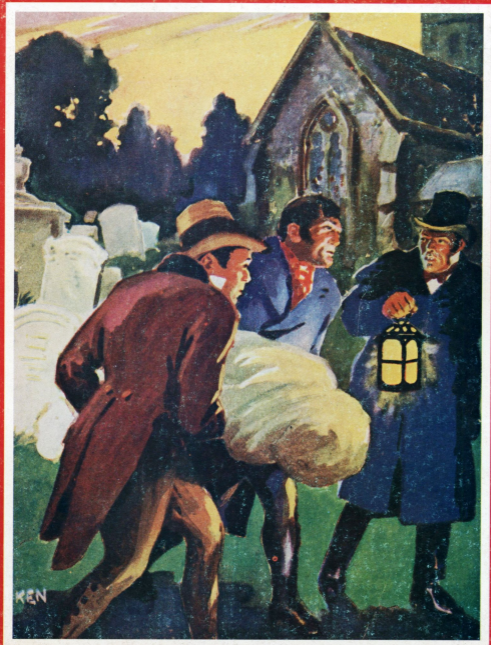
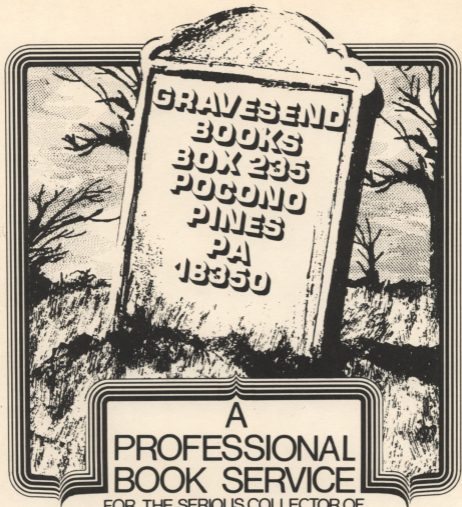


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THE UNEASY CHAIR

Dear TADian:

It would seem that a number of people have felt moved to react to my comments in 14:3. The responses have been varied and not all have arrived courtesy of the Postal Service. Restrictions of time and space necessitate that I answer the comments in the Letters pages in the next issue...they won't be avoided. One argument, however, against some of the contemporary American writers, which I heard repeatedly at Bouchercon, concerned the violence and sexuality of these writers. Well...

Elsewhere in this issue, Bill DeAndrea, in a review of Stuart Kaminsky's *Death of a Dissident*, states, "The detective novel... is not about crime. It is about setting things right." And Otto Penzler, in his article "The Great Crooks," in *The Mystery Story*, posits that the criminal is far more important than the detective, because without the crime the detective has nothing to do. He concludes his essay, which is about the great crooks (anti-heroes?) of the past, with the thought that the current state of our lives is such that it is difficult to create a criminal who can be sympathetic, because crime is too violent and too much with us. (The recent case of Norman Mailer's friend Jack Abbott is illustrative.) Keeping those thoughts in mind, let us take a brief look at the past.

In 1879, Henrik Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House*, a play designed to be in direct imitation of life, and which broke with tradition because of that design. His next play, *Ghosts*, took the new style further. He made clear his belief that if there is corruption—in the home or in the community—it must be exposed, the log rolled over and its maggots underside laid to view. It would appear that he was a bit too successful.

The public outcry at *Ghosts* drove Ibsen to write *An Enemy of the People*, a blatant defense of his previous work. Written in 1882, the plot concerns the cruel treatment accorded a doctor who insists on exposing unsanitary conditions in a public bath. The playwright made his point.

Ibsen started his work in this new vein under the influence of Émile Zola, who felt that a work of fiction should be a step-by-step series of observations which ultimately revealed a particular truth. The line from them, through Shaw, to Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (a detailed case history of murder as a result of deprivation) and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, to the novels of the hardboiled and psychologically oriented crime writers of the last fifty years or so, is direct. They are all writing in what has been variously labeled the Naturalistic or Realistic school. (There

are subtle differences between the two terms—naturalism may be more "real" than realism—but those differences are beside the point.)

These schools developed out of a reaction to Romanticism (the search for ideals—beauty, truth in beauty, etc.—brought about by the hardware of the Industrial Revolution) and were an outgrowth of Darwin's Theory of Evolution. The theology of good and evil was replaced by heredity and environment. Psychology and physiology; sociology and geology became the lenses through which Man would be studied. From that point forward, the writer's determination to live in and with his time became paramount.

* * *

"Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse. . . . He put these people down on paper as they were, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes." Chandler's famous analysis of Hammett goes right to the heart of the matter.

Crime is not pretty. A murder victim, discovered *in situ*, is not an attractive sight. The opening credit roll on *Quincy* is not a joke; the cops reacting negatively (by swooning, running from the room, becoming ill) are not a laughing matter. They are reacting directly to the evidence of violence.

It is not only in the area of murder that crime tears at the victims and those close to them. Or investigating teams. Have you ever come home to discover the house in disarray, dresser and desk drawers on the floor, your personal things—intimate things—handled by...who? The sense of violation has been compared to rape. Have you ever tried to talk to the victim of a crime, not as a friend, but as an investigator? I suppose you can become hardened to it to a degree, you *must* lose some of that emotional edge in order to continue. But how much more do you lose at the same time? (As an MP back in the early Sixties, I did experience such things. Trust me on this, if on nothing else... it is not easy. For me, the drive to "solve" the case was in direct ratio to the violence I was witnessing.)

Crime fiction is about setting things right, and the more wrong a thing is, the more we can cheer the correction. The entire point of the Naturalistic writer's investigation of the human condition is the correction of the ills besetting us. There is, obviously, still a Romantic element present, especially in the PI

novel. The view of "eye" as knight, doing battle against dragons (currently, most often in the form of the family, which brings us back to environment), is valid. If we give in to the next school of writing, Existentialism, if we remove Darwin's predetermination and leave matters strictly to chance, it makes matters worse, doesn't it?

Whether the investigator is knight or not, the novel of detection, the crime novel, is a morality play. It pits good against evil, no matter the root of that good and evil. The language and events may be shocking (and the events *should* shock), but the photographic impression left by the writer reflects the very serious nature of the subject matter. It is part of the importance of the "mystery" novel, in the contemporary scheme of things, that it does not gloss over the reality of the milieu it describes.

Yes, I will grant that we read for entertainment, and having our sensibilities offended is often not entertaining. And, yes, perhaps T. S. Eliot was right

when he claimed that "Human kind cannot bear very much reality." (He certainly thought he was right; he used the line twice.)

The sanitized little mysteries which make up so much of the stock in the mystery sections of bookstores are entertainments and certainly would satisfy the needs of Eliot's "human kind." Zola and Ibsen, though, and because of them, Hammett and Chandler, Spillane and Pendleton, and their heirs, hardboiled or not, novelists of detection or adventure, are serving us better. For it is through them that we see ourselves and may, perhaps, be able to do something about it.

Best mysterious wishes,

Michael Seidman

MICHAEL SEIDMAN



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THE QUALITY OF INGENUITY: The Work of J. J. Connington

By David Beams

Chapter twenty-one of J. J. Connington's *The Castleford Conundrum* is entitled "The Public Library," since it begins and ends there, and the details in it form a kind of compendium not only of this book but of Connington's contribution to the detective story in general. In this chapter Connington's series detective, Sir Clinton Driffeld, Chief Constable of the county, and his friend "Squire" Wendover first visit the Strickland Regis public library to ascertain what books have been checked out in recent months by the late Mrs. Castleford and three members of the Carron Hill household who are suspects in her murder. Sir Clinton is interested in the library's system which includes an indicator board with figures in red if a book is out and in black if it is available; when a book is borrowed the librarian goes to the indicator and twists a knob which reverses the shelf-number plate so that figures in red appear. Sir Clinton has also noticed a Stevenson thermometer screen in the grounds outside the library, and the librarian admits to taking meteorological data with a Jordan sunshine recorder, maximum and minimum thermometers and a barograph. Sir Clinton says these records may be useful. Leaving the librarian to round up the books, Sir Clinton and Wendover next visit the hospital where Dr. Pendlebury explains the classification of blood in four groups based on the manner in which the serum of an individual's blood reacts with red corpuscles of blood in other groups, etc. He jots down a table using crosses and dashes to indicate agglutination or no agglutination. Sir Clinton leaves three bits of blood-stained cloth to be identified by group.

On the way to their next destination Sir Clinton informs Wendover that one of the Carron Hill suspects owns a Colt automatic pistol not registered on her firearm certificate. Wendover is excited. The original presumption that Mrs. Castleford at the Chalet was accidentally shot by a .22 calibre rook-rifle which the boy Frankie was firing in the nearby spinney has broken down. Though the bullet is

missing, the diameter of the entrance wound was slightly larger than the diameter of a .22 calibre projectile but less than that of a .32 projectile. The coroner has pointed out that human skin "is resilient like india-rubber." When struck by a high-velocity bullet the skin first gives way before the bullet, stretches and is pierced in that condition, but then contracts again with the result that the orifice is less in diameter than the bullet which passed through it. Thus Mrs. Castleford was probably shot with a weapon of .32 calibre, and Sir Clinton now characteristically dampens Wendover's enthusiasm by noting that the unregistered pistol is a .22 automatic.

Their next stop is at the Chalet and spinney where Sir Clinton's men are digging up empty cartridge-cases in the area where Frankie was target-shooting with his rook-rifle. Some of these cases differ from the rest, having a deep groove in the rim, proving that an automatic pistol was also fired in the spinney, but the problem is again that it is a .22 calibre weapon. Finally, they return to the library where Sir Clinton impounds an assortment of books borrowed by the residents of Carron Hill: on law, forensic medicine, workshop recipes, fireworks, and volumes of *The Times* for 1889-90 and 1910-11 (covering, as it turns out, the Maybrick case of 1889 and the Crippen case of 1910). In *The Standard Physician* they find a cardboard manikin showing blood-vessels, muscles, skeleton, etc., and "clean through the manikin, a pinhole had been drilled" corresponding exactly to the fatal wound in Mrs. Castleford's body. The librarian also gives Sir Clinton the maximum temperatures and sunshine record for the dates on which some of the books were borrowed. Lastly Sir Clinton stops at a grocer's to inquire who has bought alum lately.

This grand tour is a representative chapter in the writer whom Barzun and Taylor have called "third in the line traced out by Freeman and Crofts for the scientific sleuth." With the exception of the minutiae about the library system (where the reverse process

with the indicator board, when a book is *returned*, is also spelled out!) nothing in the chapter is gratuitous. For example, though the .22 automatic did not kill Mrs. Castleford—there is in addition a brace of .32 pistols at Carron Hill—it has been used to simulate the rook-rifle which permits Sir Clinton to demonstrate that the latter's barrel has grooves with a right-hand twist while the Colt automatic has a left-hand spiral in its rifling, all of which is further complicated by distinctions between lead and nickel-plated bullets switched around in the weapons. More importantly the .22 automatic gives the murderer an alibi: a slow-burning touch-string has been used to fire the pistol tied to a tree-branch in the spinney at a point well after the actual murder (whence the books on fireworks). In addition to ballistics, blood groups, meteorological data (hot weather as a source of fingerprints on the books), and alum to fireproof paper, *The Castleford Conundrum* involves such clues as morphine substituted for insulin in a syringe, paint on a shoe, anonymous letters, a telegram in code, the framing of one suspect by another which Sir Clinton calls the "case within a case," elaborate alibis capped by a diagram of the routes walked (alibis of which the murderer's own is *dramatized* before the reader gets to the murder itself, and hence highly convincing), and a very complex central issue of intestacy and inheritance to which the law books and the Crippen and Maybrick cases pertain. Even if he had not in *Murder in the Maze* hit upon a kind of *locus classicus* of the detective story in his period, Connington would remain with Crofts, Cecil Street, A. B. Cox, Henry Wade and a few others a foremost exponent of the classic, enormously knotty "puzzle."

Alfred Walter Stewart, who wrote fiction as John Jervis Connington, was by profession a distinguished chemist educated at the University of Glasgow where his father was Dean of Faculties and where his use of the University library, S. Smiles writes, "laid the foundation of the extensive knowledge and literary capacity which was characteristic of his later life." After additional work at the University of Marburg and University College, London, Stewart obtained his D.Sc. at Glasgow and was elected to a Carnegie Research Fellowship (1905-1908). From 1909-14 he was Lecturer in Organic Chemistry at Queen's University, Belfast, where he reorganized the teaching of the subject and provided such new equipment as funds permitted. In 1914 he was appointed Lecturer in Physical Chemistry and Radioactivity at the University of Glasgow. In 1919 he returned to Queen's University where he became Professor of Chemistry and ultimately Dean of Faculties until symptoms of heart trouble compelled him to resign in 1944. Smiles writes that "he was an attractive lecturer. His first year course was illuminated by his sense of humor and wide culture, and his lectures

were illustrated by numerous experiments which were continually being improved." Besides writing valuable reviews of the field, *Recent Advances in Organic Chemistry* (1908) and *Recent Advances in Physical and Inorganic Chemistry* (1909), Stewart was active in research, for the nature of which the reader is referred to Smiles's obituary notice in the *Chemical Society Journal* of March, 1948. Important papers on general absorption appeared in 1907, 1911, 1912 and 1917. Many of Stewart's graduate students ultimately held responsible positions "in nearly all branches of the profession." In 1916 Stewart married Lily Coats of Glasgow, and they had one daughter.

Initially Stewart's evenings after teaching were spent up dating his textbooks, but eventually, his academic work threatened by increasing deafness, he began writing fiction. The first book by "J. J. Connington" was a science-fiction, *Nordenholt's Million* in 1923, described by David Masson as "a prototype story of world-disaster being surmounted . . . realistic, reasoned, sociologically observed and credible." Atomic energy is crucial to Nordenholt's survival colony, and in 1946 the book was reprinted by Penguin and soon after appeared in the American pulp magazine *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*. Connington's next novel was *Almighty Gold* (1924) in which, Smiles writes, he "astonished and amused his friends by a profound knowledge of dubious methods of finance," which were also to figure in his detective stories.

The first of these, *Death at Swaything Court* two years later, is about the murder of a butterfly collector and blackmailer named Hubbard whose death is intended to appear a suicide (in his stomach cyanide of potash from his killing-bottle). The murder occurs before nine o'clock but is post-dated to midnight by an intricate network of alibi-producing circumstances that range from surreptitiously made dictaphone records of Hubbard's lisping voice (in such ironic chapters as "The Invisible Man" and "The Voice from Beyond") to a roaring hearth-fire that, besides disposing of the blackmailer's documents, slows the cooling of the body. The girl in whose behalf the murder is contrived hears yet another variant of Hubbard's "voice" when she arrives at Swaything Court after the murder and is instantly and savagely ordered out of the house by what proves to be Hubbard's *parrot*, which can "imitate his voice wonderfully." The pistol she drops and the tracks of her steel-studded, non-skid tires complicate the evidence as does an earlier intruder in the interval after the murder.

The village idiot Sappy Morton loves "pretty things" and chases butterflies without attempting to catch them. Breaking into Hubbard's house to see his specimens, Sappy finds Hubbard "asleep" at his table and is so outraged at the pin in the big butterfly

that he drives a "big pin" (a steel paper-cutter) into Hubbard's (dead) body. With perhaps an excess of what Melynn Barnes calls Connington's "whiff of the occult," the book has begun with the local superstition about the Green Devil of Fernhurst, and Sappy is now grabbed and screamed at by this clawed phantom and flees in terror (the parrot again). Sappy's intrusion of course *enormously* complicates the evidence, but it is Sappy who is ultimately responsible for establishing the correct time of death, and it is typical of Connington's invention that this standard if central datum is furnished with much novelty. "Ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong...": Sappy tells time from the chimes of the church tower and recalling his adventure in Hubbard's house counts up to nine strokes and stops short. Hubbard was dead at nine o'clock.

Connington's first effort has been generally disparaged, though the early critic of the genre H. Douglas Thomson thought the alibi "worthy of Mr. Wills Crofts." What has particularly dated is the young inventor's Lethal Ray machine which allegedly "disorganizes the electrical action of the heart-muscle" and is used to create another false trail. The center of consciousness in the novel, Colonel Sanderstead, speaks for the reader when he thinks "what's wrong with this case is that there seem to be far too many clues; and hardly a pair of them point in the same direction." In a perforce on fair play, Connington claims to give the reader all of the essential facts before the last chapter; and it is true, for example, that on looking back one finds the murderer to be consistently portrayed, including his authentic puzzlement at *some* of the evidence. This is the first of many Connington books in which defective letters in a typewriter shuttle are seized upon, and in addition to cyanide of potassium, paraldehyde figures in the murder. Among the additional characters there are a busybody vicar, a spiritualist whose "astral plane" turns out to be a wax cylinder record, and a spinner of mystery yarns who attends the inquest and works out a theory of the crime in which the murderer is Hubbard's butler. This is Connington's mild satire on the genre, but though he is wrong in identifying the murderer Angermere proves to be right that it is murder rather than suicide, that there was an intruder after Hubbard's death, and that the butler is a shady character (also blackmailed by Hubbard, he is mixed up in the dope traffic!). But what one remembers from the book is the "infernal bird" in the solemnity of the death-chamber "there burst a torrent of vile profanity directed at no one in particular, merely the liberation of some foul and angry mind at odds with the Universe."

Connington's second detective story, *The Dangerfield Talisman*, is usually considered an improvement

if one is not allergic to the familiar *donee* of the house party. But it is *Murder in the Maze* in the same year which introduces Sir Clinton Driffield and Wendover. Wendover is the conservative, caste-conscious country gentleman, J. P., and amateur criminologist, always chivalrous to pretty girls in a case and anxious to vindicate the gentry, and usually treated to rather oblique inklings from the Chief Constable. When Wendover interprets evidence, Sir Clinton replies, "You're in charge of the Speculation, Surmise, and Conjecture Department of this firm, Squire. I'm only a humble clerk in the Mum and Dumb section" (until the reconstructions of final chapters). When Wendover asks, "Are you expecting more trouble even now? Nothing's happened..." Sir Clinton replies, "Since the last time? No, it's rather a curious point, Squire. Nothing ever does happen between the last time and the next time." Wendover says, "You evidently lost the chance of a good job when the Sibyls went out of business." In a later book, when some pearls are found in a rowboat and Inspector Severn says they might have dropped from the pocket of someone sitting in the stern seat, Wendover acidly comments, "Ladies don't have pockets nowadays" to which Sir Clinton rejoins, "Nor do men usually wear pearl necklaces nowadays. Curious, these vagaries of fashion." The humor in the books derives mainly from Sir Clinton's ironic and oracular manner with Wendover (and everyone else), and concerning one of the later novels Arnold Bennett found that the Chief Constable was the one character who "lives."

Compressing more than half a mile of pathways in half an acre of ground the Whistlefield maze follows the "island-pattern" to such an extent that incautious explorers might wander by the hour through its tiny archipelago without gaining a foot towards the innermost recesses or even realizing that they were simply coasting round and round the outline of some detached hedge." Suspenseful use is made of the maze early in the book when the young couple Vera Forrest and Howard Torrance take opposite paths to reach the centres and, becoming lost in the windings and zig-zag corridors, overhear a murder committed and know from footfalls or rustling sounds or the cracking of twigs in the next alley that the murderer is still in the maze. In fact, *two* bodies, of the brothers Roger and Neville Shandon, are found in the centres Helen's Bower and Narcissus's Pool, and this is the "numerical factor" which H. Douglas Thomson held to be Connington's special contribution, the extra ramifications and conundrums when murder is multiplied (there are two other attempted murders in this book). The weapon, fired through a loophole in the hedge, is an air-gun shooting feathered darts treated with curare. The suspects include Hackleton, the

criminal whom Neville Shandon K. C. was prosecuting at the time of his death; Costock, a onetime agent of Roger Shandon in Kimberley now bent on blackmailing him (and known to Sir Clinton in the latter's time at the Cape); Arthur Hawkhurst, the Shandons' nephew who since recovering from sleeping sickness has exhibited mental instability and like Costock had quarreled with Roger Shandon just before the murders; Ernest Shandon, the surviving brother; and Steness, Roger's cool secretary. Sir Clinton excels in adducing a bicycle to impeach the murderer's alibi, substitutes faked darts to prevent a third murder, and unriddles a subsidiary business involving a forged cheque. Wendover is additionally characterized by his dislike of the vivisectionist Ardsley, who is also the toxicologist who identifies the arrow-poison. At the end the maze is again the dramatic crux as the murderer takes refuge in it and Sir Clinton lays siege with sulphur fumes, the air-currents carrying an ever-denser poison cloud into the labyrinth.

In *The Case With Nine Solutions* three bodies are found, in two adjoining houses and a bungalow, within a few hours on a foggy night, and later a blackmailer, witness of the affair at the bungalow, is also murdered. The "nine solutions" represent all the permutations of "accident, suicide, murder" in the first two deaths of Hassendean and Mrs. Silverdale in the bungalow affair. But the inordinate complication arises from the enormous number of characters drawn in by the two deaths, not only Yvonne Silverdale's husband and brother and the mystery man who was an asterisk on her dance-programs and is "B" on her signet ring (except that there appears to be no B among either the Christian or surnames) but Dr. Silverdale's girlfriend, Hassendean's discarded mistress, the man who holds an insurance policy on Hassendean's life (and who happens to resemble Sir Clinton so that this suspect remains viable when the real murderer, with a background in amateur theatricals, masquerades as Sir Clinton), "Mr. Justice" of the versatile cypher letters to the police, the blackmailer Whalley, and so on. The clueing keeps apace: a burglary, a surprise inheritance, banjo string used in the tourniquet of the last murder, a picric acid stain on a lab coat, an amber cigarette-holder, mixed melting points at the Croft-Thornton Research Institute, the forged handwriting in which "Mr. Justice" indulges along with Connington's cherished cyphers, Hassendean's diary, and two different sets of love letters.

It will suffice to give two examples of Sir Clinton's ingenuity and Connington's fertility of invention in this book. One question is why the would-be seducer Hassendean administered so much of the drug hyoscine to Mrs. Silverdale (for its memory-blotting

properties) that the outcome was quite other than he intended. Inquiring at the Croft-Thornton Institute Sir Clinton finds Hassendean was a careless and inaccurate worker. In the notebook of the senior chemist Markfield, where the weight of a U-tube is subtracted from the weight of a U-tube + H₂O, the numbers are expressed in "gms." In Hassendean's notes on a similar experiment they are expressed in "grs." Sir Clinton concludes that Hassendean looked up the normal dose of hyoscine and found it given in *apothecaries' weights* as "1/00 gr." (i.e., grain) but read this as the hundredth part of a *gramme* since in the laboratory the metric system is used and chemists never think in terms of "grains." He thus gave Mrs. Silverdale fifteen times the normal dose. Equally clever is the photograph of an apparently incriminating letter where, though there is no sign of forgery, Sir Clinton deduces from close observation of the slight "cramping" of words in the *middle* rather than at the end of lines that it is a patchwork of phrases cut out of different letters, stuck together, and photographed. The final chapter, "Excerpts from Sir Clinton's Notebook," repeats the chronology of the narrative and order of evidence, showing Sir Clinton's prescience and ability to integrate pieces of the puzzle at each stage of the developing case. The

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penultimate chapter in which the murderer makes his explosive exit, involving more chemistry, has been called by Barzun and Taylor "a classic of contrivance, comedy, and crime."

Though there are not only three murders but three murderers in it, the interest of *Grim Vengeance* is that it exhibits Sir Clinton, newly resigned as Chief Constable, in the bosom of his sister's family at Fern Lodge near Raynham Parva, especially with his adoring nephew and his niece and the "modern" young people in her circle, to some of whom he is a bantering "honorary uncle." At the same time he is ultimately faced with moral responsibilities unprecedented in his official career. From the shattered glass of a windscreen in what is evidently a car-smash, Sir Clinton distinguishes a fragment of spectacle glass and the tinged chip of a broken bottle—with which the driver's jugular vein was severed—to establish it is a murder. Wheel tracks are exhaustively evaluated. A second murder takes place at a prehistoric site, the Bale Stones, where the victim's blood is found on an altar-stone among the megaliths and his body incinerated in his car. Ipecacuanha, a boy's Meccano set, and an amateur naturalist who "would be hard put to tell a dragonfly from a kingfisher" are important. The third murder, surpassingly orchestrated, is in one way the most extraordinary in Connington. *Grim Vengeance* has a rather bold subject for the detective story of its period, the Argentine White Slave traffic—dramatized in the first chapter, though the reader does not yet recognize it—and there is much irony when one of the pretty, tennis-playing girls at Fern Lodge, piqued that Sir Clinton considers her class parasitic, justifies herself by the "aesthetic pleasure" she affords men: she is one of four girls unwittingly headed for the Argentine up-country "inferno." "I have secured," the *commissionaire* writes, "four green articles of 21, 22, 23 and 25 kilos. . . . Tell La Gallina to be ready for them." Another of the girls, a violinist, has been assured "we'll soon pick up all the Spanish we need for our work."

The close reader of Connington will find that, true to the claim in the preface of his first detective story, necessary information is scrupulously planted, if anything in superabundance. It is typical that in *The Eye in the Museum* (where the "eye" is literally the glass eye of its founder) the camera obscura in the tower of the Struan Museum not only figures in the solution of the crime but is used panoramically in the first chapter—as the young couple hear the rumble of machinery in the cupola overhead and watch the succession of images slide across the disk in its beam of light—to introduce the main characters, including the victim-to-be in her garden, the ambience of town and river, and such particulars as the canoe (which will be seen again with the instrument the night of the

murder), the motor-boat (in which the murderer will make his genuinely exciting race to the sea, chased by Superintendent Ross's car and finally foiled with fishermen's nets in a James Bondian finale), and the garden of foxgloves which will be the source of the digitalis used to poison Mrs. Fenton. The camera obscura has been much remarked, but Connington never rested with one novelty. In this book jiu-jitsu figures in both the first murder (pressure on the vagus nerves and internal carotid arteries) and in the murderer's ungente getaway from Ross; and a more spurious Orientalia—an air from Sidney Jones's operetta *San Toy*: "Kowtow to the great Yen How!"—perfectly captures the disturbed sibling relationship which lies behind two killings. And in connection with highly devious, all but dizzying financial transactions involving forged I.O.U.s Connington has a field day with graphology: Ross learns about the diminution, slurring, retouching, and vertical trembling of characters in a script, that *I* may be made with either the top horizontal stroke or the vertical stroke first, that *O* may have the join at the summit of the letter or finish on a downstroke, and much about diction and punctuation (anonymous letters as well as I.O.U.s). Nor are veronal and fingerprints neglected.

Whether others might try to pass off a used railway ticket as a new one, the central character in *The Two Ticket Puzzle* travels on the train between Horton and Hammersleigh with the return halves of two first-class tickets faked with scissors to appear as if they have been clipped at the barrier. The reasons do not admit of ready summary except of course that a murder is committed on the 10:35 (as, a week earlier, a prize ram pastured near the tracks had been mysteriously shot from the train). The murderer also contrives an elaborate frame-up entailing a decoy telegram and cut telephone wires, and interlocking with his actions are those of the discharged worker Maddox, who finds an attaché case containing marked notes that is thrown from the train, and the car thieves Wilkes and Lawson. In connection with the telegram Superintendent Ross learns as much about the idiosyncracies of typewriters as he did about handwriting in *The Eye in the Museum*. The essential Connington lies in the pair of spectacles by which one character is implicated but which proves to be his second, *reading* glasses he couldn't possibly have been wearing in the circumstances of the crime. The book ends with a chase and the spectacular conflagration of two cars meeting head-on at speed.

The Boathouse Riddle and *The Sweepstake Murders* of the early 1930's are often considered the peak of Connington's achievement. In the former Wendover's new boathouse overlooking the lake is the scene of cunningly devised nighttime comings and goings, with myriad clues including the missing

motor and horn from a gramophone and stray pearls found not only in the boathouse but on the opposite shore beside the body of the slain gamekeeper. Foot tracks and trails receive more than their due from Sir Clinton, and though boats on it confuse a trail, the lake itself is informative, as he finds on dragging it. There is some "science" in the book: the enlarged thymus gland of one character and an entomologist who prepares tree trunks with brown sugar and beer to attract moths but loses them to the on-and-off lights in the boathouse—not to forget the science of boxing. But such is Connington's resourcefulness and broad culture that this time *religion* is the crux. As Sir Clinton says at one point, they have enough facts, but what is the "psychology" of the thing? The plot turns on the scruples of a young Roman Catholic bride concerning her husband's unguessed matrimonial past, for which he is being blackmailed. And in keeping the memorable characters are her confessor, the upright, aristocratically forbidding French priest in cassock and buckled shoes, Abbé Goron, whom Sir Clinton thinks (rather ironically considering his own function) would make "an excellent inquisitor" and by contrast the Salvationist Save-Your-Soul Sawtre, who offends Wendover by presuming he needs "insurance. . . . Our concern's the biggest thing in fire insurance." Sawtre is connected to "Cincinnati Jean" in a shady past. Wendover is dealt with rather brusquely in this book: when he speculates that a particular trail may be the gamekeeper's, the Chief Constable says: "If Horncastle took the trouble to walk backwards from the road to the beach, then it may be his trail, certainly."

Melvyn Barnes judges *The Sweepstake Murders* to be the best of the Driffield-Wendover books. Wendover is among the nine members of the Novem Syndicate which holds a winning ticket in the Sweep; after the accidental death of one of their number, which delays the distribution of the winnings, the others begin to be progressively eliminated, the motive being a larger share for (one among) the survivors—except that the tally of suspects, which would suffice for most writers, here undergoes a typical increment because several members of the Syndicate have been selling parts of their shares to one or more anonymous outsiders. As in Connington's first detective story the main alibi depends on post-dating a murder. Willenhall of the Syndicate had been taking photographs at Hell's Gape where "the big fangs of rock throwing their shadows on the cliff-face made a kind of natural sundial that would serve the purpose of anyone looking for a photographic alibi," i.e., the last negatives in his kodak establishing the earliest time of death, in this case after one o'clock on June 13 (he has been pushed over the cliff). The next day, again sunny, Inspector Severn minutely retraces Willenhall's route re-taking each of his shots according to

the exact position of the shadows and thus confirming the time of death. But Sir Clinton has observed that the spool of film found in Willenhall's kodak has been put in crookedly, as if in a hurry, and what he suggests in that the shadows would also correspond to those at one o'clock on June 13 in a roll of film taken on an earlier date when they were in that same position, rendering the time of Willenhall's death a moot question.

The exploiting of photography in this book represents a high point of Connington's virtuosity. Further discriminations include the broadening of the foreground in two otherwise identical exposures when one photographer is a shorter man, and the extreme case of this when a Kodak Self-timer has been used, the camera propped on a bank, to include the photographer himself. By the time the case is unraveled Sir Clinton has meditated upon four separate sets of photographs in the most punctilious detail, though drawing some of his inspiration from Isaiah's "miracle" in the Second Book of Kings. But this saturation does not deprive us of a diversity of clues in both the first and the second and third murders: the theft of three tins of toffee, a walking stick, gunpowder fumes and a cigarette stub in a wrecked car, the shape of a whiskey decanter, a

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recipe for "Herb Suckit" and a total of six typewritten letters incredibly interwoven and involving forgeries on two different machines over which ("the *d* has lost a bit of its ceriph") the author predictably luxuriates. With motley paraphernalia Sir Clinton also devises a makeshift condenser which changes in value, with a change in the pitch of the howl from a loudspeaker, when an erasure on a sheet of paper passes under the copper stylus, thus determining that (in one of the few *legitimate* letters!) the time "10:15" has been altered to "10:45." Connington continued to produce good stories through the 1930s, of which *The Tau Cross Mystery*, *A Minor Operation*, and *Murder Will Speak* may be mentioned. Also, *The Castleford Conundrum* is singled out in Otto Penzler's *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*. *The Tau Cross Mystery* is interesting as it overlaps two novels by Ellery Queen, not only the Tau symbol in *The Egyptian Cross Mystery* (1932) but the bigamous double-life in *Halfway House* (1936), without being a comparable tour de force. Atmosphere is obtained less from the Tau cross than from the myth of the Golden Bough, Macaulay's lines "Those trees in whose dim shadow/The ghastly priest doth reign/The priest who slew the slayer,/And who shall himself be slain." The

first murder takes place in an avenue called The Grove, the victim is an intending slayer wearing rubber gloves and with a "cosh" and pistol in his pocket, and both a Centurion in the "Christians, Awake!" movement and an ex-curate are among the suspects. Though he has two separate menages in The Grove and in Charpendon, the businessman Sternhall would be all right except for the second Mrs. Sternhall's genealogical delusions by which the inevitable blackmailer is first alerted. The rate at which spilled paint oozes over the floor is a characteristic clue to the sequence of events in the unoccupied ground-floor flat in The Grove where Sternhall's body is found, and the Tau cross in a paintpot. A rather touching character is the forlorn bandy-legged former clerk, George Mitford, with his "wizened nutcracker" face and yachting cap, who lives in a garret on an annuity and on visions of Japan in cherry-blossom time (Connington weaves in many Japanese fairy tales) but unfortunately sees too much in the neighborhood of The Grove. His apparent suicide by hara-kiri proves to be a "locked-room" murder inspired in Sir Clinton much skepticism and deft reconstruction, including the use of lycopodium to eliminate fingerprints on a forged letter. In both murders there is too much blood, i.e., of different groups.

A Minor Operation receives high marks from Barzun and Taylor and from Melvyn Barnes. Hazel Deerhurst disappears from Norwood House the same night the body of her malevolent husband, newly released from gaol, is found on the road to Swallow Tail Copse, apparently knocked down and killed by a car (as Wendover surmises; Sir Clinton says, "I know you can tell this tale better than I can, Squire. You're not hampered by the facts and that's a great help"). Dr. Stayton establishes that the bruise on Deerhurst's head occurred earlier than the post-mortem body bruises where there is no comparable infiltration of blood among the tissues. There are furthermore two puncture wounds clean through his heart, and there is evidence he had been at Norwood House that night (including a patch of blood on the parquet there). The question is why Hazel Deerhurst has disappeared and where she could have gone, if of her own volition, without taking any of the dresses and frocks her housekeeper canvasses with ever-greater bewilderment, but only shoes, underwear and a silk kimono dressing-gown. Inspector Dornfell comments, "If she's abroad in that outfit, we shall hear of her very shortly, no doubt." Meanwhile Hazel's brother, another ticket-of-leave man and clearly implicated to some extent, is the primary suspect.

In this book, not for the first time, mileage on a speedometer and postage stamps are significant, and the principal novelty is a "curious machine" which

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proves to be a braille typewriter and is integral to the explanation of Hazel's disappearance. Wendover knows braille but is shy of reading love-letters in it. With ordinary typewriters the latest variation is carbons as they coarsen the peculiarities or "personality" of the typist. The skewer used in the murder is Connington's tribute to A. E. W. Mason's *At the Villa Rose* which turns up in the criminal's library. The most imaginative clueing concerns changes of style in a gifted painter's work over a period of three years. The artful forgery of a will, where the forger secures witnesses to his own signature while using a solution of starch-iodine blue, in effect a disappearing ink, is exposed by Sir Clinton when he brings iodine vapour in contact with the starch solution remaining on the document. The operation in the title is for cataracts, an operation which had saved Connington's own sight.

Murder Will Speak is a much more complicated book, a full-dress affair of its period. One strand concerns Hyson, chief clerk of a stockbroker, who is both an embezzler and a sordid intriguer with women and is ultimately found with his head in a gas oven. Another element is a long series of poison-pen letters harping on sex and sooner or later received by everyone in the book (including Sir Clinton). The originality here is in (1) some of the subterfuges used by the anonymous writer to escape detection, such as dropping letters on the pavement to be found and mailed by strangers, or passing an envelope through the mail addressed to himself in pencil and then re-addressing it and delivering it by hand; (2) the complication when the poison-pen writer is aped by other characters with motives of their own; (3) the psychology of the poison-pen; (4) the introduction of Duncannon of the Investigative Branch of the General Post Office to give us the methods of the I.B. in dealing with all kinds of offenses involving the mails, set forth in fastidious detail in what might be considered an adumbration of the "procedural" form. But the serious question raised is what happens when an individual who is basically blameless but ridden by *neurotic* guilt is at the same time accused by the poison-pen.

"Don't you find that sometimes people do things quite against their will" from "irresistible impulses?" Nancy Telford asks. Kleptomania is her example, but in keeping with the sexual theme of the book the explanation in her case is endocrinologic: the action, as Dr. Malwood explains, of the pituitary gland in stimulating the Graafian follicles to overproduce "a certain hormone that throws a woman off her balance." Thus the temporary "nymphomania" of a happily married woman is at the core of the tragedy, since though Malwood has cured her physically (by dubious X-ray methods) he is not, he admits, a psychoanalyst equipped to deal with the aftermath of



guilt. The scene of the tragedy is a wooded Scottish glen replete with kelpie-haunted waterfall and pool. The "most miraculous organ" with which murder speaks in the book is a short-wave transmitter, and the extreme ingenuity in Connington's use of wireless here, hinging on the quartz crystal determining frequencies, rivals that in John Rhode's *The House on Tollard Ridge*.

Barzun and Taylor hold that Connington's books after 1938, including the stories about Mark Brand (The Counsellor), "leave much to be desired." But his next to last novel, *Jack-in-the-Box* in 1944, will serve for purposes of summary and conclusion since it is—amazingly—the most complex and various of all the books, alongside which *Murder in the Maze* reads like Nancy Drew. A developer named Rodway has left a tract of undeveloped land to the grandchildren of his two partners, eight in all (though another, unsuspected cousin is one of the surprises). One of these, the archeologist Robert Deverell, has just unearthed a hoard of gold chalices, monstrances, etc.—Viking plunder of an abbey—at the site Caesar's Camp which is part of this land. The "local Nostradamus" of ages past prophesied a curse on any treasure found there, and soon after Robert Deverell dies apparently from an incendiary bomb in an air-raid, but the crosier and other gold objects

he had been studying disappear. Next a ne'er-do-well named Pirbright who lives near Caesar's Camp is found dead there, his body twisted as if from terrible cramps; the gold is found buried in his vegetable patch. Next another of the inheritors, the dipsomaniac Anthony Gainford, is found dead in his room, apparently of carbon monoxide poisoning from the gas fire. Next Robert Deverell's brother Henry is found at Caesar's Camp "all twisted up . . . lying in the dreadful disorder of an agonizing death." Next Anthony Gainford's brother Derek dies in an asthma attack despite the amyl nitrite capsule that is rushed to him. Next, and unusually for Connington, the murderer is revealed to the reader before Sir Clinton unmasks him in order that we may have a scene of considerable sadism in which he coerces another of the inheritors, Daphne Stanway, into signing away her rights and into *marrying* him by torturing the man she loves as "Jack-in-the-box," that is, by placing the victim in a glass-covered airtight coffin, pumping air in to a high pressure and then with a valve allowing it to escape abruptly, toward atmospheric pressure, inducing the agony of the "bends" or caisson-disease, the method of the Caesar's Camp murders.

Thus at the end of his career Connington did not want for new (and excruciating) murder methods; and in fact the carbon monoxide poisoning proves to be a preparation of nickel carbonyl administered in the dipsomaniac's whiskey, and liquid prussic acid was added to the amyl nitrite in the asthmatic's capsule. And the incendiary bomb in the air-raid was probably a live unexploded bomb, of which several have been found in the area, saved by the murderer for a special occasion. Nor is the supernatural—or at least the superstition that, Wendover says, flourishes during a war—neglected. Here it is the elemental "New Force" of the Monrovia mulatto Jehudi Ashmun, with the smile "like an open domino box" and the "deep musical voice," whose converts are Novices of the Earth, Flamens of the Air, and Primates of the Fire, building the new temple of Urizen in the name of the Four Zoas (cf. Blake's prophetic books). Connington did not ordinarily give the reader the kind of exotic inset adventure one finds in Freeman's *A Certain Dr. Thorndyke*, Arthur J. Rees's *The Threshold of Fear*, or Rohmer's *Fire-Tongue*, and which traces no doubt to *The Sign of Four* and ultimately to *The Moonstone*. But there is something of this in Ashmun's African history, the tension between his inheritance from the witch doctors and his deputizing for the missionaries, himself becoming an ordained clergyman "who in virtue of the tar-brush would be able to understand what they were pleased to call 'the African soul' better than they themselves could do, hampered as they were by their racial superiority. . . ." His bitter-

ness over the English father who abandoned his native mother—"He was one of you white men, a scawlag, a scamp"—is matched by his stark, shocking quotation of Conrad's Kurtz applied to the back country of Liberia. (Not only Blake and Conrad but Milton and J. B. S. Haldane are important in this book.) Though the Magus's latent powers and unknown forces turn out to be piezo-electricity, supersonic waves and the like, he is Connington's most unforgettable creation.

The mydriatic alkaloid drugs, rabbits, rubbings from brasses in churches, notes on a violin, Henry's Law, Black Swan whiskey—the disparate ingredients of this book could be listed indefinitely. It will suffice to make one final point about it, the resourcefulness with which Connington makes the background of the War integral to the mystery. The murderer, an air raid warden, is able to secure hyosine because during a raid he bravely dashes into the inferno of the druggist's shop; he is able to prepare nickel carbonyl because he has a *gas mask*; and his real motive as regards the land is the vein of cassiterite or tin-stone revealed to him by the bomb crater in the first chapter. Finally, Sir Clinton and Wendover, contemplating the Northmen's booty or the atavism of Ashmun's followers, agree that another barbarism is still abroad in the world; and Ashmun himself says that, though human life is cheap in Liberia, "it is not as cheap as Europeans have made it in the last thirty years."

In his essay "The Grandest Game in the World" John Dickson Carr says of the British detective story in the 1920s that it "thronged with sheer brains" and offered "a skillful story told . . . by a skillful storyteller." In Connington characterization is secondary to the story, though he often hit on effective devices, for instance, in *The Castleford Conundrum*, the use of diminutives to make the obnoxious people at Carron Hill even more obnoxious; they call each other Winnie (and Aunt Winnie), Connie, Kenzie, Frankie, Laurie and even Hillie (Hilary). Atmosphere is also secondary to the plot; though he makes effective use of locales (e.g., Hell's Gape in *The Sweepstake Murders*), Connington's books do not have that intense, drenched atmosphere of place one finds in Arthur J. Rees, some of J. S. Fletcher's books, and others. The names Carr cites in his essay make an exclusive but plausible canon: Christie, Crofts, Rhode, Berkeley, Sayers, Connington, Philip MacDonald, Bailey, and R. A. J. Walling. With each of these a representative title is briefly discussed. The only writer represented by *two* titles is J. J. Connington, whose still lively interest for the reader may be summed up in the qualities Carr attributes to the group in general: "the quality of fair play, the quality of sound construction, and the quality of ingenuity." □



COLLECTING Mystery Fiction

By Otto Penzler

when books are collected but not read. But, to reiterate for the final time, assembling that type of collection falls outside the working definition of collecting that has been adopted for this column.

