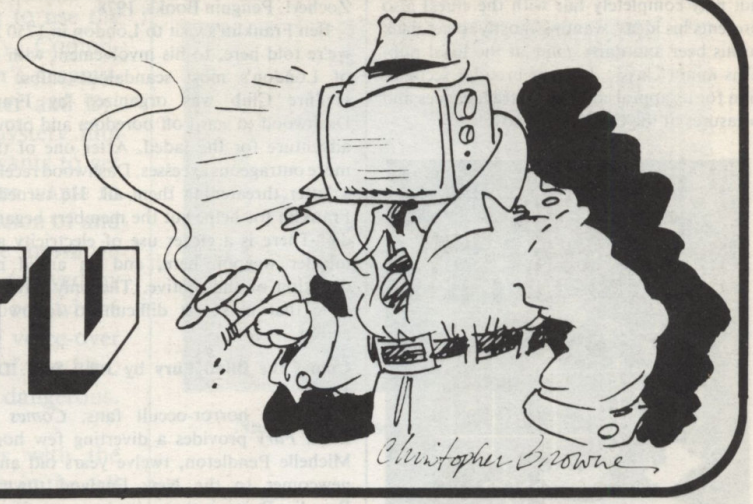
conflict and murder. A mishmash of incompatible suspects assembles around the pair—some to sponge off them, some to turn their estate and flourishing restaurant into a drug center, and Ax Grenner comes in response to a call for help. Kelly's efforts at mood writing impedes the action, and the book becomes a crime story with several strands overlapping and then straightening out by themselves.

The Year's Best Horror Stories, Series VIII edited by Karl Edward Wagner. DAW Books, Inc., 1980.

Another entry for the occult/horror fans, it is all good reading here. The sixteen stories cover the field from ghosts and grotesque monsters to psychological preyings and takeover of the world by inanimate objects. Most notable are Hugh B. Cave's "From the Lower Deep," Harlan Ellison's "In the Fourth Year of the War," Kevin A. Lyons's "Billy Wolfe's Riding Spirit," and Steve Sneyd's "A Fly One." You will have to look in the science-fiction section to find the book, but it is worth the short detour.



TAD ON TV



By Richard Meyers

Somewhere children may be playing, birds may be chirping and people may be laughing, but there is no joy in my house; mighty *Dallas* has struck out. The biggest mystery of the TV season...indeed, of almost any TV season, has finally roared to its climax, only to fall over at the finish line as if it had been severed at the ankles by the Shogun Assassin.

I'm speaking, not surprisingly, of the question that has gripped audiences, the mass media, and two entire continents; namely, "Who shot J.R.?" It turns out that the question was far more exciting than the answer. Seemingly everyone else in the world has commented on the build-up—*Panorama* magazine even had famous mystery authors offer their own solutions—so I felt that this august publication should have some comments on the payoff.

Words cannot express the extraordinary disappointment.

Word has it that 75% of the nation's viewers watched the November 21, 1980 episode of *Dallas*. I would hazard that 74.99% were royally pissed off by what they saw. I, personally, was aghast from a personal and professional point of view.

I'm happy to say that I thought the "alleged perpetrator" would be Miss Ellie, J.R.'s mother. I subscribe to the least-likely-suspect theory. In fact, as the three new episodes leading to the answer unfurled, I had fun considering other suspects. My last favorite was pegging J.R. Jr. as the gun-toting assailant. Just think...picture this: Sue Ellen, the drunken wife and mother, brings the kid along to J.R.'s office, intending to kill him. She chickens out at the last minute, dropping the gun as she runs out. The tot picks up the weapon, thinking it a toy, toddles into the office and plugs his pa. The howls of surprise would be heard around the world!

In fact, these fantasies were about the only delight the show offered me. The actual series is a pedestrian affair, buoyed only by the gleeful villainy of J.R., as played by Larry Hagman, and the intrepid attempts of such other supporting players as Patrick Duffy, Barbara Bel Geddes, and Jim Davis. In between my suspect assumptions about the only other thing to do was get as tacky as the show was. It was hard not to comment on how chubby Charlene Tilton was, how good Victoria Principal looked in her maillot bathing suit (displayed in a rather obviously-conceived scene which existed only for the actress's body) and other similarly base considerations.

You'd think the producers would, at the very least, milk the situation for all it was worth. To create a stunning mystery, peppered by a brilliant detective deciphering cryptic clues and horrendous red herrings. Instead, I got such dull fuzz as Detectives Horton and Frost (actors Michael Alldredge and Nick Hagler) doing a ridiculously shallow investigation. And make no mistake, there was not so much a solution to the mystery as a disclosure of some unimpressive information.

But what I find most amazing about this whole sad story is that the *Dallas* producers *had* me. Like it or not, I was hooked. Here was a platinum opportunity to secure a fabulous audience for the rest of series's existence. I had not, up until the J.R. shooting and subsequent publicity, watched the show. And through my recent conversations, I found many of my associates were in the same situation. More people probably watched the last five episodes than the whole first season put together.

Larry Hagman as J. R. Ewing

I can't fault the network, CBS. They repeated the episodes leading up to the shooting in rapid succession and scheduled the new shows in a bunch. But I am stunned at the vacuous plotting of the producers. Instead of surprising or even entertaining me, they decided to pile on misleading publicity about how deep the mystery would be, how many solutions they would film and the secrecy they worked under, and then went ahead to present the most mediocre dénouement possible. To suffer through all the hype only to have the crime pinned on the *most* likely suspect was the last straw.

It took gall to so remittingly blow such a golden opportunity.

The assassin of J.R. was Kristen, his wife's sister, as played by Mary Crosby, Bing's real-life daughter. Stunningly poor choice. It would've been better to have Dr. Bellows from *I Dream of Jeannie* do it. The Kristen character was the first and most often suspected. As far back as last summer, bookmakers figured it would be Kristen because Crosby had only been signed for four new episodes. Then, to add insult to injury, Kristen was the *only* character the new episodes cast any serious suspicion on. The rest of the effort was a time-wasting soap opera about J.R.'s wife's guilt.

Bad news.

One of the best examples of how lousy *Dallas's* conclusion was is that none of the more devoted watchers can bring themselves to believe that is actually the answer.

"Naw," they say. "Just wait. Kristen is a red herring. J.R.'s real shooter will be revealed later. You'll see."

No, I won't. Maybe they will, but *Dallas* has lost me for good.

Smarting from the swarmy misery of that show, I turned to the season premiere of one

Alec Guinness as George Smiley

of my favorites, *Barney Miller*. For five years I have been enjoying as well as appreciating the writers' insightful wit and the actors' ensemble abilities. Over the seasons the characters have developed from clichés to solid personalities that serve the over-all show.

I discovered that the two-part new season opener had the cops of New York's Twelfth Precinct being changed into a homicide unit. Great, I thought. Here was a chance to really examine the dehumanizing effect of the police job through pathotic humor.

Now, I've found it true that unfulfilled preconceptions can lead a critic to get vicious, but even this knowledge didn't prepare me for the travesty I watched over two weeks. Midway through the second part, I marveled at the insular Hollywood lifestyle that must've led the writers to think what they were doing was funny or effective in any way, shape or form. A cop feeling that putting the make on an apathetic, female, corpse photographer was more important than finding a maniac who hacked his victims up into little baggies is not funny. And just imagine, the big "punch line" of this plotline is when they catch the guy because he left his wallet in one of the bloody baggies. Yuk. Yuk.

The jokes were so incredibly strained, the series became almost pathetic to watch. Not only didn't the insight I was hoping for ever materialize, but the characters were pale, false plagiarisms of their former selves.

Part of the problem has to be that the first five seasons' driving force, producer Danny Arnold, had stepped aside after a heart operation, handing the reins over to Tony Sheehan. In addition, the program is no longer taped before a live audience. The canned laughter sounded hollow. The resounding silence that would have accompanied the season premiere if performed before people could have been ample warning for the folly they telecasted.

I only hope it was simply a bad week for all concerned. I'd hate to turn away from this series. It would be like losing a good friend and a last hope for humanistic TV cops.

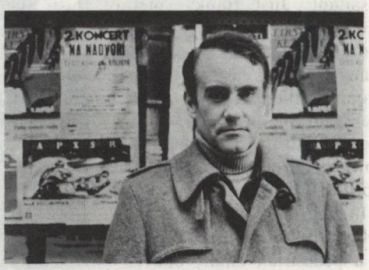
One of these men is The Mole.

After all these dreadful reviews, it's nice to end this issue's column with a TV program that finding fault with would be like quibbling over a cure for cancer because it didn't come in handy, chewable tablets.

Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy was magnificent if only because it was shown on a medium that up until now thought of the spy genre as a cross between *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* and *Get Smart*. The BBC-produced, six-episode series starring Sir Alec Guinness as John le Carré's masterspy George Smiley is as far removed from such otherwise noble efforts as *Secret Agent* and *I Spy* as *2001: A Space Odyssey* is from *Star Wars*. Both were well done, but audience response was extremely divergent.

Everything, most notably the acting, writing, direction, and especially the cinematography combined to translate the consuming literary mystery into engrossing visual terms. But the best thing about the PBS-presented series is that its success is leading to the TV production of Le Carré's second follow-up, *Smiley's People,* also starring the redoubtable Sir Alec.

Good heavens, there's hope yet in the face of such new 'tec series as *Magnum PI, Freebie and the Bean,* and *Enos*. More on those next time. Merry cataracts all.



Ian Bannon as Tim Prideaux in *Tinker, Taylor, Soldier, Spy*

TAD at the MOVIES

By Thomas Godfrey

Glenda Jackson won a second Academy Award when she surprised everyone with her comedic talents in *A Touch of Class* (1973). Seven years later she returns in *Hopscotch,* a picture with a real touch of class, and shows that her flare for light comedy is the genuine article.

Here she plays Isobel von Schmidt, a retired spy and widow of an Austrian diplomat who seconds Walter Matthau in his revenge against his tight-white-collar former CIA boss Ned Beatty. It is essentially a supporting role, but she gives it a thoroughly professional "go" that reinforces her position as one of the best screen actresses of any era.

The picture itself belongs to Walter Matthau, who, by now, is in danger of becoming a national comedic institution. He misses no opportunity to walk flat-footed through a scene or screw up his bloodhound face in an all-out effort to wring the material for all it is worth.

And the smooth, resourceful screenplay by Brian Garfield (with Bryan Forbes) is worth quite a lot. If not the last word in wit and cheekiness, it does have a light-hearted insouciance that is entirely winning.

Garfield co-produced this film, and his tastefulness and careful planning are everywhere in evidence. The mostly-Mozart score is ideally mated to the film. The photography, particularly of Salzburg, is excellent. The performances all mesh like the cogs of a Swiss watch. He has a whimsical tale to tell, and rightfully refuses to hype it up for the so-called box office. Stated flatly, this is a class act from start to finish, and one that should revive well over the next few years.

If there is a weak element here, it is Ronald Neame's slightly slack direction. Maybe it is just a case of too much class, but several lines that should bubble forth have no effervescence, and several situations that should get healthy laughs elicit only smiles instead. *Hopscotch* might have benefitted from Billy Wilder's touch. It certainly looks like his kind of material.

This reservation aside, I would strongly recommend *Hopscotch* as first-class screen entertainment, a Mozart divertimento transformed into film.

* * * * *

Fade to Black on the other hand could have used a Mozartean touch. Instead, writer-director Norman Zimmerman takes an idea with great potential and turns it into something that has the look of first takes of first drafts.

Eric Binford, a twenty-ish movie nut and Hollywood peripherite, snaps under the pressure of several evil meanies in his life, and proceeds to bump them off in the style of his favorite movies.

The script is studded with references to *White Heat, Kiss of Death, Dracula, Hopalong Cassidy,* and *Niagara,* but Zimmerman never seems to whip them into a coherent storyline. So Eric seems sympathetic at one moment, grotesquely evil the next, closet gay in one scene, frustrated red-blooded American male in the next.

Part of Zimmerman's problem is that his characters have no more depth than the screen images they are meant to reflect. The heavies are all lead statues you can spot before they open their mouths. The heroine, a ringer for Marilyn Monroe, gets dragged in and out of the script with no sense of her own motivation. Zimmerman just seems to want her there from time to time.

Finally, what might have become a chilling and fascinating character study becomes a loose-knit series of vignettes. On the basis of *Breaking Away* and *Fade to Black,* Dennis Christopher seems to be an actor of enormous talent. But in electing to play Eric, he is licked before he starts. In some respects, his Eric suffers from too much talent. He needs to modulate his acting, and stick with a single characterization, rather than planning every scene full throttle as he seems encouraged to do here.

Glenda Jackson in *Hopscotch*

Above all, he needs to choose his vehicles more carefully. Another role like this one, and he might find himself typed as the Anthony Perkins-Norman Bates of his generation. Still, he did provide the few watchable moments in *Fade to Black,* and for that I was grateful.

* * * * *

O Heavenly Dog came and went so fast, most people did not seem to know it was around. It is too bad Twentieth Century-Fox did not have more faith in it, since it was a good piece of whimsy, if not the most mysterious of plots.

Chevy Chase plays a private eye who is bumped off while investigating a murder. He is reincarnated as Benji the dog, who returns to the scene of the crime and solves the mystery. Actually, this man-and-dog routine is not new. Dick Powell did it in reverse in the rarely-revived 1954 film *You Never Can Tell.*

Chase seems to have made friends with the camera since *Foul Play,* and he performs well here as a light farceur, particularly when he is doing the voice-overs for Benji's scenes. Jane Seymour, who reminds me of Leslie Ann Down, does well in a part that often requires her to play Watson to the dog's Holmes. Omar Sharif is around as a rheumy-eyed man of mystery. Even Robert Morley shows up for two scenes to remind us what we have been missing this season.

O Heavenly Dog is a pleasant way to pass a rainy afternoon, and I hope its distributors will bring it back again for the bottom half of double bills, so that you will be able to judge for yourself.

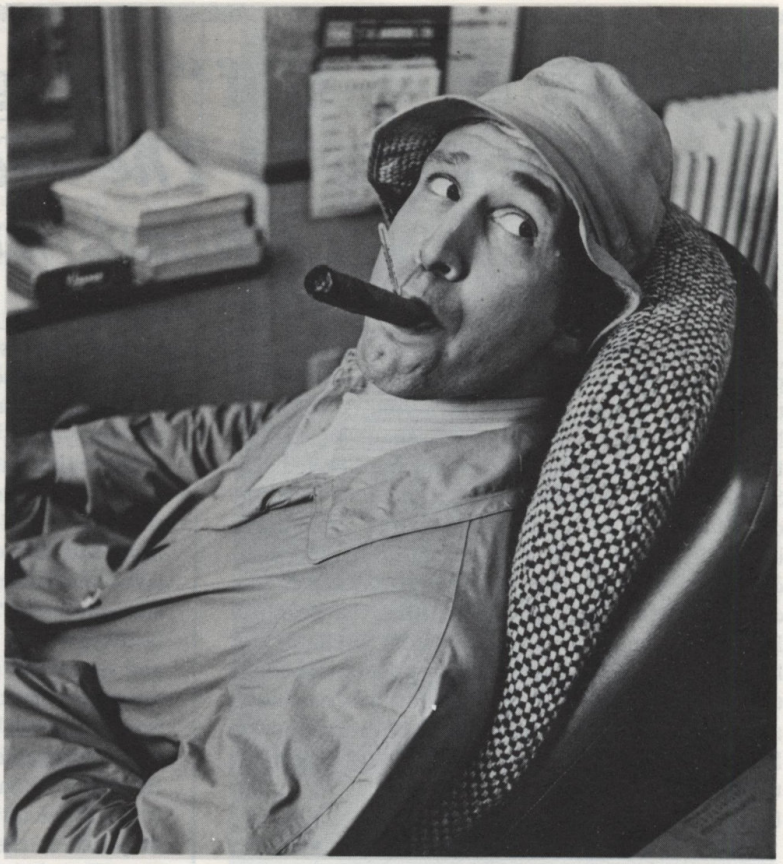
* * * * *

I saw *Out of the Past* (1947) again recently, and was bowled over by it. It looked even better than I had remembered, which was pretty good.

For anyone wondering about the screen appeal of Robert Mitchum, I would refer them to this picture, perhaps his best performance. There is a fire smoldering under all that lazy-lidded indifference, and you can sense the sexual tensions that seem so close to eruption in these early pictures. In much of his later work, this tension is absent. Kirk Douglas makes a strong impression in this early role as a reasonable but amoral hood. The aggressive features of his performance work well in this film. Later some of these features would border on mannerism, particularly as highlighted by his imitators. Jane Greer's performance made me wonder why she didn't have a bigger career. Her first entrance into the Mexican cantina is one of the most memorable ever filmed.