Perhaps a few definitions would be appropriate at this time. The word "collecting" has been dealt with, and the short phrase "mystery fiction" will mean works of fiction in which a crime, or the threat of a crime, are central to the theme of the book. Thus the definition extends far beyond the range of detective fiction to include crime stories (such as those featuring the exploits of A. J. Raffles, *The Saint*, the characters who populate the works of James M. Cain and W. R. Burnett and the zany world of Donald E. Westlake, etc.), espionage fiction (which often involves crimes against nations, rather than individuals), suspense stories (such as those by Cornell Woolrich and Francis Iles), and even out-and-out thrillers (in which adventure and chase play such large roles; after all, how can one consider the mystery genre and ignore such writers as John Buchan and Sax Rohmer?).

It is safe to suggest, and intelligent to accept the suggestion, that some limitations be placed on a collector's pursuits. Very few have the space, time, money, ability, ego, energy or inclination to attempt to assemble a complete library of mystery fiction first editions. A conservative estimate would place that number at 60,000 volumes, with more being added every week. Only a few collectors have made a serious attempt at completeness, the one coming closest thus far being Allen J. Hubin, who amassed approximately 27,000 volumes (although a large percentage were not first editions, the library having been planned for the reader rather than for the collector).

The limitations can be as strict or as loose as the collector chooses, depending upon imagination, taste, ambition and the realities of finance. A collection can be confined to one or two (or *any* number) of authors; a specific type of fiction (such as British "Golden Age," hard-boiled private eye, gothics, locked room, etc.); locale (books set in New York, or London, Southern California, Hoboken, and so on); subject matter (as books with backgrounds in the world of art, magic, opera, gambling, medicine, ballet, sports, or books them-

selves); a specific period (as Graham Greene's collection of Victorian detective fiction, or books written only between the two world wars); or any other special interest, such as books involving sinister Orientals, or lawyers, or female detectives. In short, the structure, the parameters, of a collection are solely the province of the collector. It is often true (and is to be desired) that the area of collecting is that portion of the mystery genre which most interests the collector, so that special knowledge and affection can be brought to it.

As with so many other things in this world, it is not necessary to have wealth to be a collector; it just makes it easier. The overwhelming majority of collectors function within a limited budget, but it is nonetheless possible to achieve a respectable, even enviable, shelf or bookcase or library with the slimmest of wallets.

In 1934, the eminent bibliophile John Carter advised impecunious collectors that detective fiction was one of the best "new paths" to follow. Ten years ago, Eric Quayle, in *The Collector's Book of Detective Fiction* (London: Studio Vista, 1972), proved the correctness of Carter's prediction when he wrote, "In the entire field of literature, I know of no section that has appreciated more quickly in value during the last two decades, than works of detective fiction." And that is

This first of a series of columns devoted to the collecting of mystery fiction will be an informal introductory potpourri presenting some of the elements of book collecting in general and mystery collecting specifically. It will be occasionally difficult—but always essential—to remember that the concern here is with *collecting*, not *reading*, and when these two distinct fields overlap it is a matter of happenstance and irrelevance.

Collecting, in the sense that will be addressed in this column, will have a rather specific definition. It will not mean picking up old paperbacks and saving them; it will not mean trying to put together a shelf of battered hardcover editions of the complete works of Edgar Wallace. It *will* mean (since all detective fiction and most mystery fiction has been published during the past two centuries) the pursuit of fine first editions. There will be several, or perhaps many, exceptions to this practice, but the overall aim will be to regard mystery fiction as other collectors perceive the works of Ernest Hemingway, or Americana, or poetry, or modern drama, or any of the hundreds and thousands of avenues open to them.

The ideal collection will consist of first editions in condition identical to their appearance on the day they were published. If issued with a dust jacket, the ultimate copy must have a dust jacket. That it must also have its original binding is self-evident. One can accumulate a wonderful library of reprint editions, or even shabby copies of first editions, and derive from it an enormous amount of pleasure. That is to be applauded, of course. The day would be black indeed



merely the beginning. The strides made between 1934 and 1972 were dwarfed by the developments of the next decade, and it seems most reasonable to theorize that the next ten years will see an even more escalated rate of increase in value of fine first editions in the world of mystery.

While it is a mistake to undertake the assemblage of a collection for profit motives, the expenditure of sometimes substantial sums requires that at least some thought be given to the matter. And it is an irrefutable fact that a great collection cannot be formed without occasional (or frequent) major purchases being made.

Any number of circumstances contribute to escalating values, the most obvious being that of supply and demand. In recent years, more and more people have begun to collect mystery and detective fiction. At the same time, books (being a perishable commodity) have decreased in number as fire, water, children, pets, insects and other disasters have claimed their victims. As long, then, as the number of collectors is great, the value of good books will inevitably and inexorably rise, as there is no one this side of heaven who can create another first edition copy of *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* or *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Still, if the world economy, the price of gold, war in the Sudan, the overthrow of a Latin American dictator or other esoteric factors conspire against increased values, the first and greatest pleasure

should be derived from the formation and ownership of a collection, not from its sale. Realizing a bonanza, if the collector has bought wisely, should be a bonus, a *lagniappe*.

Once the decision has been made to collect, the next step is to determine how and where. No matter where books are to be found, the possibility exists that something suitable for the collection will be on the next shelf or just behind the next book. Salvation Army outlets, tag sales, antique shops, auctions, garages, attics, thrift shops—all have books and it is always possible to find something worthwhile. A more fruitful source of supply for books is, not surprisingly, a bookstore, though the prices will be generally higher. The next step up, to a bookstore specializing in mystery fiction, means that it will be still easier to find books for the collection but, again, prices will be higher, and often higher than in a general bookstore. You will spend more money, as a rule, by going to the specialist who has devoted time, money and expertise to finding books for his customers, but you will save considerable time and effort.

There are other mystery booksellers in the United States, to be sure, but the majority advertise in *The Armchair Detective*. They are either shops, open to the public, or mail order firms which issue lists or catalogues. An open bookshop provides the collector with the advantage of seeing a book before it is

purchased. Nevertheless, there is rarely *caveat emptor* in the book business. Protection is afforded a prospective book buyer who may be ordering through the mail or over the telephone.

It is customary in the honorable profession of bookselling for a dealer to accept the return of a book for any valid reason. If a book is not as described in a catalogue or on a list, *in the buyer's opinion*, the bookseller should accept its return without complaint. This practice keeps the pressure on reputable booksellers to describe their books honestly and correctly. Of course, the street goes two ways. If a collector frequently returns a large percentage of his books, he may expect to be dropped from the dealer's mailing list. Why he would continue to order books from a dealer whose books are invariably disappointing is a pertinent question.

Before ordering through the mail, it is advisable to become familiar with standard booksellers' vocabulary. In most cases, the prime factor to consider when making a decision about a book is its condition. If a book is described as MINT, it should be exactly as new; a VERY FINE copy is just a shade below, with no noticable flaws; FINE means fresh and crisp, though a bit of dust soiling to the cover or dust jacket may be present; VERY GOOD begins the descent into secondary copies, permitting a little loosening of the binding (not a cracked hinge, of course, but the sense that a book has been

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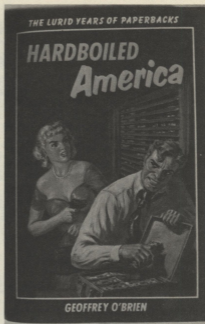
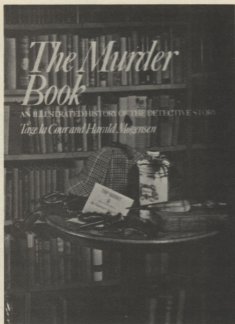
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The Life and Times of the Detective Story

MURDER FOR Pleasure

Howard Haycraft



read several times), some soiling, slight rubbing and even fraying to the dust jacket; a GOOD copy is an average second-hand book in used condition with its attendant, expectable flaws; FAIR may mean that part of the cloth has worn away, exposing the cardboard covers, there are stains on the cloth and pages, names and/or bookplates, ragged dust jackets, if present at all—not a collector's copy, in short, unless an exceptionally scarce book; POOR means exactly that—a reading copy only.

Some other frequently used bookseller's terms are:

-ANA A suffix indicating that the material is about the author or subject listed (Sherlockiana and Chandlerana, for example, deal with Sherlock Holmes and Raymond Chandler but—in the latter case—is not by the author).

AS ISSUED A term indicating that the item is in its original format (as when a book is offered "without dust jacket, as issued" and is therefore not lacking something which ought to be present).

BACKSTRIP The covering of a book's spine.

BLIND-STAMPED An impressed mark on the book's cover or page, without gold or ink (can be lettering or ornamentation).

BOARDS The cardboard covers of books, usually themselves covered with cloth or paper; generally used nowadays to mean covered with paper, books covered with cloth being described simply as "cloth" (which means cloth pasted on cardboard); abbreviated as BDS.

BOUND A book with a cover of any type.

UNBOUND means that the book has never had a binding. DISBOUND means that the book has been removed from its original binding.

CASE-BOUND Hardcover, rather than paperback.

CHIPPED Describes dust wrappers or paper covers with small pieces torn away or frayed.

DUST JACKET (or DUST WRAPPER) The generally decorative paper wrapper placed around a book by the publisher to protect it. Abbreviated as d.j. (d./j) or d.w. (d./w); often shortened to "jacket" or "wrapper" (but not to "dust").

ENDPAPERS Two sheets of paper in each book, one in front and one in back, which are used to attach the pages to the binding. Half of each sheet is pasted to the inside of each cover; the other half is then referred to as the "free front (or rear) endpaper." Abbreviated as e.p. (or f.e.p.).

EPHEMERA Items, such as flyers, programs, handbills, advertising or promotional pamphlets, intended to have only fleeting use and therefore unlikely to have survived. Ephemera can be interesting, important and valuable, and are generally scarce. They are often exactly what they appear to be—junk.

EX-LIBRARY A book formerly in a library, with predictable markings such as ink or blind-stamped labels, pockets, and countless other desecrations. The least desirable copy for a collector. Abbreviated as ex-lib.

FOXING The browning of pages due to a chemical reaction of the paper and air; found mainly in nineteenth-century books and those published on pulp paper (especially during WW II).

FRONTISPICE An illustration facing the title page.

HALF TITLE A page bearing only the book's title, generally immediately preceding the title page.

HINGE The inner joint where the cover and the pages meet; the part of the book that bends when it is opened, and thus is the point of most frequent damage. When the endpaper has taken too much wear, it begins to tear; this is described as (front, usually) "hinge cracking" or "splitting;" a general weakening and small tears is described as "starting."

OUT OF PRINT A book no longer available from the publisher; abbreviated as o.p.

POINT A distinguishing characteristic (such as a typographical error) which suggests (and occasionally proves) priority within print run of an edition.

PRIVATELY PRINTED A book designed for sale or presentation by an individual or group for private, or personal, distribution, and not to the general public.

PUBLICATION DATE The date on which the book is officially placed on sale—usually four to eight weeks after the book is actually available. The book is manufactured (printed, bound, etc.) well in advance of publication.

SIGNATURE A large sheet of paper, printed and folded to make up the pages of

The DETECTIVE SHORT STORY

A Bibliography

BY
ELLERY QUEEN



This is the first bibliography of the
detective short story ever written...
the only work of its kind in the world.

a book. In modern books, a signature is generally eight, sixteen or thirty-two pages. Signatures are sewn (in well-made books) or glued (in what is inexplicably termed "perfect-bound" books) into the binding. When a signature comes loose, it is often described as "sprung."

WRAPPERS Paper covers for a book or periodical; not to be confused with dust wrapper. Abbreviated as *wr.*, *wrs.*, *wrps.*, *wrpps.*

Finally, a few words about bibliographers' terms, often used inaccurately by booksellers: edition, printing, issue.

The first edition of a book includes all copies printed from the first setting of the type. As long as the type remains unchanged, a book may go through a hundred printings over a ten-year period and still remain in its first edition. A printing includes all the copies produced during a single press run; printing is virtually synonymous with "impression" in this context. When booksellers and collectors refer to first editions, they invariably mean the first printing of the first edition. Variations in the pages or in the bindings, within a single printing, are referred to as "issues" or "states." Thus, if the printer spots an error and corrects it during a print run, or if the binding material is used up before all the sheets have been bound, these different forms of the book are variant issues, or states. While these variants are usually accidental, they have also been planned, as when publishers (especially in the nineteenth century) offered more than one color of

binding for their customers. Priority is frequently impossible to determine in these cases.

That should be enough of the technical part of book collecting for the moment. Now, perhaps a word or two about philology, and a bit of pedantry here is irresistible.

Buy the best book you can afford. There is no bargain in picking up the cheaper of two copies if the condition is inferior. The bookseller prefers to see an inexpensive and battered copy of a book leave his shop than to part with a fine, crisp copy which may be impossible to replace. If a good bookseller is nearby, it is worthwhile to establish a relationship with him or her. Most people in the world of mystery fiction are friendly and willing to share knowledge, experience and enthusiasms. A bookseller will begin to save good books for a serious collector, or search for them, and that collection will mature nicely.

The word "relationship" implies reciprocity. Loyalty is much prized. Instead of buying the new Dick Francis or Robert B. Parker from the local chain store, it is regarded as a gracious gesture by booksellers if the collector drives a few miles extra or waits a week to make the purchase from the dealer with whom a relationship is being established.

Everyone loves a bargain, and most everyone, if he is beaver-like, will find one—or many. But a collector will win no friends in bookshops by pulling a book off the shelf and

saying, "Wow! Ten dollars? I just picked this up in a garage sale for a quarter!" It is unreasonable to expect the dealer to share the moment of excitement. The collector will also do well simply to decline a book, rather than telling a bookseller that it is "too expensive." If it is too expensive *for you*, that is both acceptable and understandable. It is inevitably true for everyone that one book or another will be too great a strain on the budget. But that is quite different from telling someone who earns a living (presumably) by being expert enough to know the value of a book that it is too expensive. The bookseller's competence has been insulted, and the matter is improved not at all if the remark is true. Other matters of bookshop etiquette tend generally to be merely those of normal good taste and manners.

Once books have been acquired, it is recommended that the best care possible be taken of what are valuable pieces of property or likely to become so. A bookcase with glass doors is the best possible storage place for a collection, but other forms of protection exist. The first is common sense. Dampness, in the form of direct contact with water or humidity and moisture in the air will destroy a book. Direct sunlight will fade the spine of a book very quickly. Tremendous heat or cold will do books no good, nor will resting drinks on them, using them as doorstops, leaning them at an angle for a long period of time, or having them make contact with pets, children, or food. A novice should never attempt to repair books; the damage will be compounded. If one insists on writing a name on the endpaper, pasting bookplates into a book, gluing dust jackets down, or eating fried chicken while handling the volumes—forget about collecting. A piece of Mylar (a clear plastic available at library supply houses) wrapped around a book will keep it clean and protect the dust jacket from dirt as well as wear and tear. Cut it a quarter of an inch or so larger than the book so that it takes more of the actual wear. For truly exceptional books, slipcases can be made to protect books, but these are quite expensive and are mainly for the advanced collector.

One of the wisest investments for any collector, new or sophisticated, is a good shelf of reference books. This is an occasionally painful necessity because a limited number of dollars often means having to choose between a reference book and a collectible first edition (which sometimes seems more urgent, or is a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity). In fact, good reference volumes will teach a great deal, help to avoid costly errors in the future and are, in themselves, often worthwhile collector's items.

Some of the basic reference tools which belong on the shelf of any collector of mystery fiction are:

ADEY, ROBERT. *Locked Room Murders*. London: Ferret, 1979. An annotated bibliography of locked room and other impossible crimes.

BARZUN, JACQUES, and WENDELL HERTIG

TAYLOR. *A Catalogue of Crime*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971. An idiosyncratic reader's guide to detective fiction.

CARTER, JOHN. *Collecting Detective Fiction*. London: Constable, 1934. A 63-page pamphlet containing the pertinent chapter of his larger volume, *New Paths in Book-Collecting*. The first serious approach to collecting volumes that had been previously regarded as unworthy.

GREENE, GRAHAM, and DOROTHY GLOVER. *Victorian Detective Fiction*. London: The Bodley Head, 1966. A catalogue, with bibliographical and historical annotations, of the joint collection (or 471 books) formed by the two friends. It was bibliographically arranged by Eric Osborne, with an introduction by John Carter.

HAYCRAFT, HOWARD. *Murder for Pleasure*. New York: Appleton-Century, 1941. Subtitled, "The Life and Times of the Detective Story," it is the first and best comprehensive history of the genre.

— *The Art of the Mystery Story*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1946. A collection of critical essays, edited by Haycraft. The volume contains Carter's long article, "Collecting Detective Fiction," among many brilliant pieces.

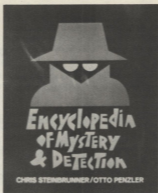
HUBIN, ALLEN J. *The Bibliography of Crime Fiction 1749-1975*. Del Mar, Calif.: 1979. The most remarkable reference book in the world of mystery fiction, listing, as its subtitle claims, "all mystery, detective, suspense, police and gothic fiction in book form published in the English language."

LA COUR, TAGE, and HARALD MOGENSEN. *The Murder Book*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971. The first heavily-illustrated overview of mystery fiction.

MUNDELL, ELMORE, and G. JAY RAUSCH. *The Detective Short Story: A Bibliography and Index*. Manhattan, Kansas: Kansas State University, 1974. A catalogue of short-story collections and anthologies, listing the titles of each individual story contained therein, as well as the name of the detective, and pertinent publishing data.

O'BRIEN, GEOFFREY. *Hardboiled America*.

Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers



New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981. An uneven history of mystery fiction in paperback format.

QUAYLE, ERIC. *The Collector's Book of Detective Fiction*. London: Studio Vista, 1972. A beautifully produced, if erratic, history of detective fiction from the collector's point of view, by a noted collector.

QUEEN, ELLERY. *The Detective Short Story*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1942. The first bibliography of the detective short story in book form and, in spite of some errors and numerous omissions, an extraordinary pioneering work of scholarship, and still the best book of its kind yet published.

— *Queen's Quorum*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1951. Subtitled "A History of the Detective-Crime Short Story as Revealed by the 106 Most Important Books Published in this Field since 1845." Each title annotated with references to its historical significance, literary quality and scarcity. Controversial but perceptive and intelligent.

REILLY, JOHN M. *Twentieth Century Crime and Mystery Writers*. New York: St. Martin's, 1980. A giant work, exceeding 1500 pages, of biographical and critical material on most of the major mystery writers of this century, as well as many others, including comprehensive lists of all their work.

STEINBRUNNER, CHRIS, and OTTO PENZLER. *Encyclopedia of Mystery and Detection*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976. An accurate and authoritative guide to mystery fiction in all media, including a section devoted to "Collecting Detective Fiction" by Norman S. Nolan.

WINN, DILYS. *Murder Ink*. New York: Workman, 1977. Contains countless essays on an implausible number of subjects, including "The Haycraft-Queen Definitive Library of Detective-Crime-Mystery Fiction" and "Collecting Detective Fiction" by Otto Penzler.

Not specifically created for collectors of mystery fiction, but important nonetheless, are:

BOUTELL, HENRY S.: *First Editions of Today and How to Tell Them*, which has gone

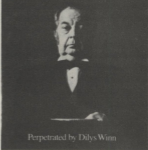
through several editions, all of which are useful in helping to identify the first edition (and first printing) of most books published in England and the United States.

SADLER, MICHAEL. *XIX Century Fiction*, published in 1951 in two volumes. Subtitled, "A Bibliographical Record Based on His Own Collection," these volumes illustrate how great a collection can be. Among the mystery writers covered are Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, Arthur Conan Doyle, B. L. Farjeon, Hawley Smart and Mrs. Henry Wood.

WILSON, ROBERT A.: *Modern Book Collecting*. New York: Knopf, 1980. A basic guide to the subject.

Murder Ink

The Mystery Reader's Companion



Perpetrated by Dilys Winn

In addition, there are many volumes devoted to a single author or aspect of the mystery genre; these will be noted with the appropriate article.

Future columns will examine various possibilities in the realm of collecting mystery fiction. Individual authors will be featured, as will series characters, subject collections, some of the narrower sub-genres covered by the broad definition of "mystery" fiction, esoterica—whatever seems interesting or necessary. Every attempt will be made at comprehensiveness and accuracy, but additions and corrections are earnestly solicited. Illustrations will be heavily in evidence, providing information about dust jackets, title pages, bindings, authors' signatures, and related ephemera. An attempt will be made to identify and describe first editions, and to place an approximate value on them. (When selling books, it is reasonable to expect twenty-five to seventy-five percent of the retail price from a bookseller, with the percentage increasing in direct proportion to the desirability of the book.)

Suggestions and requests about areas to be covered are welcome, although a personal response cannot be promised because of the absurd but immutable fact that a day is comprised of only twenty-four hours.

Next issue, then, the game (to paraphrase The Great Detective) will be afoot. □



The Unique Mystery Magazine:



Hugo Gernsback's Scientific Detective Monthly



By Robert A. W. Lowndes

Part V



The May 1930 issue of *Scientific Detective Monthly* would be the final one to bear that title. It was also one which came closer than the other four to looking like an outsize pulp magazine. Gone was the colored band across the top identifying Arthur B. Reeve, Creator of Craig Kennedy, Editorial Commissioner; the information was neatly enclosed in a box at the upper right of the cover, which had an all-white background. The scene itself was an action one, greatly simplified. A pair of Chinese lanterns on a string give the suggestion of Chinatown as the locale. A man, wearing an ordinary suit and cap, has one hand inside his jacket; his face is slightly turned to the right, eyes somewhat narrowed, and a grim smile on his lips. Behind him a Chinese coolie-type figure with pigtail has been just about to plunge a knife into the other's back; a small bolt of electricity is emerging from the proposed victim's left shoulder and is pinpointed on the knife, which is falling from the would-be assailant's hand. On the Chinese's green jacket, we read, in black, the single title "The Electrical Man" by Neil R. Jones. (Mr. Jones was another Gernsback science-fiction writer, who had appeared earlier in *Air Wonder Stories* with a space story.)

On the contents page, we find the following explanation: "In Germany, a few months ago, a device was invented whereby citizens can protect themselves against thugs and hold-up gangs. Neil R. Jones has developed this scientific idea in a fast-moving mystery story . . . Just *how* the electrical man protects himself is explained in the story on page 400." Mr. Ruger is credited with the cover. One suspects that Gernsback fed the idea to author Jones, but Jones may have come across it, too, and written the story without invitation. We do know that Hugo Gernsback did feed ideas culled from his own extensive scientific reading to authors, though not to the extent that John W. Campbell would do later.

The editorial deals with "The Subconscious Mind and Crime," and editor Gernsback suggests a more humane and scientific way of obtaining confessions from criminals than the well-known "Third Degree," noting that it "does not always yield results, and it is certain that beating or questioning a criminal for days at a stretch, without allowing him to sleep, will often cause false admissions; because under torture a man is likely to admit anything, simply to be free from pain for the time being, and very often unjust convictions have thus been obtained."

He continues:

If we can get a criminal to make admissions without the usual torture methods, the problem will be greatly simplified; because in such a case there will remain no reasonable doubt of the guilt of the criminal.

It has been shown, by experiments conducted over a period of twenty-five years, that the mind itself, during sleep, is just as alert and works in the usual manner as when awake. . . .

Some years ago, the writer invented an instrument which he called the '*hypno*-bioscope,' and by which he demonstrated that it is possible to send to the mind of a sleeper messages which will be remembered the next day. The system is now [1930] in use by the United States Government, particularly at naval training stations where students are taught the telegraphic code while asleep. It is important to note that students who could not master the code during their working hours do so while they are asleep, after having drummed into their subconscious by means of buzzer signals the characters of the telegraphic code. It is highly interesting, in this particular discussion, to note that, after the students have become proficient in the code, and while they are sound asleep, an 'SOS' signal will immediately awaken them to full consciousness.

It would seem that the reverse of this method could be easily used to wide advantage upon criminals. It would be possible to transmit, for days at a time, music, stories, and other forms of entertainment to the suspected criminal while he slept. Notes could be taken as to the respiration, pulse beat, etc., of the sleeping subject. Then, after he had become used to the method, little by little, certain subjects pertaining to the crime would be conveyed to him while

asleep. Again his reactions, as shown by his pulse beat, breathing, etc., could be noted; all of which could be photographed on a moving film. If the reactions were incriminating, no doubt the criminal himself, when confronted with the photographic evidence, could be made to confess; particularly if the technique had been worked out in such a way that reactions were reliable for all individuals.

That last phrase is the catch, of course. And the author very probably never imagined that the proposed technique could be used to persuade an innocent person that he or she was guilty of a certain crime.¹

The May issue was the one I finally managed to obtain at the time. It opened with "The Murder in the Clinic" by Edmond Hamilton, which does not go beyond the bounds of scientific possibility at the time and doesn't contain science-fictional suggestions—even of the sort that were in "The Invisible Master." A secondary blurb below the illustration reads: "Upon a single word uttered by a dying man, the clue to this mystery hangs. You, the reader, can solve this mystery on the third page if you are smarter than Sergeant Wade." (Wade and Carton were the investigators in "The Invisible Master.")

Dr. Luther Braller is a top plastic surgeon. He "specialized from the first on facial operations and plastic surgery, and dealt I may say, with only wealthy clients who required facial surgery. Rich men have come from all over the world, sir, to have Dr. Braller remedy some facial deformity, and as a plastic surgeon he was outranked by none." Braller's butler is talking to Wade and Carton. He relates that Braller had taken on two assistants, Dr. Harold Ransome and Dr. Lewis Jackson. Both were men without families and both lived with Braller; from the first the trio were very successful. "About a year ago, though, Dr. Braller seemed to lose interest in the clinic's routine work and began to occupy himself in experimentation, he said, upon another line."

Braller had a "good-sized addition" built onto the rear of the clinic building, with but one connecting door to which he alone had the key. Neither of his assistants was admitted into the addition, and they were told nothing of the nature of Braller's experiments. They continued to carry on the regular work of the clinic.

The work load was such that they all felt the need of an extended vacation, "so three months ago, in May, they decided to suspend the clinic's work for a few months. Dr. Ransome departed for a little cabin he has up in the Adirondacks, while Dr. Jackson chose to cruise down the Atlantic coast in a small cabin-boat he owns. Both of them were to have returned by now, and in fact I was expecting them tonight."

After the two others left, Braller immersed himself in his work and the butler did not see him during the entire three-month period. He received any orders through the house phone, and left meals for Dr. Braller at specified regular periods.

"And tonight?" the sergeant prompted. James's face paled.

"Tonight, sir, I had taken his supper from the house into the clinic at one as was my custom. I had left it by the door opening back into his work-rooms and returned to the house to read the evening newspaper for a few minutes before retiring. But hardly had I settled down when there came two sharp shots from the clinic building. I knew at once that they were shots, and from there, and I rushed to the door and out onto the steps, just in time to see a dark figure running out the gate into the street."

Wade's eyes were intent. "Just what kind of figure, James?"

The servant spread his hands helplessly. "I really cannot say, sir. It was a man's figure, of that I am sure, and I think he wore a soft hat and long coat, though I could not say definitely as to that. It was just a shape in the mists by the gate, there for a moment and then gone."

The detective-sergeant nodded. "Go on."

"Well, sir, I did not think for the moment of the running figure but rushed into the clinic and there saw a terrible sight. The place was fully lit and the door leading into the back-section was open. Dr. Braller was crawling on hands and knees, blood pouring from his breast and blood on his lips. He saw me and seemed to make a tremendous effort to tell me something, a babbling sound coming from his throat. He clutched the wounds in his breast from which his blood was flowing and with a terrible, agonized expression in his eyes said something to me of which I heard only one word, the rest drowned in the bubbling of blood in his throat. The word was a name, and the name was—'Ransome.'"

When asked if he had ever heard Dr. Braller quarreling with anyone, James states that, before the two assistants left on their vacations, he had gone into the clinic to deliver a telegram and heard "Dr. Braller and Ransome quarreling about something."

"... [T]hey seemed to be threatening each other. I did not hear what Dr. Braller said, but I did hear a few words in Ransome's voice, though of course I retired at once. But they were so unusual that I remembered them. Dr. Ransome was saying, in a very loud voice—'I'm not threatening you, Braller, I'm just saying that if you don't I'll take the whole thing to —' that was all I heard, sir."

"Can you remember upon what day you heard that?" The butler pondered. "That would be on May 18th, sir. I remember the date because on that morning Dr. Jackson left for his vacation. Also, on that afternoon I left upon a two-day vacation myself, sir, and when I came back Dr. Ransome was gone, also."

"And it was when you came back that Dr. Braller started his work in the clinic building's back-section?"

"Yes, sir, directly after I returned. He gave me the instructions I told you of, seeming very afraid that he would be interrupted. He went back into the clinic's rear-section then, and I never saw him again, sir, until tonight when he staggered dying out of it."

The material presented thus far has all been given to the reader on pages two and three of the story, and the astute reader should, indeed, have been able to solve the principal mystery. For the rest (including myself), further clues are given. Wade tells Carton that Dr. Ransome had called upon him on May 18, the date of the quarrel with Braller, saying he wanted some advice.

"... He said he'd come upon something that wasn't criminal in one sense but that was in another. He wouldn't give me a single detail, but he said it would be a dirty mess if it was brought out, and wanted to know whether he'd be open to a blackmailing charge if he used the threat of the police to stop it. I told him he could follow that course and if it didn't do anything, could actually invoke the police. So he wrote down his telephone number and I called him the next day about it. He said then, though, that it was all over and had turned out quite all right when he used a little threatening, and thanked me for my advice. That means that he went right from me back here that morning, and quarreled with Dr. Braller."

Wade learns the name of Dr. Braller's lawyer from the butler, gets in touch with him, and learns that, aside from a few bequests to James and others who have served him, the entire estate has been left unconditionally to Dr. Harold Ransome.

The story has a surprise ending, as did "The Invisible Master," and I shall not describe it further except to note that today's readers might find the solution simpler to arrive at than did readers of the '30s. The editorial note is correct, however: the reader has been given a fair chance.

"The Electrical Man" by Neil R. Jones is an action-thriller, dealing with a super-scientific means of wiping out a world-wide dope ring centered in San Francisco's Chinatown. The protagonist is a genius inventor, Miller Rand, who has previously aided the police by his invention of a device which will allow them to listen in to conversations taking place miles away.

Ruger's illustration for the story shows a man standing at some sort of super-scientific apparatus, controlling a switch with his left hand, while firing an automatic in his right hand at another man across the room. The subject of the experiment apparently is wearing only some sort of face shield by way of protection, so far as can be seen. He is standing unhurt, though the picture shows that he has been hit in several vital spots on his body. The Chief of Police, and Agent Moody arrive at this point. Moody assumes that Rand is wearing a bullet-proof vest.

"Better than that," returned Rand, "for all of my clothes are bullet-proof, even my shoes, gloves, and mask. You will notice that my suit-coat, while conforming to the present style in other ways, has a rather high collar. You will also notice (and here the criminologist picked up from

a nearby table a curved mask) that my face is completely covered. You see, Moody, with the exceptions of my face and the back of my neck, I am completely protected from bullets. I am now making a bullet-proof cap which I can pull over my face, so I can avoid attracting attention in the street or as I move amongst criminals."

"...I have quite an array of this clothing of different types made to fit me," continued the criminologist. "But that isn't the only feature concerning this clothing, Moody... It is electrified, carrying a voltage high enough to kill a man outright. I can control it so that it will merely stun a person momentarily, or produce a bad shock. To prevent my receiving a shock, the lining of all my clothes are made of a light durable material which effectively insulates me from the fine pliable and jointed wires which are woven through the cloth at frequent intervals, covering my entire clothing from head to foot with a network of live wires."

Upon being asked where he gets his current, since he is not carrying any storage batteries, Rand explains:

"...A huge dynamo I have installed in the basement supplies my suit with its current by radio!"

Rand opened his coat to disclose on his vest a narrow pocket entirely enclosed in an aluminum guard case.

"In here is a miniature radio set, not so remarkable when you come to consider the fact that small workable sets have been enclosed in a watch case. When I wish to control the current, I have only to reach inside my coat and manipulate the amplifier, and I can receive at my desire any amount of current that I wish. It will function properly within a three-hundred mile radius of the broadcaster. There is one condition regarding my electric suit, however, which renders the wearing of it dangerous. While wearing it, I must take care that it doesn't become wet, for water destroys the insulation, and acts as a conductor. If I should get wet, say in a rainstorm, and the current was at a very high voltage, I would be electrocuted."

I rather suspect that it is that last bit which makes such a device, even if actually possible, impractical. So long as no one suspected how an "electrical man" was protecting himself, all might be well—but a glass of water would be sufficient to knock him out—or off. And no one can avoid being rained upon unexpectedly for as long as might be necessary. Of course, in the story, no one suspects, and Rand never gets wet.

Craig Kennedy appears in "The Azure Ring," a well-worked out murder mystery which would very probably have baffled many astute readers in 1930, but wouldn't now. Today's reader, learning that the slain couple had apparently died of asphyxiation, and that blood examinations showed it could not have been carbon monoxide, nux vomica, or cyanide, and that poison was suspected—but no one except Kennedy could identify the poison—would be ahead of Kennedy. We know about curare today and wouldn't hesitate to suspect its possible injection through a poison ring. Too bad—but "scientific" detective murder mysteries can become outdated as

easily as science fiction wherein the invention is really the whole story.

Luther Trant is also present in a no less outdated tale, "The Eleventh Hour," relating to "involuntary" reactions which indicate that a suspect has definite knowledge he has denied:

"This apparatus," the psychologist said, as he saw even Walker stare at the result, "is the newest electric psychometer—or 'the soul machine,' as it is already becoming popularly known. It is probably the most delicate and efficient instrument contrived for detecting and registering human emotion—such as anxiety, fear, and the sense of guilt. . . . No man can control the automatic reflexes which this apparatus was particularly designed to register, when he is examined with his hands merely resting on these two plates!"

"As you see," he placed his hands in the test position again, "these are arranged so that the very slight current passing through my arms, so slight that I cannot feel it at all, moves that mirror and swings the reflected light upon the screen according to the amount of current coming through me. As you see now, the light stays almost in the center of the screen, because the amount of current coming through me is very slight. I am not under any stress or emotion of any sort. But if I were confronted suddenly with an object to arouse fear—if, for instance, it reminded me of a crime I was trying to conceal—I might be able to control every other evidence of my fright, but I could not control the involuntary sweating of my glands and the automatic changes in the blood pressure which allow the electric current to flow more freely through me. The light would then register immediately the amount of my emotion by the distance it swung along the screen. . . ."

Well, it was new to me in 1930, and probably to most other readers of *Scientific Detective Monthly* who had not read the story before.

"Hunting Vipers," specially written for *Scientific Detective Monthly* by Edmond Locard, Director of the Laboratory of Police Technique at Lyons, France, is a still-interesting account of how the French police tracked down writers of "poison pen" letters.

Tom Curry's two-part serial, "Rays of Death," concludes in this issue but is quite forgettable, aside from one scene:

It was a small room, with three small windows. The walls were lined with heavy, soundproofed material.

As Lawson entered, and turned on the light, he gave a cry of joy, mingled with terror. Before him, on two broad planks which had the appearance of biers, lay Byfield Mallory and his daughter, Edith. They were separated by less than a foot. Suspended above them, on wire, were nineteen small glass tubes filled with a white salt.

The girl's face was pale as death. Her eyes were closed, and her head, mouth gagged and bound, was flung far back. Her hands and feet were tightly tied to the board.

The Radium King, tied likewise, but able to see the sufferings of his daughter, lay with wide-open eyes, with the horror of what was worse than death in them. A man may undergo sufferings of his own with some degrees of fortitude, but to see one's child tortured is beyond

endurance. Yet Mallory, powerless, sick and weak, was forced to look upon Edith as she lay within range of the death-dealing radium rays.

That scene is excellently illustrated in a double spread by Frank R. Paul. The pair are rescued, of course, and we find that the culprit is not the young fellow arrested at the end of part one, but an old, wronged associate of Mallory's, out for revenge. And neither father nor daughter has been seriously injured by their exposure to radium, we gather; and the girl and our hero marry fearlessly. Hmmm.

In "The Readers Verdict," one correspondent wants to see all of Dr. David H. Keller's "Taine of San Francisco" tales gathered into a book, and another contends that "neither environment nor circumstance is influential in the formation of character. All that which we are, we inherit. . . . Despite environment, Man must become what heredity bids. If it is in a man to raise himself or lower himself from a certain environment, it is not a result of those circumstantial conditions, but a manifestation of those instincts born within him!" The reader then goes into Mendel's laws for proof of his contention. The Editor replies simply: "That heredity is more important than environment is generally acknowledged, but a suitable environment may nullify the bad effects of hereditary weakness."

For those who like chess, a reader examines the position of the crucial game played by Pardee in *The Bishop Murder Case* and concludes that Pardee need not have resigned when he did, and that, at worst, the game could have ended in a stalemate. Unfortunately, later issues did not contain any comment on that proposition, suggesting that chess-playing readers of SDM were few. There are letters both in favor and opposition to the continuation of running serials in the magazine and a discussion of Drukker's mental condition in the Van Dine novel, which brings forth an editorial comment on the differences between dementia praecox and manic-depressive psychosis.

Science crime notes deal with the question of whether crime is due to abnormal glands—a former president of the AMA thinks it is—and whether Lombroso was right about the physical characteristics of criminals. We have only two books reviewed—*The Rat Trap* by William Leaux (Macauley; \$2.00) and *Confidence Crooks and Blackmailers—Their Ways and Methods* by Basil Tozer (Boston: Stratford; \$2.50). And there is the usual "How Good a Detective Are You?" observation and memory test.

Readers are urged to write to the letter department telling the Editor what type of stories they like best: the mechano-scientific type; the psychological-scientific type; the action-scientific type; the factual deductive story; and the scientific mystery story in

which the reader is given no chance to work out the solution himself.

The most important thing in the issue, however, is an announcement which takes up a half page in one part of the magazine and is repeated on a full page in the back of the book: "The next issue of this magazine will be known as *Amazing Detective Tales*." There is no explanation offered to the readers, as was the case in the corresponding May issues of *Science Wonder Stories* and *Air Wonder Stories*, stating that with the June issue the two magazines would be combined under the title of *Wonder Stories*.¹ Hugo Gernsback had come to feel, he said, that the word "science" in a fiction magazine's title was a liability, because people assumed that such stories would be dry and too technical for comprehension. He was not yet ready to fold up his detective story magazine, but it was clear that *Scientific Detective Monthly* had not been a winner.

Why did it fail? Those were, of course, hard times, and readers were not getting any more copy for their money in *Scientific Detective Monthly* for twenty-five cents than for similar large magazines like *Real Detective Stories* (which also featured at least one series with a "scientific" type detective) at a lower price. And while the Gernsback issues looked


thicker, because of the heavier grade of paper used, the amount of space actually given over to fiction was smaller than one might assume without looking through the magazine and making a page count, as I noted above. (But I never thought of making a comparison count. The others might not have contained any more fiction than *SDM*.) Other liabilities, as noted earlier, were the ultra-mechanical covers, but those only marred the first two issues. The failure to exploit "name" authors other than Arthur B. Reeve on the covers may have cost some sales, too. And I cannot but continue to suspect that the number of reprints in each issue was also a mistake.

But most of the faults mentioned above were corrected with the June 1930 issue of *Amazing Detective Tales*. The cover for that issue, as for the four following ones, was on the sensational side, and several well-known Gernsback authors were listed, too. The stories, aside from those of Reeve and Balmer-MacHarg, had become less technical and more up-to-date. Nonetheless, sales did not improve, enough.

My guess is that Arthur B. Reeve put his finger on what was wrong in his article that appeared in the first issue. He himself had stopped writing "scientific" detective stories because the time for them had passed, and it could not be restored in 1930. For all that, *Scientific Detective Monthly* was a fascinating experiment. The world of detective story magazines had never seen its like before nor would it ever do so again.

Notes

1. We know now that such an event could happen either with or without intent. A person who *feels* guilty is very likely to produce the same symptoms, under such conditions, as one who actually *is* guilty. Then there is what we now know as brainwashing, the possibilities of which few suspected in the 1930s.
2. G. K. Chesterton calls attention to the fundamental weakness of such a device in his delightful Father Brown tale "The Mistake of the Machine."
3. I was greatly distressed by that move, particularly in the case of the science-fiction magazines, but also here. My permission to read such "lurid literature," it seemed to me, depended upon the word "science" or "scientific" in the titles. Combining the two science-fiction titles was a sound move, however, as many potential readers couldn't scare up fifty cents for the two of them every month; the Depression was on. □



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P.I. NOVELS OF 1980

By Robert J. Randisi

1980 was a good year for the Private Eye/Hard-boiled novel, and I'd like to take a look at some of the better ones that appeared during that time. One author made a big splash debut with not one, but two, novels, and appears a sure bet for stardom: Jonathan Valin.

We'll run them down, alphabetically by author, and although most of them are parts of a series, there will be some non-series books included, as well as non-P.I.-but-hardboiled books.

Browner, John: *Death of a Punk*. Pocket Books, paperback original.

This book features ex-cabbie, unlicensed P.I. Leonard Hornblower, whose yellow pages ad begins "ZZZ Private work for a fee..." so it will appear in the para-legal column beneath "X Yourself: Divorce..." He gets a lot of women calling about missing husbands. In this case, he's hired by attractive Lisa Perlont to find her teen-aged son, Binky. He gets involved in the East Village punk rock scene, a cocaine heist and a hijack ring. Hornblower is engaging and overweight, reminiscent of Hammett's Op. Well written, and worth your time.

Chambers, William E.: *The Redemption Factor*. Popular Library, paperback original.

A hard, well-written non-P.I. novel about a Mafia don who finds he's dying and tries to redeem himself through confession. This is hard stuff, and well written.

Collins, Michael: *The Slasher*. Dodd, Mead.

The tenth novel in the Dan Fortune series, this one take Fortune out of New York and plops him down in California. A call for help from his ex-girlfriend, Marty—who appeared in the first three Fortune

novels—takes Fortune out of the slums and into the sun. Her new husband's niece has become the tenth victim of the Canyon Slasher, only Marty doesn't think that the girl's death is part of the pattern. Fortune gets involved in the unfamiliar world of Hollywood, high-fashion models and expensive call girls, and rich people. This one may be one of the two or three best books of the series. It's always nice to see Dan Fortune back, but the appearance of Marty is a special treat.

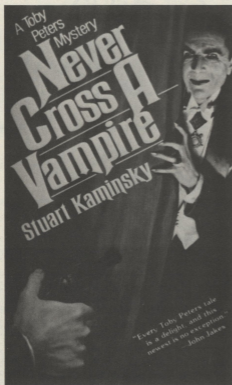
Francis, Dick: *Whip Hand*. Harper & Row.

This is the first time in seventeen novels that Dick Francis has repeated a character—and the last, I'm told—and he chose P.I. Sid Halley, the bionic man, hero of his 1965 novel *Odds Against*. Halley is asked by his ex-father-in-law to clear his ex-wife, Jenny, who got involved with a slick con man and a phony charity and then got left holding the bag. He is also asked by the Director of Security of The Jockey Club to investigate possible corruption within its ranks. Before it's all over, Halley finds his personal courage tested to its limits. It's too bad Francis has no immediate plans to bring back his P.I. with the bionic hand, for this was his best novel in some time.

Gage, Edwin: *Phoenix No More*. Avon, paperback original.