The master's touch belongs to Jacques Tourneur, the director, who pours enough atmosphere into this picture to satisfy the requirements of an entire television season. Scenes don't just happen, they seem to reach out and engulf you. The scenes in North California have so much presence you can almost smell the pines.

Anyone looking for a one-picture definition of film noir will find it here in the moody perfection of *Out of the Past.*



Chevy Chase in *O Heavenly Dog*

The Importance of "C--ing" in Earnest: A Comparison of *The Maltese Falcon* and *Chinatown*

By William D. Bottiggi

In Roman Polanski's *Chinatown,* an artfully-prepared homage to John Huston's *The Maltese Falcon,* the main character, Jake Gittes (played by Jack Nicholson), is a private eye who cannot see. Unlike Humphrey Bogart's portrayal of the hard-boiled Sam Spade, Jake is incompetent and is unable to read the clues that have been placed everywhere for him. In both films, the directors constantly remind their detectives to indeed "see" everything. Because Sam can see through the web of lies that the beautiful Brigid O'Shaugnessey (Mary Astor) prepares for him, he is able to save himself from death. Jake fails to see truth when it's put right under his very nose, and thus cannot save what is most beautiful to him, Mrs. Mulwray (Faye Dunaway). He truly deserves the admonition "Get off the streets," as the movie finishes.

From Effie, Sam's secretary's, opening line we know that Sam is a man whose vision is clear and perceptive. His ability to see will allow him to capture the criminals. Effie, as she introduces Miss Wonderly, says, "You'll want to see her. She's a knock-out." When Evelyn Mulwray first comes to see Jake, it takes his two partners *and* secretary just to get him to turn around and look. Although, it has already been established that Jake is inept in his ability to see. When tailing Hollis Mulwray, who is already aware of the water supply's dumpage, Jakes uses his watch *to watch* and goes home to sleep. He therefore misses one of the first and more valuable clues in his case.

When Sam first goes to visit Brigid in her apartment and asks her for more money, he picks up one of her hats that's sitting on a sideboard. Literally it establishes the fact that he does not trust her and also that he is inquisitive about everything. But that Huston allows us, the viewers, to see as well what Sam sees, is an insight into his brilliant achievement. Inside the hat is the name of a Hong Kong shop whose address is "Queen's Road-C." The "C" is a reminder to both Sam and the viewer to do just that. If the viewer sees as carefully as Sam, it should be quite clear how he can jump to the conclusion the second time he visits Brigid that she knows the slimy Joel Cairo (Peter Lorre). Sam has already had a whiff of Cairo's gardenia-scented calling card, and on this visit to Brigid she's wearing a gardenia corsage. His ability to see and then make accurate judgments from that visual information allows him to be the effective private eye.

One might argue that this detail is insignificant, and if it were alone and isolated I might agree that this interpretation is highly overread. But when Sam first visits Gutman (Sydney Greenstreet) in his hotel suite, the camera reveals for Sam and the viewer the suite number, "12-C." Again a reminder at all times to do just that. This fat man of words, whose stories and tales seem plausible and historically accurate, is not to be trusted. And Gutman is quick to realize that Spade *can* read between the lines. Gutman intuitively senses this perceptual ability of Sam's and is prepared for Sam's second visit. This time around Sam's drink is doctored up with knock-out drops, and for the only time in the movie his vision becomes fuzzy. He snaps out of it in time, though, to find the clipping announcement of the arrival of the *La Paloma* from Hong Kong.

After the captain of that ship stumbles into Sam's office with the Maltese Falcon and Brigid has called in her false alarm, Sam is given one more reminder to see. Before he rushes off to the counterfeit alarm he delivers the package to a bus terminal package check. The check itself is sent to Sam's postal box, and the address again is visually provided, "P.O. Station *C*" [italics mine]. This is a final injunction to Sam to not be fooled by the lies and deceit of this criminal *ménage à trois.* And of course, he is not. Even the emotional and tear-jerking final appeal from Brigid is not enough to dissuade Sam from "sending her over." This man of clear sight has been the successful private eye. He accomplishes what the police cannot.

Jake, in *Chinatown,* on the contrary, is unsuccessful. His failure to see keeps him or the police from sending Hollis's murderer over. The ironic bit of casting Huston himself as the villainous mastermind who wins, seems to be another device on Polanski's part to pay homage to the genius of the earlier director.

When Jake and Evelyn go to the nursing home to find out how someone could buy land who had died before the sale was complete, Jake fails to follow Polanski's advice to see. The name of the rest home,

Mar Vista (Sea [read *See*] View), fails to remind Jake to perform his function as a private eye. And indeed he does not see through what he views during that visit. He fails to connect the Albacore Club's insignia in the spread the ladies are sewing with the very same insignia he's seen that morning when Noah Cross's chauffeur picked him up at that club for their meeting. Of course, Evelyn mentally makes the connection and she is the first to see the home's director walk over to them. Jake, meanwhile, rambles on with his nosy (and unnecessary) questions.

But his failure to see and act on that vision has been obvious long before this. When he first visits Mrs. Mulwray he thinks he spots something in their garden pool, but stops in his attempt to obtain the object when Evelyn enters. Although the white riding suit she wears establishes her wealth, it also is a clue which establishes her innocence. Jake does not key into that fact, and persists in his belief that she is the guilty party.

Later, when they re-meet in the restaurant, and he returns the check payment she has sent him, he has to ask her about her initials, "ECM," on the return address. He queries, "What does the C stand for?" Unlike Spade, he's not able to make the necessary connections. He has already snooped around Mulwray's office and had the chance to see the pictures of Hollis and Noah Cross, and yet in the very next scene it is those same photos to which he returns. Not only that, but he's had an even earlier chance to make that link between Hollis and Noah by means of the photos that his partner had taken of the two arguing.

By the time Jake visits the land sales office of records, the viewer knows he is doomed. Upon inquiry, the indignant clerk tells Jake the records he's searching for are in "Row 23, Section *C*." But Jake refuses to. Then to be tricky, Jakes obtains a ruler from the same clerk to tear out the page of information. Unlike Sam with his photographic mind, Jake must have the information on him to remember what he needs. But it is his line to the clerk which adds significance to my thesis. Jake claims to need the ruler because, "I left my glasses at home and I need to see across." That he can't see *a cross,* namely Noah, as the guilty party, reveals that he's left more than his glasses at home.

Both directors are aware then of the necessity of clear-sightedness in the character of the private eye. The faculty of vision becomes all-important when attempting to see through the shadows of half-truths to arrive at the ultimate truth. The web of lies becomes symbolized in the mysterious, inscrutable Chinatown. Jake is unable to pierce through that labyrinth. Sam Spade is successfully able to filter the half-truths from the half-lies. Balance is restored through Sam's power of vision, while in Polanski's macabre *weltenschaung,* order is impossible. The private eye's impotence is due to his failure of vision.

Both directors, likewise, use visual images as injunctions to their respective protagonists and the film viewer as well. If we continually "see," we will experience the same bitter triumph of Spade as he sends the beautiful Brigid over. We will know by the climax that she embodies murderous evil; as we will know of Evelyn Mulwray's innocence long before Jake can discover it. Polanski, therefore, forces us to experience, like Jake, the ultimate horror of a nightmare—a nightmare caused by the failure to see.

A CATALOGUE OF CRIME

By Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor

S117 Bagley, Desmond
The Enemy
Doubleday 1978

A fresh and welcome variant on the usual material of espionage. The author provides a near-surfeit of unusual twists, all dealing with the mathematical genius, now known as George Ashton, who was smuggled out of Russia 25 years earlier but who has failed to provide British Intelligence with anything really new. Assigned to investigate Ashton's current activities, the British agent Martin Jaggard falls in love with Ashton's geneticist daughter and becomes involved in a chase leading to wintry Stockholm and finally to a sinister laboratory in Scotland. There Jaggard is accidentally exposed to a newly-developed strain of virulent germs and the tale grows grim. In spite of certain excesses, a highly readable work, with excellent suspension of disbelief provided for the reader.