Dan Falconer is a former investigator for ex-County Attorney Matt Gillette. Having vowed to take a year off and do no work, Falconer is persuaded by Jinks Boulding to bodyguard her father, Cass, against possible murder attempts. Soon Boulding vanishes, and Falconer is caught up in a search for a missing man and is attempting to reveal the greed and corruption involving the construction of the Phoenix Nuclear Facility. The first 156 pages of this novel are fine private-eye fare, and the author obviously knows

what he's talking about when he discusses nuclear power, but a rambling, 36-page epilogue lost me just a little in the end. On the whole, very readable, and one may hope there is a return engagement planned for Dan Falconer.



Greenleaf, Stephen: *Deathbed*. The Dial Press.

The second appearance for private eye John Marshall Tanner is a long, convoluted story of two missing men: the son of a dying millionaire and a missing investigative reporter. Seemingly having nothing to do with each other, both cases are tied together by Tanner in the end, and masterfully so. A better novel than his 1979 *Grave Error*, which itself was an excellent debut. Greenleaf has a bright future, as does John Marshall Tanner.

Hoyt, Richard: *Decoys*. Evans.

Lady private eye Pamela Yew cons P.I. John Denson, the protagonist of Hoyt's novel, into assisting her on a quest for vengeance, and soon finds himself trying to win a bizarre bet with the lady: his \$50,000 Thomas Eakins painting against her body in bed that he can solve the case before she can. A

fascinating idea, carried off quite well by the author. I hope Denson, who loves screw-top wine and refuses to carry a gun, will be making more appearances in the near future.

Kaminsky, Stuart: *Never Cross a Vampire*. St. Martin's.

Kaminsky's fifth Toby Peters novel, in which Toby finds himself trying to discover who is sending Bela Lugosi death threats, and trying to clear William Faulkner of a murder rap. Well-written and amusing, which is what we've come to expect of Stuart Kaminsky, who never disappoints us.

Lore, Philips: *Murder Behind Closed Doors*. Playboy Press, paperback original.

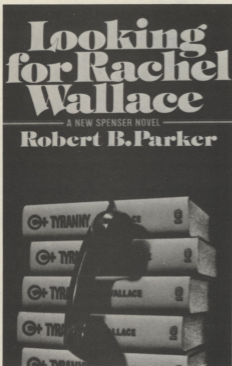
Philips Lore (pseud. for Terrence Lore Smith) has created worthy successors to Nick and Nora Charles (*Hart to Hart* notwithstanding) in Leo and Christina Roi. Leo is an investigative attorney who still works despite having been left a fortune by his father. Christina runs a boutique, despite the fact that she's loaded, too. Leo's not a private eye, but he acts as one. This is the second book of a series, in which all of the stories revolve around one nursery rhyme or another. This one uses Winnie the Pooh, and *The Looking Glass Murders*, also published in 1980, uses Alice in Wonderland. Both books feature fine writing and a collection of bizarre characters. The first book in the series, released in 1975 and reprinted by Playboy Press last year (1979) was called *Who Killed the Pie Man*. This is a series well worth reading.

Lyons, Arthur: *Castles Burning*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Probably the strongest book in the Jacob Asch series, this fifth book in the series finds Asch hired by an artist to find the wife and child he abandoned years before. Asch finds the woman married to a wealthy man but learns that the child was killed in a car accident some years before. Suddenly her stepson is kidnapped and the artist disappears, and it's up to Asch to find them both. Good plotting and excellent writing highlight Arthur Lyons's work, and he continues to get better and better. (*The Killing Floor* was also released in 1980 but carried a 1976 copyright date. It was actually the third book in the series.)

Parker, Robert B.: *Looking for Rachel Wallace*. Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence.

For my money, this is the best Spenser novel since *The Godwulf Manuscript*, Parker's first. Initially hired as bodyguard to lesbian, feminist author Rachel Wallace—with suitable friction between her and the mucho macho Spenser—Ms. Wallace is soon kidnapped, and Spenser is then looking for Rachel Wallace. It's all pretty straightforward, but Parker and Spenser seem to inject life into anything they do together.



Pronzini, Bill: *Labyrinth*. St. Martin's.

Bill Pronzini has become rather dependable when it comes to writing private eye novels, and why shouldn't he? He's a bigger private eye "nut" than even his Nameless detective is. Nameless is hired by a woman to bodyguard her brother, and discovers a murder, with the man he is bodyguarding standing over the body with the proverbial "smoking pistol." For some reason I especially enjoyed the first chapter of the book where Nameless is asked to identify the body of a young woman who had his business card in her purse. He can't, but the seemingly isolated incident soon ties in with the rest of the book. Dependable Pronzini, which is to say tautly written, well plotted, a pure private eye.

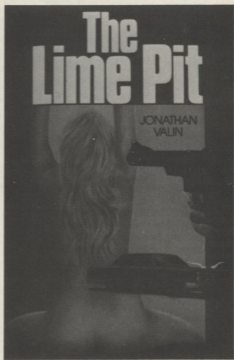
Randisi, Robert J.: *The Disappearance of Penny*. Charter Book, paperback original.

Modesty prevents me from saying more than that this is a private eye novel set against a thoroughbred racing background. It introduces Henry Po, whom I hope will be back in further adventures. Bill Pronzini said, "Henry Po is a likeable addition to the ranks of the fictional private eye." Michael Collins said, "Henry Po is a strong and interesting addition to the ranks of the fictional investigator." I won't agree,

because that might be construed as bias and immodest, but who am I to argue?

Valin, Jonathan: *The Lime Pit* and *Final Notice*. Dodd, Mead.

Probably the star of 1980 was Jonathan Valin. He produced not one, but two, well-written, tightly-plotted private eye novels featuring Harry Stoner, who works out of Cincinnati, Ohio, where Valin lives. The plots are fine, but what makes these novels so good are the writing and the character of Harry Stoner. Either one of these books—and possibly both—would have to be on anyone's list of top ten private eye novels of the past decade.



Zackel, Fred: *Cinderella After Midnight*. Coward, McCann & Geoghegan.

The find of the '70s for me was Fred Zackel's *Cocaine and Blue Eyes*, which introduced San Francisco P.I. Michael Brennan. The sequel is every bit as good. Julie Beaumont is fifteen and missing. Brennan is hired to find her but soon finds he's not the only one interested in her. Why would a female U.S. Senator and San Francisco's richest man be interested in her, too? Kidnapping, murder, politics: a jigger of each, mixed by a master, Fred Zackel, means damned good reading. □



Real Life Cases

CRIME HUNT

By T. M. McDade

Fiction has been replete with stories in which the question of identity was the crux of the tale. An early example: E. Phillips Oppenheim's *The Great Impersonation*. In real life, attempts are less common, and instances which come to mind are mainly those in which claims have never been seriously considered, such as claimants to be Charlie Ross, the kidnapped child, or Jesse James. Imposture as a literary device can amuse as a fictional puzzle; a genuine attempt to pass oneself off as another in real life is a challenge demanding a stellar performance by the claimant. No case can ever match the Tichborne affair, in which the resolution of that question aroused such spirited interest on the part of the public, embroiled the courts and all of Britain for years, cost hundreds of thousands of pounds, and, despite two legal resolutions of the question, sputtered on for years until the protagonist himself had passed from the scene. Like many a *cause célèbre*, adherents to the cause often signed on for life—their life.

On April 20, 1854, Roger Tichborne, twenty-five years old and an heir to the Tichborne baronetcy, sailed from Rio de Janeiro in the ship *Bella* for Kingston, Jamaica. Somewhere off the coast of Brazil, the *Bella* foundered, and the owners of the vessel announced the loss of the ship and all aboard. Tichborne's mother, as mothers sometimes will, refused to believe her son dead. Later there were vague rumors from sailors of some persons rescued, and a clairvoyant told Lady Tichborne that her son would return.

In 1863, nine years after the sinking, Lady Tichborne began to advertise in European newspapers for news of her son. Her long delay in so doing was undoubtedly attributed to her husband and the father of the missing heir, who did not die until 1862. Two years later, after ads had appeared in the Australian papers, a man wrote to Lady Tichborne, claiming to be her son. This man, who thereafter became known as the claimant, arrived in England on Christmas Day of 1866, and there was a sharp division in the Tichborne family as to whether he was Sir

Roger Tichborne, as he would now be if he had survived. To press his claim, he brought suit to recover the family estates, which had passed to a cousin along with the title. To show but an example of the contradictory nature of that evidence, I will cite but this: the claimant was acknowledged to be Sir Roger by his mother, the family physician, and the family solicitor; on the other hand, though the real Roger Tichborne had been born and lived in France until he was sixteen years old (his mother being French), the claimant could not speak a word of that language.

The civil trial which followed was the longest in English jurisprudence, occupying ten months, during which time hundreds of witnesses were called, some from as far away as Chile and Australia. The cross-examination of the claimant alone took two months. His counsel finally conceded the loss of the suit when the jury cut short the trial by stating that it needed no more evidence to find for the defendants. Nor did the matter end there. At the direction of the trial judge, the claimant was charged with perjury, and the criminal trial which followed covered much the same ground as the civil suit and also took another ten months to try. The evidence was so vast that the judge took a month to summarize it for the jury. The claimant was found guilty, and a vindictive court sentenced him to fourteen years' imprisonment.

During the ten years of his actual confinement, and for the fourteen years he lived following his release in October 1884, he continued to affirm his name and title as Sir Roger Tichborne, supported by thousands who believed in his cause. Edgar Lustgarten, that perceptive writer on crime, best characterized the case for the claimant: "[His] story, incredible if true, was yet more incredible if false." For a case which occupied the attention of the British public for thirty years and on which hundreds of thousands of pounds were spent, it is worth noting that a single fingerprint, a thumb, perhaps, could have answered the question in a minute or two, a question which even now, more than a hundred years after the events, is no nearer a solution.

The case is far too complex to encompass the whole in this brief article, but I will touch on a few of the more interesting features. How can we account for the conflict in the identification of the claimant by members of the family and friends who knew Roger Tichborne when he left England in 1853 at

the age of twenty-four? Even if his mother's recognition was wish-fulfilling, and she saw what she wanted to see when the claimant appeared before her in Paris thirteen years later, how do you explain the family solicitor and the doctor acknowledging him? The first of the people to join the claimant's cause was Andrew Bogle, a retired colored servant of the Doughty family who lived in Australia and who sought out the claimant when the first news of Tichborne's appearance was announced. He appeared at the claimant's hotel, and when the latter returned and saw the waiting man, was told, "Ha, Bogle, is that you?" He went to England with the claimant, whom he said he recognized, and never altered his testimony in the years to follow. Another, Anthony Biddulph, a second cousin to Tichborne, first said the claimant was an impostor but changed his views after he met and talked to him and even became godfather to the claimant's child.

Other family servants likewise recognized him, including one who spent a year traveling with Tichborne. So did members of the regiment in which he served, including the commanding colonel. Witnesses based their recognition on anecdotes which it was claimed only the real heir would know. Opposed to these, however, were most of the family relations, including a cousin to whom he was reported engaged just before he sailed from England.

But eyewitness identification, as those familiar with criminal trials must know, is not the most reliable, involving as it does matters of the perception of the viewer and his bias in the event, both personal and of class. It was claimed that it was the claimant's ignorance of matters it was felt he should have known which damned him in the eyes of many. As an army officer, he should have known the simplest of military terms—the difference between a squadron and a troop, the makeup of his own regiment, all of which the claimant failed on cross-examination. Though Roger Tichborne had spent some years at a Jesuit school, the claimant had absolutely no recollection of the courses he had taken. He thought Caesar a Greek, that a copy of Virgil was in Greek, that Euclid had nothing to do with mathematics. In fact, the claimant showed such a mixture of knowledge and ignorance that some could not believe him to be an impostor and ignorant of so many things in which knowledge could so easily have been acquired.

Here is an excerpt from a letter from the

real Roger Tichborne in 1851:

"I quite agree that perhaps I have drunk some time too much. The reasons which I could give to excuse myself for having done so are that I had my mind raised to a feverish state by the lawyers with whom I was obliged to discuss about those settlements that joined with other thoughts that occupied my mind, to the state I have just mentioned, it made me take to drinking as a kind of relief. You will perhaps say that it is a very absurd kind of remedy! I agree."

Could the man who had organized his thought to write that letter change so much in a dozen years as to compose (and spell) the words in the following note which the claimant addressed to Lady Tichborne?

"My dear Mamma, I received your letter yesterday morning and was somewhat disappointed that you do not recognise me. Has your son, Surely my dear Mamma you must know my writing. You have cause a deal of trouble. But it matters not. Has I have no wish to leave a country where I enjoy such good health I have grown very stout. . . . Hoping my dear Mamma to see alive once more but I am afraid not as I cannot get surfeiture money to come home with. Good bye My dear Mamma and may the Blessed Maria have merris on your soul."

It was noticed that throughout the years of the claimant's suit, his spelling continued to improve! And in stating that he had grown stout, could the claimant be conditioning Lady Tichborne to the expectation of seeing a larger son than she might have remembered? When the claimant left Sydney, his weight was 224 pounds, spread on a large frame. He was, no doubt, eating better in England, for he rose rapidly to 266 by the spring of 1867, by August of the next year he was 340, and two years later had reached his peak of 388! This bulk helped to make him a public figure immediately recognizable on sight and a figure made for caricature by the unbelieving press.

The attempt to compare the physical description of the claimant to that of Roger Tichborne proved unsatisfactory. In height Tichborne had been five feet eight and one-half inches when he joined the army; the claimant was five feet nine inches. But even these figures were queried. Did the military measure a man in his shoes or in his bare feet? And, asked a jurymen, was the claimant measured in the morning or later in the day, as people shrink as the day passes. The claimant had early written of a brown mark on his side, but there was a dispute whether Tichborne had had such a blemish. Family witnesses claimed that Roger did have a tattoo, a fact concealed from the claimant, but the descriptions of it varied according to the describer. The claimant also had some sexual malformation, and there was some evidence that Tichborne also had a sexual anomaly, but a lack of clarity and Victorian prudery limited inquiries on the point. The upshot was that there was no convincing proof of a physical characteristic which might have resolved the question.

When a lone individual takes on entrenched wealth as the claimant did in legal combat, somewhere he must find the financing to fight his battle. From the first steps in Australia to establish himself as Sir Roger, the claimant found people willing to lend money to support his cause. A book might be written on the financing of popular causes, for the claimant's fell in that category. In the beginning, Lady Tichborne advanced £1000 a year to support him while battling for his estate. When she died, a number of the gentry of Hampshire, where the Tichborne estates were located, contributed to a fund of £1400 per year for the same purpose. Later, when the case came on for trial, bonds were sold to the public, and about £40,000 was raised in this fashion. These bonds were sold at a substantial discount, so that the rate of interest, to be paid only when the estates were recovered, was very high.

After the civil trial in which the plaintiff was non-suited, and in preparation for the criminal trial to follow, the British public took sides according to their political opinions, their social standing, their religious orientation, and all the shades of class and personal prejudice upon which individuals make their unconscious choices. Just as Sacco and Vanzetti, the Scottsboro boys, and the Rosenbergs had supporters among people who knew little of the details of the case, so the claimant gathered followers who saw an attempt to deprive a poor man of his just estates. There then began a series of meetings throughout Britain: Southampton, Bristol, Swansea, Newcastle, and Leeds, to name but a few where rallies were held in the claimant's cause. The claimant and his counsel would arrive in a town to be met by great delegations, the carriage containing them pulled from the station to his hotel by cheering supporters, and at night meetings were held where admissions were charged and collections taken. Here the claimant, whom all wanted to see, spoke for his cause with increasing facility, asking not that they believe he was Sir Roger Tichborne but that he be afforded a fair trial. This then became an appealing issue: fair play for the poor boy. When questioners became too pressing or showed doubt at his answers, they were hooted down and treated as the opposition. Now supported by some members of Parliament, local committees organized fetes and meetings where the mass were entertained by bands and speeches. This, perhaps, was the apex of the claimant's career. From now on, his road was downward.

The Tichborne family had spent thousands of pounds investigating the claimant and retracing every move he had made in the past few years. One of its principal retainers was Detective Whicher, whose solution of the case of Constance Kent was unacceptable to the society of the times but who was later proved right. It was concluded that the claimant was, in fact, one Arthur Orton, a butcher who grew up in a London dock area

and who had emigrated to Australia.

The name of Arthur Orton had cropped up in the early investigation in Australia when a lawyer was sent out by the Tichborne family to trace the claimant's background there. The claimant had stated that under the name of Thomas Castro he had worked for a Mr. Foster as a stock-rider on his station, but the records of that place disclosed no person by that name. The work records, however, did list an Arthur Orton, and Mr. Foster's widow identified the photograph of the claimant as the Orton who had worked for them. Detective Whicher's best piece of work on behalf of his clients revolved around the locating of the Orton family who lived in the Wapping district of London. Of twelve children, only four still lived, and neither of the two daughters identified the photo of the claimant as their brother Arthur who had migrated to Australia. Whicher did discover an extraordinary action on the part of the claimant on the Christmas night of his arrival in England. In a public house in Wapping, the claimant had made inquiries about the Orton family, who had lived only a few doors away. He was told by the landlord that the parents were dead and the family split up. Asking for one of the Orton girls, Mary Ann, he was told she was a widow and ran a lodging house. Her address was procured for him, but he refused any help to see her brother Charles. The inquirer seemed to know the family so well that the landlady's mother, observing him closely, noted a resemblance to old George Orton and asked if he were not the one who had left a dozen years or more earlier and was never heard from. He denied this, claiming to be a friend, but admitted to being in Wapping at about that time.

The claimant returned the next day to see Mary Ann Orton, now a Mrs. Tredgett, but, as she was not in, he left a card with the name W. H. Stephens of Australia. Stephens was in fact the name of an American journalist who had traveled to England on the same boat as the claimant.

The criminal trial which opened in April 1873 proved somewhat of a replay of the civil suit, though there were absences of witnesses who had supported the claimant before and there were new faces to take their places. The claimant's case was profoundly compromised by the behavior of the barrister who represented him, denigrating the Court, counsel, the Tichborne family, and all the prosecution witnesses. Dr. Edward Kenealy, Q.C., a talented Irish barrister, finding himself without the necessary assistance of counsel and the preparation which money could have provided, covered this lack with long tiresome speeches, attacked everyone, and promised more than he could deliver.

The prosecution took on the burden of not only proving that the claimant was not Sir Roger but that he was in fact Arthur Orton. They bore heavily on the claimant's search for the Orton family in Wapping and produced a girl who was Orton's sweetheart in 1851 who positively identified the claimant

as Orton. Two hundred and fifteen witnesses in all were produced, covering all phases of Roger's life, and the claimant's ignorance was shown on matters that he should have known. More than a score of members of the regiment rejected him as their former fellow soldier.

The defense spent two months calling some three hundred witnesses, a mixed bag in which the effort was to overwhelm by quantity rather than quality. Volunteers to the cause were many, and at least two were proven perjurers and went to prison.

Despite the length of the trial, perhaps even because of it, the jury took but thirty minutes to find the claimant guilty on all counts, and he was immediately sentenced to two consecutive terms of seven years each. One might think that the conviction and departure of the claimant for Dartmoor would put an end to his cause, but such is the life of movements when they get under way that they attain a life of their own. Dr. Kenealy, who knew that his own behavior had ended his practice at the bar (he was later removed from the rolls for his performance in the trial), turned journalist, publishing a newspaper, *The Englishman*, a vehicle for continuing the struggle. It soon boasted a circulation of 140,000 and undoubtedly aided Dr. Kenealy to get himself elected to Parliament, where he hoped to obtain a Royal Commission to review the claimant's case. Though there had

always been a few members of that body who supported the claimant, the steam in the cause was running out, and Kenealy's motion was lost in the House, 302 to 1. Nonetheless, during all the years of the claimant's confinement (under the name of Thomas Castro, as the prison officials refused to honor his use of the name and title he claimed), the cause was kept alive principally by those for whom it had a personal meaning.

In October 1884, the claimant was released from prison, a much healthier man than the one who had entered it. Denied tobacco, liquor, and rich foods, his weight was greatly reduced, and, determined to take up the struggle again, he once more took to the road, speaking in towns and cities, seeking contributions and support. While these appearances, including a trip to America, were ostensibly to justify his cause, they had become the claimant's sole means of earning a living, and so it became more his occupation than his cause. For the next fourteen years, he persisted, with declining success, in his efforts, dying in 1898, having outlived almost every one of those who had supported him in his quest. To the end, he presented himself as Sir Roger Tichborne, and that was the name on the coffin which bore him to his grave.

These few words have but touched on an amazing event which spread over into so many avenues of study and interest. For

years, the cause had almost the force of a social movement, and even in the arts it was felt. The San Carlo Opera in Naples produced *Roger di Ticciborni*, and where could one find a more interesting libretto? The publications of the day were filled with reflections of the divisions in the public mind which the case had created. The literature of the case is vast, much of it too detailed to interest the casual reader. *The Trial at Bar of Sir Roger Tichborne* by the claimant's counsel, Dr. Kenealy, alone is in nine volumes. The official shorthand report of the trials contains more than 10,000 pages. J. B. Alay's report of the case appeared in the Notable Trial series in 1912. For the interested reader, *The Tichborne Claimant: A Victorian Mystery* by Douglas Woodruff (Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1957) is a full and balanced account of the case which avoids dogmatism and for the curious is a fine presentation of the problems of the case. □



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TAD

NORBERT DAVIS: Profile of a Pulp Writer

By John L. Apostolou

For his anthology of *Black Mask* stories, *The Hard-Boiled Omnibus*, Joseph T. Shaw wrote some introductory material that did not appear in the book. His unpublished preface to the story "Red Goose" reads:

Norbert Davis is a natural. If we were to pick anyone who, in spite of all human trials and tribulations, looks upon life resignedly and mostly as all fun, our nominee would be Bert. His sense of humor is prodigious and, so far as we know, never got him into serious trouble. . . .

There is one thing that makes Bert Davis an individualist; he always did and always will write just what he very well pleases; mostly what strikes him as "funny."¹

Anyone familiar with the stories or novels of Norbert Davis would tend to agree with Shaw's picture of the author as an easy-going optimist. The truth, however, is that Davis—like many humorists and comedians—had a serious, perhaps even troubled, side to his character. It would seem that Shaw knew Davis the writer, not Davis the man.

Several years ago, I conducted a lengthy copyright search that resulted in my gaining extensive information on the life of Norbert Davis. Although the project I had been pursuing was eventually dropped, a thick file of correspondence and documents remains in my possession. These materials plus some more recent research form the basis for this article.²

I. THE BEGINNINGS

Norbert Harrison Davis was born on April 18, 1909 in Morrison, Illinois. His parents were Robert and Euphemia Davis, and his mother's maiden name was Harrison. His family was proud of its relationship, through an ancestor named Jeanie Burns, to the Scottish poet Robert Burns. By 1909, there were so many male relatives named Robert in the family that Mr. and Mrs. Davis decided to make a small break with tradition and give their son the different, though similar, name of Norbert.

Davis referred to Norbert as his "fancy first name." It appears to have caused him some pain and embarrassment during his childhood years. "I considered Norbert not only ersatz but slightly sissy,"³ he later confessed. Although he came to accept the name in

adult life, he was usually called Bert by his friends.

Davis grew up in Morrison, a small city in a farming district of northern Illinois.⁴ He grew to the height of six foot five, almost a foot taller than the average American male in the nineteen-twenties. By the end of that decade, he had moved, along with thousands of other Midwesterners, to Southern California. Of his situation in 1929, at the beginning of the Great Depression, he later wrote:

It became obvious . . . that, if I were going to continue what I reverently referred to as my educational career, there would have to be some changes made. I tried mowing lawns and polishing cars and shoveling sand, and I decided that a life of honest toil was not for me. So I started murdering people—with a typewriter, on paper.

I laid them away in short stories, novelettes, novels and in seven installments. About 80,000 corpses later, I found myself sitting on the front steps of Stanford with an A.B. in one hand, and an LL.D. in the other, and no job in sight. So I went on killing people.⁵

Responding to a request for background information made by Joseph Shaw in 1946, Davis produced a somewhat different version of his beginnings as a writer:

All my English instructors were completely unimpressed with my literary efforts, but I had a Public Speaking professor who told me that what I said in my mumbling and bumbling manner was often quite interesting in a nonsensical way and why didn't I try writing some of it. So I did. He invariably told me it was wonderful and would positively sell for thousands of dollars. Finally an editor I had been bombarding wrote me, somewhat plaintively, and asked me why I didn't read his magazine and figure out something that there might be some remote possibility of him using. That was a new idea to me, but I was willing to try it. I sold him the next story I wrote. About that time I discovered *Black Mask*, and it became my bible, as it did many, many other writers who were beginning about then. You can picture me writing "Red Goose" in a college rooming house between bouts with Blackstone and Coke and other legal luminaries while my room-mates read over my shoulder and alternately applauded and viewed with alarm. Law students are inclined—and no wonder—to be pessimistic, and it was predicted that you would not even read the story, that if you did you wouldn't like it, and that even if you did like it you wouldn't buy it, and—by one ultra-cynic—that if you did buy it the check would bounce. As is evident, none of these dire prophecies came to pass.⁶

By 1934, the year he received his law degree, Davis was selling regularly to the pulp market. He was so busy writing stories that he never bothered to take the bar exam. I cannot identify his first published story, but his first story in *Black Mask* was "Reform Racket" in the June 1932 issue.

Shaw, who like his writers tall, once published a list of *Black Mask* writers who were over six feet. He was no doubt pleased with Davis's great height, but only five stories by Davis were printed in the magazine during the years that Shaw was its editor. In his book *Cheap Thrills*, an informal history of the pulps, Ron Goulart indicates, by quoting an unnamed friend of Davis, that Shaw found Davis's work too whimsical to fit into the action pattern of *Black Mask*.⁷

II. LOS ANGELES AND THE FICTIONEERS

Norbert Davis lived in the Los Angeles area during most of his writing career. He associated with other pulp writers and was a member of the Fictioneers, a writers' club founded by W. T. Ballard and Cleve Adams. The group of about twenty-five members met once a month in the Nikabob Cafe at 875 South Western Avenue in Los Angeles. The meetings were informal and their real purpose, Ballard recalls, "was to get comfortably drunk and then en masse attend one of the local burlesque theatres."⁸

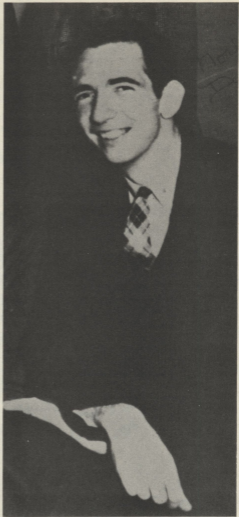
The meetings, however, were not mere social functions. The Fictioneers was a pulp oriented group, and Ballard says that:

... [O]ne of the things that held it together was that most of us were working in the same markets. In the east there was a lot of backbiting among competitors, but in Hollywood because we were three thousand miles from our markets, we clung together, passing on any information which might help the other fellow.⁹

In an interview published in TAD, Ballard spoke about the lifestyle of pulp writers in Los Angeles during the thirties and forties: "We worked hard, played hard, lived modestly, drank but few to excess, gambled some when we had extra cash. Most of our friends were other writers."¹⁰

Davis and W. T. Ballard, better known today as Western novelist Todhunter Ballard, were good friends who did some writing in collaboration. Using the joint pseudonym of Harrison Hunt, which was derived from their middle names, they wrote the novel *Murder Picks the Jury*. They also collaborated on a short story, not a mystery, for the *Saturday Evening Post*.¹¹

Raymond Chandler attended several meetings of the Fictioneers. He and Davis were acquainted, but not close friends. For a time in the fall of 1940, they were neighbors, living a few doors apart on San



Vincente Boulevard in Santa Monica. Both were represented by New York agent Sydney A. Sanders.

Chandler, the older and more intellectual of the two, respected Davis's talent. When Chandler was studying pulp fiction, prior to his first sale to *Black Mask*, he read and admired Davis's early stories. Years later, he recommended a story by Davis, "Kansas City Flash," for inclusion in James Sandoe's anthology *Murder: Plain and Fanciful*. The story was one of a group selected by Chandler as being "noteworthy and characteristic of the most vigorous days" of *Black Mask*.¹²

Davis maintained a good relationship with members of his family, many of whom lived in

Southern California. His first novel was dedicated to his mother; and the second, to his aunt, Jeanette Harrison, a physician who had a practice in Los Angeles for many years.

Davis was married as a young man, but the union did not last long. Some years later, he married again. His second wife, an attractive woman, had the maiden name of Nancy Kirkwood Crane. She was a writer from the East, who had a child, a son, from a previous marriage.

III. FLOGGING THE TYPEWRITER

Norbert Davis was a prolific writer of pulp fiction. Besides detective and mystery stories, he wrote love stories, adventure stories, war stories and even Westerns. In fact, his only sale to Hollywood was a Western story entitled "A Gunsmoke Case for Major Cain," which became a movie, starring Will Bill Elliot, called *Hands Across the Rockies* (1941).

Since the going rate was one or two cents a word, a pulp writer had to produce dozens of stories and several hundred thousand words a year. Some authors—Robert Leslie Bellem, Lester Dent, Walter Gibson and a few others—knocked out as many as a million published words a year. I doubt that Davis reached that figure in any one year, but he came close.

Frank Gruber captures the flavor of the pulp era in his book *The Pulp Jungle*. He tells of the rejection and loneliness that he had to overcome, of having to deal with insensitive and dishonest editors. Recalling

a hectic period when he was producing over eight hundred thousand words a year, he writes:

This is an enormous amount of writing, any way you slice it. The manual labor involved in typing eight hundred thousand words a year is considerable. I flogged the typewriter day and night. I flogged it in the early hours of the morning, I beat at it, late at night. I worked Saturdays and Sundays.¹³

Hal Murray Bonnett has also written about his years as a pulp writer. He gave his reminiscences the pointed title "It was never that much fun!"¹⁴

Being represented by Sydney Sanders, a top agent, Davis may have been protected from unscrupulous editors. Still he, like all pulp writers, was under constant pressure to grind out the words. During the thirties and forties, several hundred short stories and novelettes by Norbert Davis were published in the pulps. He was a frequent contributor to *Black Mask*, *Dime Detective*, *Double Detective* and *Detective Fiction Weekly*.

Judging from the many Davis pulp stories that I have read, he was able to maintain a surprisingly high level of quality. His *Black Mask* stories are certainly worth reading, with the possible exception of "Reform Racket," an awkward early effort, and the jingoistic "Bullets Don't Bother Me." The Max Latin series in *Dime Detective* is also recommended.

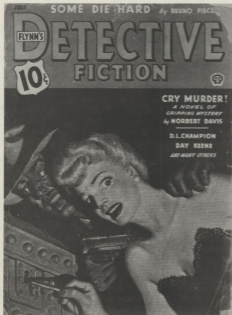
In addition to his pulp writing, Davis began, in the early forties, to write hardcover novels and slick magazine stories. His first novel, *The Mouse in the Mountain*, was published in 1943, with the second, *Sally's in the Alley*, appearing that same year. These are, in my opinion, two of the funniest detective novels ever written. Bill Pronzini has called them "minor classics."¹⁵

Both books feature the team of Doan and Carstairs. Doan, whose first name is never mentioned, is a short, fat detective and Carstairs—a gigantic Great Dane—is his partner and constant companion. Their hilarious adventures represent a high point in the career of Norbert Davis.

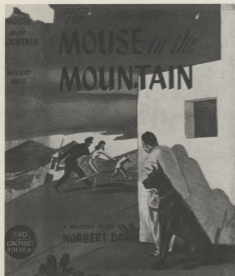
A third Doan and Carstairs novel, *Oh, Murderer Mine*, appeared as an original paperback in 1946. A more conventional work, this novel is not as cleverly plotted or as amusing as the first two. Doan and Carstairs were also featured in at least one pulp story.¹⁶

Murder Picks the Jury was published in 1947. A crime novel, coauthored by Davis and Ballard using the pseudonym of Harrison Hunt, it has a rather dark tone, reminding me of the work of David Goodis. In a letter to TAD,¹⁷ Pronzini states that the novel is based on a shorter and somewhat different story by Davis,¹⁸ and that Ballard may have worked alone to produce the longer version.

Davis entered the slick magazine market with two stories appearing simultaneously in issues of



*Collier's*¹⁹ and the *Saturday Evening Post*,²⁰ both of which were dated January 1, 1944. He went on to write many more slick stories, about four a year. They are not in the mystery genre, but fall, for the most part, in the love story category. Although these stories are not his best work, he and his agent must have been pleased to receive the higher rates that the slicks were paying.



IV. THE DAVIS STYLE

Phillip Durham writes: "There is a strong feeling for the joy of violence in the stories of Norbert Davis."²¹ Herbert Ruhm refers to "the cockeyed gruffness of Davis."²² Closer to the mark, I believe, is this comment by Ron Goulart: "In Norbert Davis' work you'll find a Bogart-like mixing of toughness and humor."²³

The Davis style deserves a more extensive analysis than can be given here, however I shall make a few remarks on the subject. Simply put, Davis wrote in a style that combines the toughness of the *Black Mask* school with his own brand of screwball humor. Robert Leslie Bellem and Robert Reeves attempted much of the same thing, but Davis's light touch and solid craftsmanship raises his work to a level that they rarely achieved.

Although humor is always present in Davis's most characteristic work, he produced a great amount of straight hard-boiled detective fiction. The following excerpt from "Kansas City Flash" is a good example of a Davis action scene:

Mark Hull came out of his daze in time to hook his foot around the thin man's ankle. The thin man made no effort

to catch himself, to ease his fall. He slammed down limply all at once. He moved a little on the rug. His hands went out in front of him, clutching. His feet jerked in short little kicks. He made soft, choking noises. Then he stopped moving suddenly, as though he were a mechanical toy that had run down.²⁴

Davis's humor could have a subtle, almost sardonic quality as in this description, also from "Kansas City Flash," of a movie star, Doro Faliv:

She was one of the real mysteries of Hollywood. She was thin and flat-chested, with a complexion like yellow paste. Her black hair was lifeless and dull. Her features were assembled in regular enough order, but her face gave a queer blank effect, as though there was nothing but emptiness behind it. But on the screen she was marvelous. She was the essence of allure. She could send goose-pimples along your back by just turning her head. The camera brought something out that wasn't there.²⁵

In the whimsical Doan and Carstairs novels, there is some tough writing, but humor is clearly dominant. This passage from *The Mouse in the Mountain* is a description of a remote Mexican village, Los Altos,²⁶ during World War II:

In Los Altos, there had been a rumor going the rounds that some rich tourists from the United States who were staying at the Hotel Azteca outside Mazalar were going to make a bus trip up to Los Altos. It was obvious, of course, that this rumor wasn't entirely to be trusted. Anyone with any brains or a radio knew that the people from the United States were too busy raising hell up and down the world to look at scenery except through a bomb-sight.

But tourists of any brand had been so remarkably scarce of late that the mere hint of their impending arrival was enough to touch off a sort of impromptu fiesta. The inhabitants of Los Altos shook the mothballs out of their serapes, mantillas, rebosas and similar bric-a-brac and prepared to look colorful at the drop of a sombrero. They gathered in the market place with their pigs and chickens and burros and dogs and children, and slept, argued, bellowed, squealed, cackled or urinated on the age-old pavement according to their various natural urges.²⁷

V. NINETEEN FORTY-NINE

A forgotten pulp writer, Arthur J. Burks, made a profound impression on the young Frank Gruber when he said that the life of a pulp writer was seven years. "At the end of seven years you've got to go on to better writing, or go downhill."²⁸ Davis probably never met Burks, but we can assume that he heard similar statements at the meetings of the Fictioneers. He made his move into "better writing" in the mid-forties, cutting back on his pulp work and concentrating on hardcover novels and slick stories.

The year 1949 was a fateful one for Norbert Davis. It began auspiciously with the publication of a short story by Davis and his wife Nancy in the January 8 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*.²⁹ His career, however, was not going well.

Although his stories for the slicks were appearing at a respectable rate, the pulp market, still a source of income, was rapidly collapsing as a result of competition from comic books and paperbacks. *Black Mask* was in decline, and in a few years, pulp magazines would no longer be published.

Davis had not established himself as a successful author of hardcover novels. He had not made the transition to motion picture writing as had Hammett, Chandler, Gruber and others. The possibility that television could provide him with a new market for his work may have not been apparent in 1949.

Early in that year, Davis moved from Southern California to Connecticut. His last California address was in Los Angeles at 1171½ South Norton Avenue, about a mile from the Nikabob Cafe where the Fictioneers held their meetings. He had lived in a modest apartment in a multi-unit complex then known as a court.²⁰

It is conceivable that Nancy Davis, being an Easterner, had urged her husband to make the move to Connecticut. At any rate, they settled in the small community of Salisbury in the northwest corner of the state. Sidney Sanders lived in Westport, less than seventy miles to the south. The desire to be closer to his agent and to the New York publishing houses may have been a consideration favoring the move.

That summer, for what reason I do not know, Davis made a trip to Harwich, Massachusetts. The town of Harwich is on Cape Cod, not far from the Kennedy family compound. It was in this resort setting that Davis, apparently despondent over career difficulties and other problems, took his own life.

According to the death certificate on record at the Massachusetts Division of Vital Statistics, he ran a garden hose from the exhaust pipe of his car to the bathroom of the house in which he was staying. In the early morning of July 28, Norbert Davis died, at the age of forty, from inhalation of exhaust gases. His body was cremated in Boston, and burial of the ashes took place at Inglewood Park Cemetery, near Los Angeles, on August 11.

Davis had died without leaving a will. In a document filed two months after his death, his estate was estimated at five hundred dollars.

Why did Norbert Davis end his life? There is no simple answer to that question. Since many of Davis's friends and relatives are deceased and others who might have pertinent information are unwilling to discuss the matter, arriving at an answer is extremely difficult. Despite an intensive search, I was never able to locate Davis's widow. I can positively place her in Westport, Connecticut, in September 1949; but there the trail ends.

No doubt, Davis had problems of a personal nature that my research has failed to uncover. Twenty years of flogging the typewriter may have

taken a toll on his physical and mental health. Separation from close friends and relatives, most of whom were three thousand miles away in California, probably aggravated his situation. It is possible that he needed the support that these people would normally have provided.

I shall not speculate further on the reasons for Davis's suicide. My purpose in writing this article was not to answer that question, although it could hardly be ignored, but to help restore Norbert Davis to his rightful place among the major pulp mystery writers and to introduce Davis to a new generation of readers. If interest in his work is generated, perhaps the tough, funny exploits of Max Latin and the screwball adventures of Doan and Carstairs will once again become available to mystery fans.

Notes

1. Joseph T. Shaw, drafts of introductory material for *The Hard-Boiled Omnibus*, Joseph Thompson Shaw Collection, UCLA Research Library, Los Angeles.
2. I am grateful to many people who kindly provided me with information on Norbert Davis. They include the late Dr. Jeanette Harrison, Mrs. Sydney A. Sanders, Mills Ten Eyck, Jr., of the Authors League of America, and Barbara E. Adams of the William Morrow and Company. I also wish to thank two friends—Tod Johnson and Mitchell Rose—and the staff of the UCLA Special Collections Department for their most helpful assistance.
3. Quoted in "Keeping Posted" department, *Saturday Evening Post*, September 30, 1944, p. 4.
4. Morrison's only claim to fame: In May 1874, James Sargent installed a time lock mechanism in the First National Bank of Morrison, the first such installation in the United States.
5. Quoted in "Keeping Posted," p. 4.
6. Quoted in Shaw.
7. Ron Goulart, *Cheap Thrills* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1972), pp. 127-28.
8. Quoted in Frank MacShane, *The Life of Raymond Chandler* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1976), p. 74.
9. Quoted in MacShane, p. 74.
10. Quoted in Stephen Mertz, "W. T. Ballard: An Interview," TAD, 12 (Winter 1979), 17-18.
11. Todhunter Ballard and Norbert Davis, "Kelly Makes a Deal," *Saturday Evening Post*, May 17, 1947, pp. 22 et passim.
12. James Sandoe, ed., *Foreword to Murder: Plain and Fanciful* (New York: Sheridan House, 1948), p. vii.
13. Frank Gruber, *The Pulp Jungle* (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, 1967), p. 177.
14. Hal Murray Bonnett, "It was never that much fun!" *Xenophile*, No. 38 (1978), p. 141.
15. Quoted in Robert J. Randisi, "An Interview with Bill Pronzini," TAD, 11 (January 1978), 48.
16. Norbert Davis, "Cry Murder!" *Flynn's Detective Fiction*, July 1944, pp. 8-27.
17. Bill Pronzini, Letter, TAD, 12 (Summer 1979), 268.
18. Norbert Davis, "String Him Up," *Double Detective*, February 1938.
19. Norbert Davis, "A Is for Annabelle," *Collier's*, January 1, 1944, pp. 20 et passim.
20. Norbert Davis, "Get Out and Get Under," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 1, 1944, pp. 16 et passim.

21. Phillip Durham, "The Black Mask School," in *Tough Guy Writers of the Thirties*, ed. David Madden (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. 72.
22. Herbert Ruhm, ed., Introduction to *The Hard-Boiled Detective* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1977), p. xii.
23. Ron Goulart, ed., Preface to "Don't Give Your Right Name," by Norbert Davis, in *The Hardboiled Dicks* (Los Angeles: Sherbourne Press, 1965), p. 1.
24. Norbert Davis, "Kansas City Flash," *Black Mask*, March 1933, p. 85.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Davis has some fun with names in *The Mouse in the Mountain*. Los Altos was, and still is, a large apartment-hotel on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles. Davis also uses Doan (a patent medicine: Doan's Pills), Carstairs (a brand of liquor), Janet (his aunt's first name; Jeanette) and Bay City (a fictitious city in Raymond Chandler's stories). In *Oh, Murderer Mine*, he uses Bert (his nickname) and T. Ballard Bestwyck (W. T. Ballard).
27. Norbert Davis, *The Mouse in the Mountain* (New York: William Morrow, 1943), p. 24.
28. Quoted in Gruber, p. 29.
29. Nancy Davis and Norbert Davis, "The Captious Sex," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 8, 1949, pp. 18 et passim.
30. The apartment complex still stands in what is now a neighborhood mainly populated by blacks, Chicano and Asian-Americans. The Nikabob was torn down several years ago.

NORBERT DAVIS: A CHECKLIST

This checklist is limited to Davis's mystery and detective fiction, specifically his novels and his pulp stories in *Black Mask*, *Detective Fiction Weekly* and *Dime Detective*. For his slick magazine stories, see the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* for the years 1944 to 1949.

The list of novels is, I believe, complete. Of his many pulp stories, however, only those in the above-mentioned magazines are listed. My major source of data was the extensive pulp magazine holdings of the UCLA Research Library, Special Collections Department. Since there are gaps in these holdings, it can be assumed that some, perhaps several, stories are missing from the checklist.

For each story that I have actually examined, the name of the main character, usually a detective or a lawyer, is included.

Novels

- The Mouse in the Mountain*. Morrow, 1943; Grosset & Dunlap, 1944. Published as *Rendezvous With Fear*, Withy Grove Press (London and Manchester), 1944. Also published as *Dead Little Rich Girl*, Handi-Books pb, 1945.
- Sally's in the Alley*. Morrow, 1943; Boardman (London), 1944; Grosset & Dunlap, 1946.
- Oh, Murderer Mine*. Handi-Books pb, 1946.
- Murder Picks the Jury*, as by Harrison Hunt (joint pseud. with Willis Todhunter Ballard). Curl, 1947; McLeod (Toronto), 1947. Published as *L'estomac!* trans. Jacques Papy, Gallimard (Paris), 1951.