S 118 Berckman, Evelyn
A Case in Nullity
Doubleday 1968

In her long series of books, of which this is the fifteenth, the talented and verstile author has set herself some very pretty problems. In this one, a "contemporary novel of divorce based on unusual grounds," Miss Berckman explores new and very sensitive territory. The situation of unconsummated marriage she handles well, though the homosexual villain never quite achieves life (in more senses than one), and his motive in marrying the pretty Auriol Hailes remains unconvincing. But the unfortunate man's persecution of his equally unfortunate wife generates anxious interest and even a bit of the sinister to keep the reader going in a tale happily free of mere sensationalism. (153-)

S 119 Cranston, Maurice
To-morrow We'll Be Sober
Westhouse 1946

S 120 *Philosopher's Hemlock: a Detective Story*
Westhouse 1946

This first, deceptively slender, book actually contains 243 pages filled with a rich assortment of intriguing places and personalities. It is set in London during the "cold war" and features the stolid Inspector Blunt and his more temperamental sergeant St. Clair. A body is discovered in the Chelsea home of a publisher where a very mixed party is in progress. The trail leads the two policemen into a rare variety of situations. Psychoanalysis, the ballet, a questionable "gymnasium" whose high-placed patrons are reluctant to provide alibis—all come in for neat touches at the hands of a highly capable writer: he is or has in fact become Professor of Political Science at London, and the author of truly great works. (All the more pity that he should refer to the ducks in St. James's Park as "amphibians.")

Much less readable, though in two spots rather entertaining, is the author's other work. The philosophers are neither credible nor farcically funny; the journalists are sorry attempts at satire; and curiously, the American gangster, whom the author cannot have drawn from life, is the only living likeness, and humorous in his attractiveness. The 376 pages of this work must be called an expense of print in a shameful waste of paper, but should not keep the reader from the former effort.

S 121 Dollond, John
A Gentleman Hangs
Longmans 1940

Here is one of those single shots that prove long practice not always necessary to success. After an entertaining jury scene, in which an intelligent young man tries to guide his fellows to a decision compatible with the judge's charge, we follow him and his girl to Tregeagle House, where she has a flat, one of six in a converted town house. There, on a hook behind the bathroom door, they find a dead man hanging from his own braces. In the next 23 short and vivid chapters, we are taken into the lives of the other residents and unwind a plot full of ingenious turns. Details are abundant and picturesque and organic, as is also the subject of the jury trial. The detection is shared among our hero and two policemen, also intelligent, and capable of lively conversation like the rest of the cast—all in all an extremely deft and pleasant example of the best work of its period.

S 122 Forsyte, Charles
The Decoding of Edwin Drood
Scribners 1980

S 123 Garfield, Leon
The Mystery of Edwin Drood
Intro. by Edward Blishen. Illus. by Anthony Maitland
Pantheon 1980

The Droodists—as they have come to be called—never give up. Nothing in the now extensive double-barreled literature of Who Killed Drood and What Did Dickens Have in Mind satisfies them. New solutions, continuations, discussions keep appearing. Charles Forsyte, who is the author of four tales of slightly spy-specked detection that are full of good things, began his present half-novel by

trying to detect Dickens's intentions. His 100-page report on the meager yet tantalizing evidence makes for excellent reading and prepares one for the completion of the original in a hundred or so more, a workman-like job fore and aft.

By contrast, Edward Blishen sums up his friend's *donnée* in six-and-a-half brilliant pages—a tour de force of compressed exposition. Then we have Dickens's 22 chapters with acceptable illustrations and a conclusion by Mr. Garfield that is about half again as long as Mr. Forsyte's. Its special merit is that it offers a very fair imitation of Dickens's style, whereas Mr. Forsyte contents himself with avoiding modern deviations from the Victorian. The two solutions differ markedly in detail yet achieve equal interest—if so be that you are a Droodist confirmed and insatiable.

S 124 Innes, Michael
"The Mysterious Affair at Elsinore"
in Rayner Heppenstall and Michael Innes, *Three Tales of Hamlet*
Gollancz 1950

The virtuoso whose John Appleby has romped through nearly fifty tales of varied skullduggery in many moods and species once applied his detective mind, for the benefit of the BBC Third Programme, to the murder followed by massacre which is reported in *Hamlet*. The result is a dazzling piece of critico-detectico-literarico-comic analysis of Shakespeare's dubious account of the doings in Denmark. It would take a genius of the same stripe and strength to question Innes's insight, let alone refute it. The work is unjustly buried in a small volume never available in this country and its reprinting in some suitable journal or anthology is greatly to be desired.

S 125 Keating, H. R. F.
Inspector Ghote Draws a Line
CCD

Inspector Ghote is an acquired taste which these reviewers have only occasionally been able to share. His creator has presented him in a great variety of situations, and that of the present tale—"up country" and not in Bombay—has points of fresh interest. The formerly severe Judge Asif has retired to his country estate with his daughter. Receipt of threatening letters on the occasion of the approaching 30th anniversary of a famous "decision" involving Indian patriots leads to Ghote's assignment to protect the Judge. Lack of co-operation by the Judge and the presence of an ill-assorted group of house guests, not to mention the presence of a deranged and violent son who is confined on the premises, all make Ghote's eventual exposure of the least likely person difficult and meritorious. (1265+)

S 126 Marsh, Ngaio
Photo Finish
LB 1980

To be producing full-length "entanglements" at the age of 81 is a feat in itself, and Dame Ngaio's admirers rejoice to think of her in health and in her beloved New Zealand, working to please them. This latest story is set on an island in Lake Waihoe, on the Southern Island, whose scenery, roads, and storms inspire the author to display her knowledge and descriptive powers.

The makings of the plot are also good—a tempestuous diva of Italian ancestry, her protector, her singing master, a young composer whom she bewitches, and a large assortment of other musical and domestic characters could easily combine with the original motive and isolated locale to yield a first-rate tale. But it must be confessed that they do not properly mesh and move the heavy vehicle. A slowness and slackness in the telling, an excess of visual detail, and much pointless dialogue rob the best ideas of their inherent credibility: even the food and drink fail to convince. What a pity to see good material and a superior talent fail to realize themselves!

S 127 Upfield, Arthur W.
An Author Bites the Dust
CCD 1948

An atypical story about Detective Inspector Napoleon Bonaparte of the Queensland police, this tale is also an unsatisfactory one. "Bony" is borrowed by the Victoria CIB to look into the death of a notable literary man in Wesburn, a suburb of Warburton, forty miles east of Melbourne. The man may have died of natural causes, and that is the official view, but a local constable and a doctor have their doubts, which some higher-ups give heed to. Bony becomes a boarder in the house of a charming old maid next door to the scene of the death, and by teaming up with the intelligent pair of skeptics "finalizes" his case—it is his habit that he never fails.

In the citified setting—Bony has to visit Melbourne and Sydney—only a little of his aboriginal tracking can be done, and what there is of it is implausible. His genetic inheritance, including his complexion, is barely alluded to, and he moves about in a literary society like any Caucasian. What he uncovers is also full of improbabilities, such as a poison in the form of "coffin dust" imported from Colombia in pingpong balls. What is best done, though often in clumsy language, is the satire of a group of highbrow writers who scorn the true storytellers with a large public. Upfield's own narrative powers keep the reader going, but places and people—Bony among them—do not generate the pleasure and suspense one expects from such a practiced hand.

Patricia Wentworth Revisited

By Nancy Blue Wynne

My more sophisticated friends, whose tastes in mysteries run to the hard-boiled, the police procedural, and espionage, often ridicule me (gently and good-humoredly, of course) for my old-fashioned fondness for the "teacake Ladies," as Dilys Winn most aptly christened them. You may call them by Dilys's name, the Body-in-the-Library School, or the Cozies; but, by whatever name, they are the mystery writers whose books conjure up for us a village High Street, the Blue Boar and the Blue Willow, hedgerows and heaths, vicars and chief constables, and jam tarts and scones. San Francisco's fog is fine and romantic, we're sure, but some of us prefer ours in London or Dartmoor.

The list of authors who offer us our favorite milieu is long: Agatha Christie, Josephine Bell, Elizabeth Lemarchand, Anne Morice, Georgette Heyer, Elizabeth Ferrars, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Josephine Tey (these last two being very superior, literary Cozies). They are not all British, nor are they all women: Elizabeth Daly, Phoebe Atwood Taylor, and Zenith Brown in her David Frome persona are Yankee Cozies; and Henry Wade, Philip MacDonald, Michael Innes, and Michael Gilbert are my very favorite ones. Conan Doyle should be included in this list too, because the entire ambience of 221B Baker Street is the epitome of Coziness.