Stories in *Black Mask*

- 6/32 "Reform Racket." Dan Stiles.
- 3/33 "Kansas City Flash." Mark Hull. Rpt. in *Murder: Plain and Fanciful*, ed. James Sandoe. Sheridan House, 1948. Also rpt. in *The Hard-Boiled Detective*, ed. Herbert Ruhm. Vintage pb, 1977.

- 2/34 "Red Goose." Ben Shaley. Rpt. in *The Hard-Boiled Omnibus*, ed. Joseph T. Shaw. Simon & Schuster, 1946; Pocket Books pb, 1952.
- 4/34 "The Price of a Dime." Ben Shaley.
- 4/35 "Hit and Run." Jake Tait.
- 10/37 "Medicine for Murder." Dr. Bruce Gregory.
- 12/37 "Murder in Two Parts." Brent.
- 11/40 "You'll Die Laughing." Dave Bly. Rpt. in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, September 1954, as "Do a Dame a Favor?"
- 4/42 "Walk Across My Grave." Sheriff Jim Laury. Rpt. in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, November 1953.
- 5/42 "Don't Cry for Me." John Collins.
- 8/42 "Beats Don't Bother Me." Sam Carey.
- 11/42 "Bullet Me Daddy." Sgt. John Collins.
- 5/43 "Name Your Poison." Sgt. John Collins.

Stories in *Detective Fiction Weekly*

- 5/18/35 "Black Death." Sarr.
- 8/24/35 "The Girl with the Webbed Hand." Slattery.
- 10/19/35 "Trip to Vienna."
- 1/18/36 "One Man Died."
- 2/22/36 "The Missing Legs."
- 3/14/36 "Diamond Slippers." Simon Saxton. (Title?)
- 6/20/36 "Public Defender." Michael.
- 6/27/36 "Murder Harvest." James Michael.
- 9/12/36 "5 to 1 Odds on Murder."
- 2/ 6/37 "Beauty in the Morgue." John Mark.
- 10/ 2/37 "Mountain Man." Saul Jarret.
- 12/11/37 "Devil Down the Chimney." Dan Crael.
- 3/12/38 "Murder Buried Deep."
- 10/15/38 (Title?)
- 2/11/39 "Ideal for Murder." Tom Grey.
- 4/29/39 "The Lethal Logic." Prof. Carlson.
- 7/15/39 "A Vote for Murder." John Gaul.
- 10/14/39 "Mud in Your Eye." Craig.
- 11/11/39 "Never Say Die." Les Free.

(In 1943 magazine became a monthly, *Flynn's Detective Fiction*.)

- 7/44 "Cry Murder!" Doan.

Stories in *Dime Detective*

- 1/15/35 "The Gin Monkey." Max Clark.
- 11/35 "The Devil's Scalpel." Bill Ray.
- 5/37 "Something for the Sweeper." Jones.
- 7/37 "Death Sings a Torch-Song." Dennis Lee.
- 12/39 "Drop of Doom." Dale.
- 2/40 "Murder Down Deep." William Dodd.
- 4/40 "Murder in the Red." William Dodd.
- 8/40 "This Will Kill You!" William Dodd.
- 7/41 "Watch Me Kill You!" Max Latin.
- 10/41 "Come Up and Kill Me Some Time." William Dodd.
- 12/41 "Don't Give Your Right Name." Max Latin. Rpt. in *The Hardboiled Dicks*, ed. Ron Goulart. Sherbourne Press, 1965; Pocket Books pb, 1967.
- 3/42 "Have One on the House." William Dodd.
- 5/42 "Give the Devil His Due." Max Latin.
- 8/42 "Who Said I Was Dead?" William Dodd.
- 9/42 "You Can Die Any Day." Max Latin.
- 4/43 "Too Many Have Died." Peter Tracy.
- 10/43 "Charity Begins at Homicide." Max Latin.
- 12/43 "Take It from Me." William Dodd. □

AJH REVIEWS

Short notes . . .

In *Flight of a Dragon* by Lee R. Bobker (Morrow, \$10.95), a top Chinese leader decides to defect and gets word to the U.S. Secretary of State. Everyone—the Secretary, the CIA, agents of several other countries—has a pipeline into this caper, so the cast that assembles in Hong Kong for homicide and double cross and related party games is a large one. No one is entirely who he seems as this complex tale steams toward a climax that's almost as good as what comes before. Here too some interesting views of loyalties and standards in high places.

The Heights of Rimming by Duff Hart-Davis (Atheneum, \$12.95) is of the "head-'em-off-at-the-pass" type, except the pass is in the Himalayas, not the American West. Bill Sterling, self-retired British agent, is induced to retrieve a wounded American stranded in a nearly inaccessible Tibetan monastery. The American, a redefecting defector, is coming out of China with a bookful of China's secrets, a subject in which sundry villains have vested interests. So a good deal of mountain tramping takes place, in the presence of peril both human and natural, with a bit of romance thrown in for Mr. Sterling. OK of its kind.

There's not the faintest shred of credibility in *The Balloon Affair* (Dodd, Mead, \$8.95) by Marion Margery Layne, the pseudonym of three New Mexican women. A solar energy tax is proposed in the New Mexican legislature. Various enraged citizens, led—if that is the word—by solar engineer Rodriguez Riley, strike back. Riley has a solar-powered hot-air balloon entered in an Albuquerque balloon race which is to be attended by a bevy of dignitaries, including the Governor. The scheme:



Allen J. Hubin, Consulting Editor

Photo: Robert Smull

kidnap the dignitaries by balloon to arouse public opinion and defeat the tax. A separate drug-running enterprise gets tied into this caper, imperiling our heroes (?) and their scheme. Some may be capable of the vast suspension of disbelief required; I'm not.

The eleventh of Elizabeth Le-marchand's novels about Supt. Tom Pollard of the Yard is *Change for the Worse* (Walker, \$9.95). This is pleasant, readable, unspectacular stuff which will while away a couple of hours nicely. The murder of the caretaker of a small town manor brings Pollard to the scene. The manor had been in the midst of a fund-raising showing of locally-owned artwork, and a couple of minor pictures are missing. The handiest suspect soon washes out, and Pollard is left sans both likely culprits and motive: why should anyone find an unremarkable lot of daubings worth killing for? Finally, Pollard remembers a story he'd heard a while back and puts the unusual pieces of the puzzle together.

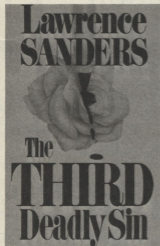
Michael Z. Lewin happily brings back Albert Samson in *Missing Woman* (Knopf, \$10.95), wherein a woman hires him to find her missing college friend. She's missing from a

small Indiana town where it is presumed she might have run off with a local chap a couple of months before. Nobody seems much interested, including the local law, except for Samson's client, who then presents him with a disappearing act herself. This is a tad disconcerting, but the poverty-stricken Samson soldiers on, catalyzing murder, getting himself variously assaulted, and eventually yielding up a killer. . . Samson is one of the most enjoyable P.I.'s now practicing.

The Night of the Falcon (St. Martin's, \$10.95) is an undistinguished WWII tale on the fringes of our genre by James Oxford, "pseudonym of a best-selling author known to millions." The war is winding down and the Germans are in retreat in Italy, where it is suspected they have erected massive fortifications. A spy behind the lines—at German HQ in Savaldi Castle in northern Italy—is believed to have details of those fortifications. Ed Kimball and a team of partisans are sent to fetch both spy and German plans. So follows a series of marches over mountains, various heroics at the castle, and a good bit of dying on the way to the Swiss border.

"Frank Ross" is a curious collaboration by two former Fleet Street reporters, Colin Northway and Michael Ewings. Their first book, *Dead Runner* (1977) was written together. Thereafter, they have alternated on solo efforts, and the latest, *The Shining Day* (Atheneum, \$13.95), is by Ewings alone. This is another WWII thriller which failed to excite me greatly. The death of an Englishman in Germany in 1939 allows a look-alike German professor to be sent, without training or natural aptitude, to England as a spy. He is identified as such even

before he hits the British shore, and in the war years which follow, British Intelligence plays him like a hooked trout, feeding judicious and juicy morsels through him to his German masters. Except that somewhere along the line the spy realizes he's being used and turns the tables. Some richness of character and character development can be found here, but the net effect is not persuasive.



What would happen if a repressed, bitterly unhappy woman working invisibly in New York City were periodically to dress up like a whore, pick up a conventioner at a midtown hotel, take him to his room, and stab him ritually to death? The hotel industry would probably have fits (not about corpses as such, but about the threat to its business). The politicians, recipients of said fits, would transmit the pressure, with amplification, to the cops. The latter might, in desperation as the toll mounts, turn to retired detective Edward X. Delaney. And Delaney, who's not sufficiently entertained by retirement and debates on feminism with his wife, would eagerly help out. This is Delaney's third case, *The Third Deadly Sin* by Lawrence Sanders.

Chuck Scarborough and William Murray have a rather low opinion of their readers, imagining them in *The Myrimidon Project* (Coward, \$12.95) to require passages of purple or perverted sex. But despite this, the book, which brings back some characters from Scarborough's *Stryker*, offers suspense and flashes of imagination. The focus is again the media, here television news reporting and the ends to which its masters may go to preserve and enhance their power. Harvey Grunwald, America's reigning newsman, is getting ideas above his station when tragedy strikes, killing off his family and sending him into seclusion. His friend, a TV cameraman, wonders where he's gone, and, finding that wondering is dangerous, he asks a wartime killer buddy to help him look. Thence matters get bloody indeed, and the denouement is an effective blend of technology and coeppance.

Ross H. Spencer forsakes Chance Purdue, softcover originals and some of his engagingly mad humor in *Echoes of Zero* (St. Martin's, \$9.95). Spencer has previously demonstrated his lack of need for such tools as plots and punctuation marks. Here he's still free of the encumbrances of plot, but somebody has talked him into paragraphs and punctuation. Next thing we know, he'll use a plot and straighten up his syntax and we won't be able to tell him from the herd. That, I suppose, will be described as progress—or maturation. Sigh. Anyway, here we have Rip Deston, reporter. He roams around the apparent state of Illinois asking questions after the murder trial relating to the death of an old friend ends in an acquittal. He would like to find somebody whodunit. After that, I'm not sure. Except that it was almost as much fun to read as a Purdue tale.

I haven't had the pleasure of a Dorothy Uhnak book since she forsook Christy Opara for "big crime novels" (*Law and Order*, *The*

FALSE WITNESS

A NOVEL BY

DOROTHY UHNAK

Author of *THE INVESTIGATION*

Investigation). Now I come to *False Witness* (Simon and Schuster, \$12.95) and find it tough, tense, convincing and subtle. Here's a feminine face-off between a television celebrity—raped, butchered, left for dead—and a prosecuting attorney in the New York City D.A.'s office, who has her eye on her boss's job. Into the mix Uhnak introduces racism (the victim is black), sexism, radical politics, manipulation, the fragility of egos, the appetites of the media, and more. Altogether a powerful story which the Edgar committee should not overlook.

—AJH



Chester Himes and the Hard-Boiled Tradition

By Jay R. Berry, Jr.

The hard-boiled, or tough-guy, novel is a uniquely American creation. It represents a reaction against the classical school of mystery writing, which is generally characterized as being comprised of novels of manners. The style and dialog of the latter are slick and polished, character motivation is often weak, and the genre's central concern is the solution of a complex puzzle. The society and world at large are seen to be orderly and rational in their operation, and crime is seen merely as an aberration. Once the crime is solved and the aberration eliminated, the world can resume its orderly function.

The hard-boiled genre, on the other hand, presupposes an entirely different view of the world, one shaped by the general disillusionment and cynicism following World War I, Prohibition, and the Depression. The moral climate of these novels, as Herbert Ruhm points out, "was one of chaos; individual conscience, wit, or cunning triumphed rather than any social order. The world depicted in the tough guy novels was irrational and disorderly. Violence was the means to all ends."¹

Tough guy novels are written in the American grain, using colloquial vernacular, emphasizing characterization and motivation, action, and often a moral and ethical code that governs the behavior of the private eye. These novels are set in urban America, for it is in the streets of the city that society's chaotic and disordered moral climate is reflected most effectively. "Events were depicted in the language of these streets; mean, slangy, prejudiced, sometimes witty and always tough. It was a

language that could be made to say almost anything."² The solution of the puzzle is not nearly as important as the implicit and explicit social criticism that one generally finds in these novels, as well as the interaction between characters.³ These general characteristics represent a definite break with the classical tradition of mystery writing.

The first writer to substantially develop the tough guy genre was Dashiell Hammett, who, with the creation of the Continental Op and, later, Sam Spade, first articulated the essential ethical and moral code of the private eye—honesty, dedication to the profession, loyalty to one's partner and one's client's interests.⁴ He was also the first hard-boiled writer to fully develop a lean, detached and objective narrative style which fell within the Naturalistic tradition (characterized by a profound sense of pessimism, determinism, and randomness in an irrational world) of American literature. In the ensuing decades, Raymond Chandler and Ross Macdonald expanded the scope of the genre by creating more complex and human protagonists (with varying degrees of sentimentality and compassion), by evoking a definite sense of place through the use of descriptive passages integrated into the story, and in the case of Chandler, by injecting humor effectively into the novels.

The tough guy novels of Chester Himes are an important part of the Hammett/Chandler tradition of detective fiction, working both within the scope of the genre as well as going beyond the strict limits of the form in the last few novels (especially *Cotton Comes to Harlem*), where Afro-American history

becomes an integral part of the novel.³ This paper will examine Himes's detective fiction in a general way, noting his place in the tough guy genre through his use of common themes and motifs that persist throughout the series, and commenting upon his innovations in the genre.

Four years after leaving the United States to reside permanently in Europe, Chester Himes turned away from the protest writing that had characterized his career, and turned to writing detective fiction. It took Himes many years to discover that the demand for protest novels was small, and in the late 1950s he found that he could earn a decent living by writing detective fiction for Marcel Duhamel's "Seire Noire."⁴

The decision to make a total commitment to the detective novel was not an easy one for Himes. As Stephen Milliken points out:

The decision meant turning aside from the high ambitions the lofty dedication, that had kept him going for so long, but his head had been pretty thoroughly battered and he was ready for a rest. The most important aspect of the decision, however, was the fact that it meant that he would have to concentrate exclusively on the most violent and sordid aspects of black life in America.⁵

Indeed, Himes's world in his Harlem detective novels is sordid, chaotic, and violent. Although the tough guy novel has always been violent, in post World War II America the level of violence increased tremendously in many of these novels. One has only to examine, however briefly, the novels of Mickey Spillane—*I, the Jury*, *Kiss Me Deadly* etc.—to understand this point. Some critics have argued that the acceptability of increased violence was due, in part, to a shift in American culture and values in the postwar years towards an acceptance of a kind of G.I. mentality.

Many of the more recent fictional tough guys were veterans of World War II and the Korean War who came home to find the country radically changed and corrupted (at least they perceived it this way) by organized crime syndicates. In the novels they assume the moral burden of eradicating the widespread corruption. Given their war experience, violence is seen as the only feasible recourse. This phenomenon in the tough guy genre is called the "vengeance variation,"⁶ and to some extent Himes's protagonists, Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson, subscribe to this type of violence.

At times they kill for revenge (e.g., *For Love of Imabelle*, where Digger shoots out the eyes of the man who threw acid in Ed's face), and they often fly into violent rages during the course of each novel. They are intimidating and often cruel in their treatment of suspects (e.g., *The Crazy Kill*, where Digger and Ed handcuff a suspect's ankles together, suspend him upside down from the top of a door, and slowly push down on his armpits with their feet

in order to get information). Finally, they have been known to perform illegal acts in order to wage their battles against the Harlem underworld.

The description of violence in Himes's novels, not surprisingly, is very detailed, deliberate, and gruesome, perhaps because the core of reality in Himes's Harlem is the presence of violence. Therefore, in *All Shot Up* (1960), a motorcycle rider is decapitated, and the scene is depicted quite vividly, even though no such detail is important to the actual story line itself:

The motorcycle rider was pulling up fast behind the car carrying sheet metal when the tire burst and the driver tamped his brakes. He wheeled sharply to the left, but not quickly enough.

The three thin sheets of stainless steel, six feet in width, with red flags flying from both corners, formed a blade less than a quarter of an inch thick. This blade caught the rider above his woolen-lined jacket, on the exposed part of his neck, which was stretched and taugth from his physical exertion, as the motorcycle went underneath. He was hitting more than fifty-five miles an hour, and the blade severed his head from his body as though he had been guillotined.

His head rolled halfway up the sheets of metal while his body kept astride the seat and his hands gripped the handlebars. A stream of blood spurted from his severed jugular, but his body completed the maneuver which his head had ordered and went past the truck as planned (*All Shot Up*, p. 83—hereafter referred to as *Shot*).

Later in the novel a man is knifed in the head; and, as he staggers around like a blind person, passersby ignore him as they would one of the neighborhood drunks. Himes again takes great pains to be as detailed as possible in the description of this almost incredible act of violence in an effort to drive home the point that reality in Harlem, as he sees it, is violence or the threat of violence.

In the midst of this chaos and senseless violence, Harlem police detectives Grave Digger Jones and Coffin Ed Johnson try desperately to bring peace and order to an irrational world. "This mother-raping senseless violence!" Grave Digger exclaimed upon seeing someone with his throat cut. "Yeah, but what you gonna do?" Coffin Ed said, thinking about themselves. "Hell, meet it is all!" (*The Heat's On*, p. 94—hereafter referred to as *Heat*).

One look at the two black detectives—who were modelled on two black police officers in Watts, California, one of whom shot the other for seducing his wife⁷—tells the reader that one is dealing with a couple of very rough characters:

Their faces bore marks and scars similar to any other colored street fighter. Grave Digger's was full of lumps where felons had hit him from time to time with various weapons; while Coffin Ed's was a patch-work of scars where skin had been grafted over the burns left by acid thrown in his face (*Heat*, p. 32).

Despite their rough edges, Grave Digger and Coffin Ed are familiar literary heroes. Their cultural antecedents give them the moral authority that they exercise—from folk culture they are the “bad niggers” in the tradition of Stackalee. “Like their less sophisticated ancestors, they are aggressively courageous and utterly indifferent to physical danger, willing to submit without complaint to the risk of the same ruthless violence by which they express their own naked force of will.”¹⁰

It is ironic, then, that the detective heroes “can express their genuine love for their people, their altruistic hopes for communal peace and decency, only through the crude brutality that has become their bitter way of life.”¹¹ Despite this paradoxical situation, Coffin Ed and Grave Digger do possess an ethical code of behavior that has its roots in the Hammett hero:

Hammett's Continental Op is on the side of right, but he is in many ways as cruel and unscrupulous in pursuing his cause as his opponents are in pursuing theirs. He is a deadly shot with a pistol, able to give and take vicious beatings with his fists, and he foreshadows Coffin Ed and Grave Digger in these respects.¹²

Ed and Digger also possess the other important traits of the hard-boiled detective: honesty, loyalty to one's partner, a dedication to one's profession of helping to form a better community, and, if necessary, a willingness to take the law into one's own hands to ensure that justice prevails. With the progression of the series, one can see Ed's and Digger's ethical code becoming more clearly delineated and complex.

In *For Love of Imabelle* (1957), for example,

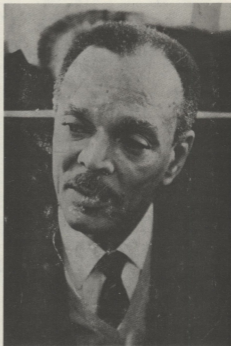
Grave Digger and Coffin Ed weren't crooked detectives, but they were tough. . . . They took their tribute, like all real cops, from the established underworld catering to the essential needs of the people. . . . But they were rough on purse-snatchers, muggers, burglars, con men, and all strangers working any racket (*Imabelle*, p. 59, emphasis mine).

It is hinted, though, that they do accept some sort of compensation from the underworld for ignoring activities relating to essential needs of the people of Harlem (e.g., prostitution, gambling, etc.), carrying on a symbiotic relationship with it.

In subsequent novels, however, the detectives' honesty and integrity are never questioned. When the proprietor of a Harlem restaurant refuses to let Ed and Digger pay for their dinners in *The Heat's On* (1964), ostensibly to accrue some favors to be used at a later date, Digger replies harshly, “Just don't think it buys you anything.” (*Heat*, p. 38). Later in the novel when a bribe is offered to Ed in order to persuade him to abandon his search for the gunmen

who wounded Digger, he says, “Is everybody crooked on this mother-raping earth? . . . You think because I'm a cop I've got a price. But you're making a mistake. You've got only one thing I want. The truth!” (*Heat*, p. 185).

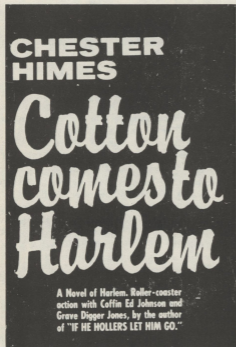
In *The Maltese Falcon* one of Sam Spade's motives in solving the case is to have his partner's murderer arrested, and in Himes's novels partner loyalty is also extremely strong. When a felon throws a glass of acid



in Coffin Ed's face in the first novel, his first thought is of his partner: “Where are you, Digger? Speak up, man.’ Despite the unendurable pain, his first duty was to his partner” (*Imabelle*, p. 84). Loyalty to Ed motivates Digger to avenge his partner's injury by shooting the acid thrower through both eyes. After Grave Digger is critically injured by two gunmen searching for a lost heroin shipment in *The Heat's On*, Coffin Ed tracks down the gunmen even though he and Digger were suspended from the police force earlier in the novel for unnecessary brutality.

Like Raymond Chandler's Philip Marlow, Grave Digger and Coffin Ed possess a moral conscience concerning the formation of a better Harlem community. Although it is not as complex or clearly stated in the first five novels, one can still catch

glimpses of this conscience cloaked in cynicism. In *The Crazy Kill* (1959), Digger and Ed are trying to find out who stabbed the brother-in-law of a powerful gambling figure. While interrogating one of the suspects Ed says, "Me and Digger are two country Harlem dicks who live in this village and don't like to see anybody get killed. It might be a friend of ours. So we're trying to head off another killing" (*The Crazy Kill*, p. 124).



Later novels, such as *The Heat's On* and *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, are more explicit in their treatment of the detectives' moral conscience. As Ed says, "Folks just don't want to believe that what we're trying to do is make a decent peaceful city for people to live in, and we're going about it the best way we know how" (*Heat*, p. 220).

In *Cotton Comes to Harlem* (1965), one sees Digger and Ed most clearly possessing a moral conscience. When 87 black families lose \$87,000 in a religious Back-to-Africa swindle, they try desperately to recover the money:

Grave Digger and Coffin Ed knew that these families had come by their money the hard way. To many it represented the savings of a lifetime. To most it represented long hours of hard work at menial jobs. None could afford to lose it.

They didn't consider the victims squares or suckers. They understood them. These people were seeking a home—just the same as the Pilgrim Fathers. Harlem is a city of the homeless. . . . Everyone has to believe in something; and the white people in America had left them nothing to believe in. But that didn't make a black man any less criminal than a white; and they had to find the criminals who hijacked the money, black or white (*Cotton Comes to Harlem*, pp. 34-36—hereafter referred to as *Cotton*).

The detectives' code of behavior is not the only element of Himes's novels that is part of the hard-boiled tradition. Narrative point of view and plot structures are also very much a part of that tradition.

Himes's use of the omniscient third person point of view in his novels is a somewhat unusual, but not unique, practice in the genre. Most writers, including Ross Macdonald, Raymond Chandler, and Dashiell Hammett (in three of his five novels) employ the first person point of view.¹³ Given the chaotic world-view that most tough guy writers adhere to, it is logical to have the individual perceptions of the protagonist serve as the narrative mode rather than those of an omniscient narrator. Omniscience suggests a sense of order and external control that is not seen much in the world of the hard-boiled writers.

The third person point of view is strategically used in Himes's novels for several reasons. One reason is to prevent the detectives from dominating all aspects of the novels. By using the third person, Himes is not forced to have Ed and Digger in every scene. In fact, the first few novels feature the two detectives in supporting roles. Since one of Himes's strongest attributes is the ability to create a host of memorable minor characters, it is important that Ed and Digger do not overshadow them.

Another reason for Himes's use of the third person is that it enables him to jump back and forth in time and space between chapters (sometimes annoyingly so), to narrate the story from a variety of perspectives. In *All Shot Up*, for example, the action of the first chapter is seen through the eyes of a petty thief who happened to see a hit and run accident. The second chapter retells the action of the first, but from the perspective of another character—the driver of the hit and run vehicle. Ideally, this device gives the author a freedom of movement in telling the story; sometimes, as in the case of some of Himes's work, it gives the novels a sense of disjointedness and chopiness, eliminating the fluidity of the story line.

A third, and perhaps the most obvious, reason for using the omniscient narrator is that it enables the author to withhold information from the reader for revelation at a later and more dramatic time without being accused of cheating. A true first-person narrative requires that the narrator articulate to the reader all important assumptions, observations, and deductions made during the course of the novel.

One of Himes's favorite structural motifs—a variation on *The Maltese Falcon* plot¹⁴—also lies within the tough guy tradition. In novels using this motif, all of the major characters are trying to acquire some object(s) that they believe to be extremely valuable, and the plot is structured around the frantic search for the object. Himes, like Hammett, often uses this device in an ironic manner by revealing the object of desire to be worthless or non-existent, and this twist is especially effective as a mode for social criticism.

The object in *For Love of Imabelle* is a trunk of fool's gold, mistakenly thought to be gold ore. This ore is the cause of much of the trouble surrounding the innocent victims Jackson and Imabelle when three southern con artists attempt to establish a phony gold mine racket with Imabelle's "gold," leaving several corpses in their wake.

The objects of desire in *The Heat's On* are five eels stuffed with heroin that has been shipped in from France, but the reader discovers at the end of the novel that the eels were inadvertently destroyed before the actual story opened. Thus all of the killing and scheming is pointless, and the novel assumes a grotesquely comic and ironic position, echoing Raymond Chandler's statement: "It is not funny that a man should be killed, but it is sometimes funny that he should be killed for so little, and that his death should be the coin of what we call civilization."¹⁵

In *Cotton Comes to Harlem* the object is real enough—\$87,000 stolen by a neo-Confederate colonel at a Harlem Back-to-Africa rally. The money is hidden in a bale of cotton, the symbol of his Back-to-the-Southland movement, which is lost during a chase scene. The bale is found by an old junk collector who eventually discovers the hidden money and uses it to go to Ghana—another ironic twist. Again there is senseless violence amidst a chaos of events, and the original \$87,000, having disappeared earlier in the novel, is never recovered by those who were involved in a frantic search for it.

Through the use of this plot device, Himes is able to work within the conventional limits of the hard-boiled detective novel. But Himes also surpassed the limits of the genre in two important respects—through his innovative use of Afro-American history as an integral part of his later novels and his evocation of a sense of place, grounded in the Harlem area, which rivals Chandler's Los Angeles.

Cotton Comes to Harlem is Himes's penultimate Coffin Ed Johnson/Grave Digger Jones novel to date. Central to the story are a bale of cotton, a southern colonel who heads a Back-to-the-Southland movement, a Back-to-Africa movement, and the appearance of black militancy—all very important

elements in Afro-American history. These elements, when placed in their historical context, help enrich the reader's understanding of what Himes is trying to accomplish in the novel.

The novel opens with a Back-to-Africa rally being held in a vacant Harlem lot by a con artist (Deke O'Hara) posing as a minister. He has managed to con 87 families out of \$87,000 by promising them passage to Africa. Before he is able to slip away with the money, however, three masked gunmen in a meat truck escape with the money. O'Hara and a few of his security guards pursue the robbers in an armored truck. In the middle of the chase, a bale of cotton falls from the rear of the meat truck, and is picked up by an old junk collector. The robbers escape; and O'Hara, going into hiding, contemplates how he will try to recover the money.

Grave Digger and Coffin Ed are unable to find either O'Hara or the robbers, and the next day a Back-to-the-Southland movement is established in Harlem by Colonel Calhoun and his nephew from Alabama. The movement is used as a front for the gang of thieves as they endeavor to recover the lost cotton (containing the \$87,000).

Five corpses later, Grave Digger and Coffin Ed discover the significance of the cotton and the role of Colonel Calhoun and Deke O'Hara in the drama. They stake out the colonel's office, apprehending him and the nephew as they bring the recently discovered cotton into the office. When they discover that the money is gone, Digger and Ed make a deal with the colonel—if he reimburses the Harlem families for the \$87,000 that was stolen, he and his nephew will be allowed a twenty-four hour head start in their escape.

The novel closes with the Harlem families having their money returned, the old junk collector going to Ghana with the original \$87,000, and the state of Alabama refusing to extradite Colonel Calhoun and his nephew for a murder they committed while trying to get the bale of cotton.

Himes's use of the bale of cotton obviously suggests historical images of torture, cruelty, and hardship that Afro-American slaves were subjected to; and in this novel those conditions, metaphorically speaking, are seen in the North as Digger suggests: "This mother-raping cotton punished the black man down south and now it's killing them up north!" (*Cotton*, p. 153). It is also ironic that Uncle Bud, the junk collector, should find his passage to Africa—and hopefully to happiness—in that bale of cotton, thus terminating an historical cycle.

Colonel Calhoun (even the name's significance is painfully obvious) is dedicated to keeping the black race subservient to the white. He refers to all those "nigras" involved in the Back-to-Africa movement as anti-Americans, and tries to entice blacks back to the

South to work at menial jobs by offering \$1,000 bonuses to the first families to sign up. The colonel's white supremacist movement is a tongue-in-cheek parody of Marcus Garvey's Black Nationalist movement during the 1920s. The African movement represented by O'Hara is also an ironic twisting of Garvey's philosophies since it is being headed by a con man using the cloak of religiosity.

Black militant insurgency, reaching fruition in the 1960s, emerges twice in the novel. The first occurs when the B.T.S. office opens in Harlem—there is a move to protest its opening that becomes increasingly militant until the police break it up—and later an angry mass of black protesters converge on the B.T.S. headquarters, threatening to erupt as a riot, until Grave Digger and Coffin Ed break up the march. Himes is not, I think, trying to say that black protest is ineffectual, for his latest novel, *Blind Man With a Pistol* (1969), ends amidst a racial riot. Himes is arguing that unorganized violence is like a blind man with a pistol, and that organized violence is the correct route to pursue.

Himes's other important contribution to the tough guy novel lies in his evocation of a sense of place. Using the black community of Harlem as the setting for his novels, he has created a society that has a life of its own. Although his physical description of Harlem is rarely pretty, one cannot help being impressed by the power of his images.

Black-eyed whores stood on the street corners swapping obscenities with twitching junkies. Muggers and thieves slouched in the dark doorways waiting for someone to rob; but there wasn't anyone but each other. Children ran down the street, the dirty street littered with rotting vegetables, uncollected garbage, battered garbage cans, broken glass, dog offal—always running, ducking, and dodging. Listless mothers stood in the dark entrances of tenements and swapped talk about their men, their jobs, their poverty, their hunger, their debts, their Gods, their religions, their preachers, their children, their aches and pains, their bad luck with numbers and the evilness of white people (*Cotton*, p. 47).

The description of the physical surroundings that one finds in the vast majority of tough guy novels is of minor significance, but for Himes the very action and violence that dominates his writing calls for a very special sense of place, and calls for detailed descriptions of the physical surroundings that one finds in his work. It is as if Himes is compiling a naturalistic case-study of various aspects of Harlem life in each of his novels through the use of stark details.

Himes's description of such facets of Harlem life as restaurants and foods, music, and entertainment also help to create a sense of place in his works. The minor characters who reappear throughout the series—Jackson and Imabelle; H. Exodus Clay, the mor-

tician; Fats and Mammie Louise, owners of popular Harlem restaurants; and Uncle Bud, the old junk collector—give the series a sense of continuity and community.

Like all writers in the genre, Chester Himes imitated existing literary conventions, but he always added an interesting twist (e.g., his plot structures, similar to that of *The Maltese Falcon*, are carried to their logical extremes in the novels). His innovations in the realm of Afro-American history, in the evocation of a sense of place, and in the creation of Afro-American detective heroes are of great importance in expanding the genre's scope. Himes should be recognized as a capable, and at times outstanding, practitioner of the art of detective story writing.

Notes

1. Herbert Ruhm, Introduction to *The Hard-Boiled Detective* (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. viii.
2. *Ibid.*
3. E.g., Dashiell Hammett's *Red Harvest* and Raymond Chandler's *Farewell, My Lovely* are sharp, biting criticisms of corrupt small-city politics, and Hammett's *The Thin Man* attacks what he felt to be a savage and cruel society on an individualistic level.
4. Hammett's detective, however, was not the first tough private eye. Carroll John Daly's Race Williams is credited with being the prototype of the tough guy. He first appeared in *Black Mask* in 1923, and many times thereafter. Williams was very crudely drawn and Daly's style was never very good—it was trite, riddled with clichés and stock situations—so Hammett's Continental Op is really the first substantive private-eye character.
5. Himes has written eight detective novels in all, and in order of composition they are: *For Love of Imabelle*, *The Real Cool Killers*, *The Crazy Kill*, *The Big Gold Dream*, *All Shot Up*, *The Heat's On*, *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, and *Blind Man With a Pistol*.
6. Stephen F. Milliken, *Chester Himes, A Critical Appraisal* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976), p. 208.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
8. William Kittredge and Steven M. Krauzer, Introduction to *The Great American Detective* (New York: New American Library, 1978), p. xxiv.
9. Edward Margolies, "The Thrillers of Chester Himes," *Studies in Black Literature*, 1 (1970), 2.
10. Raymond Nelson, "Domestic Harlem: The Detective Fiction of Chester Himes," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 48 (1972), 266.
11. *Ibid.*, 270.
12. James Lundquist, *Chester Himes* (New York: Ungar, 1976), p. 108.
13. Several of the best hard-boiled novels, however, employ the third-person point of view, notably Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* and *The Glass Key*, as well as the Perry Mason novels of Erle Stanley Gardner.
14. Milliken, pp. 217-18. Himes uses this plot device in six of his eight Harlem series novels—*For Love of Imabelle*, *The Big Gold Dream*, *All Shot Up*, *The Heat's On*, *Cotton Comes to Harlem*, and *Blind Man With a Pistol*.
15. Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," in his *The Simple Art of Murder* (1950; rpt. New York: Ballantine, 1977), p. 20. □

REX STOUT

Newsletter

By John McAleer

Dr. Joseph Fletcher may find his days busy commuting between the Harvard Medical School and the Medical School of the University of Virginia to impart knowledge to fledgling Dr. Thorndykes, but he hasn't let flag his interest in detective fiction. Consider these remarks he's lately addressed to me:

"Has it ever occurred to you that the seed for Nero Wolfe was sown by Conan Doyle in *A Study in Scarlet*? Holmes calls himself 'a consulting detective.' Watson, amazed, says, 'But do you mean to say that *without leaving your room* you can unravel some knot which other men can make nothing of, although they have seen every detail for themselves?' Holmes answers, 'Quite so...'"

While we are on that topic, may I ask if anyone has noticed that in Nicholas Blake's *End of Chapter* (London, 1957), Stephen Protheroe says to Blake's detective, Nigel Strangeways, "Oh dear me, are you one of those *active* detectives? I was hoping you would be the Nero Wolfe type, never budging from your chair." (p. 26?) Blake, of course, was Britain's poet laureate, C. Day Lewis. My thanks to David Oyerly, Ann Arbor, Michigan, for catching this allusion for us.

For a publication party at Brentano's, Isaac Asimov struck off this "Jingle Puzzle":

Clean the stoop, oh, President,
Fatsio is the resident,
Wait there, for he's unconcerned,
While he fiddled, your men burned.

From New Richmond, Ohio, R. L. Wenstrup writes:

"The posthumous memoir of Martha Foley (former wife of Whit Burnett), entitled *The Story of Story Magazine*, published by Norton in 1980, contains some interesting material anent the Burnetts' relationship with Rex Stout.

"While newspapering in Europe between the wars, they became friends with him

through their mutual interests in literature and liberal causes. Rex told Martha he was in Paris 'to keep a promise he had made to himself twenty years before. . . . He wanted to be a writer, a good writer, but he needed money, lots of money so that he could forever after write what he really wanted to write: important literature of permanent value.'

"Martha goes on to say how Rex had outlined a play to her one night, describing it scene by scene, act by act, only to come across her a few days later and tell her then, 'I have decided to write a novel.' She says Rex also showed an interest in publishing D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* but was beat to the punch by 'someone in Florence.'

"Later in her story she told of plans Whit and she had to raise money to launch a short story magazine. Before abandoning the idea they had thought of approaching Rex. But Rex was then building High Meadow and seemed so happy with his new life, they decided he wouldn't be interested: 'Rex's letters from Brewster. . . described how every morning he wrote a thousand words of his new novel and every afternoon worked at being a carpenter, mason, and all the other jobs building a home required. No, I decided his life was too full.'

"For many years Martha Foley edited the annual *Best American Short Stories*. Her last volume (1977) was dedicated 'to the memory of Rex Stout.'

As a postscript to R. L. Wenstrup's generous letter, I should mention that Rex told me: "Freda Kirchwey asked me to review *Lady Chatterley's Lover* for *The Nation* and wouldn't print what I wrote because it wasn't enthusiastic enough for her. I have never reread it, but if I did I would probably be even less enthusiastic."

In 1935, Rex Stout published a non-Nero Wolfe novel, *O Careless Love*. The title came from a song which Ethel Waters sang to Rex

on several occasions. In 1978, the Red Ozier Press published a book by poets Allen Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky. Its title is *Careless Love*. A few years ago, a TV drama involving submarine warfare was entitled *Fer-de-Lance*. In 1967, Lippincott published Celia Fremlin's *Prisoner's Base*. Rex's novel *Prisoner's Base* was published in 1952. His title had been *Dure Base*, but the publishers changed it because they believed the game Rex was referring to is better known as Prisoner's Base. Rex's title *Gambit* also saw added mileage—as a Hollywood movie which, of course, was *not* a Nero Wolfe movie.

Word has been received from Professor Burnett Meyer that his mother, Adda Burnett Meyer, died 6 August 1980, at 88. Adda, Rex's first cousin, supplied much information for his biography.

Novelist Ruth Doan MacDougall evidently is a Stout stalwart. In her *One Minus One* (Putnam, 1971), my daughter, Mary Alycia, came upon this passage: "No, I'm fine," I [Emily Bean Lewis] said, unbuckling my seatbelt and taking my paperback Nero Wolfe out of my pocketbook" (p. 115). And in her *Wife and Mother* (Putnam, 1976), Mary spotted these two passages. On a visit to Chesley Public Library, Carolyn Lyman "chose Mary Stewart's *Nine Coaches Waiting* and Rex Stout's *Champagne for One*" (p. 53). Later in the book, Carolyn's friend Dee asks her, "'Have you read Ruth Stout?'" When Carolyn says, "'Who?'" Dee replies, "'This is going to be fun. I'll educate you'" (p. 234).

From my mail bag:
Ernestine Gilbreth Carey (one of the

Gilbreth dozen in *Cheaper by the Dozen*) writes:

"As a member of the Authors Guild Council I found Rex to be a joy on all counts. No one in my experience ever seemed more stimulating, better informed, or more zealous in helping to guide us all. As you know he always carried a characteristic dignity. Also he took delight in forgetting this every so often in lightning-fast interchanges with writer-friends.

"It took me a while as a new Council member in the mid-fifties to get used to this. I made progress bit by bit. One day during a Council meeting I hurried out to the hotel ladies' room adjacent to the impressive pine-paneled room we used. Imagine my astonishment when Rex came out of one of the booths there, amid the roar of toilet-flush. "More convenient," he said with no trace of a smile. "I recommend it."

"On checking later, I found he was right. The men's room was way down the hall and required needless extra steps. Still later, when I teased him about this, he ignored it. . . . I never go into New York City Fifth Avenue hotels' ladies' rooms today without steeling myself for the unexpected."

From Amsterdam, Holland, Rudolf Kok writes:

"Recently I bought a book identified on the cover as the work of Rex Stout. The title was *De vergiftige naald*, being a translation of *The Poisoned Needle*.

"As a Nero Wolfe fan I was surprised that I had never heard of this title, because I thought I had all Stout's Nero Wolfe books in my possession.

"Some details in the novel are strange. Ever heard of Fritz Brenner driving a black sports car? Or Nero Wolfe being so upset that he does not go to the plants room for two weeks? Are we dealing with a fake? If this would be the case, it would be an insult to Rex Stout and all his fans."

Professor Robert Briney has brought to my notice Brian R. MacDonald's "The Phonographic Holmes" in *Baker Street Miscellanea*, No. 25 (Spring 1981). MacDonald says that a 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ -rpm volume of *Voices from Baker Street*, prepared by Bill Rabe and The Old Soldiers of Baker Street (1961), contains comments on Holmes spoken by Rex Stout.

In 1956, Donald McNutt Douglass received the MWA's Edgar Award for Best First Mystery for his novel *Rebecca's Pride*. The Pocket Books edition of this book (#1178) bears a blurb from Rex Stout: "The most exciting and least expensive trip I have ever taken to a Caribbean isle. . ." That was in 1957. In 1961, Rex wrote a blurb for another Douglass novel, *Saba's Treasure* (Harper &

Row): "I ate it up. . . Manchenil is one of the best books, bears a name which means "poisonous tree." He is black, six-foot-four, and weighs three hundred pounds. His full name is Captain Bolivar Manchenil. Rex also wrote a blurb for yet another Douglass-Manchenil novel, *Many Brave Hearts* (1958). I haven't seen it. Perhaps some reader has and will send me the information. For the foregoing I'm indebted to Greg Goode of Rochester, New York, whose name doesn't do him justice. He's not merely Goode, he's the best.



To Robert Samoian, Cerritos, California, we owe thanks for these items:

A box on the jacket of Ernest E. Blau's *The Queen's Falcon* (David McKay, 1947) states: "REX STOUT, the celebrated creator of the famous NERO WOLFE, read an advance copy of THE QUEEN'S FALCON and wired: IT STARTS GOOD, GETS BETTER AND FINISHES LIKE A HOUSE AFIRE."

In Anthony Boucher's *The Case of the Solid Key* (Simon & Schuster, 1941), Detective Fergus O'Brien says of his penchant for beer drinking, "My one resemblance to Nero Wolfe." To this his sister Maureen replies, "Don't forget your infallibility, darling. . . . And wouldn't Norm [part-time Watson in this story] make a beautiful Archie?" At that point, Norm (an Harker) humbly intervenes, "Afraid I couldn't ever attain that crisp prose."

Linda Toole, Rochester, New York, reminds us that in Guy Townsend's *Mystery FANcier* (Vol. 3, pp. 22-26), Marvin Lachman, writing tongue-in-cheek on "Presi-

dent Nero Wolfe," all but convinces us that "Rex Stout, for four decades, thought of Nero Wolfe as President of the United States."

For an hour-long radio adaptation of *A Study in Scarlet*, aired over Fordham University Radio in the 1950s, Rex Stout wrote and delivered live the following Introduction, fortuitously preserved by Chris Steinbrunner (who took a major hand in the production) and shared with us now:

"Good evening. Three weeks ago yesterday I attended the annual dinner, at a New York restaurant, of an organization of which I am a member—the Baker Street Irregulars. Seventy men were there, of varied ages and occupations: doctors, lawyers, editors, businessmen, educators, college students. They had come from different cities, some at considerable distance; one had come from England. They had gathered to do honor, and pay tribute, to a man who has never lived but who to them was still alive. . . Sherlock Holmes, the great detective.

"That annual dinner in honor of Sherlock Holmes is an astonishing affair because it is unique. Thousands of such gatherings are held every year to honor some soldier or statesman or scientist or writer, dead or alive; but has there ever been a dinner to honor Hamlet or Achilles or Little Nell or Huckleberry Finn? Or any other of the millions of men and women who have lived only in a novel or play or poem? No. Sherlock Holmes alone, of fictional characters, has had that tribute, and he will have it again next January.

"Why does he get it, and does he deserve it? There have been many attempts to answer these questions, and if you want to have a go at them yourself you may get a hint during the next hour by listening to this dramatization of *A Study in Scarlet*. But only a hint. To be properly qualified, to have your answers seriously considered by a Baker Street Irregular, you would have to read all of the sixty tales written by A. Conan Doyle about Sherlock Holmes. That might be a good idea; I doubt if you would think the time wasted. But for now, this evening, this performance will be a good start. *A Study in Scarlet* is the first of the sixty—the one in which Doyle created Sherlock Holmes and introduced him to the world.

"If you have already met him, you need no introduction: if you haven't, here it is."

My thanks to the many readers who have sent \$5.00 to subscribe to my *Thorndyke File*, which brings with it membership in the R. Austin Freeman Society. Keep the wonderful flow of mail on this newsletter, and *The File*, coming to me at Mount Independence, 121 Follen Road, Lexington, Massachusetts 02173. □



RED HAND

By Neil Munro

Among the most forgotten of the books catalogued by Ellery Queen in *The Detective Short Story: A Bibliography* is Neil Munro's *The Lost Pibroch and Other Shelling Stories*, published first in Edinburgh by William Blackwood in 1896.

While the title story is not a detective or crime story, it was termed by Queen "one of the most beautiful stories ever written." There are several stories with elements of crime and murder in this collection, of which "Red Hand" is a typical example.

The story is filled with dialect and has a quaint Victorian tone, as do all the tales in the book. The

publisher was astute enough to provide a Gaelic glossary at the end of the book, the appropriate parts of which are reprinted here in the belief that they will be useful.

"Red Hand" is not a detective story, but it is certainly a tale of wickedness and crime, and it has a kind of grace that makes a rereading almost necessary. The first edition of *The Lost Pibroch* is quite a scarce book, and even reprints are not commonly found, but the search is worthwhile, as the stories have a uniform level of style and charm.

—OTTO PENZLER

A GAELIC GLOSSARY

A pheasain! O Brat!

Amadain dhoill! O blind fool!

Biodag, a dirk.

Cabar, a rafter, a log of wood for throwing in Highland sports.

Clachneart, putting-stone.

Clarsach, harp.

Cothrom na Feinne, the fair-play of Finne; man to man.

Crunluadh, a movement in piping.

Dhè! O God!

Feadan, the chanter or pipe on which pipers practise tunes before playing them on the bagpipes.

Piobaireachd, the symphony of bagpipe music, usually a lament, salute, or gathering.

Pìob-mhor, the great Highland bagpipe.

Sgian-dubh, black knife, worn in the Highlander's stocking.

THE SMELL of wet larch was in the air, and Glennaora was aburst to the coaxing of Spring. Paruig Dall the piper — on of the son of Iain Mor — filled his broad chest with two men's wind, and flung the drones over his shoulder. They dangled a little till the bag swelled out, and the first blast rang in the ear of morning. Rough and noisy, the reeds cried each other down till a master's hand held them in check, and the long soft singing of the *piobaireachd* floated out among the tartan ribbons. They grey peak of Drimfern heard the music; the rock that wards the mouth of Carnus let it pass through the gap and over the hill and down to the isles below; Dun Corrbhile and Dunchuach, proud Kilmune, the Paps of Salachary, and a hundred other braes around, leaned over to listen to the vaunting notes that filled the valley. "The Glen, the Glen is mine!" sang the blithe chanter; and, by Finne's sword, Macruimen himself could not have fingered it better!

It was before Paruig Dall left for Halt Town; before the wars that scorched the glens; and Clan Campbell could cock its bonnet in the face of all Albainn. Paruig was old, and Paruig was blind, as the name of him tells, but he swung with a king's port up and down on the short grass, his foot firm to every beat of the tune, his kilt tossing from side to side like a bard's song, his sporrán leaping gaily on his brown knees. Two score of lilting steps to the burnside, a slow wheel on a brogue-heel, and then back with the sun-glint on the buckles of his belt.

The men, tossing the caber and hurling the *clachneart* against the sun beyond the peat-bog, paused in their stride at the chanter's boast, jerked the tartan tight on their loins, and came over to listen; the women, posting blankets for the coming sheiling, stopped their splashing in the little linn, and hummed in a dream; and men and women had mind of the days that were, when the Glen was soft with the blood of men, for the Stewarts were over the way from Appin.

"God's splendour! but he can play too," said the piper's son, with his head aereel to the fine tripling.

Then Paruig pushed the bag further into his oster, and the tune changed. He laid the ground of "Bodaich nam Briogais," and such as knew the story saw the "carles with the breeks" broken and flying before Glenurchy's thirsty swords, far north of Morven, long days of weary march through spoiled glens.

"It's fine playing, I'll allow," said the blind man's son, standing below a saugh-tree with the bag of his bannered pipes in the crook of his arm. He wore the dull tartan of the Diarmaids, and he had a sprig of gall in his bonnet, for he was in Black Duncan's tail. "Son of Paruig Dall," said the Chief seven years ago come Martinmas, "if you're to play like your father, there's but Dunvegan for you, and the schooling of Patrick Macruimen." So Tearlach went to Skye — cold isle of knives and caves — and in the college of Macruimen he learned the *piob-mhor*. Morning and evening, and all day between, he fingered the *feadan* or the full set — gathering and march, massacre and moaning, and the stately salute. Where the lusty breeze comes in salt from Vaternish across Loch Vegan, and the purple loom of Uist breaks the sunset's golden bars, he stood on the braes over against Borearaig and charmed the grumbling tide. And there came a day that he played "The Lament of the Harp-Tree," with the old years of sturdy fight and strong men all in the strain of it, and Patrick Macruimen said, "No more, lad; go home: Lochow never heard another like you." As a cock with its comb uncut, came the stripling from Skye.

"Father," he had said, "you play not ill for a blind man, but you miss the look on the men's faces, and that's half the music. Forbye, you are old, and your fingers are slow on the grace-notes. Here's your own flesh and blood can show you fingering there was never the like of anywhere east the Isles."

The stepmother heard the brag. "A pheasain!" she snapped, with hate in her peat-smoked face. "Your father's a man, and you are but a boy with no heart for a long day. A place in Black Duncan's tail, with a gillie to carry your pipes and knapsack, is not, mind ye, all that's to the making of a piper."

Tearlach laughed in her face. "Boy or man," said he, "look at me! north, east, south, and west, where is the one to beat me? Macruimen has the name, but there were pipers before Macruimen, and pipers will come after him."

RED
HAND

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"It's maybe as you say," said Paruig. "The stuff's in you, and what is in must out; but give me *cothrom na Feinne*, and old as I am, with Finne's chance, and that's fair play, I can maybe make you crow less crouse. Are ye for trying?"

"I am at the training of a new chanter-reed," said Tearlach; "but let it be when you will."

They fixed a day, and went out to play against each other for glory, and so it befell that on this day Paruig Dall was playing "The Glen Is Mine" and "Bodaich nam Briogais" in a way to make stounding hearts.

Giorsal snapped her fingers in her stepson's face when her husband closed the *crunluadh* of his *piobaireachd*.

"Can you better it, bastard?" snarled she.

"Here goes for it, whatever!" said Tearlach, and over his back went the banner with its boar's head sewn on gold. A pretty lad, by the cross! clean-cut of limb and light of foot, supple of loin, with the toss of the shoulder that never a decent piper lacked. The women who had been at the linn leaned on each other all in the soft larch-scented day, and looked at him out of deep eyes; the men on the heather arose and stood nigher.

A little tuning, and then

"Is comadh leam's comadh leam, cogadh na sithe,
Marbhar 'sa chogadh na crochar 's an t-sith mi."

"Peace or war!" cried Giorsal, choking in anger, to her man—"peace or war! the black braggart! it's an asp ye have for a son, goodman!"

The lad's fingers danced merry on the chanter, and the shiver of something to come fell on all the folk around. The old hills sported with the prancing tune; Dun Corrbhile tossed it to Drimfern, and Drimfern sent it leaping across the flats of Kilmune to the green corries of Lecknamban. "Love, love, the old tune; come and get flesh!" rasped a crow to his mate far off on misty Ben Bhreac, and the heavy black wings flapped east. The friendly wind forgot to dally with the pine-tuft and the twanging bog-myrtle, the plash of Aora in its brown linn was the tinkle of wine in a goblet. "Peace or war, peace or war; come which will, we care not," sang the pipe-reeds, and there was the muster and the march, hot-foot rush over the rotting rain-wet moor, the jingle of iron, the dunt of pike and targe, the choked roar of hate and hunger, batter and slash and fall, and behind, the old, old feud with Appin!

Leaning forward, lost in a dream, stood the swank lads of Aora. They felt at their hips, where were only empty belts, and one said to his child, "White love, get me yon long knife with the nicks on it, and the basket-hand, for I am sick of shepherding." The bairn took a look at his face and went home crying.

And the music still poured on. 'Twas "I Got a Kiss o' the King's Hand" and "The Pretty Dirk," and every air better than another. The fairy pipe of the Wee Folk's Knowe never made a sweeter fever of sound, yet it hurt the ears of the women, who had reason to know the payment of pipers' springs.

"Stop, stop, O Tearlach og!" they cried; "enough of war: have ye not a reel in your budget?"

"There was never a reel in Borerraig," said the lad, and he into "Duniveg's Warning," the tune Coll Ciotach heard his piper play in the west on a day when a black bitch from Dunstaffnage lay panting for him, and his barge put nose about in time to save his skin.

"There's the very word itself in it," said Paruig, forgetting the taunting of Giorsal and all but a father's pride.

'Twas in the middle of the "Warning" Black Duncan, his toe on the stirrup, came up from Castle Inneraora, with a gillie-wetfoot behind, on his way to Lochow.

"It's down yonder you should be, Sir Piper, and not blasting here for drink," said he, switching his trews with his whip and scowling under black brows at the people. "My wife is sick of the *clarsach* and wants the pipes."

"I'm no woman's piper, Lochow; your wife can listen to the hum of her spinning-wheel if she's weary of her harp," said the lad; and away rode the Chief, and back to the linn went the women, and the men to the *cabar* and the stone, and Tearlach, with an extra feather in his bonnet, home to Inneaora, leaving a gibe as he went, for his father.

Paruig Dall cursed till the evening at the son he never saw, and his wife poisoned his mind.

"The Glen laughs at you, man, from Carnus to Croit-bhile. It's a black, burning day of shame for you, Paruig Dall!"

"Lord, it's a black enough day for me at the best!" said the blind man.

"It's disgraced by your own ill-got son you are, by a boy with no blood on his *biodag*, and the pride to crow over you."

And Paruig cursed anew, by the Cross and the Dogs of Lorn, and the White Glaive of Light the giants wear, and the Seven Witches of Cothmar. He was bad though he was blind, and he went back to the start of time for his language. "But *Dhé!* the boy can play!" he said at the last.

"Oh, *amadain dhoill!*" cried the woman; "if it was I, a claw was off the cub before the mouth of day."

"Witless woman, men have played the pipes before now, lacking a finger: look at Alasdair Corrag!"

"Allowing; but a hand's as easy to cut as a finger for a man who has gralloched deer with a keen *gian-dubh*. Will ye do't or no?"

Parig would hearken no more, and took to his pillow.

Rain came with the gloaming. Aora, the splendid river, roared up the dark glen from the Salmon Leap; the hills gathered thick and heavy round about the scattered townships, the green new tips of fir and the copper leaves of the young oaks moaned in the wind. Then salt airs came tearing up from the sea, grinding branch on branch, and the whole land smoked with the drumming of rain that slanted on it hot and fast.

Giorsal arose, her clothes still on her, put a plaid on her black head, and the thick door banged back on the bed as she dived into the storm. Her heavy feet sogged through the boggy grass, the heather clutched at her draggled coat-tails to make her stay, but she filled her heart with one thought, and that was hate, and behold! she was on the slope of the Black Bull before her blind husband guessed her meaning. Castle Inneaora lay at the foot of the woody dun, dozing to the music of the salt loch that made tumult and spume north and south in the hollow of the mountains. Now and then the moon took a look at things, now and then a night-hag in the dripping wood hooted as the rain whipped her breast feathers; a roe leaped out of the gloom and into it with a feared hoof-plunge above Carlonan; a thunderbolt struck in the dark against the brow of Ben Ime and rocked the world.

In the cold hour before the mouth of day the woman was in the piper's room at the gate of Inneaora, where never a door was barred against the night while Strong Colin the warder could see from the Fort of Dunchuach to Cladich. Tearlach the piper lay on his back, with the glow of a half-dead peat on his face and hands. "Paruig, Paruig!" said the woman to herself, as she softly tramped out the peat-fire and turned to the bed. And lo! it was over. Her husband's little black knife made a fast sweep on the sleeper's wrist, and her hand was drenched with the hot blood of her husband's son.

Tearlach leaped up with a roar in the dark and felt for his foe; but the house was empty, for Giorsal was running like a hind across the soaked stretch of Cairnban. The lightning struck at Glennaora in jagged fury and confusion; the thunder drummed hollow on Creag Dubh: in a turn of the pass at the Three Bridges the woman met her husband.

"Daughter of hell!" said he, "is't done? and was't death?"

"Darling," said she, with a fond laugh, "'twas only a brat's hand. You can give us 'The Glen Is Mine!' in the morning." □

PAPER CRIMES

By William L. DeAndrea

Until recently, I used to tell people that every book I wrote was the first book in a series; that I just couldn't get a publisher interested in a second book. I can't say that any more, because, as this is written, Doubleday is just about to bring out *Killed in the Act*, the sequel to my Edgar-winning first book, *Killed in the Ratings*, and a very nice book it is, too. (I know this is unseemly, but Penzler doesn't pay me for these columns, and I have to make a living somehow.)

Anyway, the point of all this is that, while I, after years of pain and travail, have finally managed to get a series going, some well-known professionals have abandoned series (temporarily, I hope) to try a few experiments.

Actually, it might be better to say that Stuart Kaminsky's *Death of a Dissident* (Charter, \$2.95) is the beginning of a new series. Kaminsky is the author of the popular Toby Peters mysteries set in the Hollywood of the 'forties. *Death of a Dissident* is contemporary, but it's set in Moscow, an ambience that seems (to an unabashed capitalist such as myself, at least) to be every bit as crazy and bizarre, only less charming.

Comparisons will inevitably be made between this book and *Gorky Park*, but not by me, since I haven't read *Gorky Park*. I have been assured, however, that *Death of a Dissident* was in the works long before the other book appeared.

On its merits, then, I think Kaminsky has written a hell of a book. It's a police procedural; the search for an unbalanced individual who kills a famous dissident on the eve of the dissident's trial. Several murders follow, and the killer is believably and neatly run down, but the real strengths of this book lie elsewhere—in the atmosphere of political flank-covering and face-saving engaged in by the rival enforcement agencies involved, for example. When there is only one employer in the whole country, corporate paranoia reaches new heights.

The best things in the book, though, are the characters. The protagonist, Inspector Porfiry Rostnikov, is a dedicated man trying to do a job under pressure. His relationship with his wife, who happens to be Jewish, and therefore a bar to Rostnikov's further advancement, is touchingly and deftly done. Also memorable is Karpo, one of Rostnikov's assistants, a fanatical communist who never blinks. It's all a matter of will power, he says.

The detective novel, I have always maintained, is *not* about crime. It is about setting things right, and about those special people who feel they should and can set them right. Kaminsky's book shows this holds true even

in a society in which things in general are overwhelmingly wrong. The end of *Death of a Dissident* promises a sequel. I hope we don't have to wait too long before the promise is kept.

Game Bet (Fawcett, \$2.50) is credited on the cover to "Stockton Woods," but my spies assure me that this is a pen name for Richard Forrest, who ordinarily writes engaging little novels about a Connecticut children's-book writer and the crimes he solves. *Game Bet* takes place mostly in Connecticut, too, but the similarity stops there. This one is a Hitchcockian guilty-man-on-the-run opus. It's about a compulsive gambler and expert shot named Cory Williams, who is goaded into a bet with a former friend that he can draw a bead with a rifle on the President of the United States, snap a picture of the Pres with a camera attached to that rifle, and get away again. Things go wrong; Cory is captured and accused of trying to assassinate the President, escapes, and things go on from there. It's more complicated than this, but "Woods" does a fine job of working in the background through gaps in the action. This, by the way, is the single hardest part of writing a thriller — at least it is for me.

This is not a perfect book, but then, what is, right? If you can overlook some staggering implausibilities, such as the ingenuosity of the President's daughter or the total ineptitude of the Secret Service, and the irritating way characters who believe Cory's innocence get bumped off within two pages of their conversions, you can have a really good time with this book. A page-turner, as the blurb writers say.

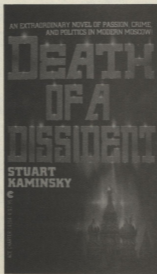
Collin Wilcox is best known for his series of San Francisco police procedurals featuring Lieutenant Frank Hastings. In *Spellbinder* (Fawcett, \$2.50), he gives us a sort of maniac procedural. *Spellbinder* is a James M. Cain-type story of a sex maniac who is the illegitimate son of a powerful but utterly corrupt TV evangelist. The maniac comes to wreak revenge on his father by killing a few people.

This is a well written book, but I didn't like it. Don't let that bother you, though, because I don't like Cain, either. Too many maniacs, drunks, power-and/or-money-hungry types, drug addicts, or pervers in one book, and I get depressed, and, if I want to get depressed, I can read a newspaper. If you are tougher than I am about this sort of thing, you may love it.

Kenn Davis has written a couple of private eye novels, the best known being *The Forza Trap*. Now, in *Dead to Rights* (Avon, \$2.25), he tries his hand at a caper novel, one of the "they ripped off the Mafia" kind. In this one, a trio of Vietnam veterans do the ripping. It's set in the winter in some Midwestern (I would guess) city, the writing is competent, and there is not a single original idea in the book.

The same is true of *Brown's Requiem* (Avon, \$2.50) by James Ellroy, a newcomer as far as I can tell. As a stylist, he is fine. As a plotter, he has a great Raymond Chandler collection. Why is it, I wonder, that so many new writers of talent are drawn to this same gloomy, sunswept never-never land? Hell, Raymond Chandler ran out of Raymond Chandler material, for God's sake, and Ross Macdonald, his chief inheritor, has had to use the same plot (by actual count) thirteen times, saved only by his truly remarkable ability at putting words into sentences and sentences into paragraphs.

I, for one, can spot an Alcoholic Friend coming three chapters away, and, if there's a Young Cutie in chapter one, I know she'll be shackled up with the Decaying Millionaire before fifty more pages are gone. *Brown's Requiem* contains these and the other forty-one required Gloomy Southern California



Private Eye conventions, especially the gloom. I'm beginning to wish Chandler had stuck to poetry. This hole, I'm afraid, is just about mined out.

Notice, please, that I said "just about." The amazing thing about *The Old Dick* by L. A. Morse (Avon, \$2.25) is that it's a GSCPE novel that *does* contain a new idea, the idea being that the GSCPE in this case is 78 years old and long retired. He's called on by an equally old ex-con he put away some forty years ago. The private eye has to help the ex-con rescue his grandson, who apparently has been kidnapped. The plot is more coherent than most, with a neat, if somewhat foreseeable twist, and the insights of a man working against the limitations of his aging body in a wearing situation are nicely done. As is, for the most part, hero Jake Spanner's cranky first-person narration.

There is one irritating stylistic quirk, however. Morse has the habit, probably



acquired by reading Kurt Vonnegut (another of my *bêtes noires*; thank God he doesn't write mysteries), of using, as a separate paragraph, some word made meaningless by repetition.

Shit.

That's what Morse does—writes "shit" as a separate paragraph, all through an otherwise fine book. Irritating, isn't it? Despite that, this is a nice twist on a sub-genre that could use a few twists, and it's definitely worth a read.

Bantam Books has started a series called "Matthew Swain, 21st Century Private Eye."

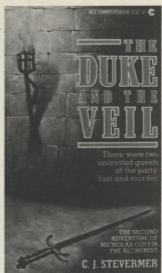
This sounds like something of a twist, but not the way author Mike McQuay handles it in the first in the series, *Hot Time in Old Town* (\$2.25). The entire series is "dedicated to the memory of Raymond Chandler," and the major problem is that McQuay remembers too well. This kind of book can only work if the future involved is sufficiently different from now; in other words, if the mystery is set against a background of true science fiction. Otherwise, what's the point? Matthew Swain's world is the same old miserable hellhole called Los Angeles, only somewhat worse, and with mutants and gadgets. He still taunts the cops with twentieth-century wise-cracks and ends the book with his own version of the "You slept the Big Sleep" soliloquy.

The kind of thing *Hot Time in Old Town* tries to do has already been done, and better, by Larry Niven, one of the top science-fiction writers going. In *The Long Arm of Gil Hamilton* (Ballantine/Del Rey, 1976, \$2.25), there are three novelettes set in a logically extrapolated future in which the most heinous of crimes is organlegging, the kidnapping of people to be used as spare parts. The society invoked is fascinating, and more than a little frightening; the crimes and solutions are impeccable. Gil Hamilton also appears in a novel called *The Patchwork Girl* (Ace, 1980, \$2.50), which is very nearly as good. Both books are currently in print, by the way; I recommend them.

In a different vein of science-fiction detective story, a sort of John Dickson Carr mixture of detection and high adventure, we have *Lord Darcy Investigates* (Ace, \$2.50) by Randall Garrett. The book is a collection of four novelettes, all set in a parallel universe in which Richard the Lion-Hearted did not die of the wound that killed him on our world but went on to found a dynasty that survives to the present. In that world, the laws of magic have been worked out in great detail, whereas science and engineering are only vaguely understood. Garrett is an immensely skillful writer, dropping little facts and bits of language that establish the scene and the ground rules so that the mystery solutions are fair. He also leavens the stories with wit. Lord Darcy's constant companion is a master sorcerer named Sean O Lochlainn, and their byplay is both funny and educational—dammit, those Laws of Magic sound as if they should work.

This is the third book in this series, the first two being a novel, *Too Many Magicians*, into which Garrett almost negligently drops the best Nero Wolfe pastiche I, a Stout fanatic, have ever read, and a collection called *Murder and Magic*. I'm hoping for more.

A similar series, by C. J. Stevermer, but set in the past of our own universe, follows the adventures of Nicholas Coffin, an alchemist studying in Renaissance Rome. There have been two books in the series so far, *Death of a Borgia* (Charter, \$1.95) and *The Duke and*



the Veil (Charter, \$2.50). Both involve young Coffin with Cesare Borgia, virtual dictator of Rome, and the son of the Pope.

It's been my observation that style will get an author through times of bad plot better than plot will get him through times of bad style.

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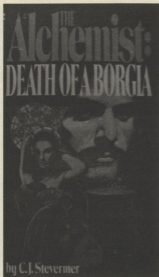
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That's the case here. Her editor tells me that C. J. Stevermer is a student of the Renaissance with a happy talent for writing. I agree. Her style is evocative of antiquity without being hard to read, and her depiction of the period as a time of carefree, amoral, adolescent selfishness is delightful. And right on the money, if my own amateur reading of history is correct.

It's in the technical end of the business that she needs help. I would like to see Coffin go out at night just once when he isn't accosted by thugs. And if he must be accosted, I would like the people he knows to stop just *happening* to walk by so they can rescue him. There is also a howling anachronism in the first book. The crime hinges on the use of barium salts as poison, but any almanac or reference book can tell you barium wasn't discovered, nor was the name invented, until 1803. Now, in writing my own historicals, I have frequently said to hell with it over matters of a year or two, but a discrepancy of three hundred years or so stops my suspension of disbelief dead in its tracks. The second book is better; maybe the author is learning with practice. The series is within shouting distance of excellence, and it's entertaining enough right now to reward a reading.

The Unknown Tale of World War II has been a hot sub-genre in recent years. Ask, for example, Ken Follet or Jack Higgins. I gave *Double Griffin* (Jove, \$2.75) a try because I liked the premise. The Germans, in a last-ditch attempt to turn the tide of the war, plan to plot a V-1 in downtown Manhattan.

The byline on the book is "Patrick Blake," but the copyright reads Clive Egleton, a British thriller writer best known for *Seven Days to a Killing*, which became a vehicle for Michael Caine called *The Black Windmill*.

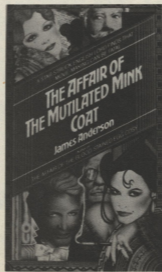
I didn't finish *Double Griffin* for several

reasons. It's one of those books editors like to refer to as "broad canvas" but that I think of as "diffuse." It jumps around from Berlin, to a navy base, to a submarine, to Brooklyn (you heard me), to God knows where, with three or four point-of-view characters at every location. I just lost track. Also, "Blake" tells me more about practically everything than I want to know. That is a trap into which it's very tempting for the writer of a historical novel to fall. Research is, quite literally, a pain in the butt, and in the eyeballs, too. You find something out, and, by God, you want to stick it in the manuscript, whether it has anything to do with the story or not. It hurts to lose that stuff, but it must be done. *Double Griffin* didn't lose anything. Weather forecasts, personal histories of every character, measurements of apartments, it's all in here.

Finally, when a tough Brooklyn mobster walks into a clothing store and says, "I fancy that shirt in the window," I've had enough. As far as I know, Ian Fleming was the only British writer ever without a tin ear for Americanisms. God only knows what horrors we American writers have done to defenseless English readers with our depictions of Englishmen and their speech.

And speaking of Englishmen (clever segue, huh?), James Anderson has done another of his English Country House pastiches. This one is *The Affair of the Mutilated Mink Coat* (Avon, \$2.75), a sequel to his popular *The Affair of the Blood Stained Egg Cosby*. This one not only repeats the detective from the first book, it even repeats the country house! Again, there is the profusion of suspects—An American movie star, his producer, a couple of long-lost relatives (or are they?), the Sweet Young Thing's two suitors.

There is a very strong John Dickson Carr



influence here, from the fair but wildly improbable solution to the general air of wacky humor interspersed with dark doings. There is also a nicely done spoof of the whole concept of The Master Detective.

Mink Coat doesn't have the advantage of novelty that its predecessor did, so it lacks a little of the charmed surprise *Egg Cosby* was able to evoke. Still, it's a lot of fun.

Warner Books has brought out a whole bunch of series under the blanket title "Men of Action Books." Titles like that scare me—it usually means the publishers picture their audience moving its collective lips as it reads the books.

I picked the first book in the Dirty Harry series, *Duel for Cannons* by Dane Hartman (Warner, \$1.95) as a representative sample for two reasons. First, I liked all the Dirty Harry movies. Second, the book was really written by TAD's very own TV critic, Ric Meyers, and TAD takes care of its own. Or at least doesn't ignore them. I would have panned the book if it stank, but I wouldn't have told you the author's real name.

The verdict, then. Ric has done a nice job. *Duel for Cannons* gets Harry involved in a case that brings him to San Antonio and face to face with Sweetboy Williams, a stone killer who also uses a .44 Magnum. There's a lot of action (naturally) but also some characterization, to say nothing of a plot that actually seems to be more than an excuse for gunplay. And he's done his homework; there's no visible seam between the Harry of the movies and the Harry of this book. So, as I say, Ric Meyers did a nice job.

Warner did a crummy job. I think the editor moved his lips, or, more probably, didn't do a damn thing with the manuscript but send it to the printer. Because an author is going to make mistakes. That's a fact of life, especially with this sort of typewriter-for-hire, churn-it-out stuff that has to be written like the wind for the writer to make a living. There are going to be typos in the manuscript. The author may forget that orchids have no scent or some other little fact. Editors have the responsibility to backstop that sort of stuff. Return it to the author for correction. Make as sure as humanly possible no typos make it to the book (God, what a number of typos made it to this book). Correct any error he happens to spot. The use of a house name on the cover does not remove this responsibility.

Unless the editor just doesn't give a damn. And if the editor doesn't give a damn, it's because he thinks the reader doesn't give a damn. And that's contempt for the audience, the worst sin anyone in the entertainment business can commit.

It alienates the readers who do care and leaves the publisher taking the money of the lip movers.

It's not only Warner who does things like this, and it's not Warner all the time; that company has done an excellent job on some excellent mysteries. It's just that it bothers me to see such careless treatment of material that was basically worthwhile to start with. □



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TAD at the MOVIES

By Thomas Godfrey

Film noir, the screen phenomenon of the 1940s, has always been a matter of public taste. Critics of the time found it cheap, sensational, and artificial. It barely survived into the next decade, but, when it did, it was as unabashed B movies, pulp fiction for the eye and ear.

Yet it managed to maintain a hold on the movie-going public for over forty years. The strongest examples of the genre continue to revive better than anything else done in the decade. Revival houses continue to prefer *The Big Sleep* over *The Bells of St. Mary's*, *Out of the Past* over *Gentleman's Agreement*, *White Heat* over *Mrs. Miniver*.

Even the '50s B's have held their own in a peculiar way. *Pickup on South Street* forms the cornerstone of director Samuel Fuller's cult reputation and allowed him to continue making this kind of picture. The same could be said for Budd Boetticher's *The Killer Is Loose*. Older directors such as Fritz Lang (one of *noir's* pre-eminent practitioners) were winding down long careers at this time (*Beyond a Reasonable Doubt*), while new talents like Stanley Kubrick were cutting their teeth on the form (*Killer's Kiss*).

A decade later, the genre was dead. *Noir's* cynical view of the world had become a harsh reality. The Vietnamese era had the *noir* elements built in. Napalming a group of GI's or civilians made pushing a lady down the stairs in a wheelchair look like warm-up exercises. Much of the language and substance of the *film noir* of the '40s had become absorbed into all filmmaking processes in the '60s.

By the '70s, a new generation was emerging that looked at the old form with new eyes. *Chinatown*, *Pulp*, and *St. Ives* reflected this new fascination with the artistic expression of an older era. Remakes of *The Big Sleep* and *Farewell, My Lovely* were further evidence of classic *film noir's* renewed vitality.

Recently, two books have appeared surveying the phenomenon, *The Dark Side of Film Noir* (Barnes, 1981, \$14.95) by Foster Hirsch and *Film Noir* (Overlook Press, 1979, \$25.00) by Elizabeth Ward and Alain Silver. What they tell us is that *film noir* was not so much a form as a sensibility, a way of looking at life. A *film noir* entry, then, is defined as a film with a lot of *film noir* characteristics. The definition is in the feeling. Both books attempt to catalog the traits of *noir* sensibility,

but neither provides us with much of a working definition.

Both books are recommended to the reader with an interest in the subject, although both are bound to be controversial. Hirsch's treatment, in particular, reads like one long subjective essay. He seems to draw much from his research, more, I sometimes suspect, than was actually there. His arguments are at least cogent and well-considered.

The Silver-Ward book is more encyclopedic. In fact, Silver and Ward are listed as the editors, followed by a sizeable list of contributors. The book begins with an introductory essay that covers much the same ground as the Hirsch book, then goes on to list over 300 examples of the genre individually. Their choice of representative films will raise a few eyebrows. Included are surprises like *The Letter* (1940), *Beyond the Forest* (1949), and *The Kremlin Letter* (1970). Overlooked are more likely candidates such as *Jigsaw* (1949), *Get Carter* (1971), and that fascinating example of *film noir* in buckskin, *The Violent Men* (1954), which boasts *noir* veterans Barbara Stanwyck, Edward G. Robinson, and director Rudolph Mate (*D.O.A.*, *The Dark Past*).

Any list of this kind is bound to draw potshots from armchair authorities, and it should be said that the editors give solid reasons to support their choices. The book also lists the films by stars, by year, and by studio. In short, a highly specialized one, but also an indispensable one.

Two new pictures have appeared to indicate that this interest has extended to filmmakers as well.

Union City, a low-budget directorial first effort, has actually been in the can for a couple of years. It had its first West Coast screening this year at Filmex and went on to a short run at one of Los Angeles's art houses. In spite of the renewed interest in *film noir*, it is a safe bet that the film's currency owes more to the recent celebrity of its star, Deborah Harry (of the rock group Blondie).

Whatever one's definition of *film noir*, *Union City* is sure to satisfy it. Director Mark Reichert has obviously spent some time looking at old movies, because he gives the film just the right feel of urban decay overwhelming the American Dream. His post-war northern New Jersey setting instills in the city the ominous, threatening character of similar

settings in *Call Northside 777* and *Phantom Lady*.

Harlan (Dennis Lipscomb) is a hard-driving, neurotic Vet married to Lillian, a restless, bored housewife who is having trouble keeping the lid on her sexual fantasies.

While Lillian grows more alienated, Harlan becomes obsessed with the disappearance of milk from bottles left outside their dingy fourth-floor apartment. He sets up a series of elaborate traps that fail, until one morning he catches the thief (another Vet drifting through town) and beats his brains out.

The terror-stricken Harlan hides the body in a Murphy bed in the vacant apartment across the hall and goes back to sleep, thinking the crime unseen.

Meanwhile, Lillian is starting to play up to the building superintendent, the object of her fantasies. Harlan begins to unravel mentally, sliding downhill into alcohol, impotence, and hysteria. Then the superintendent decides to rent out the vacant apartment.

The rest is ersatz James M. Cain. Not bad, but veering dangerously near the ludicrous.

Harry performs rather well in her scenes. Her face is too round to be sensuous or threatening, but she makes the most of her lines. Reichert also showcases her well with his eye for summery reds and oranges. A scene with her arranging flowers while wearing black lingerie has its intended effect.

Lipscomb, on the other hand, is allowed to overact disastrously. He starts at such a high energy level that his character threatens to go into a melt-down halfway through the movie. He has nowhere to go emotionally but keeps heading there on the run.

Not, then, a totally satisfactory film, but a commendable stab at recapturing classic *film noir*.

No such qualification need be made of *Body Heat*. It has the look of a classic already. Writer-director Lawrence Kasdan has also done his homework and come up with a product as slick as anything done in the '40s.

It starts off looking like a remake of *Double Indemnity* but keeps on going on its own. Kasdan has taken classic *film noir* sensibilities and wedded them to '80s angst and made them look as if they were meant for each other. We start off hearing a bit of a Big Band concert playing "That Old Feeling" but

are quickly swept up in John Barry's original (and effective) score. Kasdan seems to be telling us, "Look, I know this looks like '40s film noir, but I'm making my own statement in that context."

The look of the characters is definitely modern. William Hurt (the protagonist of *Eyewitness*) plays Ned Racine, a second-rate lawyer in a Florida beach community. One night, he meets Mattie Walker, the wife of a local businessman, on the boardwalk. As the movie's title may imply, they hit it off. So well, in fact, that they are talking of getting rid of her husband (Richard Crenna) when he returns from a business trip.

Naturally, there are complications.

Kasdan sets Hurt up as a classic film noir loser, likeable, all in all, and more victim than victimizer. Hurt responds with an excellent performance. As in *Eyewitness*, he uses his ordinariness to his advantage. He seems like a regular guy, almost dull. (If he had come along in the '40s, I doubt he would have done more than B's. Yet, by contradic-

tion, there is no actor I can think of who could have brought Ned Racine off with the success that Hurt does here.) He conveys intelligence, yet makes his sexual desire seem wholly believable. There is no other actor currently before the public quite like him. One has to go back to performers such as Lloyd Nolan and Arthur Kennedy to find the solid, unglamorized talents Hurt displays here. It may be a statement on the changes in film audiences that Hurt seems so accessible and easy to identify with, yet still so plain and ordinary.

Kathleen Turner is similarly striking as the archetypal film noir woman. In her early scenes, she seems to suggest the young Jane Fonda, but she quickly stakes out a screen persona of her own. She is in every way contemporary, a worthy successor to the Barbara Stanwycks and Gloria Grahames of the past.

There are many scenes that stand out. The most important thing about them is that they add up to a whole strong movie. Many of the

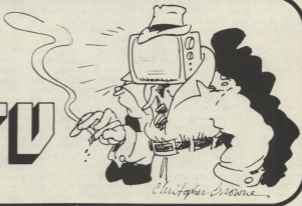
old film noir classics are remembered for great scenes in spite of unsatisfactory stories. Here Kasdan wraps up all the loose ends nicely. The tension never sags. The viewer never feels let down.

As with Reichert, Kasdan uses color and props to underscore his point. Heat is constantly re-emphasized with swatches of red, fans, sunglasses, cigarette lighting, and perspiration. The dialog is crisp and terse, with an effective sense of humor that doesn't call attention to itself.

Body Heat comes so dangerously close to greatness that I find myself wanting to predict big things for it and its director. Surely his work on *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark* indicate a major talent with a good understanding of what makes good cinema. Even if that promise is never fulfilled, however, I think people will look back at *Body Heat* and want to see it again and again and again. □

TAD ON TV

By Richard Meyers



Well, the television industry itself made it clear what they thought of *Hill Street Blues* on the night of the Emmys by awarding the MTM-produced series eight awards in seemingly every artistic and technical category. Strangely enough, that bodes both good and ill for the program. First, it seems as if the awards will create an interest in the show that thousands of prior publicity dollars were unable to do. Naturally, NBC and its new president, Grant Tinker—who had been the head of MTM until he took over the network post from Fred Silverman—have spent scads of new monies to promote the record-breaking win. Initially, it seemed illogical not to immediately rebroadcast the first season of the show, but the powers that be decided that, having already rerun the original episodes three times in some cases, a fourth go-around would be entertainment overkill.

On second look, however, the eight Emmys far from guarantee to lift *Hill Street* from the blues. After the blitz of favorable criticism from reviewers all over the country and the wealth of commercials failed to get more people to watch, why should the Emmys? The record speaks for itself. Emmys did not bring such shows as *My World and Welcome To It* back. Then again, no new show had ever won as many awards as *Hill Street Blues*. Hardly anything was awarded to *Star Trek* or *The Law and Mr. Jones*, but both shows returned because of public demand.

They, of course, will decide whether *Hill Street* will become a well-traveled thoroughfare or a dead end. Not critics or the producers' fellow artists. And, at this point in time (November 1981), the signs are not good. After glowing coverage of the show in the October issue of *American Film*, the

November issue had a letter from Kay Anderson of Ventura, California, which read, in part:

"Could it be that the audience won't watch it [not because it is too good for television, but] because the audience does not care what happens to... misfits, jerks, cops who victimize the public... racial stereotypes and contemptible people?"

Ms. Anderson solidified my own thinking on the Blues subject after having offered my initial opinion a couple of columns ago. I had skirted around the issue then, failing to acknowledge my own mental bottom line. It could quite possibly be that after having read the papers, listened to the radio and watched as much as three hours of TV news, people—for the most part—just don't want to watch the *Hill Street* brand of depressing "reality." It is made more than abundantly clear to us

just how rotten things are in the real world. Maybe after all that, viewers don't want that type of thing encroaching into their fantasy lives.

As well produced as *Hill Street Blues* is, I know I don't. (What did you think—that I was going to let the faceless masses take the rap for killing the series?) Oh, no, I'm afraid that I uncomfortably watch the program under duress. If not for this column, I'd be hard pressed to find a reason to view the award-winning proceedings. It doesn't engage me or involve me, like fellow award winner *I Spy* or the overlooked *The Prisoner*. It doesn't inspire me, it only depresses. That may be the reason the series had failed. Whether it goes on to garner the hearts of countless millions this season is yet to be seen.

Yet to be seen by me at this time are the straight new fantasy shows. It should be very interesting to see how *Hill Street Blues* does in the ratings in comparison to *Strike Force* starring Robert Stack, *Today's FBI* starring Mike Connors, and *McClain's Law* starring James Arness—all three supposedly hard-hitting, whitewashed tales of man against crime. *Hill Street* is certainly in a good position, time-slot-wise. Televised Thursday at ten, viewers can only turn to *Jessica Novak* on CBS—the hateful glorification of a TV reporter—or the candy-coated bad news found on ABC's *20/20*. If its present position added to the eight Emmys doesn't do the trick, nothing will.

The rest of the new detective shows look serviceable, if not interesting. In addition to Jim Arness's *McClain*, NBC has brought back ex-*McMillan* Rock Hudson as an ex-private eye helping out his gumshoe son (played by Jack Scalia) in *The Devlin Connection*, ex-*Police Woman* Angie Dickinson as an unretired private eye in the cleverly-named *The Angie Dickinson Show*, and James Garner, in the company of Stuart Margolin, to bring back *Bret Maverick*. I wouldn't put a lot of money on any of these mystery shows, since each seemed plagued by concept and personnel changes before they went on the air.

ABC has the strongest characters and toughest point of view—its *Strike Force* being salty, nasty, and as close to textured as TV gets. Handled right, it could be the best "video noir" since *Harry O*. In addition to the reborn FBI program, there's also a somewhat rejuvenated Lee Majors as *The Fall Guy*—a stunt man who doubles as a bounty hunter. Except for a somewhat obnoxious partner, Majors has jettisoned the dourness he seemed immersed in during *The Six Million Dollar Man* to become television's answer to the Burt Reynolds film persona. It's too bad that Reynolds himself was unable to do the same thing when he starred in the drab *Hawk* and *Dan August* shows.

The network presently in the ratings lead, CBS, has only *Simon and Simon*—with two diametrically opposed brother 'tees—and a show I'm rooting for, *Shannon* starring Kevin Dobson. As you may remember last time, I

interviewed Dobson about this series and his role as Mike Hammer in a CBS telefilm. *Shannon* has yet to premiere, but the TV movie has aired, and it threw almost everything the actor said into doubt.

What aired under the title *Mickey Spillane's Margin for Murder* started as a pedestrian translation of one of the best hard-boiled dicks there is and descended into a full-scale travesty of both the character and the private eye form. It was one of those efforts at which, immediately after its completion, I shook my head in sad amazement. But the more I thought about it, the worse the miasma got.

The good news was that Dobson made a credible Mike Hammer. The actor has a good face, a good voice, broad shoulders, a strong chest, and the biggest hands I've ever seen. That man can really wrap his digits around a .45. In retrospect, however, I cannot agree with Dobson's decision not to read up on the Hammer character. There's no reason he couldn't have a working knowledge of what made the literary character tick to help—not hinder—his characterization. In fact, one of the most jarring moments, in character terms, came when Hammer answered the damsel in distress's query about coffee with something akin to, "Never drink the stuff... it's bad for your body."

Otherwise, Dobson delivered a bunch of good, strong Hammer-like speeches about how rotten bad guys were and how he'd like to squeeze their heads open like pimples. But that was about the only good thing about this ultimately sloppy, extremely arbitrary effort. At least forty-five minutes of the hundred-minute flick was padding, and what plot there was was emasculated. The first bad sign came when Mike Hammer knew the name of the doomed heroine without any introduction. After meeting her in a bar, he roughs up the bar's manager, returns to the bar, and says something like, "O.K., Daisy, let's have your life story." And, by gum, she gives it to him.