But the writer who fits most comfortably among the Teacake Ladies is Patricia Wentworth. She has been, more often than not, dismissed or slighted by most of the critics and cataloguers of our genre. The Haycraft-Queen Definitive Library of Detective-Crime-Mystery Fiction does not include a book by Wentworth; Julian Symons does not mention her at all in his *Mortal Consequences*; James Sandoe omitted her from his Honor Roll of Crime Fiction. On the plus side, Mr. Haycraft does place Miss Wentworth in his listings of "competent or better" writers of mystery fiction in the 1930s; Michele Slung classifies her among those women writers she considers underrated; and certainly Chris Steinbrunner and Otto Penzler do her full justice in their *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection* by including entries both for the author herself and for her detective, Miss Silver.

Patricia Wentworth is the pseudonym of Dora Amy Elles, the daughter of a British army officer who was stationed in India. She was born in the little hill station of Mussoorie, in the year 1878. (There is evidently some mysterious force present in the upbringing of girls with an Anglo-Far Eastern childhood that leads them into the detective fiction field: Christianna Brand and Pamela Branch both lived in India as children; Elizabeth Ferrars in Burma; and Phyllis Whitney in Japan.) The Elleses brought Dora and her two brothers to England to stay with a grandmother during their school years. Dora returned to India when her formal education was finished, and there was married to Col. George Dillon, in 1906.

Between 1906 and the beginning of World War I, a little girl was born to her, Col. Dillon died, she returned to England with her daughter and three stepsons, and began her writing career. Quite an eventful eight years!

Wentworth's first novels were historical fiction, and one of them, *A Marriage under the Terror,* was awarded a literary prize, earned her considerable recognition as a writer, and went into ten editions. Other titles from her historical fiction period: *A Little More than Kin, The Devil's Wind,* and *Queen Anne Is Dead.*

Following World War I, Mrs. Dillon remarried. Her second husband was, like her first, a British army officer, Lt. Col. George O. Turnbull. It was at this time that Wentworth began her mystery-writing career, a successful one that she pursued until her death in 1961. (Her last novel, *The Girl in the Cellar,* was published in that same year.)

By all accounts, Col. Turnbull was an active partner in his wife's work, encouraged her, and was delighted with her success. Wentworth's method of writing was to dictate her stories to her husband. She managed a terrifically large output of books on

relatively few hours of work evidently, because we are told that she worked only in the winter and only between the hours of 5:00 and 7:00 P.M. She was among those mystery writers who work better without a completely detailed plot in mind at the beginning, preferring to let characters and incidents develop as they may.

Because Patricia Wentworth's detective novels fit so snugly into the damsel-in-distress niche, they are perhaps too quickly dismissed as inconsequential. The author was excellent in her development of young women characters, portraying an amazing variety of types when we consider the number of stories for which she supplied a heroine. The presence of Miss Maud Silver and her official cohorts, Detective Inspector Frank Abbott, Chief Detective Inspector Lamb, and Chief Constable Randal March, keep the Wentworth books firmly in the track of the bona fide detective story rather than in that of the romantic suspense novel...despite the frightened-girl-in-foreground/manor-house-in-background illustrations that frequently adorn her paperback covers.

Neither does she fall very often into Had I But Knownism. Occasionally, one of her second-lead, ingenue types (Mirrie Field in *The Fingerprint,* Lila Dryden in *The Ivory Dagger,* for instance) gets herself into trouble through dimwittedness of some sort; but usually the Wentworth heroine is quite bright and capable.

Although we tend to associate Patricia Wentworth with her detective character, Miss Silver, she actually wrote more mysteries without Maudie than with her. (There is a total of 65 mystery novels: 32 are Miss Silver stories; 33 are not.) The first Wentworth mystery was *The Astonishing Adventure of Jane Smith,* published in 1923. Most of the elements that were to become Patricia Wentworth hallmarks made their first appearances in this novel: secret passageways, orphaned girl in deadly peril, desolate country-house atmosphere and/or sinister London atmosphere, gangs of criminals who are adept at disguise, mysterious and powerful Moriarty-like figures...all familiar ingredients of the typical mystery novel that was being written primarily for women readers at that time. But Miss Wentworth managed to spin a far more intriguing yarn from these threads than did most of her colleagues.

Suspense was her long suit. She was a pioneer in the craft which Charlotte Armstrong would later develop to its highest point: that of creating spell-binding terror from placing quite ordinary people into extraordinary situations of danger. A 1928 book, *Anne Belinda,* has a perfectly inane, impossibly silly plot; but so well does Miss Wentworth tell the story that several mature, intelligent, well-read ladies of my acquaintance found themselves utterly unable to put down the book until the end.

Another of the early Wentworth books worthy of special mention is *Fear by Night* (1934). It features a forbidding lake in whose murky depths lurks a Loch Ness-type monster (maybe) and a diabolical machine which resembles said monster (for sure)! This was certainly the most mind-boggling of Wentworth's early plot devices, but a few others strain the reader's credulity almost as fully.

Miss Silver first made her appearance in the 1928–29 novel, *Grey Mask,* but was not in that book the fully developed personality that readers would later come to expect. Many of the kindly, caring, affectionate aspects of Maud Silver were missing in that first glimpse. She comes across in *Grey Mask* as much more of a professional, working detective, and much less of a person.

Miss Silver pre-dates Agatha Christie's Jane Marple, with whom she is often compared and contrasted. Miss Marple's debut was in *The Murder at the Vicarage* (1930). It is unlikely that Christie was at all influenced by Miss Silver, even if she had chanced to read *Grey Mask,* because that early Miss Silver was much less like Miss Marple than she would be in later books. Indeed, the two characters have never been particularly comparable: Miss Marple was the ultimate in amateur detectives, and invariably pictured as dithery in her manner, albeit with an acute mind behind the dither; Miss Silver, on the other hand, made her living as a private enquiry agent, and gave no signs of being dithery unless she was acting such a part in the course of her duties. The two ladies had in common, really, only their spinsterhood and their fondness for knitting.

Nine years after *Grey Mask,* and fifteen mysteries later, Miss Silver reappeared in *The Case Is Closed* (1937). From this date on, the dowdy, perceptive ex-governess proved to be so popular with readers that she was a part of more and more Wentworth books. The last of the non-Miss Silver Wentworth novels was *Silence in Court* (1945–47), but there would be two dozen more books written by the author before her death sixteen years later.

I imagine that more detail is known about Maud Silver than any other fictional detective. Certainly we know enough about how she looked that we can easily picture her in our mind's eye: the small, neat features; the mousy but thick hair, arranged in an Alexandrian fringe in front, carefully controlled by an invisible net in the daytime and by a stronger one at night. (We know about this because she is much given to nocturnal investigations!) Even items of her wardrobe are well-known: the ancient, yellow fur tippet; the hat with three pompoms of different colors; the bog-oak brooch; the warm, cozy, blue dressing-gown with its hand-made crocheted trimming; the olive-green cashmere dress; the beaded shoes; the velvet coatee which always accompanied her to draughty country houses.

We know just how her flat was furnished: carpet and curtains of peacock blue, terribly faded and worn through the years of World War II, but replaced with similar materials after the war; silver and plush frames with photographs of past clients on all available table and shelf space; curly walnut chairs in a style that dated from Victorian days; and the pictures on the walls..."Hope," "The Black Brunswicker," and "The Soul's Awakening." Emma Meadows, her faithful maid and cook, kept the flat spotless and orderly and produced delicious scones for favored visitors.

We are well acquainted with her family and special friends: the beloved niece, Ethel Birkett, with her family of four children whose needs for socks, sweaters, twin sets, and baby clothes keep Miss Silver's hands busy with constant knitting (in the Continental manner, which enables her to give full attention to the plight of the current client); the not-so-satisfactory niece, Gladys Robinson, who is forever complaining about her long-suffering husband; Detective Inspector Frank Abbott of Scotland Yard and his multitudinous cousins; Chief Inspector Lamb and his three daughters, all named after flowers; and her favorite pupil from her governess days, Randal March, now Chief Constable of a county to which Miss Silver's cases frequently take her. Last, but by no means least, we know of her fondness for the poet Alfred Lord Tennyson, and her propensity to quote from his works.

The special blend of teacakes and terror that Patricia Wentworth dispensed is still popular. Coronet Paperbacks (Hodder & Stoughton) are presently reprinting her titles; and my bookseller friends tell me that they disappear from the shelves as fast as they are placed there.

Bibliography

The Mysteries without Miss Silver:

	British Publisher	*American Publisher*
The Astonishing Adventure of Jane Smith	Melrose, 1923	Small, 1923
The Red Lacquer Case	Melrose, 1924	Small, 1925
The Annam Jewel	Melrose, 1924	Small, 1926
The Black Cabinet	Hodder, 1925	Small, 1926
The Dower House Mystery	Hodder, 1925	Small, 1925
The Amazing Chance	Hodder, 1926	Lippincott, 1927
Hue and Cry	Hodder, 1927	Lippincott, 1927
Anne Belinda	Hodder, 1927	Lippincott, 1928
Fool Errant	Hodder, 1927	Lippincott, 1929
Will-O'-the-Wisp	Hodder, 1928	Lippincott, 1928
The Coldstone	Hodder, 1930	Lippincott, 1930
Beggar's Choice	Hodder, 1930	Lippincott, 1931
Kingdom Lost	Hodder, 1931	Lippincott, 1930
Danger Calling	Hodder, 1931	Lippincott, 1931
Nothing Venture	Cassell, 1932	Lippincott, 1932
Red Danger (U.S. title: *Red Shadow*)	Cassell, 1932	Lippincott, 1932
Seven Green Stones (U.S. title: *Outrageous Fortune*)	Cassell, 1933	Lippincott, 1933
Walk with Care	Cassell, 1933	Lippincott, 1933
Devil-in-the-Dark (U.S. title: *Touch and Go*)	Hodder, 1934	Lippincott, 1934
Fear by Night	Hodder, 1934	Lippincott, 1934
Red Stefan	Hodder, 1934	Lippincott, 1935
Blindfold	Hodder, 1935	Lippincott, 1935
Hole and Corner	Hodder, 1936	Lippincott, 1936
Dead or Alive	Hodder, 1936	Lippincott, 1936
Down Under	Hodder, 1937	Lippincott, 1937
Run!	Hodder, 1938	Lippincott, 1938
Mr. Zero	Hodder, 1938	Lippincott, 1938
The Blind Side	Hodder, 1939	Lippincott, 1939
Rolling Stone	Hodder, 1940	Lippincott, 1940
Who Pays the Piper? (U.S. title: *Account Rendered*)	Hodder, 1940	Lippincott, 1940
Unlawful Occasions (U.S. title: *Weekend with Death*)	Hodder, 1941	Lippincott, 1941
Pursuit of a Parcel	Hodder, 1942	Lippincott, 1942
Silence in Court	Hodder, 1947	Lippincott, 1945

The Mysteries with Miss Silver:

	British Publisher	*American Publisher*
Grey Mask	Hodder, 1928	Lippincott, 1929
The Case Is Closed	Hodder, 1937	Lippincott, 1937
Lonesome Road	Hodder, 1939	Lippincott, 1939
Danger Point (U.S. title: *In the Balance*)	Hodder, 1942	Lippincott, 1941
The Chinese Shawl	Hodder, 1943	Lippincott, 1943
Miss Silver Intervenes (U.S. title: *Miss Silver Deals with Death*)	Hodder, 1944	Lippincott, 1943
The Clock Strikes Twelve	Hodder, 1945	Lippincott, 1944
The Key	Hodder, 1946	Lippincott, 1944
The Traveller Returns (U.S. title: *She Came Back*)	Hodder, 1948	Lippincott, 1945
Pilgrim's Rest (Also published as *Dark Threat*, Popular Library, 1951)	Hodder, 1948	Lippincott, 1946
Latter End	Hodder, 1949	Lippincott, 1947
Spotlight (U.S. title: *Wicked Uncle*)	Hodder, 1949	Lippincott, 1947
The Case of William Smith	Hodder, 1950	Lippincott, 1948
Eternity Ring	Hodder, 1950	Lippincott, 1948
Miss Silver Comes to Stay	Hodder, 1951	Lippincott, 1949
The Catherine Wheel	Hodder, 1951	Lippincott, 1949
The Brading Collection	Hodder, 1952	Lippincott, 1950
Through the Wall	Hodder, 1952	Lippincott, 1950
Anna, Where Are You? (Also published as *Death at Deep End*, Pyramid, 1963)	Hodder, 1953	Lippincott, 1951
The Ivory Dagger	Hodder, 1953	Lippincott, 1951
Watersplash	Hodder, 1953	Lippincott, 1951
Ladies' Bane	Hodder, 1954	Lippincott, 1952
Vanishing Point	Hodder, 1955	Lippincott, 1953
Out of the Past	Hodder, 1955	Lippincott, 1953
The Silent Pool	Hodder, 1956	Lippincott, 1954
The Benevent Treasure	Hodder, 1956	Lippincott, 1954
The Listening Eye	Hodder, 1957	Lippincott, 1955
Poison in the Pen	Hodder, 1957	Lippincott, 1955
The Gazebo (Also published as *The Summerhouse*, Pyramid, 1967)	Hodder, 1958	Lippincott, 1956
The Fingerprint	Hodder, 1959	Lippincott, 1956
The Alington Inheritance	Hodder, 1960	Lippincott, 1958
The Girl in the Cellar	Hodder, 1961	

I am indebted to Chris Steinbrunner's and Otto Penzler's *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection* and to jacket blurbs from my own library for biographical material.

For bibliographical information, Allen J. Hubin's *Bibliography of Crime Fiction* supplied the missing links in my own library.

Interview with Tony Hillerman

By Bruce Taylor

Tony Hillerman was born May 27, 1925 in Oklahoma. His parents were farmers. His earliest education came at Indian reservation schools. He would later attend Oklahoma State University (cut short by World War II) and graduate from both the University of Oklahoma (B.A. Journalism) and the University of New Mexico (M.A. English). He served as a political reporter, news editor and bureau chief for U.P.I. in Santa Fe and as a reporter for and managing editor of the Santa Fe *New Mexican.* He joined the faculty of the University of New Mexico in 1963 and has served as associate professor, professor, department chairman and finally Assistant to the President. Mr. Hillerman is married (he and his wife Marie have six children) and makes his home in Albuquerque.

This interview was conducted at the Soquel Writers Conference (September 1978) and at Bouchercon VII (October 1978).

Q: *The Blessing Way* came out in 1970 and was an Edgar finalist. The next book—*Fly on the Wall*—written the following year, was a completely different kind of book. Were you not happy with *The Blessing Way?*

A: When I decided to write a novel I was going to write the novel which became *Fly on the Wall.* I had been a political reporter, and a reporter is basically a hunter. I wanted to put my protagonist in a situation where he was both the hunter and the hunted. Also, I wanted to do something with the moral dilemma of the damage that can be done with the power that a reporter is given and the notion that a reporter is neutral and detached in relation to his story. But...I had never written anything long, so I decided to write a more conventional detective story (which turned out to be less conventional) and set it in a background that would help me sell it. Also...I wanted very much for people to understand more about the Southwest Indians—the Navajo—and this seemed a good way to get it done. Then, if I could write 70,000 words, I'd write *Fly on the Wall.*

Q: After *Fly on the Wall* we have *Dance Hall of the Dead,* which was an Edgar winner—and then a five-year hiatus. Why?

A: I wrote a lot of non-fiction. [See the bibliography. —*Ed.*]

Q: The character of Leaphorn is not as important in *Blessing Way* as he is in *Dance Hall* and then again not as important as he finally is in *Listening Woman.* Was that by design?

A: The main protagonist of *The Blessing Way* was designed to be the anthropologist—not Leaphorn. I had to have, for reasons of plot, a Navajo policeman. As the book developed and I got more acquainted with the characters, I became more and more interested in Leaphorn. When I got the manuscript back from Joan Kahn at Harper and Row, I had to write a new last chapter. I wrote a second new chapter as well (chapter 15) and beefed up the character of Leaphorn throughout the book. I got to liking him and thought him interesting.

Q: We never really learn very much about Leaphorn—not even a good physical description.

A: I could never make up my mind. . . . I never had any trouble with the way he thought or his attitudes about things. . .

Q: The thread of "logic" runs through all the books. Is that a traditional trait of the Navajo or something you imposed on Leaphorn?

A: It's the whole thrust of the Navajo culture. . . to be in harmony. . . everything in proper order. . . cosmic orderliness.

Q: The F.B.I. appears regularly in the books, and they never come off looking too great. Why?