Actually, the first warning signs came to me when CBS, or somebody, changed the show's name three times. First, it was called *Mickey Spillane's Death by a Dainty Hand*. But they had to change that because, after

introducing the concept of Mike's best friend getting beaten to death by a "dainty hand" in the first half hour, they drop the clue without further reference. In the original script, one of the villain's main hit men had a miniature metal fist. They left the friend's murder in but dropped everything else. It was like being told a joke without the punch line.

Second, it was called *Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer*. And I suppose they dropped that because they felt there wouldn't be enough recognition of the character, given that Hammer's greatest fame was in the "fifties. As far as I'm concerned, however, it was dropped because they couldn't bring themselves to translate Hammer onto the tube effectively. I say "couldn't" bring themselves" since violence isn't necessarily needed to make the man work. But retribution is. An eye for an eye is. Making the punishment fit the crime is. That's the blood that flows through Hammer's veins.

But, incredibly, after talking all through the darn movie about what he wanted to do with the villain, this pale plagiarist of Hammer faces the man—after several meaningless murders and time-wasting meanderings. Rather than killing the manager, the hit man, and the heroine to keep Hammer away, the villain would have been better served killing Hammer—especially since the hit man had a perfect opportunity earlier in the illogical, nonsensical piece. Anyway, once Mike has the villain dead to rights, he gives him right over to the NYPD, giving this as the reason: "Killing you myself would be too easy. Now you'll die little by little."

When one talks about the stupidest, "facilest," most contrary, and most uncharacteristic thing a TV detective has ever said, this has to rank with the best (or worst, as the case may be) of them. I was afraid the show would be bad, but even my misgivings didn't prepare me for this badness. *Mickey Spillane's Margin for Murder* was an insult to Spillane—who had nothing to do with the script—and his fans. Or, as Spillane himself calls them... his customers. As one of his best customers, I feel like calling the Better Business Bureau. □

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Bouchercon XII *alias* Beer City Capers

By Mary Ann Grochowski

It started out as a typical Autumn weekend in Milwaukee. The trees were in full Fall color. The air was clear with the brisk promise of colder weather ahead. The sun was dazzling as it beamed through the windows of the Marc Plaza Hotel, highlighting the beautiful chandeliers and woodwork of one of Milwaukee's oldest and finest resting places. But this peaceful scene was only a cover-up for a very mysterious group gathering on the fifth floor. Sinister sleuths, cranky crooks, peering private eyes, probing police detectives, and rowdy robbers were preoccupying the minds of their creators and fans at the twelfth annual mystery authors' and fans' convention.

Although the convention festivities did not formally begin until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 9, 1981 and were scheduled to be terminated at 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, October 11, the actual planning, plotting, promotion, and prestidigitation necessary to organize this prestigious event began well over a year before the convention. In fact, tangential plans for 1981's Beer City Capers were announced at Bouchercon XI, in Washington, D.C., in October 1980.

Ironically, the plans that had been formulated at the time of Washington's Bouchercon were drastically altered as more precise details were acknowledged and accommodated. The biggest change necessary was the actual meeting site, the hotel. Originally, the Hyatt Regency, Milwaukee's newest hotel, had been chosen as the most economical yet glamorous choice. For some unexplained reason, however, the dates which had been set for the convention, namely Columbus Day weekend, were interpreted erroneously by the hotel management, who reserved

the wrong weekend. When I received the written contract from the hotel, I tried to change the date back to October 9-11 but was informed that the meeting rooms were not available.





Mary Ann Grochowski

One of the other problems I encountered in trying to arrange hotel accommodations was the dearth of information I had received about previous conventions' plans and their coordinators' advice. To put it bluntly, I had no mailing list, no idea of the number of actual sleeping rooms which would be needed, and could only guess how many authors and fans would be attracted to Milwaukee. What a dilemma! Even *The Great Merlini* would have had difficulty solving that problem!

Fortunately, the management of the Marc Plaza Hotel, one of the many I subsequently contacted, proved to be extremely helpful and informative. They were able to determine that at the previous two conventions, in Washington, D.C. and in Los Angeles in 1979, only thirty sleeping rooms had actually been booked at the convention hotels. This would also probably have been true had Milwaukee's convention been held at the Hyatt Regency, since their room rates were almost double the rates offered to us at the Marc Plaza. Based on that projected figure, however, I was finally able to do some financial planning with the hotel. Because previous Midwest conventions had only drawn an attendance of approximately 150, I hoped for an attendance of at least 200 and decided that to obtain that goal we would have to have a program that would be difficult to resist.

As early as 1979, at the Los Angeles convention, Bouchercon X, I began to investigate the possibilities of attracting a few of my favorite authors to the Beer City venture. Several authors expressed some interest, a few actually committed themselves to attending if I did indeed succeed in setting Milwaukee as the location for Bouchercon XII. I don't think they believed that I would really go ahead with the plan. Of those few who committed themselves, only a couple finally ended up on the program. John Lutz and Al Nussbaum, besides fulfilling their promises to

appear on the program, were very helpful and encouraging while I was struggling with ideas for the format and topics to be discussed in the final program.

The central core of the planning committee consisted of myself, Beverly De Weese, a Milwaukee librarian and wife of the author Gene De Weese, and Gary Niebuhr, Director of the Greendale Public Library. None of us had ever planned a convention before, Gary had never even been to Bouchercon before, and Beverly had only attended Bouchercon twice, but she had attended many science-fiction conventions. Members of a reading-discussion group to which we belonged and the members of another local group, the Cloak & Clue Society, helped with mailings, distributed local flyers, etc. We were the perpetrators; the location was set; now we needed speakers and topics of popular interest.

Because it had never been done before, we decided to have a female guest of honor. Easier said than



Helen McCloy

done! How many female American mystery authors can you name who are well-known and still living? Finances were also a problem. Since transportation and hotel expenses were the responsibility of the convention for the guest of honor, it would be best if she lived close to Milwaukee. After all of the most likely candidates were nominated, the best choice appeared to be Helen McCloy. Not only did she publish her latest book in 1980, and win current recognition as a result, but she had been the first female president of the Mystery Writers of America and the wife of Davis Dresser, the creator of Mike Shayne.

The fan guest of honor, for whom the room expenses would also be assumed by the convention, was an easy choice. There was no more fitting candidate for the first fan guest of honor than Allen J. Hubin. To ask anyone else would have been a gross injustice. Luckily, he accepted.

We wanted to draw the majority of the rest of the speakers from the Midwest if possible and to line up topics appropriate to the setting as well. Local members of the Mystery Writers of America were approached via letters, their addresses having been obtained from a long-out-of-date directory. There is no way of knowing how many of the members actually received their letters requesting their presence at Bouchercon XII, but the response left much to be desired. William C. Gault, a resident of Milwaukee during his early professional career and Robert Bloch, also a former Milwaukeean, were both asked to return to their former stamping grounds. Bill Gault reluctantly agreed to patch up the holes in his alligator topcoat and leave his California hacienda to renew old acquaintances. Robert Bloch had to decline but graciously agreed to write an original essay about his days in Milwaukee for the program booklet.

As the list of participants grew, so did our uneasiness. What we still needed was a person with personality, known inside and outside of the mystery field, a controversial name, but one recognized in almost every household. Eureka! We had it! Mickey Spillane!

I remembered that Mickey had been in Milwaukee some time ago for a collegiate tug of war sponsored by Miller Lite Beer. Since the Miller Brewery was Milwaukee based, I gave them a call. They were very cooperative and believed as I did, that a writer's conference would be right up Mickey's alley. There was some delay in obtaining an affirmative response from Mickey himself due to his involvement in his Broadway play, which has now been placed on the back burner, but finally word came that he was committed.

Much of the advance publicity had already been

William Campbell Gault (standing),
Mickey Spillane, Max Alan Collins (right).



prepared and appeared prior to our knowledge of Mickey Spillane's commitment. Notice of the convention appeared in the July or August issues of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine*, and in the fanzines such as *The Poisoned Pen* and *The Mystery FANcier*. Notices were sent to all known mystery bookstores throughout the nation and Canada.

Approximately one month prior to the convention, notices announcing the dates and participants, along with a rough schedule, were sent to libraries, bookstores, newspapers, radio and TV stations throughout the three-county area surrounding Milwaukee. Many libraries set up special displays of mystery books including those by authors who were scheduled to attend. With a large number of posters in surplus, we decided to really bombard the general public. We waited until there were only fourteen days left before the convention to distribute these flyers in local supermarkets, drugstores, banks, anywhere that would let us put up a poster. All of the local colleges had already received an ample number of registration blanks and information, particularly the colleges in which classes on the mystery were conducted.

The last two weeks, or the final stretch, found us setting up last minute arrangements with the hotel; microphones, tables, keys, rooms, projection equipment all had to be accounted for and on schedule for the performances and panels. Since the convention was being videotaped by Video Magic, Inc., it was vital that the sound equipment be thoroughly checked out in advance. Although the acoustics in the room were very good, tapes would not have been of good quality without dependable sound systems.

About this time, my phone began ringing incessantly. I was glad to go to work in the morning and escape all of the last-minute quandaries which besieged us. One of the biggest dilemmas turned out to be the program brochure. Although it was virtually complete as far as information, ads, etc. by September 1, the cover art, typesetting, and printing were not completed until the week of the convention, giving the planning committee palpitations of anxiety. I received several calls from authors who were unsure as to whether or not they could attend, but if they could, wanted to be assured of a place in the program. A couple of authors received phone calls from me asking them to sub for whomever might not show up. Tact and desperation went hand in hand.

The last week before the convention, minutes ticking away, the phone ringing nonstop morning to night, I was arranging TV, radio, and newspaper interviews for the guest of honor, Helen McCloy,

and for Mickey Spillane, as well as for the convention as a whole.

Right up to the opening of the bookroom, we were unsure as to what the final count would be of the booksellers participating in the convention. Originally, we had set up a deadline of August 1 for anyone interested in selling books at Bouchercon, but that was obviously unrealistic, since at that date we had only about six tables reserved. The final number turned out to be more than twice that. A fine selection of materials was represented, from new books to pulps with plenty of variety.

Convention participants began arriving as early as Wednesday, October 7. Those who had let me know in advance that they would have time to tour the city were sent a Milwaukee Visitor's Guide and suggestions which seemed to keep them happy as they awaited the formal events. By Thursday evening, a large number of out-of-state authors and fans had begun to invade the Marc Plaza's regal halls. After I picked up Helen McCloy at the train station, with Kathi Maio, a Boston journalist and librarian, to assist me, we settled Ms. McCloy at the hotel and then persuaded her to join a large group of early arrivals, most of whom were members of DAPA-EM (*Elementary, My Dear APA*, a thirty-five-member amateur press association mystery fanzine), who were dining at one of Milwaukee's famous German restaurants, Mader's.

The next morning, Friday, October 9, was THE DAY!

Ms. McCloy was very anxious about her scheduled TV interview, which was to take place at noon at a local station. She called me twice at home that morning worrying about whether or not we would be on time; she, herself, having arisen at 5:00 A.M.! The interview itself went very well, in spite of the two

interviewers' inane questions. The interrogation included comments and questions which revealed the interviewers' complete lack of knowledge of the mystery genre and of reading in general. Imagine Ms. McCloy, a sweet, discreet, little old lady, huddled in her coat in a freezing studio, being asked "Do you have a devious mind?" Or how about, "Why do people read? Is it supposed to be fun?" Helen was wonderful, never losing her composure, and coming back with frank witticisms, in spite of the fact that they never did ask her about the plot formation which was the announced topic of the interview.

Gary and I then whizzed Helen away to a scheduled luncheon at the Milwaukee Press Club, which is one of the oldest press clubs in the nation. We were joined there by many authors and fans. Max Collins, Chris Steinbrunner, Clark Howard, Al Nussbaum, K. Arne Blom, Bill De Andrea, Bob Randisi, Michael Seidman, Al Hubin, Phyllis White, Dave Hagberg, Jeff Meyerson, and William C. Gault, to name just a few, all joined in the festivities as both Helen and Bill Gault were invited to sign plaques which would be framed and hung on the Press Club wall. It was a nostalgic scene for Bill Gault, who had used the Press Club as a meeting place for a writers' group and poker-playing session four decades ago.

Back at the hotel, the organization of the booksellers' room began and preparation for registration was completed. By 5:00 P.M., the lines for registration started to form, and we were really on our way!

The next three days seemed to whiz by so quickly that I had to arm myself with a copy of the program in order to figure out what was supposed to happen next, or to remember where I was supposed to be. I have been assured, however, by a few relatively unbiased people, that my confusion was not obvious to them, as the programs proceeded as scheduled with only one hitch. Luckily, that misadventure of Sherlock Holmes occurred very early in the schedule when the Sherlockian actors' group failed to show for their Friday evening performance. Since Chris Steinbrunner, Max Collins, and Mike Nevins had provided a good supply of films, we were able to substitute a film program which everyone enjoyed.

Back to the beginning, Friday evening began with a short excerpt from a play entitled *Any Number Can Die*, a mystery spoof performed by a local theatrical group. This performance ended dramatically with a gun being fired, as Bouchercon began with a BANG! Next, the guests of honor, Helen McCloy, Allen Hubin, and Phyllis White, Anthony Boucher's widow, gave short opening addresses to the gathered audience. The guests of honor were presented with leather plaques commemorating their participation in Bouchercon XII.

Percy Sutton (left) and Chris Steinbrunner



Before Art Scott began his introduction of William C. Gault, who was to speak about his early writing career in Milwaukee, Mr. Gault was presented with a leather plaque in the shape of a sole, in commemoration of his former Milwaukee occupation, sole fitter in a shoe factory. He said it brought back many memories.

It would be impossible to give you a blow-by-blow account of each panel or talk presented at Bouchercon. There are video and audio tapes available in case anyone is interested in finding out what he missed. I would just like to dwell on what were the general impressions and highlights for me of this unbelievable weekend.

The biggest thrill of Bouchercon XII, for me, was to bring so many wonderful people to my home town. I had hoped to motivate more interest in the mystery genre in this area, to help closet mystery addicts shed their hideouts and step into the open, and, of course, to help everyone who attended have an enjoyable stay in Milwaukee. It was really very difficult to believe that a whole year's work was finally bearing fruit as I stood in front of the audience Friday evening with my welcoming address. It passed much too quickly.

Of special enjoyment to me was the mix of authors on the program. With Helen McCloy, William C. Gault and Mickey Spillane representing the golden days of mystery writing in the United States, and authors such as John Lutz, Bill DeAndrea, Gene DeWeese, Joe Hensley, Rosemary Gatnby, Max Collins, and Sean Flannery representing the current phase, and Stuart Kaminsky combining the old with the new, almost every phase of mystery novels and stories was discussed. The frankness of the authors and their readiness to answer questions from other authors and fans; the vital personalities, combined with wit and humor but spiced with the wisdom of experience made each panel or presentation interesting and entertaining.

The autographing sessions were very well received and attended. It was not unusual to see a fan lined up in front of an author with a stack of five or six books. It was not unusual to overhear statements from each author in turn being repeated over again, such as "Where did you find this one!" The question-and-answer periods after each session were great ways of making everyone feel an essential part of the convention.

Of course, there is always room for improvement. In retrospect, there should have been a more definitive team responsible for registration. Beverly and I were constantly trying to shanghai someone or another to man the table. We should have charged more than \$15.00 for the three-day weekend. A charge of \$20.00 or even \$25.00 would not have been



William L. DeAndrea and Mary Ann Grochowski

inappropriate, nor do I think it would have turned very many away. I don't know how we could possibly have done any more local publicity than we did, but it would have been nice to have drawn more local people. Final attendance from the Milwaukee area was only about forty-five. When I spoke to some people who didn't come but wished they had after the convention, they said they had felt intimidated and didn't think the general public was welcome. I guess we should have said on our flyers, "General Public Welcome!"

I would also strongly recommend that anyone planning on organizing a Bouchercon in his community check out the printing and typesetting options available early. Giving a discount for early registration might also give future organizers some advance money so their own pockets will not be quite as empty as ours were. I would also suggest that they get plenty of sleep the week before the convention if they can.

From the letters that have been continuously flowing in since the convention proclaiming what a good time was had by all who attended, I must admit that Bouchercon XII was very successful. Enjoyment is the ultimate purpose of the convention and the way Tony Boucher would have wanted it to be. Total attendance for Bouchercon XII was 212. That may seem a small number, but it certainly provides ample opportunity for intermingling and getting to know one another. In fact, I think they were the most congenial 211 people I have ever met, mystery fans and authors alike. May we all meet again next year at Bouchercon XIII, Bouchercon by-the-Bay in San Francisco. Inquiries may be mailed along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Don Herron, Chairman, Bouchercon by-the-Bay, 537 Jones Street #9207, San Francisco, CA 94102. □

LETTERS

From Robert A. W. Lowndes:

What better way to spend Thanksgiving morning than writing a letter of appreciation to one of those labors of devotion I remain thankful? I certainly agree with Bob Randisi's letter in the Summer 1981 issue: having recently started going through my old copies of TAD (I didn't start, alas, until Vol. 4, No. 1) and relishing the long letters section, it's somewhat sad to see it reduced to a single page in the latest issue.

I don't know whether that is because you feel that the letters department should not be given too much space, or it's a case of just not receiving many letters. Or many letters that say anything of interest to the readers, in your judgment. (I had that problem in my various science-fiction magazines, at times; and my solution was one which I would not recommend to you.)

Considering my own negligence in writing to you, however, I'm hardly in a position to chide other readers; and, of course, it happens that many dedicated letter-writers fade away after a while, for one reason or another—and by no means always a matter of interest.

William A. S. Sarjeant's lead article on Gervase Fen was my selection for best in this issue, particularly because I have not read any of the Crispin novels but now want to do so. It won't be the first time that TAD has steered me to new pleasures in detective fiction. Sylvia W. Patterson also did a splendid job with her tracing of Ariadne Oliver's amusing career. That will make my re-reading of Christie even more enjoyable. And Fred Dueren's comments remind me that I have yet to get to the "Old Man in the Corner" stories. Well done, all.

Thanks for the fine presentation of my efforts. I have been meaning to write a note of thanks since the first installment appeared. What has held me up is that I discovered a whopping error in the very first installment that was entirely my own doing. My first thought was to write and correct myself immediately; the second thought was to wait and give some of the eagle-eye, knowledgeable readers a chance to call me on it first. But apparently no one caught it, or those who did haven't had the time to write about it.

The error had to do with Hugo Gernsback's strange bankruptcy in 1929, which I tried to refer to as briefly as possible. But I see that what I said was "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." Dear me, no! The injustice of the laws was that, in such an instance, the debtor was *not* given any such chance. I don't recall, and cannot at the moment find reference material relating to, how long the



accounts had to be overdue. The whole point, however, is that the debtor was given no last chance at all. Once the proper forms had been filled in, the debtor was automatically declared bankrupt by the court in question. That is why Gernsback did not know he was bankrupt until a reporter called him up to ask if his radio station was up for sale.

Since it was the Gernsback case which resulted in the laws being changed, a little more background may be in order. Hugo Gernsback lived in the same apartment building as Bernard MacFadden, and they were elevator acquaintances. MacFadden brought out *Ghost Stories* shortly after Gernsback started *Amazing Stories* in 1926. MacFadden also published various "health" magazines, which leaned heavily on various fads, while Gernsback's publications were as scientifically correct as possible. So MacFadden wanted to buy *Amazing Stories* and the Gernsback health publications, which were giving him stricter competition than he liked. Gernsback declined the offer.

When he learned what had happened, Gernsback went to the officials in question and told them not only the above, but another interesting fact: two of the three creditors who combined to force him into liquidation were also suppliers for MacFadden. There was no direct evidence of collusion, but it did look fishy. No action was taken against MacFadden, but it was gently hinted to him that it wouldn't be wise for him to wind up owning any of Gernsback's titles. He didn't; and Gernsback immediately set up another publishing company, incorporated in another state. His first magazines, *Science Wonder Stories*, *Air Wonder Stories*, and *Radio-Craft*, appeared in May and June 1929. The liquidation had taken place in February, so we see here one of the fastest comebacks in magazine publishing history. And one of those three magazines is still being published: *Radio-Craft* is now *Radio-Electronics*, and will shortly be starting its 53rd year.

From Marvin Lachman:

The combination of the letters of Jiro Kimura and Bob Randisi and your editorial in Vol. 14, No. 3 of TAD has impelled me to write again. The basic questions that have

been raised are whether TAD and whether the American mystery? No easy questions these.

Perhaps my own experience with TAD might explain why fans seem disenchanted with it and why there are few letters and even less controversy. TAD was born as a magazine of mystery fans. When professionals (e.g. Breen and Proznin) wrote in it, they wrote as fans. Somehow, in its journey to San Diego, TAD became a "spokes-journal" for the mystery—or at least for Publisher's, Inc. and its Mystery Library.

I wrote a letter specifically criticizing Vol. 10, No. 4, which had attempted to defend the mystery, as if it were still under attack from Edmund Wilson. It had included such articles as "A Defense for Crime Fiction" and "Mystery Genre Gets Literary Status Boost." The Uneasy Chair editorial for that issue began: "What better therapy for a jaded psyche than a good mystery." My letter was never printed. At about the same time, I submitted an article. That was never published, either. Worse, I never received acknowledgment of either my submission or of a follow-up letter. Finally, like so many others, I had a hell of a time getting the copies to which I was entitled on my subscription. Is it any wonder that I write for *The Mystery FanCier*, *The Poisoned Pen*, and *DAPA-EM* when I write for "free"? What I write there is acknowledged and appreciated by people who are true fans.

Except for Al Hubin, and possibly regular columnist Charlie Shibuk, I wrote more words for TAD during its first ten years than anyone else. I never resorted to footnotes, which are crabgrass on the lawn of fandom. TAD editors have consistently failed to exercise their editorial prerogatives regarding these, to eliminate or curtail them. Perhaps, it is because they do not pay for articles. The current TAD editor is by no means solely responsible. Al Hubin had a long history of accepting footnotes, beginning with Joan Mooney's interminable stultifying thesis which ran in Vols. 3, 4, and 5.

I never wrote from a "publish or perish" academic compulsion. I would not write articles like "Dorothy L. Sayers and the Apotheosis of Detective Fiction" or "Detective Story Aspects of the Nouveau Roman." I tried to be informative and amusing, but I always tried to write for other fans. Nor was I alone. So did "Mike" Nevins when he wrote about Keeler, Bill Proznin in describing the Phoenix mysteries, Randy Cox on George Harmon Cox, Frank McSherry on Vanishers, etc. People wrote letters. They added to my lists. They even misunderstood my pseudo-scholarship when I did an article on Perry Mason in the style of Sherlockians. They wrote criticizing Guy Townsend's real scholarship regarding Richard III.

Now there seems to be very little in TAD to write letters about, certainly nothing humorous or controversial. Yet, there are people waiting to read. When I ripped into James Crumley's *The Last Good Kiss* in my *DAP-EM* 'zine, I got plenty of reaction.

Your editorial exemplifies the further trend of TAD away from the fan. As an editor-writer yourself (and friend of many professional writers), you are understandably anxious to earn a living and promote new American mysteries. I've received enough rejection slips for fiction and nonfiction in my time to be entirely sympathetic, but your suggested solutions are worse than the problem. Surely you aren't serious about expecting government subsidies for publishing. It's not likely to happen in these days of Reagan economics, and I'm not sure it would lead to better mysteries being written. Equally misconceived is the idea of diluting the quality of the Edgar Awards by making American writers alone eligible for some of the top awards. It is in MWA's long-term interests to promote the best, not to qualify it for the possible short-term advantage of a few writers.

Many TAD readers can echo the sentiment of the person at Boucheron in Washington, who, albeit young, said he had enough books to read to last his lifetime. Christie, Crofts, Queen, Woolrich, Chandler, the Millars, Francis, et al. did not receive subsidies. It may be tough, but today's mystery writers are going to have to write books that are good enough to make publishers want to print them and make readers who have many other books at home want to buy them.

I hope we have finally got the issue of how TAD can keep its fans out into the open. There are many of us who want to "go home" again and are waiting for a sign that you want to return to the material that made it fun to read and write for—and to, What about it, TAD?

* * * * *

From Greg Goode:

Congratulations on TAD 14:2! The square-back format looks very impressive, and the cover with Sherlockian Shakespeare, dignified.

I'm very sorry to see Fred Dueren's column go. In many cases it was the only way I had of learning about paperbacks that were not available locally. I hope that his replacement will be as interesting and as balanced as he was. I appreciated the note about *The Game of X* by Robert Sheckley. I thought it was a forgotten book, although Sheckley continues to write, as for *The Twilight Zone*.

Also interesting was the article on Carr. In 14:1, I was overjoyed to see the study of Jo Gar, complete with checklist. Now if I can only find those issues of *Black Mask*...

* * * * *

From James P. Devlin:

Several points in the current TAD—notably Bob Randisi's plea for increased correspondence—have moved me to this letter, which will be rather rambling, I'm afraid.

First, the sad state of mystery publishing. Thank heaven, Joan Kahn has taken her imprint to Ticknor & Fields, where it will, I hope, continue to signify quality in both material and production. Although Doubleday's Crime Club does have the distinction of being the longest-running imprint in our field, the physical quality of their books has declined to the abysmal, their first editions now being no better than a book club edition.

Of course, the price of books isn't helping the mystery field any, either. The price of a hardcover mystery continues to climb, and more and more people are deciding to wait for the paperback. Unfortunately, the price of the paperback is going up, too (with a \$5.95 tag predicted for Clavell's *Noble House*), and books that do poorly in hardcover are not considered likely to recoup their losses in the soft form.

Now, if the original mysteries of the future are going to make their first appearances in paperback, TAD is definitely going to have to start giving them better coverage. I read a book, not that long ago, by Joseph Matthews, called *Alicia's Trump*; unless I missed it (and that's entirely possible), the book was never reviewed in TAD.

I certainly think that Charter is doing a wonderful and long-overdue job on the Saint stories, but before you blame the publishers for the whole thing, you have to look at your own pages. I like to know about old friends coming out again as much as the next guy, but it really can't be necessary to tell even the most ill-read tyro that Dell and Pocket Books will continue to reprint the same old Christie titles year after year as long as their presses hold out.

Of course, there is a tie between the better-selling books and the same publishers' sleepers, one helping to pay for the other, but let's consider another real problem: the publisher often doesn't really know what the public wants. Why are there only two Hugh Pentecosts currently in paperback, when he continues to publish at least two novels a year? Why has it been all but impossible, until lately, to get an Elizabeth Daly title in softcover? Isn't anyone in this country interested in Dennis Wheatley, one of England's most published thriller writers? When was the last time you saw an Edgar Wallace?

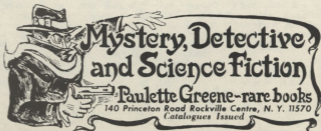
Certainly, an inactive fandom is the greatest problem the mystery labors under. If people are unhappy with what TAD has become in recent years, they should write: TAD will only be what its readers want it to be. (May I humbly suggest a proofreader? "Memorium" (14:2, p. 118) and "Penguid" (14:3, p. 264) should have been caught, and someone should have known that *A Study in Terror* was at least used as the title of a Sherlock Holmes-Jack the Ripper film, although all the Ellery Queen material seems to have been dropped from the plot.)

Frank Eck, an old friend of mine, contributed several articles to TAD a while back under the title of "Shadow Gallery," about the cover art on mystery stories. In this project, and the editing of an EQMM Calendar, he met with all kinds of difficulty from the art departments of the various publishers he contacted. This is all part of the weakness of mystery fandom; science fiction covers can be easily identified by their painters. Jack Gaughan's covers for the pirate edition of *Lord of the Rings* were the best that trilogy has had; they conveyed the excitement of the narrative, rather than the prettiness of the fairyland it takes place in. Frazetta and Vallejo have each covered the entire series of Tarzan stories—and their work is well known to fans.

But does anyone know Mara MacAfee's Christie covers? (There is a book of her work available now, but the ad focus on her *National Lampoon* drawings.) Does anyone remember Bob McGinnis's Brett Halliday covers? (Or his lovely covers for the Dorothy Dunnett historical adventures?) Who outside of the pulp field recognizes the Steranko covers for the Shadow reprints?

Is there an answer? Yes—write! Some time ago, I decided I wanted to do a piece for TAD on Georgette Heyer. I wrote to Al Hubin; he was supportive. I wrote to Miss Heyer's son; he was helpful. I wrote to Heinemann Publishing; they were cooperative. The piece isn't done yet, but, if I hadn't written to these people, it would never have been started. And most people will write back (with the conspicuous exception, in my case, of Doubleday); I have a very nice letter from Joan Kahn concerning the Creasey-Marric books.

TAD must encourage, and lead, mystery fandom. It may not be enough for TAD just





I'll be with you in a minute, Poole... I'm changing!

to be our premier publication. There was a very interesting item a few issues back, which amounted to the virtual blackballing of a second-hand book dealer; very few publications could do this effectively. The specialized societies — BSI, Wolfe Pack — are all very well in their way, but it is not enough in the last analysis.

I can't believe that there aren't enough mystery fans out there to organize like the science-fiction fans do. We can get what we want from the publishers and the bookstore if we go about it in the right way. We are not just a bunch of little old ladies nodding over our tea.

Let's make mystery fandom mean something.

P.S. It looks like TAD, with 14:3, is getting a little closer to "schedule"; congratulations.

* * * * *

From Charles Shubuk:

There are several mistakes in Vol. 14, No. 3.

William A. S. Sarjeant is incorrect in stating that Gervase Fen has been "knocked unconscious..." on p. 196, when the previous paragraph (quoted from Crispin's *The Moving Toyshop*) clearly states that "Cadogan moaned and opened his eyes." (Doesn't anyone bother to check articles for accuracy before publication?)

[Charles is being a bit nit-picking here. The rest of the quoted paragraph indicates that Fen is in the cupboard with Cadogan... he just revived sooner. It all seemed clear to us, but perhaps I'll have to edit more closely.

Still, without nit-pickers, we'd be knee-deep in nits, eh?

Michael]

Raymond Obstfeld is doubly wrong when he lists *Harmony Heaven* (1929) as a silent Hitchcock film on p. 249.

In his review of a recent edition of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Howard Lachtman (who really should know better) states that *The Moonstone* (1868) "is the first, full-fledged, full-length detective story in the English language." Isn't he aware of *The*

Notting Hill Mystery by the pseudonymous Charles Felix, which was published in book form in 1865 — three years before *The Moonstone*?

[Ray? Howard? Over to you.

Michael]

* * * * *

From Teri White:

This is my first letter to TAD, and, admittedly, it is being written with a certain degree of trepidation. Scholarship has never been my greatest strength, but having been assured that the absence of footnoted intellectual gymnastics is not only allowed, but actually preferred, I decided to share my views.

Let me preface my remarks by acknowledging the fact that I am a new reader of TAD. My first issue, in fact, was the first under the new editor. No doubt this slants my perspective somewhat. Having so much enjoyed the three new issues, I was delighted to be able to purchase some back copies at Bouchercon in October. While I enjoyed the rather mixed bag of past issues, I can see no diminution of quality with the arrival of a new leader. Certainly, it is an unenviable task to step in and take over from such a well-established and respected editor.

The only area I see suffering somewhat in the newer issues is the letters column, and responsibility for that lies not with the editor but with the readers.

Now, a few specific comments about 14:3. Michael's editorial was interesting, to say the least, and, to an aspiring writer such as myself, more than a little frightening. No need for new fiction? One might as well deny the need for air to breathe. The past is fine, but any art form that refuses to grow will stagnate and eventually die.

As to the question of why mystery fandom does not rise to the occasion in the same fervent manner as do sci-fi fanatics, I am equally bewildered. Perhaps mystery fandom is too segmented — hard-boiled freaks (like myself) rarely read the cozy tea-and-murder books; no doubt the reverse is also true. Sci-fi

fans (within their genre) are far more catholic in taste. An Asimov fan and a Heinlein fan probably feel a closer kinship than, for example, a Spillane reader would with a Christie devotee. Another thought: sci-fi fans tend to be young, and the young are notoriously passionate in their enthusiasms. Even those of chronological maturity seem to have maintained a childlike gusto for the subject. Mystery fans, at least in my experience, seem to be an older group, a group more involved with other aspects of life, and therefore less free to congregate and applaud their genre.

Having said all of that, I must admit that I enjoyed Bouchercon more than any sci-fi con I've ever attended — due, no doubt, primarily to the fact that mystery-suspense fiction has always been a true passion, while SF has not. My enjoyment was also due in large part to the fact that so many fascinating people attended.

Why don't mysteries sell? Darned if I know, but then I'm a person who will jog through a blizzard to get to the bookstore for a new Robert Parker or Joseph Hansen, or... hell, I even buy them in hardback.

That's probably enough about Michael's editorial. I agree with what was said, and, yes, it was a lot more interesting than yet another recounting of the woes of fanzine publication. Keep beating that dead horse, Michael; as both a reader and a writer, I appreciate it. Who knows, there might be a spark of life in there somewhere.

Richard Meyers's review of *Hill Street Blues* was, as he himself admits, mostly hairsplitting. Unlike him, I do race to the TV set whenever it's on — not only to the TV but to the faithful Betamax as well. Even if the rest of the vast wasteland weren't so vast and so very wasted, HSB would still be a shining moment. One local critic commented that the show occasionally veered from reality into the bizarre; I responded by telling him that my own reality frequently does the same.

Having read and enjoyed William DeAndrea's books, I was pleased to see him taking on the task of reviewing paperbacks. It was even more pleasing to discover that his prejudices coincide so nicely with my own. I, too, avoid the supernatural, Holmes pastiches, (most) spy books, especially those with swastikas in view. Also, as a writer, I definitely believe in being gentle with neophytes.

No one asked, but let's pretend they did, and let me mention one thing I'd like to see in TAD. That's interviews and essays dealing with some of the writers doing top-notch PI stories — Joseph Hansen, Stephen Greenleaf, Jonathan Valin, Robert Parker, Brad Solomon — there's a whole lot of them out there, and I, at least, buy and enjoy their books.

Also, I am encouraged that the editor has expressed an interest in cutting footnotes considerably.

Maybe the readers could do their bit by responding with a little of the SF fan's vaunted enthusiasm?

All in all, I love TAD, and I look forward to many more issues. Keep up the good work.

CURRENT REVIEWS

Great Detectives: Seven Original Investigations by Julian Symons. Abrams. 144 pp. \$18.50

A riddle for readers: the most exclusive club in literature is composed of what elite group of fictional characters?

Here's a clue. From Dupin of old Paris to Lew Archer of contemporary California, the names of these characters are legend, their readers are legion, and their writers never tire of telling us that "Crime does not pay—enough."

If you guessed that prestigious society of super sleuths known by their reverent readers as The Great Detectives, stamp your suspect sheet "solved" but leave room in the margin for fresh notes on this mysterious subject furnished here by Julian Symons, crime writer (*The Blackheath Poisonings*, *Sweet Adelaide*), crime critic (*Mortal Consequences*), and successor to Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers as President of London's legendary Detection Club.

Invited to attempt updating the biographies of some famous sleuths, Symons consulted his conscience and decided that it couldn't be done. "My first reaction," he admits, "was to say that the task was impossible, that I had too much information about some of them, too little about others. My next was to reflect that if some of the 'facts' given us by their creators were blended with inventions of my own, the result might be entertaining to read."

"Supposing, further, that I introduced myself into some of the pieces as an enquiring biographer, they could also be amusing to write. The technique would need to vary from one detective to another, the story should suggest the master without ever attempting to enter into competition with him, parody must be avoided, and although this was planned as an illustrated book, the text must have its separate interest, even without the pictures."

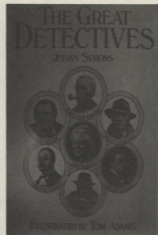
The attractive illustrations (by Tom Adams) are eye-catching as well as evocative, but it is the writing that surprises us by fulfilling nearly all of Symons's precise rules and regulations for playing "the great game." How well the writing works, subtly recapturing the mood, the tone, and the texture of an original while at the same time reminding us of these seemingly authentic adventures are actually a mystery writer's homage to his most personally esteemed predecessors.

Neither parody nor pastiche, Symons's seven stories are closely concerned with a very careful observation of the human nature of the six men and one woman chosen for depiction, and with fabricating the puzzle problems that recreate their attitudes and artistry as crime-solvers.

Of course, devotees of this or that detective may claim that Symons has at times taken too much poetic license or narrative liberty with their favorite character; and other strict

constructionists may argue that the little mysteries which Symons invents for the sleuths are not always challenging enough. Agreed. But what is remarkable about the writing is Symons's eye for incident, his ear for language that reflects and reveals character, and his ability to plant the telling detail in the web of a plot. If these are not great detective stories about Great Detectives, they are at least beautifully representative.

Here, for example, we meet Sherlock Holmes coming out of his beekeeping retirement to assist a distraught young girl whose fiancé has disappeared. Holmes looks, sounds, acts, and even thinks like the real Holmes. One has a sense of the true person-



ality missing in so many of the modern, neo-Holmesian novels. Over crumpets and clues, the reader can enjoy the pleasure of his company and the riddle of a mystery which has, as Symons says, "a tease, if not exactly a twist, in the tail." A bee sting, so to speak.

Agatha Christie fans will enjoy meeting the chatty vicar of Miss Jane Marple's cozy village and reading the notes compiled by a certain retired captain for a never-completed biography of the fastidious, the precise, and slightly vain Hercule Poirot.

On the American side of sleuthdom, Symons reaches a peak as biographer-detective in his interviews with the friends of Nero Wolfe, Ellery Queen, and Philip Marlowe. Informal conversations aimed at eliciting the origins or fates of eminent American investigators bring these characters to life in a manner that allows the author (and his reader) to have a great deal of fun. The Marlowe interview which ends the book is a particularly sly sendup. Its storytelling fidelity, ingenuity, and highly visual quality reflect the

controlling theme of the book in still another unexpected variation.

Working within the discipline imposed both by his own criteria and by the rigors of the detective short story itself, Symons scores often enough to make *Great Detectives* a happy excursion, a pleasing fantasy about some perpetually appealing characters who have given many hours of innocent pleasure to a wide variety of mystery readers. *Great Detectives* can be called "imaginative biography" or "factual fiction," but these terms are of small use in describing a book of so many narrative surprises and illustrative delights. Readers will enjoy their wanderings through Symons's Mysteryland, journeying from the mean streets of Marlowe's L.A. to Sherlock's fairy-tale cottage, and from the stifling orchid room of Nero Wolfe to the fragrant lanes of Miss Marple's St. Mary Mead ("a perfectly ordinary pleasant English country village. Except, of course, that it has had more than its share of crime").

Wherever they are found, however, Symons's classic characters prove to be something more than marvels, something better than myths. What is of ultimate importance to any reader is the fact that they are good company.

—Howard Lachtman

* * * * *

Hush Money by Max Collins. Pinnacle, 1981. \$1.95

With this fourth book in the Nolan series, Max Collins proves again that he is a worthy successor to the mantle previously worn by Richard Stark with his Parker novels. Collins also shows himself becoming more and more skillful as both a writer and a plotter. He has effectively taken three separate story lines and, by Part 4, has woven them deftly into one.

When an assassin's bullet kills one of the DiPrea brothers, who are "fringe" Family members, the Family calls on Nolan to go in and head off the slaughter before it can go any further. They've identified the assassin as a Viet Nam vet whose father was once Nolan's best friend. Plot twists and double crosses abound before Nolan finally prevails.

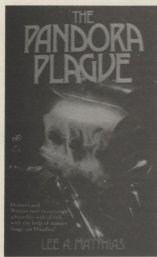
Hush Money is easily the best Collins yet!

—Robert J. Randisi

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The Pandora Plague by Lee A. Matthias. Leisure Books, 1981. 286 pp. \$2.25.

The year is 1902, and the young magician Harry Houdini approaches a middle-aged Sherlock Holmes with a mystery. A group of criminals has brought him a box designed in the East, with an impenetrable lock, to be opened. Houdini, though a master at manipulating locks, is hesitant to do so. As Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, and Houdini investi-



gate the mystery of the box, they discover an anarchist conspiracy. The box contains a radioactive substance, capable of destroying the entire population of London, which Professor Moriarty, the arch adversary of Holmes, had discovered before his death. Thus the evil of Moriarty continues from the grave. Holmes and his brother Mycroft consult with Marie Curie and her husband, but even these scientists do not have much information about the radioactivity of the box. Though the actual substance is never named, and though the threatened use of the substance by the anarchists is left vague, Matthias builds considerable suspense with the unknown element in the mysterious box.

Occasionally the pace of this novel lags a bit. At one point, Sherlock Holmes leaves the story for about 44 pages, a device originally used by Conan Doyle in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Here, despite the magical personality of Houdini, *The Pandora Plague* becomes somewhat pedestrian. And Watson's occasional philosophical remarks slow the action slightly. Otherwise, this is a pleasant Sherlockian pastiche, fun for both non-Sherlockian specialists and Holmesian devotees. Various bits scattered through the novel tantalize the in-depth Sherlockian: there are passing references to Holmes's other cases; there is Holmes's jack-knife letter file; Shinwell Johnson works with and saves Holmes's life; Holmes objects to using the telephone. Twice, R. Austin Freeman's Dr. Thorndyke passes quickly through the story as a rival detective, the actor William Gillette poses as a double for Holmes, and Conan Doyle himself appears briefly (Doyle actually did know Houdini). Such "in jokes" will please any intense student of Sherlockian matters. Nearly as fascinating as Holmes is the young Harry Houdini. Matthias describes Houdini's feats of magic, both on and off stage, most skillfully. Escape from impossible

confinement was Houdini's specialty, and such things as handcuffs, chains, locks, and jails offer no obstacle to the magician. For the plodding Watson, Houdini is something of an enigma, and at one point he even wonders if Houdini uses supernatural methods. Holmes, on the other hand, immediately penetrates Houdini's illusions. In real life, Houdini sometimes played the part of a detective, actually exposing fraudulent spiritualistic seances, and it would not be surprising if Lee Matthias develops the great magician as a detective, without Holmesian connections, in further stories.

—Edward Lauterbach

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My Foe Outstretched Beneath the Tree by V. C. Clinton-Baddeley. Dell "Murder Ink Mystery." 1967

Murder in an exclusive London club is not the newest idea in the field. And, of course, the victim was something of a rotter. A bully, a cheat, a chaser of other men's wives, Morris Brent had few friends. Dr. R. V. Davie of Cambridge inadvertently stumbles on an odd altering of language lesson tapes, and plays one of them for Brent. He picks and prods at the puzzle, following the clues from formal opera productions to a struggling actor's Chelsea flat. Along the way he discovers Brent's body in the club garden. Coincidence plays a strong part in both the plotting and unraveling of the mystery. On the whole, however, that is a minor fault. Dr. Davie makes a competent amateur investigator and wins favor with his perceptive, reminiscent observations.