A: That's a Tony Hillerman prejudice. . . but it's tempered now. I'm less hostile now than I used to be. Remember, I was a political and police reporter. You never got any co-operation out of the F.B.I. They were famous for cloning their agents. . . they all looked like Chamber of Commerce executives. You shouldn't stereotype, but. . . They have cleaned up their act lately.

Q: The female characters in each of the books are completely different. I can't recall any one real strong female Navajo.

A: The demands of the plot required certain kinds of characters. Also, I've never been real comfortable writing about female characters. . . . The Listening Woman is kind of a strong character, and I could have done more with her—when I got started with her I didn't plan too much with her, but her relationship with Leaphorn became important. . . . Leaphorn is both a stranger and a policeman. He is from a different clan. He has arrested her nephew. Remember, the first value in the Navajo culture is family. There's also the business of witchcraft and witches which permeates the culture of the less sophisticated Navajoes.

Q: Are any of the incidents from the novels based on fact?

A: The ceremonial and cultural aspects are, of course. The crimes and the plots, no.

Q: There are several other writers who have a similar story to tell. Brian Garfield has Sam Watchman, and Richard Martin Stern has Louis Ortiz. Have you read them?

A: I've read one of the Watchman books, and it was good because Garfield is as good as they get when it comes to writing narrative action. His books move like lightning. Brian has a different interest than I do. He is not as interested in the "Indian-ness"—the "Apache-ness"—of Watchman as he is in the action of the book. What I try to do is have the plot turn on an understanding of Navajo ways. The solution to the crime requires that the policeman be Navajo. Brian hasn't given himself that kind of restriction. . . Ortiz is a sheriff—part Indian and part Chicano—Stern is a good friend and a real pro, and I believe he does more with his character. . . . Where I originally got the idea for Leaphorn was from Arthur Upfield and his Bony books. . . read him as a kid. . . fascinating stuff. . .

Q: A stock question—who does Tony Hillerman enjoy reading? Who has been influential on your writing?

A: Really enjoyed Upfield, Ambler (the early ones), who was really remarkable in that no two books are alike. . . Greene, LeCarré's *Spy Who Came In from the Cold* is the greatest spy novel ever written. McBain, McGuiver (*Rogue Cop* was excellent), Aaron Mark Stein, John Ball, John D. MacDonald, Dick Francis are all good. . . Don't like Sayers. . . Hammett and Chandler, of course. . . Where do you find a better book than *The Maltese Falcon?* Ross Macdonald is also good.

Q: Macdonald has been criticized for only having one story to tell and telling it over and over again.

A: That criticism misses the point of why Macdonald is great. He uses the same plot, but who else could do it and write all those rich, commanding books? I couldn't. He can take his same theme, and book and book engrosses me in it, and I feel I'm dealing with real human beings and real problems. I know the plot's gonna be the same, and I love 'em. That criticism misses the whole magic of Macdonald.

Q: What are your "work patterns"? How do you put a book together?

A: I don't have the mental discipline to outline. I have no idea what chapter three is going to be when I begin chapter one. . . . I use a legal note pad...I write down the date I get the original idea... For *Listening Woman* it was almost exactly 24 months from the time I started it until I finished it. In the interim, I did write several other things—non-fiction, mostly. . . . I get it started and come back to it when I have something more to write—I write in spurts. . . . It's an inefficient way to write—but I'm taking notes all the time—I spend a lot of time sorting it out in my imagination.

Q: Have you written any short stories?

A: One—published in a small literary magazine. I think they are more difficult. Not enough elbow room ...I would like to publish one more so I can say I've published both novels and short stories (plural).

Q: Have there been any TV or movie sales?

A: There was a lot of interest in Leaphorn in 1969 and 1970. Warner Bros. optioned *Blessing Way*... *Dance Hall* was also optioned, and I wrote a screenplay, but the TV sale fell through. . . . *Listening Woman* has generated a lot of interest, but I'll believe it when I see it...

Q: How soon can we expect another book?

A: Joan Kahn at Harpers has one now. It needs a little work—should be out by the middle of 1980.

Q: A Leaphorn?

A: It's a Navajo tribal police book—Leaphorn is in it as a minor character—but it concerns a younger Navajo policeman named Jimmy Chee. He is studying to be a Navajo Singer, but he also has an offer from the F.B.I. So...he has to decide whether he wants to be a Navajo or a white man. It also concerns a Navajo cult and a crime twenty years old.

Q: Any plans to write full-time?

A: I don't think so... Not at this time... I have six children...plus, I was raised during a depression... but the real reason is that I don't think I'd write any faster...

Principal Publications

The Blessing Way. New York: Harper and Row, 1970. Listed among the Notable Books of 1970 by the American Library Association. Honorable Mention Award, Mystery Writers of America.

The Great Taos Bank Robbery, and other affairs of Indian Country. Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1970.

The Fly on the Wall. Harper and Row, 1971. Honorable Mention Award from the Mystery Writers of America.

The Boy Who Made Dragonfly. Harper and Row Junior Books, 1972. Juvenile Book Award of the Border Regional Library Association. Honorable Mention, Western Writers Association.

The Dance Hall of the Dead. Harper and Row, 1973. Winner of the Edgar Allan Poe Award of the Mystery Writers of America as the best mystery novel published in 1973.

New Mexico. Portland Graphic Arts Center, 1974.

Rio Grande. Portland Graphic Arts Center, 1975.

The Spell of New Mexico. University of New Mexico Press, 1976.

Listening Woman. Harper and Row, 1977. ALA Notable Books list, New York "Best Books of the Year" list. Finalist in MWA Edgar Allan Poe competition.

People of Darkness. Harper and Row, 1980.

MYSTERY MARKETPLACE

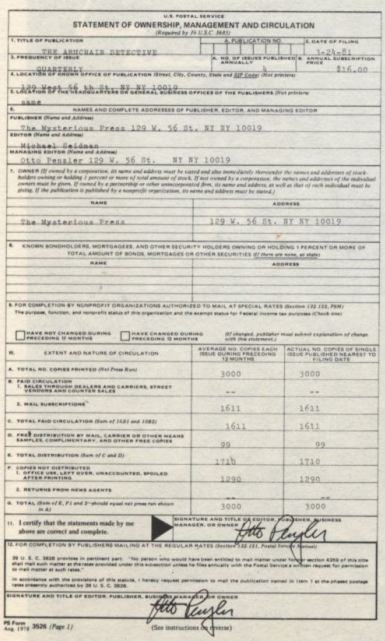
Wanted by author's nephew—*Death in the Dark* by Stacy Bishop. London: Faber & Faber (1930). A. McTighe, 186 Maple Shade Avenue, Hamilton Square, N.Y. 08690.

For *Everything* Sherlock Holmes: Unique personal guaranteed service. Testimonials from four Continents ('How in the World—or is it Other Worlds—do you do it?':JBS). Books, magazines, comics, models, cinema/theatre, etc., etc. Free airmail lists (dollar prices). I also buy. Father Hertzberg, 48, Shalmarsh, Bebington, Wirrall, L632JZ, England. (AD)

MURDER BY MAIL
P.O. Box 1846
Spring Valley, CA 92077

Send $1.00 for catalog of First Editions. Catalog includes English and American firsts as well as Bibliographies. Items fully described, many are annotated. This catalog is a must for all serious collectors of mystery and detective fiction. All books guaranteed.

MYSTERY, DETECTIVE, SCIENCE FICTION
RARE! RARER!! RAREST!!!
bought and sold
PAULETTE GREENE, BOOKS
140 PRINCETON ROAD
ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N.Y. 11570
—catalogues issued



U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. TITLE OF PUBLICATION	A. PUBLICATION NO.	2. DATE OF FILING	
THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE		9-24-81	
3. FREQUENCY OF ISSUE	A. NO. OF ISSUES PUBLISHED ANNUALLY	B. ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION PRICE	
QUARTERLY		$16.00	

4. LOCATION OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION (Street, City, County, State and ZIP Code) (Not printers)
129 West 56 th St. NY NY 10019

5. LOCATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHERS (Not printers)
same

6. NAMES AND COMPLETE ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR

PUBLISHER (Name and Address)
The Mysterious Press 129 W. 56 St. NY NY 10019

EDITOR (Name and Address)
Michael Seidman

MANAGING EDITOR (Name and Address)
Otto Penzler 129 W. 56 St. NY NY 10019

7. OWNER (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual must be given. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, its name and address must be stated.)