—Fred Duern

* * * * *

Angel Eyes by Loren D. Estleman. Houghton Mifflin. \$11.95

Amos Walker of *Motor City Blue* returns, and it becomes apparent that he is in the Chandler rather than the Hammett hard-boiled tradition. Walker is gentle with women and wearily worldly-wise. As Chandler and Ross Macdonald explored and laid out their California both in area and time, Estleman moves from Detroit's Cass Corridor scene of murders, wins, and an opera house to Grosse Pointe on the city's East Side to Grosse Isle on its Southwest Side. It's been argued that California stands for a sort of promised land for Americans, understood by the reader as such. Hence, its landscape has or had significance as a sort of last frontier. But Detroit? Can Estleman involve his reader in the same way as his predecessors? Detroit as an environment is a stranger—an unknown.

On the strength of this book, the answer seems to be "yes." A judge disappears and seems to have been involved with a lady who is now a go-go dancer. Walker meets her in an all-black club where her "number" is the Frank Sinatra record "Angel Eyes." She hires him to prevent her disappearance. She disappears, and the body of a bodyguard for a labor leader lies in her place. The owner of the club she worked in is killed as well. She's

his client, and Walker must atone for his "failure" to prevent whatever has happened. Along the way, he meets the judge's family and people who knew Angel Eyes. He pieces together a kind of family saga leading to a carefully plotted and most effective ending.

Walker, who narrates the story, verbally pushes the judge's stepson.

"I started to rise. He hurled a respectable haymaker at my jaw that might have been trouble had it connected. I caught it in one hand and stepped to one side, and twisted his arm back and braced my other forearm against the stiffened elbow. We cursed through the gap in his teeth. I said, 'I don't want to break your arm, Mr. Billings. I opened my big mouth and you probably have a right to bust me one, but I'm too well trained to let you do it. Please accept my apology.'"

There is a sense of Marlowe in that paragraph, but it is Estleman's own work. Walker is told, "You're a detective, detect." And he does. In his own way.

"James Dean Haircuts"; "His verbiage was pure Warner Brothers"; "the gangster's right hand man from The Big Heat." The Hollywood similes abound, marrying California to Detroit rather daringly, tying the behind-the-tinsel tradition back to the heartland.

Chandler used to complain that in England he was a novelist and in the U.S. a mystery writer. A looked-upon genre. We know the "English" view is now prevailing. Estleman uses California's most important image—the movie—to punctuate his novel of struggles, failure, and survival in one of heartland's major cities. He seems to be saying that this is where important living and dying is going on.

At thirty, Estleman has given us a new detective and a new focus. Where he carries his next book, what he makes important to him and to us in it could be "major" or just "similar." In the meantime, we have *Angel Eyes*, whose "tears silvered her cheeks," to enjoy and to ponder.

—Peter B. Spivak

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Act of Love by Joe N. Lansdale. Zebra Books. 301 pp. \$2.25

This book should be a strong contender for Best Paperback Novel of the year honors at Edgar time. Smooth, fast-paced writing is the key here, and the author shows great skill in maintaining the degree of tension that he does throughout the final sixty or seventy pages.

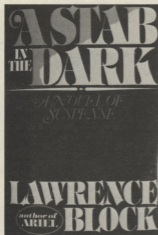
The book deals with a psycho killer dubbed "The Houston Hacker" by the newspapers. He is killing young women and dismembering them to some degree, each in a different fashion. There are some particularly gruesome scenes here, some dealing with what The Hacker does with these pieces of girl when he returns to his apartment.

We are with The Hacker before, during, and after some of his attacks, but we never know just who he is until the end. Lansdale does a fine job of switching the suspicion from character to character, even to the point

of having the two police officers on the case start suspecting one another.

Again, the power with which this book was written is highly impressive, especially for a first novel, and I expect to be seeing Joe Lansdale again very shortly—I hope!

—J. R. Roberts



A Stab in the Dark by Lawrence Sanders. Arbor House, 1981. \$10.95.

This is a book I have been waiting five years for. As successful as the author's Bernie Rhodenbary series is, my favorite of all his creations has always been ex-cop Matt Scudder. In 1976, Scudder appeared in three novels published by Dell as paperback originals, and now Scudder makes his first appearance in hardcover.

A Stab in the Dark seems to me to be a much more straightforward book than the previous three novels. The father of a murdered girl "hires" Scudder to find out who killed her nine years before, when it is discovered that her death was not just another of a series of inept murders. Aside from a relationship he develops with a woman he meets during the investigation, there are no discernible subplots here. The book moves in a more or less straight line until Scudder finally discovers who the killer was. A phone book might have helped him do it much sooner than he did.

Without going back and looking at the earlier Scudder books, I'd say that Scudder is hitting the bottle a little more frequently these days, and he seems somewhat more depressed after five years. Block has created an interesting character here in the woman Scudder becomes involved with. Hopefully, she'll be back—and so will Scudder.

—Robert J. Randisi

Jack London and Conan Doyle: A Literary Kinship by Dale L. Walker. Gaslight Publications. 70 pp. \$8.95

When Sir Arthur Conan Doyle visited San Francisco in 1923, he was asked to name his favorite modern American writer.

Since a major mystery predecessor like Poe had been ruled out by the time limitation, the door was left open for Doyle to salute a minor yet familiar figure in the contemporary mystery field. Which one would he choose? Richard Harding Davis? Jacques Futrelet? Melville Davison Post?

Doyle's reply surprised everyone. "I have considered Jack London my greatest American contemporary in the world of letters," he admitted. "He got to the root of things. And he expressed himself wonderfully."

But did Jack London actually write mystery stories?

Indeed he did. The San Francisco-born author-adventurer had more in common with the creator of Sherlock Holmes than merely an active lifestyle, a background of worldwide travel, a youthful fling at sailing before the mast, a streak of good-hearted humanism, a love of sports and sportswriting, a fictional preoccupation with action and danger, and worldwide popularity as an author.

As Dale Walker makes abundantly clear in this interesting biographical comparison of the two men, London was also a student, perhaps even an ardent student, of the Baker Street Saga. Sherlockian allusions and deductions are sprinkled throughout his work, and his several mystery tales make use of introductory analysis ("A Goboto Night") and primary deduction ("A Little Account with Swithin Hall") that are in the best Doylean tradition. One story called "The Mistake of Creation" even steals the lire (literally, as well as literarily) from "A Scandal in Bohemia," making a pointed bow in Doyle's direction and incidentally revealing how well London remembered his readings in the Canon.

"A good many of London's stories contain mysteries," Walker observes, "and the few pages of detection he did incorporate in his work are purely Sherlockian in character."

Admitting that this is so, why is it worth knowing? Walker refrains from telling us why it is useful, indeed valuable, for us to learn about London's Sherlockian references and Doyle's Londonian enthusiasms. But the answer, I think, is that such knowledge provides particularly revealing clues to the self-image and personal myth which each writer embraced.

Despite the many confusions and contradictions that clung to his life, for example, Jack London prided himself on being a detached, serene, "scientific" thinker. He was most often referred to as a vigorous, simple, red-blooded writer, but he himself preferred his great reading public to think of him as an analytical reporter of experience, a logical detective who had correctly interpreted issues ranging from the riddle of economic inequality and social injustice to the mystery of survival in an inhospitable, naturalistic universe. Holmes's value to him as a rationalist role model must have been considerable. Yet, as a creature of fiction who had

acquired a humanity and reality all his own, Holmes was the very reverse of London, the simple sailor-turned-writer whose adventurous legend had converted him into a story-book hero. Those who accepted Sherlock as a human being often had difficulty thinking of Jack as a living man. London himself had no difficulty, however, in seeing at least one part of himself in the Holmes role.

As for Conan Doyle, he read London, admired London, and may have compared himself to the American author. "I was always of the opinion that he really had such an equipment of mind, energy, and actual experience as few authors have had the good fortune to possess," Doyle said in a 1925 letter. "I discerned also that in his deep and complex nature, which different forces were fighting to control, there was a purely mental one which led him to the darkness of materialism, and an idealistic one which urged him to the heights."

Is it possible that Doyle was speaking, not only of Jack London, but of himself? How often had he also been ranked by critics as "a mere writer of sensations"? How often had he, too, been required to write what paid rather than what he felt he ought really to say? And how often had he also struggled, even as London struggled, between the conflicting claims of materialism and idealism?

If the lessons of Sherlock Holmes were not lost on Jack London, the lessons of London were not wasted on Conan Doyle. As an author who had been repeatedly misunderstood for his part in popular fiction and for his faith in an unpopular cause, Doyle must indeed have felt a close kinship to his California counterpart. We can be sure that it was with something of his own situation in mind that he wrote of London: "I am sure that even now his work has not received its full recognition and that anything concerning him will be of great interest in days to come."

With both men in mind, Dale Walker has proven the validity of both these prophecies. As authors, sportsmen, and spokesmen, Doyle and London had so very many points in common that it is rewarding to trace their affinities and to investigate London's little-known career as a Doyle-influenced writer of adventure tales with strong detective elements. Walker has given us a particularly illuminating little study of the two most widely read, widely imitated, and universally beloved literary legends of their day. An entertaining exercise in biographical detection.

—Howard Lachman

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

A Savage Place by Robert B. Parker. Delacourt/Seymour Lawrence.

A Savage Place is the eerie dwelling of Coleridge's Kubla Khan and the glitzy California locale of Robert Parker's eighth Spenser adventure. It is a western in detective dress—the usual form of American heroics. The remorselessly first-person narrative begins with the now mandatory exposition of the paradox (or pastiche) that is Spenser: he is reading an academic analysis of the "Faerie



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Queen" (a gift from his lover, Susan Silberman) and pretending to be the president of Yale. His solipsism is interrupted by a telephone call from a former client, the militant lesbian feminist Rachael Wallace. (Spenser delivered her from her rabid right-wing captors and got his consciousness raised a millimeter or so in *Looking for Rachael Wallace*.) Ms. Wallace has recommended Spenser and his various services to a decidedly heterosexual investigative reporter on the Lower West Coast named Candy Sloan. Spenser agrees to leave his speedy Back Bay environs if and only if Candy promises that he can see a real movie star: either Dale Evans or Mala Powers. Candy seals the deal with a giggle.



The intrepid Candy Sloane has a problem and maybe several of them. She is doing a story on pay-offs in the film industry, and she has been threatened. Since she is not a woman to be scared off her job, she hires a man whose job is not to be scared. Candy is determined to be taken seriously as a television news reporter can be. ("I've learned to be tough. It frightens some men.") One wonders then why she doesn't change her name and turn in her spike heels, designer jeans, scarlet blouse and lavender T-shirt for the skirted suit uniform of *Dress for Success*. Spenser is to help Candy prove that she is "a damn good reporter."

In the time it takes to drive from Los Angeles International Airport ("We turned onto Pico, heading east") to the Beverly Hillcrest (both the Beverly Hills and the Beverly Wilshire were booked solid), Spenser has become Candy's father-confessor. ("Do you think I'm too pushy?" she asks. He assures her that he understands that it's just part of her job.) He later becomes her nanny (she is not a graceful drunk), then her lover (but only once—his commitment to Susan

Silberman allows for a romantic interlude but not a steady practice), and, ultimately, he is Candy's avenging angel.

Much of the action (the word is used with reservations) involves getting from one part of Los Angeles to another. Spenser spends a lot of his driving, drinking, and eating time explaining Spenser's Code to Candy. ("I wouldn't do anything I couldn't tell [Susan Silberman] about"; "I've never shot anyone when it wouldn't have been a lot worse not to"; "I do the best I can to approve and disapprove only of my own behavior. I don't always succeed, but I try"; etc.) We've heard all this before (especially in *Rachael Wallace* and *Early Autumn*), and it's getting a bit too self-congratulatory.

Real fans may enjoy Parker's elaborations of and variations on the Spenser mystique: the perpetual adolescence of the middle-aged jock, the true gourmet's appreciation of vintage greasy spoon, the rugged individualist dabbling in populism. (Spenser drinks a lot of beer, cuts the sleeves off his T-shirts, and buys yellow Oxford button-downs at Brooks Brothers.) Spenser's chivalry causes him to kill a lot of people, but he is perpetually absolved by the love of a good woman with an advanced degree in psychology. The Spenser myth comes to a discreet quasi-climax in *A Savage Place*.

Spenser is a self-proclaimed romantic, and Parker cannot resist his charms any longer. Susan Silberman understands. He does it because he has to.

—Patrice K. Loose

* * * * *

BLEEP. blipBEEP. Razz.

For me, anyway, it started with Parker Brothers' *Clue*. Without even thinking about it, I'd accuse good old Colonel Mustard of doing it in the library with a lead pipe. Ah, lost innocence. Nowadays, if you're wrong, it is not simply a matter of losing a turn; the bad guy shoots you or, perhaps worse, blows a raspberry and disappears into the night to commit further crimes.

At least that's the way it works in Parker Brothers' new crime board game, *Stop Thief: Electronic Cops and Robbers* (\$33.00). Using the sounds generated by the Electronic Crime Scanner, the two to four players track the criminal through four major crime scenes (Fur Building; Jewelry Center; Antiques; Bank) and one quick ripoff spot, the corner newsstand, until certain they know the thief's location. Once fed into the computer, there are three possible outcomes: the criminal is caught, in which case the reward money goes to the detective; the criminal is cornered but gets away, allowing the game to continue; or the detective is sued for false arrest and must pay a fine to reacquire his license. The first player to earn \$2,500 in reward money is the winner.

Stop Thief is an enjoyable way to pass a rainy Sunday afternoon. The sound effects (more about them in general, later) are entertaining, and, while Parker Brothers suggests

ages ten to adult, we found that children of six can, with a little patience, acquire sufficient understanding of the computerized thief's machinations to play the game successfully.

There are a couple of other nice touches, probably reflective of social change. While it is a game for four, there are eight ID cards for the detectives. Four of them bear the names and pictures of women. Role identity crises are, thus, nipped in the bud. Finally, while the "fine" for false arrest is \$100, "if you have only \$50 pay that. If you have no money at all, you don't have to pay anything." This keeps the game going and also helps keep the kids interested.

The instructions are clearly written, the game itself fast-moving and engaging. And for all its apparent simplicity, don't be fooled. After tracking your thief to the streets, he slips away into the night, leaving you baffled, and \$100 poorer. (Unless, of course, you have no money...)

Another entry into the crime-solving electronic games ranks is Ideal's *Electronic Detective* (\$40.00). This is a game for one to four players, aged ten and up. But the difficulty level here (which is adjustable—Master Detective, Sleuth, and Gumshoe, in descending order) makes it a bright ten-year-old, indeed, who can play the game successfully.

Again, we are presented with a computer capable of generating up to 130,000 different "crimes." The player—through the grilling of nineteen different suspects—has to come up with the name of the killer. Each player is supplied with a fact sheet on which notations may be made—the type of weapon, the locations of the various suspects, and whether the fingerprints on the gun are "odd" or "even." Punch in the name of the wrong suspect, and the killer blasts away at you, and the computer plays a dirge just to bring the point home.

Electronic Detective is an extremely challenging game, even at its simplest level of play. (The levels control the number of private questions a player may ask of a suspect. While other information is shared by the players, the private questions—there's a list of them for each suspect—are just that.) At the lowest level, the players get three such extra clues; at the highest, one.) The closest parallel, for me, are those logic games found in word puzzle books. Money isn't the end result here. Just knowing that you won is sufficient prize.

It helps to keep the rules in front of you the first five or six games you play (it helps me, anyway), and to bring a certain amount of patience to the playing. This is a test of your ratiocinative powers, and if your reading focuses on classic puzzle mysteries, *Electronic Detective* is the game for you.

With the boom in microchip technology, many other classic games are now available in a more electronic form, most of them designed for one player. Some of the new ones, worthy of consideration by gamespeople—and, by obvious extension, mystery fans—are high on the list of "return play" levels. They are



games which can become obsessive in their playability, and, since the computer is your opponent, they don't require sometimes elusive partners.

Elegant secret agents seem to spend a lot of time in casinos and coveting with the very rich. Mattel Electronics was obviously well aware of this when they started promoting their *Computer Backgammon* (\$75.00). The ads showed a Bond-like character in a private jet, willingly being tossed overboard... he would rather continue his game against the computer than fight.

I don't think I'd go quite that far. But there is definitely something compelling about this machine, and it goes beyond my basic enjoyment of backgammon.

The game itself is a sleek, glossy black with red and blue trim. The bloody thing looks rich. The playing board is an LCD (Liquid Crystal Display), which makes it very convenient—there are no pieces to lose or extra things to carry—and compact. The dice rolls are randomly generated by the computer, and there is a doubling option. Your victory is sounded by an upbeat six-tone victory tune (once for a simple win, twice for a gammon, thrice for a backgammon), and defeats are noted by a razz (with the same formula). No special indication is given of the extra points scored in doubled games, beyond the visual indication in little windows to the left of the game board.

There are six levels of play, the difference being the amount of time the computer takes to consider moves. Once a game is doubled, or if the dice roll is doubles, the computer takes a bit more time. Mattel claims that at level six the computer will never take more than two and a half minutes, but I've timed it at as much as four. All moves and functions are accompanied by a series of blips, so if your attention wanders, the game effectively calls you back.

I have some questions about the program-

ming. I know of very few top-rank players who will cover their own two point with a six-four initial roll, for instance, and I found a tendency on the part of the computer to bump when there are (for my taste) too many blots in its own home board. But the complaints are minor. I've sat with the game for two or three hours at a time, just enjoying myself immensely, and not paying any attention at all to the agent from the "other side" creeping up behind me.

An important note. My five-year-old daughter watched me play for a while, picked

the game up, and after just a week was playing at level six. The machine is a good teacher.

You should also know that *Computer Backgammon* has one of the best battery-life-to-games-played ratio of any game I've used. Since it doesn't have an AC adaptor, I find it to be a valuable selling point.

While it might be nice to be able to program situations (there is a long, tedious process by which this can be done, since the player does have the option of controlling the dice, though not the moves), and while I do question some of the moves the computer makes, all in all, Mattel Electronics' *Computer Backgammon* is a good investment.

Back in 1836, Edgar Allan Poe wrote an essay about Maelzel's Chess-Player, a large machine making the fairgrounds circuit, challenging any and all to a game. The secret, Poe revealed, was the man hidden in the bottom of the machine.

No one can accuse SciSys of using that maneuver in the production of their *Executive Chess* (\$129.50), just one of a line of chess computers this electronics company is producing.

A little larger than a standard, handheld calculator, *Executive Chess* also makes use of the LCD board, with all its advantages. A matte-black finish, and no sound effects, make it the perfect companion on a stake-out. It has eight levels of play (based on response time) and plays a wicked enough game of chess to have earned the endorsement of FIDE (the World Chess Federation). The display is clear, the pieces easily recognized.

Among its features: the ability to switch



white (usually the player's color) to the top of the board; an erase function, which will wipe out up to six previous moves; a look function, which repeats the computer's last move; and, of course, full programming capability, allowing you to set up any problem—either directly placing pieces or by moving the pieces through the opening of a game. While battery life is estimated at about four and a half hours, there is an AC adaptor available.

Executive Chess is one of the best—for its size—of the currently available batch. (Mattel Electronics has something similar—using the same layout as their backgammon—but it was unavailable for testing at the time this was being written.) We matched *Executive Chess* against a Boris *Diplomat* (\$79.00) at the same level (based on response time) and found SciSys to have a good winning percentage.

The SciSys line, incidentally, has what would appear to be some remarkable equipment, including one computer which can not only play twelve games simultaneously but will, with the optional printout accessory, give you a move-by-move diagram of every game played. Still, for someone on the move, and on a relatively limited budget, *Executive Chess* would appear to be the ideal opponent. And it will never complain about the psychics you are using to disrupt its attention.

Trevanian, in his latest bestseller *Shibumi*, uses the venerable Japanese game of *go* as a metaphor for a lot of the action. It is believed that the Occidental mind can never fully cope with the nuances and subtleties of *go*, and masters of the game are honored, and almost worshipped.

Back in the mid-seventies, Gabriel started marketing a game called *Othello* (\$125.00), for all intents and purposes *go* for the Occidental mind. Played on a grid of 64 squares, *Othello* is a game requiring the players to outflank each other, thus "claiming" pieces—and territory—on the battlefield. It quickly became one of the two best-selling games of its time (the other being *Mastermind*—about which, more later). And now, Computer *Othello*.

Eight levels of play, again based on time, an LCD (with adjustable contrast—a very nice touch), AC jack, and the ability to switch sides in the middle of a game are among the features. Another feature is the sound effects.

Barry Schwartz, a public relations director in New York, and an *Othello* fan, explained that, with the exception of chess, it has been discovered that most players not only like, but want, the sounds, and pointed out that chess tournaments are the only ones played in silence. The sounds do, of course, keep the player informed of moves being made, and by that token—especially in an instance in which the computer is taking its full time to make a move—they are important. The looks, however, which I've gotten from people on planes as my games have gone through the motions, make me wish that the sound level could be controlled. Maybe in the next generation.

Jonathan Cerf, an American who won the



International *Othello* Championship (the game was, naturally, invented in Japan in 1973, and until 1980 the crown was held by Japanese), can, I am told, beat the computer at any level. (And there is a school of thought which claims that people will always beat the machine, no matter what the game... with the exception of some of the arcade games which do not have a "win" in them. It may have something to do with the fact that the machine must play logically while the human, bringing emotion to the playing board, may just get so baroque that the computer in effect gives up.) But, to end a ridiculously complex paragraph, Computer *Othello* offers enough challenge for anyone I can think of.

Another interesting feature—the computer can be programmed so that two people can play the game, while the program takes care of "flipping" the pieces, always accurately. That accuracy is often lost in the non-electronic version. Human fallibility can affect the outcomes of a lot of our ventures, eh?

A word about a game which is, unfortunately, not widely available in its electronic version at this time, *Mastermind*.

Ever since Poe wrote "The Gold-Bug," ciphers and codes have been part of our genre. *Mastermind*, a game which preceded *Othello* into the marketplace and which shares top-selling honors with it, requires players to break codes, based on colored pegs. In its "deluxe" board version, the code-breaker looked for up to five colors out of a possible eight. The electronic version called for finding from three to five numbers out of a possible ten.

Electronic *Mastermind* (a "silent" game when first introduced, though with effects in its second generation) was an intriguing game of cunning and logic, playable solo or against any number of opponents—either against each other or all attempting to find the computer's hidden code—but Invicta, the company which introduced the game in America, has gone out of business, and Pressman, the new licensee, does not have plans at this time to release the game in an electronic version. If you can find it in stock, give it a try.

(A reasonably interesting sidebar to the above. Michael Seidman, TAD's editor, was a central figure in the creation of *The Official MASTERMIND Handbook*, which is still available from Signet for those who want more on that game.)

Almost by definition, mystery fans are games players. Whether in the form of solving the puzzle of Carr, the clues of a Wheatley "crime dossier," or across the table from an opponent, we all rise when the cry goes out that "the game's afoot." The games just discussed all got a rise out of me, and I think they'll entertain you as well.

Incidentally, the prices listed are the manufacturers' approximate retail prices. They are rarely honored. A little careful shopping will find the best price.

Special thanks to Shelley Rosestock, Zeke Ross, Joan Gasperini, Carol Zoref, and Barry Schwartz for their cooperation and assistance.

—Grigory R. Tuditov

Guilty Until Proven Innocent

By Hannelore Hess

There's nothing quite like the writing profession to bring out one's latent neuroses. (Not that mine were ever all that latent. Blatant is more like it.)

Still, in the real world there's always somebody looking over your shoulder, telling you when you've done well (ah, the thrill of passing muster!) or (less pleasantly) when you've been a flop. In either case the feedback is speedy and if you've flopped you're likely to get a second chance. (And a third...and a fourth... It's pretty hard to get fired from most jobs.)

But when you're a brand-new, unpublished writer, the only things hanging over your shoulder are a nagging conscience and the threat of financial disaster. (I believe this is what is meant by a "muse.")

So with no one there to pat one's head, or give a thunderous burst of applause when a particularly mordant one-liner comes rolling off the pen, it's hardly any wonder that the path to that first book is strewn with nocturnal heebie-jeebies and diurnal pratfalls.

For example...

The Fear of Being Unoriginal:

Wednesday the writing goes well. *Very* well. No redundant adjectives, no jump-Spot-jump dialogue. My characters get on and off the page without overstaying their welcome. I must be quite clever to manage all this. And it's *easy*! At this rate the book will be finished in four weeks. Three!

I knock off at the end of chapter four and stretch out on my Barcalounger (my very own, from the old days when I had a *real* job and could afford to buy things), and I finish off John D. MacDonald's latest, and the last of the Breyers' coffee ice cream.

The next day I reread Wednesday's output. First I am puzzled, then appalled. My laconic detective, to whom the very words "sandy-rumped beach bunny" would be offensive to the point of nausea, *has turned into Travis McGee!* Before my eyes. I can hardly believe it, but there he is strutting across the page, preening and pontificating like the loose-jointed knight errant himself.

When the initial shock has worn off, I whip out my

scalpel (a Pentel 0.5 mm.) and excise the offending portions, hoping that they aren't malignant.

At this point I'm still blissfully unaware that within two chapters my hero will have tried to metamorphose into Lew Archer. Later, Jim Rockford. He's so *slippery*, this creation of mine. I break my back to keep him walking the straight and narrow. Whenever the effort seems too much, I remind myself that the alternative is to go back to my old job.

That's always good for a gratuitous spurt of energy to carry me through an extra chapter or two.

In the old days—only a few months ago, really—I was, as the lady on the tube says, downright upright. I mean, I was *respectable!* Eight-thirty to five-thirty, an hour for lunch, bimonthly paychecks that covered the mortgage and the groceries and all my incidentals. Never had to ask hubby for cash.

Had the respect of my colleagues, fat raises each year, a closet full of suits. Bright future. Capable member of the team in one of those big, monolithic Manhattan consulting firms. Designed computer systems, talked bits and bytes. Hot diggety dog!

The only problem was the crying jags. Twice a day usually just about covered it. Once in the morning, when I woke up and knew I had to go to work. And once again in the evening, when I knew I'd have to do it all over again tomorrow.

When it got to the point where I was crying on Friday nights, in anticipation of Monday, my valiant husband came to the rescue. Okay, he said. You think you can write? So write. I give you one year, and if you can't cut it by then, it's back to the old salt mines.

Or words to that effect.

In the beginning, I wasn't sure if I could even write a coherent paragraph. It turned out I could, but I still didn't know if I could dream up an idea for a novel. When I did, I wasn't sure I could start it. Once it was started, I had little hope of finishing it. And when *that* finally happened, I had no idea if it was any good.

Clearly, a second opinion was needed. Which brings us to another phobia...

The Fear of Being Branded:

I am Having Lunch With An Editor. (My first time.) He seems like a nice man, and we're both feeling relaxed, and enjoying the lunch. He says he's going to read my book.

He's Jewish. For perhaps the eighteenth time I have a qualm about a scene in the book where my detective is questioning a Jewish man named Weinstein. *Who has a big nose.* Why, I ask myself, did I give Weinstein a big nose? Why did I feel impelled to mention Weinstein's nose at all? Or if he had to have one, why not a pretty little one, like your typical stereotyped WASP?

Well, I ask myself, why shouldn't Weinstein have a big nose? Lots of people have big noses, including some Jewish people. I think of a story told at a writer's conference. An illustrator of textbooks is told by his publisher that he shouldn't give his black people big lips. He asks a friend of his, a young black woman, what she thinks about this, and she says that not giving any black people big lips implies that there's something wrong with big lips, and is profoundly insulting to people who do happen to have big lips.

So how about that? Does that let me off the hook?

Never! I can hear the whispering already: Bigot, racist, antisemite!

Weinstein has a cold. His big nose is all red, and his mother-in-law has made him some chicken soup. *Chicken soup!* Why did I put the everloving chicken soup in? Why not spaghetti, or stir-fried vegetables?

Well, I tell myself, *my Jewish mother-in-law always makes me chicken soup when I'm sick.* Once she even brought the chicken to my house, and made the soup in my very own kitchen. Not only that, but her sister and their mother and plenty of other Jewish women I've known do the same thing. They believe, really believe, that chicken soup makes penicillin redundant; and I mostly believe it, too.

Not good enough (I hear the people say); antisemitic stereotyper!

But, I tell myself, I cleared this scene with my Jewish husband, asked him *specifically* if he found Weinstein stereotyped, and the scene offensive, and he said it was just fine. And besides, I really like Weinstein. He's a good guy.

Not good enough! *Nothing* is good enough. Not being Woody Allen or Philip Roth, I'll never get away with this. There goes my reputation... and I don't even *have* a reputation yet! Suddenly, irrationally, I feel guilty as hell. I hope the editor will be forgiving.

It's a good thing they'll still take me back at the old job.

I worry so much about Weinstein on the way home that I almost end up in the East River instead of New Jersey.

After leaving the real world I embarked on the perilous transition from non-writer to writer. The way was uncharted.

I discovered how difficult it was to talk about writing to non-writers. Friends and family invariably asked the non-writer questions:



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"Yes, the smell of bitter almonds can mean only one thing."

- Where do you get your ideas? (Good grief—don't these people have any ideas in their heads?)
- Do you write from real-life experience, or do you make things up? (Our "real-life" experiences are made up too—but try telling them *that!*)
- Do you write longhand, or at the typewriter? (Well, sort of a shorthand designed to be indecipherable by anyone but me...but why does everyone ask me this?)
- Will I be in your book??? (It seems that all these people have terrible secrets, and are afraid of being revealed to the public.)

On the other hand, I couldn't really talk to writers, either. I was new at this. (Still am.) They talked about subsidiary rights and volume rights, back-selling and copublishing. Writing "big" versus writing "small." Series and voice-overs. They name-dropped: publishing companies and agents and editors and writers I had never even heard of. I smiled and nodded and tried to pick out one or two kind souls to whom I could pose my untutored questions.

Which brings us to yet another bugaboo...

The Fear of Being Though a Neophyte:

I am at my very first Edgar Awards Dinner. One man, referring to Mystery Writers of America, remarks, "This is a clannish group."

Indeed?

I recall the very first MWA function I ever attended. Some lovely people adopted me, introduced me around. Still, I remember felling uneasy and thinking, Am I supposed to know these names? What is an Armchair Detective? What is a Third Degree? Who is Otto?

One charming woman applauded me for having the "guts" to join MWA before I had published; but another, not knowing my terrible secret, whispered to me that there were two kinds of members—active and affiliate. ("The affiliate members—they don't write. They're just groupies.")

I beg your pardon!

Yes, it is rather clannish. And the only road to acceptance is through one's work. There are so many hopefuls out there...people who, like me, think they can write. Perhaps they can. But until one has proven oneself...until one's been legitimized by being published...one remains suspect. Just another would-be writer. Probably no talent. Guilty until proven innocent...

So, I tell myself, get back to that typewriter.

To get back to that first book...

That nice editor calls promptly. Congratulations,

he says. (No mention of Weinstein. Of course not—the whole phobia was ridiculous anyway.) Fine job, he continues. A wonderful start. A bit too small for my list right now, but I know someone else who might be interested...

Neophyte that I am, I'm not sure how to interpret this. It's definitely a rejection; still, he really seems to think someone else might buy it. I feel vaguely vindicated, partially legitimized. I make the changes he has suggested, retype, and send my darling infant off to the first name on the list he has given me.

And settle down to wait.

The qualified elation lasts about two days. Then, as it must, reality intrudes and I realize (not for the first time) that there is no such thing as true, permanent legitimacy when you're a writer. Not even if Book #1 makes it into print. Not even if it's a best seller.

Because a success—a published work—only tides you over for a brief time. Coasting along on the strength of work that's over and done is simply not allowed. Once you've proved yourself, you have to *keep* proving yourself.

So if you don't mind, I think I'll go now. Book #2 is waiting in the wings. This time I think I have a better idea of how to breathe life into it. And (to mix metaphors even further) I think it'll fly.

Oh, by the way—even if I haven't published by the time the year is up, I'm not going back to the real world. I've tasted blood, and I'd rather sell pencils on the street corner than give up now.

What am I talking about? *This* is the real world. □

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Volume 14, Number 2, Spring 1981

Volume 14, Number 3, Summer 1981

Volume 14, Number 4, Fall 1981

Also available is *The Armchair Detective Index* at \$7.50. Cash with order. Postpaid.

A CATALOGUE OF CRIME

S151 Bernard, Robert
Death in a Cold Climate
Scrib 1981 (orig. 1980)

Mr. Bernard's output reminds us of Michael Innes's and not only quantitatively. The full-time writer is of course expected to turn out his products at a rapid rate. But to teach at a university, with all the ancillary duties filling one's "free" time, well—one can only gasp and admire. Of course, the feat is remarkable only if quality is maintained, and this Mr. Bernard has achieved so far. *Death of a Mystery Writer* (1979), *Death of a Literary Widow* (1979), *Death of a Perfect Mother* (1980) and the present book have followed hard on the heels of *Death on the High Cs* and *Blood Brotherhood* (1977) and two others are now in press. It must be that the practice of writing essays at the English university (Balliol College in Mr. Bernard's case) gives an unflinching facility with the pen. After a stint at the Fabian Society, Mr. Bernard went to New South Wales as lecturer in English for six years (University of New England), next to Bergen for ten years, and now he is full professor at Tromsø, north of the Arctic Circle, which is the setting for the tale under review.

The competent Norwegian Inspector of Police Fagermo is faced with the murder of a young Englishman, the reason for whose presence in the town is, to say the least, ambiguous. Though Fagermo has to make journeys to Trondheim and to England, there is great unity in the plot, as well as convincing local color supplied by an author who knows not only the place but its denizens of all ages and from all over. Detection is rather slow-moving but not static, and the Inspector finally builds up a convincing case against his chief suspect. Something a little frigid may be observed in the telling of the sundry insertions of sex and may even cause the reader to feel sympathy with the nicely-portrayed criminal; but after all, Tromsø is always freezing (or nearly so) and narrative chibblains are not inappropriate.

S152 Buckley, Christopher
Rain Before Seven
H. & S. 1947

Some murder stories are *flawed*—say, by a bad device, bad scene, bad explanation. Others are *spoiled*, by a persistent element in the telling. The second error is the matter here. Mr. Buckley has a good plot, entertaining characters, an attractive setting, and a pair of plausible investigators, one official, the other not. But the author, who can narrate well enough when he wants to, is a gambler. He cannot refrain from commenting on every last object, person, or event, usually in smart words, often with irrelevant "educated" allusions or quotations. It is the

**By Jacques Barzun
and Wendell Hertig Taylor**

kind of book that repeatedly prompts one to cry out loud: "Please, please shut up and get on with the story."

Yet the murder of Mrs. Redlynch, a writer of cheap fiction, and the actions of the several parties interested in her death are well described and solidly put together. Even the young boy "Blowfish," who ferrets out some of the physical clues, is tolerable. What the author needed was some outspoken impatience from the members of his family, to whom he dedicates the work, or else a capable editor. But the book is English, and English editors don't edit.

S153 Gash, Jonathan (pseud.)
Spend Game
Ticknor & Fields, 1981

It is a pity that this long and elaborate tale by the English physician who writes as Jonathan Gash should be such a poor thing. The notion of an antique dealer as crime-buster has not been overdone. There is Michael Delving's Dave Cannon and virtually no one else. It may be that earlier books featuring Mr. Gash's Lovejoy, of Lovejoy Antiques, are better. The first, *The Judas Pair* (1977), was highly praised by some critics but is still unknown to these reviewers. Here the whole silly plot, full of red herrings, winds up inside a highly improbable railway tunnel which was built ca. 1846 in East Anglia (of all places) and which caved in on top of a "bogie" conveying the local dignitary scheduled to officiate at its opening. The even more improbable trophy the dignitary was carrying is of course the object of the hunt that brings Lovejoy, at great risk to himself and his associates, in conflict with the "bad men" who are also lured by this prize. The whole thing is just as phony as the irritating lingo spoken by Lovejoy or the picture of a nineteenth-century American locomotive on the dustjacket.

S154 Jeffers, H. Paul
Rubout at the Onyx
Ticknor and Fields, 1981

Joan Kahn, the famed editor of crime fiction at Harper's, has lately transferred her sovereignty to the re-established firm of Ticknor & Fields, a subsidiary of Houghton Mifflin with offices in New York. There she has added several new authors to the group of faithful from her former stable, and the crime list at T. & F. already outnumbers all other genres put together.

Mr. Jeffers is a relatively new name. After doing a Sherlock Holmes pastiche, this debut

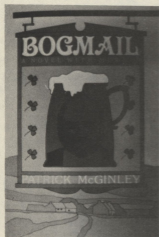


in originality takes the form of a reconstruction: gangster tactics on and about 52nd Street just after the end of the Prohibition Era. There are drunks and parasites, a cop who hates the hero-private eye, a deal in diamonds, lashings of sex and sex talk, many mentions of Walter Winchell, Mayor La Guardia, and other real people, and more than one rebut, public and private. The incidents amid the hero's phone-and-doorbell ringing are appropriately tense and the language snaps and clicks as we should expect. If the mood throughout is mostly listless, that too is what we should expect. Were it not for 52nd Street and 1935 one would be entitled to be bored.

S155 McGinley, Patrick
Bog Mail
Ticknor & Fields, 1981

This first novel has been praised by Eudora Welty for good writing and by Dorothy Salisbury Davis as a source of enjoyment beyond her usual expectations. The scene is northwest Ireland; there is murder and blackmail but no investigation, for the book treats crime as part of normal life in simple communities. The main interest therefore comes from character and opinion. For these crude and wild people—pub-owners and priests, whom a visiting engineer mingles with and surveys—are intellectually ambitious; they are concerned, in addition to drink and sex, with moral issues and scientific truths. Not many stories present volume 25 of the Britannica as a lethal weapon, or the article on Homicide as a guide to behavior when vol. 25 has done its work. Though the story holds one's attention (with a few lapses), one may question whether the writing is uniformly apt. Even journalists and engineers and

village intellectuals do not speak quite so formally, so academically, as they do in some of the debates here reported as going on in the central pub. Still, Mr. McGinley is an author worth watching, if only to see if he develops some sounder views on murder.



S156 Thomson, June
The Habit of Loving
CCD 1979

Miss Thomson, it is pleasant to report, continues to develop modestly but steadily. This rural tale of currant-pickers involves Inspector Rudd in a case whose sordid elements are handled deftly and with the right balance between reticence and straightforwardness. Both the author and her detective share this now-uncommon merit. The murder is that of a young girl, who is living with her fatherless child in a cottage with her own overprotective father. The characterizations of the other actors in the drama are excellent: we recognize—but not as stock figures—the middle-aged spinster who takes in and mothers Chris and the teen-ager recovering from an earlier breakdown. Controlled sympathy is the note struck and held. Chris is of course a prime suspect. The author, partly by denying herself a happy ending, has produced an engaging story of convincing strength.

S157 Thorman, Richard
Bachman's Law
Norton 1981

The author calls his book a "novel" and it indeed approaches the genre more closely than one expects from crime tales, however realistic. The difficult father-and-son relation between the elderly lawyer Joe Bachman and his son Emmet, also a lawyer, is the subject developed throughout most of the book. Only in the last fifty pages or so (after the ailing old man has died) does the author turn his attention and ours to the unmasking of the corruption that lay behind the writing of a peculiar will which puzzled the reader at the

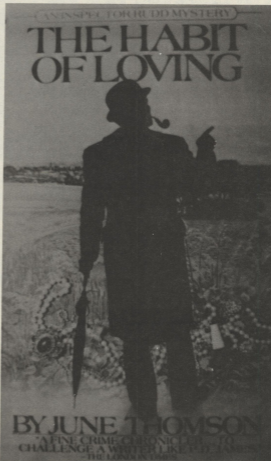
start. An unusual twelve-page epilogue, presented in three scenes, as in a play, concludes this unusual book. The setting is upstate New York. Detection is necessarily minimal, and good writing must serve as compensation.

S158 Williamson, Audrey
The Mystery of the Princes, an Investigation into a Supposed Murder
Rowman & Littlefield (Totowa, N.J.), 1978

Readers of Josephine Tey's *Daughter of Time* are well acquainted with the question whether Richard III murdered—or caused to be murdered—his two nephews in the Tower of London. The subject has been debated for some five hundred years and still remains a murder mystery in the strictest sense. But over the years a great amount of research has been done and documents continue to come to light. The English Ricardian Society keeps the fires of revision burning and more and

more persons are now total disbelievers in Shakespeare's *Richard III*.

It is this mass of information that Miss Williamson organizes and reviews in her compact book of 200 pages. She holds the scales with admirable fairness, giving pros and cons wherever the two exist. But the scales do tip, on many points, in favor of Richard. He was an able ruler, anything but brutal, and certainly not deformed. It is unlikely (but negative proof is still lacking) that the murder charge is warranted. Crime buffs will be especially interested in the forensic facts about old bones and carbon-14 dating. Biographers will wonder why, since so many of the lies were propagated by Sir Thomas More out of self-interest, he retains his reputation as a saint and a man for all seasons. Lastly, critics will be surprised that Audrey Williamson, who has written splendidly about the history of the ballet and the work of Bernard Shaw, should use difficult, contorted prose in the present book. □



CHECKLIST

MYSTERY, DETECTIVE AND SUSPENSE FICTION PUBLISHED IN THE U.S. JULY-SEPTEMBER 1981

Allan, Stella: **A Dead Giveaway**. St. Martin's, 10.95
 Ambler, Eric: **The Care of Time**. Farrar, 11.95
 Barak, Michael: **Double Cross**. NAL, 12.95
 Bernard, Robert: **Death of a Perfect Mother**. Scribners, 9.95
 Bayer, William: **Peregrine**. Congdon and Lattes, 12.95
 Block, Lawrence: **A Stab in the Dark**. Arbor, 10.95
 Brett, Hy and Barbara: **Promises to Keep**. Harper, 10.95
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 Cody, Liza: **Dupe**. Scribners, 9.95
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 Dewhurst, Eileen: **Trio in Three Flats**. Doubleday, 10.95
 Dobyns, Stephen: **Saratoga Swimmer**. Atheneum, 12.95
 Ebersohn, Wessel: **Divide the Night**. Pantheon, 10.95
 Egan, Lesley: **The Miser**. Doubleday, 9.95
 Eller, John: **Charlie and the Ice Man**. St. Martin's, 9.95
 Estleman, Loren D.: **Angel Eyes**. Houghton, 11.95
 Field, Evan: **What Nigel Knew**. Clarkson Potter, 10.95
 Furst, Alan: **The Caribbean Account**. Delacorte, 11.95
 Gill, B. M.: **Suspect**. Scribners, 8.95
 Goldthwaite, Eaton A.: **First You Have To Find Him**. Doubleday, 9.95
 Gosling, Paula: **Solo Blues**. Coward, 12.95
 Grimes, Martha: **The Man with a Load of Mischief**. Little, 12.95
 Holland, Isabelle: **The Lost Madonna**. Rawson, 12.95
 Hoyt, Richard: **Thirty for a Harry**. M. Evans, 11.95
 Jeffers, H. Paul: **Rubout at the Onyx**. Ticknor, 10.95
 Kaminsky, Stuart M.: **High Midnight**. St. Martin's, 9.95
 Larrabeiti, Michael D.: **The Bunce**. Doubleday, 10.95
 Layne, Marion Margery: **The Balloon Affair**. Dodd, 8.95
 Lutz, John: **The Shadow Man**. Morrow, 10.95
 MacPherson, Malcolm: **The Lucifer Key**. Dutton, 13.50
 Mantell, Laurie: **Murder in Fancy Dress**. Walker, 9.95
 Marshall, William: **Sci-Fi**. Holt, 10.95
 Mantalano, William D. and Carl Hiaasen: **Powder Burn**. Atheneum, 11.95

By M. S. Cappadonna

Perry, Ritchie: **Foof's Mate**. Pantheon, 19.95
 Pronzini, Jill: **Masques**. Arbor, 12.50
 Queen, Ellery: **Ellery Queen's Crime Cruise Round the World**. Dial, 9.95
 Rendell, Ruth: **Death Notes**. Pantheon, 9.95

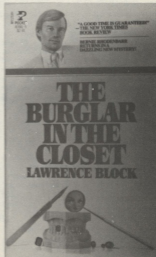


Ross, Jonathan: **Dark Blue and Dangerous**. Scribners, 8.95
 Sloane, Robert C.: **A Nice Place to Live**. Crown, 10.95; 4.55 paper
 Spencer, Ross H.: **Echoes of Zero**. St. Martin's, 9.95
 Suyker, Betty: **Death Scene**. St. Martin's, 10.95
 Traver, Robert: **People Versus Kirk**. St. Martin's, 12.95
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Paperbacks

Alexander, Patrick: **Show Me a Hero**. Playboy, 2.95
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 Brett, Simon: **The Dead Side of the Mike**. Berkley, 2.25

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 Freemantle, Brian: **The Inscrutable Charlie Muffin**. Ballantine, 2.25
 Gardner, John: **The Return of Moriarty**. Berkley, 2.25
 Gardner, John: **The Revenge of Moriarty**. Berkley, 2.25
 Gash, Jonathan: **The Judas Pair**. Dell, 2.25
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 Higgins, Jack: **Solo**. Dell, 2.95
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 Marsh, Ngaio: **Last Ditch**. Jove, 2.25
 Masterman, J. C.: **An Oxford Tragedy**. Dover, 3.50
 O'Donnell, Lillian: **Wicked Designs**. Fawcett, 2.25
 Parker, Robert B.: **Early Autumn**. Dell, 2.75
 Perry, Ritchie: **Holiday with a Vengeance**. Ballantine, 2.25
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Ernest Bramah on Max Carrados: An Unpublished BBC Talk

With a Note by William White

NOTE: By 1935, Ernest Bramah (1868-1942) was at the top of his trade as an author of both detective fiction and a collection of pseudo-Oriental Kai Lung tales. His short stories, featuring his clever blind detective Max Carrados, were published in MAX CARRADOS (1914), THE EYES OF MAX CARRADOS (1923), and MAX CARRADOS MYSTERIES (1927); Carrados is also the center-piece of the novel THE BRAVO OF LONDON, not nearly so successful. Though some prefer his Chinese stories, THE WALLET OF KAI LUNG (1900), KAI LUNG'S GOLDEN HOURS (1922), KAI LUNG UNROLLS HIS MAT (1928), THE MOON OF MUCH GLADNESS (1932),* and KAI LUNG BENEATH THE MULBERRY-TREE (1940), it was his detective stories that mainly appeared in anthologies. Of the forty-one anthologies listed in "Ernest Bramah in Anthologies 1914-1972," THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE, 10 (January 1977), 30-32, thirty of them include Max Carrados fiction.