NAME	ADDRESS
The Mysterious Press	129 W. 56 St. NY NY 10019

8. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES, AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING OR HOLDING 1 PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS, MORTGAGES OR OTHER SECURITIES (If there are none, so state)

NAME	ADDRESS

9. FOR COMPLETION BY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORIZED TO MAIL AT SPECIAL RATES (Section 132.122, PSM)
The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes: (Check one)
☐ HAVE NOT CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS ☐ HAVE CHANGED DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS (If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement.)

10. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION	AVERAGE NO. COPIES EACH ISSUE DURING PRECEDING 12 MONTHS	ACTUAL NO. COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUE PUBLISHED NEAREST TO FILING DATE
A. TOTAL NO. COPIES PRINTED (Net Press Run)	3000	3000
B. PAID CIRCULATION 1. SALES THROUGH DEALERS AND CARRIERS, STREET VENDORS AND COUNTER SALES	--	--
2. MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS	1611	1611
C. TOTAL PAID CIRCULATION (Sum of 10B1 and 10B2)	1611	1611
D. FREE DISTRIBUTION BY MAIL, CARRIER OR OTHER MEANS SAMPLES, COMPLIMENTARY, AND OTHER FREE COPIES	99	99
E. TOTAL DISTRIBUTION (Sum of C and D)	1710	1710
F. COPIES NOT DISTRIBUTED 1. OFFICE USE, LEFT OVER, UNACCOUNTED, SPOILED AFTER PRINTING	1290	1290
2. RETURNS FROM NEWS AGENTS	--	--
G. TOTAL (Sum of E, F1 and 2—should equal net press run shown in A)	3000	3000

11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EDITOR, PUBLISHER, BUSINESS MANAGER, OR OWNER: Otto Penzler

12. FOR COMPLETION BY PUBLISHERS MAILING AT THE REGULAR RATES (Section 132.121, Postal Service Manual)

39 U. S. C. 3626 provides in pertinent part: "No person who would have been entitled to mail matter under former section 4359 of this title shall mail such matter at the rates provided under this subsection unless he files annually with the Postal Service a written request for permission to mail matter at such rates."

In accordance with the provisions of this statute, I hereby request permission to mail the publication named in Item 1 at the phased postage rates presently authorized by 39 U. S. C. 3626.

SIGNATURE AND TITLE OF EDITOR, PUBLISHER, BUSINESS MANAGER, OR OWNER: Otto Penzler

PS Form 3526, Aug. 1978 (Page 1) (See instructions on reverse)

CRIMINOLOGISTS WANTED

Professional and amateur investigative researchers to aid in formulating theories and submitting data related to unsolved murder cases of the past and present. For information write:

London Club
International Society
for Criminal Research
P.O. Box 4527
Topeka, Kansas 66604

Send $3 for our next 4 catalogues of detective-mystery fiction; use as credit on your first order. World's largest stock of mysteries, specializing in the genre since 1953. We buy libraries, collections, single copies. Have checkbook, insatiable greed, will travel. Aardvarks, Mystery Specialists, Box 15070, Orlando, Fla. 32858.

Free catalogues of mystery-detective-spy fiction issued monthly. Also free search service for that hard-to-find mystery. Send your wants list; no obligation to buy. Mention TAD on your first catalogue request and deduct $2 from your first order. Detective-Mystery Books, Box 15460, Orlando, Fla. 32858.

BURGLARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS – one of only 1,000 copies of the hardcover first edition, signed and serially numbered with exclusive calligraphy bookplate, only $4.95 postpaid. For resale, gifts, or (shudder) investment, $36 per dozen, postpaid. Lawrence Block, 791 Greenwich Street, New York, N.Y. 10014.

WANTED
MYSTERY / DETECTIVE
"WANT LISTS"

Free search service. No obligation. . . no fees. Large stock on hand and more constantly arriving. Call or write. All correspondence answered. Send for free catalogue.

The Silver Door, Box 3208, Redondo Beach, CA 90277 (213) 379-6005 (213) 379-3139

WEST'S BOOKING AGENCY
Booking Book Adventures
Books Bought & Sold
Detective/mystery lists issued
Quote/send for free list
P.O. Box 406 Elm Grove, Wis. 53122

Send for our free listings of mystery and detective fiction. We also specialize in science-fantasy and ERB's. Our catalogues are issued quarterly. Canford Book Corral, Drawer 216, Freeville, N.Y. 13068.

SHERLOCK HOLMES – RARE-BOOK COLLECTOR
by Madeleine B. Stern
NEW PRINTING with an introduction and **CATALOGUE OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES LIBRARY** and hitherto unrecorded Sherlock Holmes' signature. Illustrated. Limited 500 numbered and signed copies.
$15.00
(postage and handling $1.50)
Published by: **PAULETTE GREENE**
140 Princeton Road
Rockville Centre, N.Y. 11570

YOUR CLASSIFIED AD here will reach more than 3,000 of the most avid mystery-story readers and crime buffs in the world. Rates: $.20 per word. Minimum: 50 words or $10.00 per ad. Send your ads with check or money order to: *The Armchair Detective,* 129 W. 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10019.

GREY HOUSE BOOKS
12a Lawrence Street
Chelsea, London SW3, England
Telephone: (01) 352-7725

More than 2,000 first edition detective stories and crime. Catalogues sent on request. Visitors welcome to see the books in an 18th Century private house near the Thames and Sir Thomas More's Chelsea Old Church. Telephone or write first.

GRAVESEND BOOKS – Box 235, Pocono Pines, PA 18350 – Enola Stewart, Proprietress. A professional book service which issues fully annotated, fully described catalogues for the librarian and the serious collector of mystery, suspense, and imaginative fiction. Specializing in Conan Doyle, Sherlockiana, and analytical material on criminous fiction. Catalogues issued and professional services rendered on request.

MOVING?
Don't make it a mystery to us.

To avoid missing an issue of TAD, send us your change of address at least 4 weeks before you move.

Please send your old TAD address label and your new address.

Mail your address change to

TAD
129 West 56th Street
New York, N.Y. 10019

CURL UP WITH A GOOD Mystery

INTRODUCTORY SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ **Zip** _____

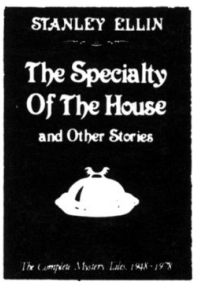
Enclosed please find $10.00 (check or money order) for one year's subscription (6 bi-monthly issues) to MYSTERY™.

Send to:
MYSTERY
304 S. Broadway Ste. 202
L.A., Ca. 90013

If subscription is to be sent to Canada, add $1.00 for postage; if it is to be sent to any other foreign country, add $2.00. Note: Since the first issue is sold out, subscriptions *may not* begin with the first issue.

The Specialty of *This* House is mystery, crime, suspense, espionage and detective fiction. Fine hardcover editions of new books by the most distinguished authors in the world.

We are especially proud to announce the monumental volume of Stanley Ellin's complete mystery stories, the landmark edition of *The Specialty of the House and Other Stories.* $15



The Mysterious Press

also publishes the Edgar-winning quarterly, ***The Armchair Detective***, the leading critical journal in the mystery world — now in its 13th year.

We are also the proud publishers of:

Ross Macdonald: *Lew Archer, Private Investigator*
Ellery Queen: *The Roman Hat Mystery*
Robert Bloch: *Out of the Mouths of Graves*
The King of Terrors
Norma Schier: *The Anagram Detectives*
Maxwell Grant: *Norgil the Magician*
Norgil: More Tales of Prestidigitection
Edward D. Hoch: *The Thefts of Nick Velvet*
Cornell Woolrich: *Angels of Darkness*
Isaac Asimov: *Asimov's Sherlockian Limericks*
Robert L. Fish: *Kek Huuygens, Smuggler*
Peter Todd: *The Adventures of Herlock Sholmes*

Subscriptions are $16 per year; $20 outside the U.S.

129 West 56th St.
New York, N.Y. 10019
(212) 765 - 0900

The Mysterious Bookshop is a two-story bookshop specializing in mystery fiction. New, used, out-of-print, rare, and autographed books for readers, scholars and collectors. Hardcover and paperback.

Monday—Saturday. Hours: 11 a.m. — 7 p.m.,

The Mysterious Bookshop

All located at
129 West 56th Street,
New York City
(212) 765 - 0900

The Mysterious Press

The Armchair Detective

Call! Write! Visit! —Otto Penzler