For a recluse and an author who gave very, very few, if any, interviews and said he wanted only to be remembered by the books he wrote, Bramah did consent, however, to appear in a British Broadcasting Corporation radio program, No. 2 in the "Meet the Detective Series." Entitled "Meet Max Carrados, the Blind Detective, Presented by His Creator, Ernest Bramah," it was aired on the Empire Programme on 7 May 1935, from 3 to 3:15 P.M.

The typescript, which contains a few autograph changes, was found among the Ernest Bramah papers in the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, and is published here for the first time with the permission of the Center and Mr. Michael Horniman, a Director of A. P. Watt Ltd., London, England, owner of the Ernest Bramah copyrights.

- W. W.

*Published in America as *The Return of Kai Lung* (New York: Sheridan House, 1937), this book is a satire of detective-story writers, who are habitually referred to as "the barbarian sages." Ordean A. Hagen, *Who Done It? A Guide to Detective, Mystery and Suspense Fiction* (New York & London, 1969), does not list this story but does include, under Ernest Bramah (Smith), *The Wallet of Kai Lung*, which does not belong in this genre.

I have been asked to say something about an individual called Max Carrados—sometimes labelled for descriptive purposes "The Blind Detective." But possibly that doesn't take you very far.

Well, as a matter of fact, Max Carrados is an amateur sleuth—one of that vast army of indomitable 'tecs who make it simply incredible that any crook nowadays should be so foolish as to abstract Lady Constance's priceless rope of pearls; any alien spy so blind to the obvious consequences as to purloin those vital Admiralty papers. And yet, for some inscrutable reason, crime on the grand scale does seem to go on still and in quite a formidable number of cases the criminal manages to remain uncaught! What can all those remarkable gentlemen who flood the lending libraries be doing? They only need to look at a bent pin or to discover a dead earwig in Chapter VI to be able to ring down on a successful arrest on page 329—and real crimes are generally far simpler. To tell the truth, I fancy that they are all busy putting together their reminiscences before the detective boom begins to peter out. And who can blame them?

Among all these burly ex-inspectors and astute outside specialists, I don't imagine that, for some reason or other, Max Carrados is quite so well known as his publishers—for instance—would like him to be. I, at any rate, don't get the embarrassing stream of laudatory correspondence that other writers confide to the world is the bane of their existence. As a matter of fact—with the exception of press criticism, which as a purely professional act of mutual convenience of course doesn't count—with that exception I have come across a reference to Carrados on one occasion only.

It was in the help-yourself department of a large library—a free library of course—what, I believe, is called a Carnegie after someone or other. Looking rather aimlessly round I came face to face with a copy of "Max Carrados." I was so surprised—and, well, perhaps excited—to find one at all that I took it down to see if it was real, and there, on the title page, someone—evidently someone who had read it—or at all events read some of it—had pencilled a little

criticism. "Max Carrados," wrote my unknown reviewer, "is not —" and there, most tantalizingly, the line ended. Something very important must have called him away. "Not what?" I naturally speculated. "Not half bad," was the most obvious rendering. "Not surpassed among the greatest masterpieces of contemporary fiction," was perhaps too imaginative a flight. And then, looking again, I made a further discovery. Our anonymous friend, like many another casual scribbler, without being actually illiterate, was just a trifle shaky over some of the more difficult letters. What he intended for R's he made like N's, and strictly speaking he had written "Max Cannados." I hope I don't need to elaborate the distressing fact, but, so far from being incomplete, the line he had written was definitely and unconvincingly finished.

But touching the personality of Max Carrados—since he is the only reason of my being here now. Though you mightn't think it, there's just a little difficulty in knowing where to begin in the case of an individual of whom you may be presumed to know nothing and of whom I am supposed to know everything. Fortunately, at this point, the B.B.C. itself thoughtfully supplies an opening. "For instance," helpfully wrote an official, "the circumstances under which you came to evolve the character."

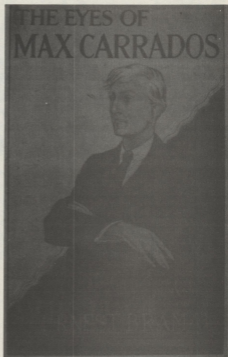
Well, that was quite casual. I was at a crook play—"The —" No, perhaps it *would* be better not to say which, but it was the sort of play where the pursued people always drift out of the room about a fifth of a second before the pursuers drift in, and where the sleuth turns round to admire a picture on the wall while the confederates pass the jewels. This goes on until five minutes to eleven when someone suddenly becomes extremely brilliant or someone else makes an obvious remark and then the mystery falls to pieces.

"If it comes to that, why not have a blind detective?" I thought. "I mean, a *really* blind one."

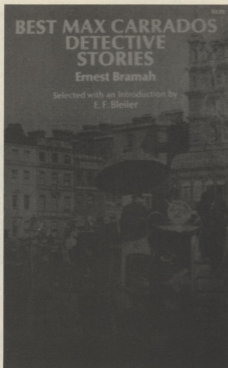
The idea at that stage was, of course, humorous and ironic—the incongruity of a man so handicapped taking part in what was generally supposed to be a particularly open-eyed occupation. But, needless to say, that conception had very soon to go by the board. You may do a lot of surprising things in the way of magazine or holiday fiction nowadays without the average reader noticing that anything is amiss—even to the extent of forgetting your heroine's name in process—but you cannot associate a comic theme with the character of a blind man. You must at all costs keep him serious. And you have to be very, very careful with the mildest flights of satire. Even with all the trouble I took to tread warily one conscientious critic jibbed at the mere idea of a blind man being useful. He said he didn't like it.

"The idea is no doubt original enough," was the burden of his complaint, "but it will probably occur to many people that it is playing it rather low down to make literary capital out of the affliction of the blind."

Well, of course that is a possible point of view and



the idea might be indefinitely elaborated. Shakespeare, to start at the top, made considerable literary capital out of a hypochondriac whom he called Hamlet. Dickens works in considerable play at the expense of a gallery of half-wits. Lucas Malet might be said to have founded her reputation on the exploitation of club feet. Mr. Walter de la Mare owes something to the psychological isolation of dwarfs. Mary Webb, in *Precious Bane*, trades on the idiosyncrasies of hare lips, and Leonard Merrick, in *The Quaint Companions*, Pett Ridge, in *Erb*, Mrs. Craik, in *Olive*, Mary Waller, in *The Wood Carver of Limpus*, and Miss Coolidge, in a whole series of *What Katy Did*, are all tarred with this same brush of indebtedness to physical or mental imperfection.



These, and hundreds of others similar, may all be deplorable examples of questionable taste, but I doubt if it has ever occurred to any of you to see it in this light. In this particular case it certainly didn't occur to the National Institute for the Blind that there was any danger of feelings being hurt since they asked for permission to issue Carrados in Braille, and if any of their people have felt outraged by the delineation of a blind man being extremely able, so far I haven't heard about it.

Now actually the critic merely transposed the values. What he ought to have said was: "There is nothing at all original in the idea of a blind detective but it is commendable of Mr. Bramah to insist on the way in which his Max Carrados is able to rise above his physical disability." That's what I should have said about it if I had been reviewing, for you naturally have to mingle praise and blame with a judicious impartiality that gives the impression of having actually read the book and knowing all about the subject.

There *is* nothing original about the idea. I don't profess to be a fan on this crime subject and the earliest blind detective I can recall in fiction is

Polyphemos. Ulysses, you will remember, saw to the blindness by gouging out the giant's one eye with a red-hot stake. The detective business forced on Polyphemos was the problem of how to catch the crooks doing a get-away. The poor primitive mut had no brighter thought than to feel the backs of his sheep as he turned them out to pasture the next day, on the assumption that the gang would mingle with them. Thinking just one ahead of course Ulysses and his lot hung on underneath the sheep and so pulled the wool on old man Polyphemos in more than one way. Had it been Max Carrados I'm sure that his uncanny sense of touch would have given away what was happening by the unnatural tension of the wool on the sheep's backs. That shows the great strides detective fiction has made since the days of Homer.

Meanwhile there have been quite a number of blind detectives in fiction though they may not have been called it—probably because detective fiction was not in vogue just then. I can't refer you to the characters offhand but I am sure that there *have* been because every sort of idea has been exploited over and over again—all we do is to modernise the setting. Even so, the criminological field is getting terribly overcrowded. Every sort of method of detecting has been pre-empted—from sitting in a flowery pyjama suit playing the ukelele and drinking hashish for inspiration, to that of just simply being a detective. The old man who squats in a corner and broods... the hustling young man (generally on a daily newspaper) who *does things*... the steady middle-aged man who works it all out... the quiet foreigner who doesn't need to do anything but just look on... the silly ass who time and again exposes the clever crooks as it were by sheer fatuousness... the unworlly-minded ascetic who gets solutions direct from the Above; the mysterious personages; the humanised machines; the mechanical humans—they've all been got, dozens of them, so that now the difficulty isn't so much to think out a plot—which is largely a piece of joinery nine times out of ten—but of evolving a distinctive personality to hang it about. And I daresay I need scarcely tell you that it really isn't the tales that matter after a bit—it's the amount of popularity that editor or publisher has been able to work up for your particular detective.

In the matter of Max Carrados I very soon came up against his inevitable limitations. That's the snag of detective fiction; that when you endow your detective with unusual qualities you automatically impose corresponding limitations. He has to show off according to his particular qualities and therefore he is pinned down within certain limits. Sherlock Holmes (who in real life would probably be the world's worst detective) was perhaps the freest in this respect, for the induction stunt is capable of endless variations—not of method but of detail. With Max

Carrados there was only one situation in fact that gave him the advantage; when he could contrive to shut himself and the villain up in a dark room, where he was completely at home and they were all as fish out of water. But the ground is limited; you can't go on shutting the bad people up in dark rooms tale after tale and chapter after chapter without it getting monotonous. So I had to fall back on Max's superlatively acuter perceptions in the senses other than sight. That simply discounted his blindness. Anyone could endow a detective with abnormally developed senses without him being blind at all. Still, there he was, a poor cod no doubt but yet mine own, and as a winning card in any tight corner I took the liberty of equipping him with the elusive sixth sense—which of course covers anything and everything. Then I flattered myself that whatever happened we couldn't go wrong.

Not unnaturally Carrados struck different people in different ways. Some reviewers profess to find him charming, genial and sympathetic; others dull, austere and forbidding. I rather incline to the latter view myself; I can't imagine that he would be anything but a deadly heavyweight about the social board. Miss Rose Macaulay found him unpleasantly canine. I quite agree. One speaks of the sense of smell reluctantly and the picture—well, the idea of a detective following the trail by his nose instead of his eyes is crudely suggestive of a bloodhound. Mr. Ralph Straus regards him as rather an uncanny person and his delicacy of touch almost, but not quite, unbelievable. Mr. Francis Iles, on the other hand, does find it quite unbelievable (and unfortunately I haven't the time now to cite the mass of authority that would cover Mr. Iles with apotheosis confusion); while I am afraid that Max generally falls short of Miss Clemence Dane's avowed liking for a good bloodthirsty round-up of a situation.

But perhaps the most penetrating criticism is provided by the gentleman on the *Times Literary Supplement*. Just listen to this. "Carrados, with the magical development of his senses is obviously a fairy tale character."

How true and how illuminating! I had never thought of it in that way before but I see now plainly enough that not only Carrados but *all* the detectives of fiction are merely disguised fairies and the records of their doings represent the pathetic yearnings of the grown-ups to cling to the illusions and make-believe of childhood.

They are fairies in that the detectives of fiction do things, and are allowed to do things, that no human being would ever dream of doing and the results of these activities are results that would never, never come about in real life. The queen of the fairies touches the pumpkin with her magic wand and immediately it turns into a magnificent chariot. At

five we—well, if we didn't exactly believe it in a "Be-a-good-boy-and-you-will-go-to-Heaven" sense we could more or less accept it. In much the same way, Sherlock Holmes, picking up a discarded toothpick under the Ritz portico, might pronounce: "The murderer, my dear Watson, is obviously a one-legged Armenian refugee who is in the habit of frequenting political meetings on Clapham Common. Elementary"; and at fifty we are no less prepared to—well, if not exactly to credit the inevitableness of the deduction, to accept the conclusion as sufficient basis for our grown-up fairy tale. We know very well all the time that it wouldn't really work. We can't be blind to the fact that if a normally well-turned-out gentleman arrives wearing a dusty hat it doesn't prove that his punctilious wife is away on a holiday—not in Baker Street of the eighteen-nineties when all the London dust carts were open vehicles and when twenty-seven other quite like contingencies might account for it. We realise that anyone who conducted his daily life on Sherlockian principles of deduction would be making straight for either Holloway or Colney Hatch. But we don't regard it in that light as we read on. It's all part of an understood game and there are obligations on us at our end equally with those incumbent on the author at the other. He mustn't cheat. And we don't want to shatter our grown-up fairy tale by anything so disastrous as thinking. □

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Minor Offenses

By H. Edward Hunsburger

One of the ways I frequently get hooked on a story is by background. As a word it doesn't sound like much, *back ground*, something lurking in the hazy middle distance with little or no connection to the characters and action. And yet it is vitally important to the mystery/suspense short story. A good plot, without compelling characters or background, isn't enough to hold the reader's interest.

When a writer makes a certain locale, era, or milieu come alive, he can count on my attention to the last page. On the other hand, if he or she is faking it, it almost always shows. I know from having done it myself a few times.

What all this is leading up to is a story entitled "Hit and Run" (AHMM 9/81) by Clark Howard, a recent Edgar winner for his short story "The Horn Man" (EQMM 6/80). "Hit and Run" chronicles the fortunes of Dave Handley, an aging boxer preparing to return to the ring. From the very beginning, he is beset by problems, a nagging wife who doesn't want him to fight, his own self-doubts, and an underworld boss who wants him to throw the bout. The narrative opens with the police finding an unidentified body in an alley. Then it moves into a long flashback sequence to complete the story, with Howard skillfully pulling the reader into Handley's corner, constantly building suspense as to whether or not he is the dead man in the alley. Through atmosphere and an attention to detail, Howard creates a very real sense of place. The gym, the locker room, a pool hall, the ring itself, have a gritty authenticity that jumps right off the page.

A nagging wife also figures in "Dear Dorie" (AHMM 9/81), John Lutz's tale of domestic discontent. The Dear Dorie of the title is a newspaper columnist who dispenses money-saving household hints to her millions of readers. The other principal character in the story is her unhappy husband, Huey, who's being slowly driven "wacko" by Dorie's living-what-she-writes, penny-pinching ways. He does some planning of his own, in a murderous vein, and what results is a wry, amusing story with a neat twist at the end.

Veteran author Talmage Powell's "The Night of the Goblin" (MSMM 10/81) is a beautifully crafted short concerning the rivalry between a child and his mother's rock-musician lover. The action centers around the preparations for a kid's Halloween party. In a series of quick-moving, almost cinematic scenes, Powell constructs an intricate plot with a powerful, thought-provoking conclusion.

All But Impossible (Ticknor & Fields, \$14.95) is the most recent anthology from the

ALL BUT IMPOSSIBLE!

An Anthology of Locked Room
& Impossible Crime Stories by Members
of the Mystery Writers of America



Edited by Edward D. Hoch

Mystery Writers of America. As the title suggests, it is a collection of locked-room and other impossible crime stories. Editor Edward D. Hoch has selected twenty of the best for inclusion in the volume. There are classic locked-room tales by John Dickson Carr and Clayton Rawson, Jack Ritchie's offbeat humor, as well as stories from authors

better known in other genres, Poul Anderson and Isaac Asimov. Hoch's introduction also includes the results of a survey taken in which seventeen prominent figures in the field were asked to name their ten favorite locked-room or impossible crime novels. In all, this is an excellent anthology, a must for any fan of impossible crime. □

The Radio Murder Hour

By Chris Steinbrunner



*Who's that little chatterbox?
The one with pretty auburn locks?
Who can it be? It's Little Orphan Annie . . .*

These days, illustrator-writer Leonard Starr has brilliantly assumed the creative reins of Harold Gray's *Little Orphan Annie* comic strip, making it better than ever, and the long-running Broadway musical has revived interest in the celebrated child drifter—reminding us that, for many years in the Depression 'thirties (debuting in 1931), the spunky orphan was a five-times-a-week afternoon radio star as well. With all her political attitudes intact, the Annie of the radio serial at least had a perky little-girl voice, which helped you imagine her as a child and not as the midget woman you sometimes suspected the determined creature in the strip might be. (The radio version also helped you avoid Harold Gray's drawing device: his characters' harrowing, pupil-less white eyes.) Just as in the newspaper pages, though, Annie shared many scrapes with the munitions king she called Daddy Warbucks—listening attentively to his ultra-Right philosophy and giving him prodding little pep talks when his fortunes were momentarily wiped away—in such diverse settings as palatial manor houses set in deep woods, metropolitan office buildings, and even a deserted cannibal island on which a mutineering crew had abandoned them and where Warbucks had good cause to be grateful to his ward, for she kept him going when he was near death for a while. And when Oliver Warbucks was elsewhere making his empire grow, Annie enjoyed friendly chats with his two most trusted servants: Asp, the quiet Oriental killer, and the giant, scimitar-wielding, djinnlike Punjab. Punjab's devotion to the girl was obvious to all listeners; he was frequently to be found hovering close to her, rescuing her when danger approached with a deep-throated: "We must come away, Little Princess."

But those were Annie's salad days, the times with her rich guardian, one of the wealthiest men in the world. After Oliver Warbucks's frequent disappearances and simulated deaths, with Asp and Punjab also vanished for a time, however, Annie was left to fend for herself, generally without even pocket money. It was in these hard times that the plucky orphan often gravitated to the small towns and farming communities of mid-America. She was even given a set of

foster parents, a rural couple appropriately named Silo, who loved Annie as much as "Daddy" did, though quite without his resources. But even the rustic towns to which Annie retreated were not without their dangers: crooked aldermen, grasping orphanage wardens, wicked landowners, proliferating arsonists, thieves of all descriptions, and even, as the program reached the war years, fifth columnists and foreign types whose names smacked of the Black Hand!

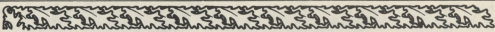
Although the Annie of the newspaper pages lit out of most locations too quickly to establish any permanent relationships with her peers, the radio Annie soon picked up a boy companion, a somewhat backward farm youth named Joe Cornstassel, to exploit and commandeer. (Joe was created because of dramatic radio's axiom that lead characters had to have pals with whom to achieve dialogue, and also to keep Annie from talking to herself in the alarming fashion she did in the newspapers. Communication with her dog Sandy was also limiting, as all he could respond was "Arf.") Played with soft-voiced docility, mostly by young Mel Tormé, Joe was constantly giving way to Annie's aggressive leadership.

Annie also virtually pioneered and dominated the field of children's radio premiums during the 'thirties. Premiums were devices that linked sponsors irrevocably with the heroisms and spoils of their radio creations. Some treasure was offered in exchange for product boxtop or seal and generally a dime, "to cover mailing," which often made the prize self-liquidating in cost. The best and most fondly remembered premium was the famed Orphan Annie's Cold Ovaltine Shake-Up Mug. Ovaltine, the milk fortifier, was Annie's long-time sponsor, and the red-topped blue mug was heavy identification for the firm. On its plastic side, a surprisingly fat-legged Annie, with Sandy arfing by her side, can be seen energetically skipping rope. "For extra pep 'n' flavor keen, drink CHOCOLATE FLAVORED OVALTINE!" One needed all that pep and energy to shake the grey curds of the powdered fortifier into a blended chocolate-milk drink.

Not only did the immense popularity of the mugs insure a succession of them, there were also other Annie premiums. One was a life-sized Annie face mask, "just like" the ones used by the brave orphan on that cannibal isle to make advancing natives think a whole

army of girls was holding them at bay. Another was a decoder, for at one time Annie fell in with a cipher expert named Clay Collier. But the most outrageous of all her premiums was a sort of dog-tag offered during the years before the war, eerily prophetic of a time soon to come when most young men would be wearing a similar ID. The Little Orphan Annie Identification Tag and Chain, "keen-looking," was oval-shaped and bore the picture of an American flag plus, "best of all, right above the flag, your initial, to show it's your property." And on the other side, your *official identification number*, stamped right into the metal. "Everybody gets a different number, that's going to be registered with your name and address at the headquarters of Annie's Identification Bureau, in Chicago! Then, if there's an emergency, or any boy or girl gets lost, people can send in to the headquarters, and find out the name and address which matches up with the number on any tag! And so it's useful, as well as being so wonderful looking . . ." All it took was your initial, a dime, an Ovaltine seal, "and Annie will send you your Identification Tag just as quick as she can!"

It was a curious offering, and one wonders how many emergency lost children Chicago was called upon to help. It was, anyhow, a bad year for Annie and her Identification Bureau: the last year, after nearly a decade, in which she was to travel solo. Ovaltine had decided the listening audience of children warmed more to heroic figures than to tales of their peers, and parted company with the little orphan. Drastic changes in program format became a necessity, so the radio Annie went out of Daddy Warbucks's life forever and became a child acolyte to an aviator named Captain Sparks, inspired by the program's new sponsor, Quaker Puffed Wheat Sparkies. It was a difficult adjustment for Annie, and, even with her orphan's outlook which forced her to make the best of whatever life offered, her natural pesky aggressiveness would not allow her to be nudged from center mike for long . . . especially by a man. The program did not last, and Annie disappeared from radio, never to be heard again. No doubt the radio Orphan Annie can still be found, though, checking the IDs of runaways somewhere in the twilight of mid-America. □



MISS ALLINGHAM'S KNIGHT: The Saga of Albert Campion

By J. Randolph Cox



It was Meggie Oliphant who characterized Mr. Albert Campion as a lunatic in *The Crime at Black Dudley*. She went on to refer to him as "quite inoffensive, just a silly ass." Mr. Campion certainly looked inoffensive to George Abbershaw once this had been pointed out to him. But there was something familiar about

the fresh-faced young man with the tow-coloured hair and the foolish, pale-blue eyes behind tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles [with] the slightly receding chin and mouth so unnecessarily full of teeth.

Campion was not even his real name. He was the younger son of noble parents, who seemed somewhat ashamed of his profession of gentleman-adventurer as well as of his quarters at Bottle Street, over the police station. His real first name would appear to have been Rudolph. Even his address, like his name, is not certain. It is recorded variously as #17, #17A, and #12.

But Mr. Campion was not to remain a vacuous young man for long. His creator, Margery Allingham, allowed him to mature, to age, and eventually to marry. Few fictional detectives have been granted those privileges. Dorothy Sayers, of course, did this with Lord Peter Wimsey, but she then stopped writing detective stories and turned to writing plays, translating Dante, and writing essays on theology.

Miss Allingham was a conscious artist in her chosen field and realized that even fictional characters cannot always remain exactly the same in book after book. Certainly, their writers are not the same people *they* were when they began their literary careers.

The career of Mr. Campion can be divided into three periods. His early years were spent as a sort of amateur adventurer with little official connection with the British police. Beginning in 1929 with *The Crime at Black Dudley*, and ending in 1933 with *Sweet Danger* (also published under the titles: *The Fear Sign* and *Kingdom of Death*) these stories are closer to the "thriller" category than the true detective story. They are light in tone and Mr. Campion plays more on his traditional role as the "silly ass" with a shrewd and serious interior. The titles in this group also include *Mystery Mile*, in which Campion's servant, the ex-burgler, Magersfontein Lugg makes his bow, *Look to the Lady* (also published as *The Gyrth Chalice Mystery*) and *Police at the Funeral*. It is, I believe, in *Look to the Lady* that Inspector, later Superintendent, Stanislaus Oates makes his first appearance.

This first group of stories is important for it is here that we meet Lady Amanda Fitton, who is to become Mrs. Albert Campion. The vehicle in which the meeting takes place is the final novel in the group, *Sweet Danger*. The story is pure adventure with its emphasis on the search for a lost crown and title to a small kingdom called Avena. It is Amanda's brother Hal who is the heir to the fortune, but it is Amanda, the seventeen year old miller of Pontisbright, we must watch.

She was not very tall, slender almost to skinniness, with big honey-brown eyes, and an extra-ordinary mop of hair so red that it was remarkable in itself. This was not auburn hair nor yet carotty, but a blazing, flaming, and yet subtle colour which is as rare as it is beautiful...She eyed them calmly with the inquisitive, polite regard of a child.

Eager-Wright was staring at her with frank admiration. Mr. Campion, as usual, looked merely foolish.

Amanda is proud of being Mr. Campion's "lieutenant" in this adventure. It is the eagerness of a child to be in on a great adventure, but there is also a glimpse of the seriousness of the woman she was to become. There is a continuity in her character in the saga in contrast to that of Campion. Other than maturing, the changes in Amanda are less abrupt than those in Campion.

In the second section of this saga, beginning with the 1934 novel, *Death of a Ghost*, Campion becomes a professional detective and leaves behind the world of high adventure of his youth. This is not to say that the adventures which follow are not as exciting as those of the early years. But with Campion's greater maturity comes a seriousness in the tone of the stories. There is more emphasis on the puzzle element, so central to the pure detective story, as well.

This section includes two collections of short stories, one published in Great Britain, the other in the United States. There is some overlapping of the contents of the two collections which are entitled *Mr. Campion: Criminologist* and *Mr. Campion and Others*.

The novels in the Middle Years are *Flowers for the Judge*, *Dancers in Mourning*, *The Fashion in Shrouds* (in which Amanda appears once more and in which she and Albert become engaged), and *Traitor's Purse*, a story of the second World War. This section closes appropriately with that last novel for it is also the account of the marriage of Albert Campion and Lady Amanda.

In the final section, the post-war books, we find eight novels, beginning with *Coroner's Pidgin* (Published in this country as *Pearls Before Swine*) and ending with the posthumous work (completed by Philip Youngman Carter) *Cargo of Eagles*. The other books in this mature phase of Campion's career are *More Work for the Undertaker*, *The Tiger in the Smoke* (there are those who consider this thriller to be her greatest work), *The Beckoning Lady* (published in this country as *The Estate of the Beckoning Lady*), *Hide My Eyes* (published here as *Tether's End*)*, *The China Governess*, and *The Mind Readers*.

There are, in addition, two further novels, *Mr. Campion's Farthing* and *Mr. Campion's Falcon* (published here as *Mr. Campion's Quarry*), written by Margery Allingham's husband, Philip Youngman Carter, shortly before his death in 1969. Perhaps

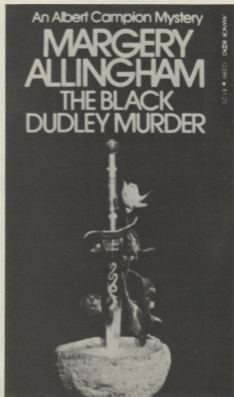
*This novel also appeared in a *Reader's Digest* Condensed Books edition.

these should be considered to be apocryphal adventures of Mr. Campion, although there was no secret that a certain amount of collaboration between Miss Allingham and her husband went into all of the Campion stories.

In addition to these books there are several short stories about Albert Campion in *The Allingham Case Book*, edited by Youngman Carter. An important adjunct to the career of Miss Allingham, as well as that of Mr. Campion, are the three omnibus volumes: *The Mysterious Mr. Campion*, *Mr. Campion's Lady*, and *Mr. Campion's Clowns* since these include introductions setting down some of the conditions under which the books were written. These also give a fascinating insight into what being a writer requires. The introduction to *Mr. Campion's Clowns* was included in the American edition (but not the British) of *The Allingham Case Book*.

So much for the Campion canon. But what about his creator?

Margery Allingham came from a family of writers.



Her father had been an editor of a London magazine but gave this up to write melodramatic tales for the weekly adventure magazines which formed so much of the diet of young people before the era of the motion picture. His friends were writers who turned out reams of copy for the Amalgamated Press detailing the adventures of Sexton Blake or Robin Hood. The young Margery Allingham served a rigorous apprenticeship in this setting and at the age of sixteen had a juvenile adventure yarn about smugglers actually published. By the time she was seventeen the book, *Blackchief Dick*, had even appeared in America.

Success didn't follow overnight. She did turn out anonymous pieces, synopses of motion pictures, light stories, for various British magazines, but it was largely what she has termed "left hand writing," that is, writing to order and according to definite requirements on the part of the magazines. Her "right hand writing," the seriously attempted writing for her own enjoyment, did not really surface until she wrote *The Crime at Black Dudley*. This was not the first mystery she had written. She is said to have written one at the age of seven (unpublished) and another at the age of twenty-four (published). This second attempt is perhaps her least known work, *The White Cottage Mystery*. Although it appears in lists of her works appended to some of her books, she wished it to be forgotten.

Her decision to write detective fiction came about, she felt later, because of the comfort of writing about something which retained some of the "familiar demigods" which the upheaval of the world following the first World War seemed about to destroy. It was an attempt to retain the eternal theme of romance and the knight errant.

In 1928 (she says) the postwar demolition of Edwardian civilization was well under way. Few people anywhere had any faith in anything constructive and the mood was angry. Discredited ideas suffered in a general spring cleaning so drastic as to be almost a laying waste. Many perfectly good babies got thrown out with the bath water and several eternal themes nearly went with them.

She created her own knight errant in Albert Campion. In her hands this vacuous young man grew to become the central figure in a continuing saga. He became a wanderer in search of other people's troubles, even a champion (a word that his name suggests). It was not so much a question of "what shall I have Albert do next?" as "what would he do in this particular situation?" There is a continuity that links the books more closely than is usually the case with a series-detective. She also formed a fairly consistently-adhered-to philosophy regarding her creation and the detective story in general.

It is not that changes [in the detective story] have never been attempted (she wrote) but that, although the pattern has softened, no radical alteration has yet occurred. The mystery remains box-shaped, at one a prison and a refuge. Its four walls are, roughly, a killing, a mystery, an inquiry and a conclusion with an element of satisfaction in it.

To please the majority, each of these items must be balanced, at least factually convincing and, if possible, new. This is an exacting specification. Both writers and readers are relentlessly precise. When moralists cite the modern murder mystery as evidence of an unnatural love of violence in a decadent age I wonder if it is nothing of the sort, but rather a sign of a popular instinct for order and form in a period of sudden and chaotic change. The essential killing is, at worst, no more than a status symbol, an indication that the theme in hand is of importance. But there is, also, something deeply healthy in the implication that to deprive a human being of his life is not only the most dreadful thing one can do to him but also that it matters to the rest of us.

There is certainly much of this feeling present in a novel of her middle years, *Dancers in Mourning*. If the story can be said to have a theme this might well be expressed in the words of Ex-Inspector Blest to Campion when he says,

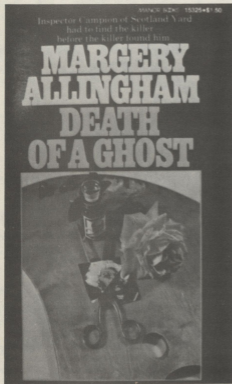
"Take a tip from an old pro and don't feel it personally . . . That's always the trouble with us. We come up against nice people, people we can understand and enjoy a drink with, and then out comes the dirty linen and it gets us down if we aren't careful. Once we start thinking about right and wrong and extenuating circumstances we're sunk. Take it from me."

But Campion does "feel it personally" once he becomes involved in the case of finding the person bent on persecuting Jimmy Sutane, dancing star and producer of that popular musical show, *The Buffer*. In fact, the novel opens with Campion and Mr. William Faraday watching a performance of the show. Mr. Faraday will be remembered by readers of *Police at the Funeral* as a member of the ill-fated Faraday family who figured in that book. He is also the author of *Memoirs of an Old Buffer*, the book from which the musical was taken. Miss Allingham exercises her ability at injecting humor into her stories through characters like Uncle William Faraday. In fact, the first paragraph is an example of this:

When Mr. William Faraday sat down to write his memoirs after fifty-eight years of blameless inactivity he found the work of inscribing the history of his life almost as tedious as living it had been, and so, possessing a natural invention coupled with a gift for locating the easier path, he began to prevaricate a little upon the second page, working up to downright lying on the sixth and subsequent folios.

This easy mood is soon shattered effectively by the murder of Chloe Pye at the Sutane country estate, White Walls.

Campion finds himself in an odd world of make-believe at White Walls. Everyone there is connected with the successful musical in some way: Benny Konrad is Sutane's understudy, Slippers Bellew shares the lead with Sutane, and Squire Mercer is the enigmatic genius who composed the music for the show. Chloe Pye, a once-popular dancer, has been attempting a come-back in the show. It is she who is killed one night by Sutane's car. It is an apparent suicide, but Campion learns that she was dead before



Sutane's car hit her. Of course, in a mystery novel, nothing is really as apparent as it seems. We should be prepared to look beneath even the simplest acts of the characters.

The apparent suicide is soon ruled an accident, to the delight of the company who prefer that explanation to the stigma that a suicide might bring. Forgotten for the moment are the odd attacks on Sutane: the garlic substituted for flowers he is to sniff in the show, the pin hidden in the grease-paint stick.

[Campion] stood by, looking at them all uncomfortably

while they discussed the mechanics of the move with schoolboyish satisfaction. It occurred to him then what a pack of children they were, all of them. Their enthusiasm, their eagerness to escape from the main shocking reality, their tendency to make everything more bearable by dramatising it; it was the very stuff of youth.

Only Linda Sutane, Mrs. Jimmy Sutane, had reacted to the death as though it were a tragedy. She had reacted in a way that Campion understood: "arms hanging limply at her sides and her face pallid, she looked exhausted, ready to sleep on her feet."

And thus Campion finds himself drawn personally into the drama. He is not to serve as an observer only, the role to which he has become accustomed. A man falling in love with another man's wife is not a new thing to Campion. The newness comes about because he is the man to fall in love. When it appears that Linda, or Sutane, or someone close to them has had something to do with the death of Chloe (and later of Benny Konrad) he is rendered helpless to focus on the problem as an abstract one. It is only at the end that he realizes he has been wrong all along, wrong in his love as well as in his theories about the murderer's identity. He should have realized that the solution lay in an examination of the personalities of the people at White Walls.

The characters in an Allingham story are often more convincing, and more sympathetic, than one encounters in much detective fiction. We see enough of the intensity of Jimmy Sutane, the eccentricity of Squire Mercer, even the bumbling of Uncle William (who felt it was better to be a clown than a pompous fool) to be able to recognize them on sight. We too should be able to figure out "whodunit" if we are only alert enough to the clues. We have to spot the points of misdirection and not swallow everything we are told without mentally weighing it against other information.

But apart from the involvement of the detective and the excitement of the unravelling of the mystery there is the authentic background of the theatre. This is something that many writers of detective fiction employ — an authentically rendered background. They don't always succeed in quite the same way. Agatha Christie, in a rare commentary on the work of another writer, suggests of Margery Allingham that

Everything she writes has a definite shape. The people, their characters, the very distinctive atmosphere in which they move and have their being — never twice the same — each book has its own separate and distinctive background.

Within her other works, the world of fashion or the world of publishing (in *The Fashion in Shrouds* and *Flowers for the Judge*) may be mentioned. Other books by other authors may also be cited as examples of this: the advertising agency in Dorothy Sayers'

Murder Must Advertise, the publishing industry (again) in Nicholas Blake's *End of Chapter*, and the milieu of Oxford University in much of the work of Michael Innes, and of course, Edmund Crispin's *The Moving Toyshop*.

The theatrical background in *Dancers in Mourning* is rendered mostly through the characters and their attitudes. They are concerned with their professions in the theatre and through their conversation the necessary glimpses of that profession are provided the reader. The Sutanes are all city people who don't quite fit into the country setting and yet it is a natural place for them to want to live in order to be apart from the stage and to relax. The neighbors consider them a bit odd and aloof, all the more so when the mysterious prankster invites 200 of them to the Sutanes to embarrass the dancers and actors.

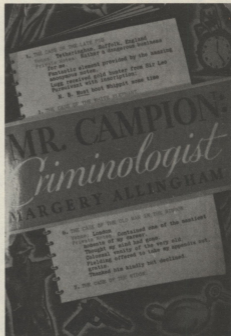
A minor episode in the story concerns young Sarah Sutane who is being protected from the fame of her father by her very seclusion at White Walls. Her interest in Albert Campion lies partly in her realization that he is from a different world from that of Jimmy Sutane and is not like most of the people who visit White Walls—people who are not interested in her. She has parents who obviously love her but find little time for her. Dr. Bouverie penetrates to her inner world when he calls and prevents the well-intentioned maid-servant, Miss Mudd, from frightening the girl. Her dog has scratched her and the servant has promised (or threatened) to get rid of the dog. Campion realizes this and asks if this isn't just what has occurred. It is then Dr. Bouverie's turn. He sees plainly that it is this that is frightening the girl and not the fact that the dog has scratched her.

"That's a very lonely, overimaginative little girl in there, [he says] and if you take her dog away she'll lie awake and see him standing waiting to be shot. She'll hear the bang and she'll see him bleed and she'll see his little dead body as clearly as if you'd killed him in front of her eyes. Cruelty, my good woman, is a very relative thing. That child is suffering from shock and it may interest you to know that more people die of shock than from any other disease..."

Campion and Bouverie are outsiders who can see more clearly the problems in this make-believe world of actors. But it is Lugg, Campion's servant, who really wins over the little girl and brings her out of herself to a position of enjoying herself more and perhaps enables her to see her parents' world a little more distinctly. Lugg is simple, straight-forward, and a bit on the level of a child himself.

To many of the readers of Margery Allingham, one of her greatest creations is the ex-burgler who acts as Campion's servant. He is Mr. Magersfontein Lugg (with two "g's", if you please). There are also those readers who find him an irritant. A vast man,

("seventeen stone and eight pounds, and proud of it") Lugg is considerably different from Bunter who acts as Lord Peter Wimsey's man and assistant. It is not inappropriate to make the distinction since the careful reader will already have noted certain parallels between Albert and Lord Peter. Bunter is dignified and every inch the gentleman's gentleman of the Wodehouse stamp. Lugg speaks in a cockney dialect and often berates Campion for saying things he considers vulgar and "not the thing a gent would say." He frequents a nearby pub which he calls his club and



often relates his experiences and conversations to Campion.

In showing Blest out he says, "This way, sir, if you please... Mind the rug or you'll break your neck. Good day, sir... and next time you come 'ere 'ave some gloves so I can give 'em to you like a Christian. So long."

Campion, on learning that the Sutanes have lost their butler, has offered Lugg's services. He springs this news on Lugg as the valet is looking for a clean collar in the bureau drawer. There is a pause in the running monologue of Lugg and one can visualize his reactions.

The ponderous form in the vast black trousers and the tight white shirt remained bent over the open drawer. There was a moment of uncomprehending silence.

"Wot?" said Mr. Lugg at last.

"I've lent you. You're to be Mrs. Sutane's butler—God help her—for a day or so, until she can get another man."

Mr. Lugg straightened his back and surveyed his employer with steady dignity. His small black eyes were cold and unfriendly.

"You're barny," he said. "I'm no butler. I'm a gent's 'elp."

"Well then, learn a new trade." Campion took out his wallet and studied the card he had taken from it. "I'm going out now and when I come back I want my things packed for a week and yours too. Not in the same bag. Have them at the foot of the stairs and be waiting yourself. We're going down to the country tonight.

"Country?" echoed Lugg in a voice of mutiny. "Butler in the country? You're snuffing round another crime, I suppose? I wish you'd drop this private narking of yours. You're getting old for it, for one thing. It's not smart any more. It's old fashioned and, in most people's opinion, rather low. I'm sorry to 'ave to tell yer like this but that's 'ow I see it. My friends think you're very vulgar to allow ourselves to get mixed up with crime. Crime's gorn back to its proper place—the gutter—and I for one am glad of it."

There is more of this same vein in *Traitor's Purse*, the later novel dealing with a counterfeiting scheme in war-time England. Campion there has lost his memory—or bits of it, including the details of the plot against the government. He doesn't even recognize Lugg at first, then he confesses his inadequacy.

"You stay where you are." Lugg had picked up his revolver and was playing with it carelessly. "Your head seems to 'ave gone so we'll 'ave to use mine for a ruddy change. Now look 'ere, we're in a very nasty position. I'm an accessory after the fact, don't forget that, so I'm going to tell you all you saw fit to let me know about the lark you're on before you lost your senses... I've only been by your side day and night for seventeen years and you couldn't trust me with the whole packet. Said you was under oath... If you hadda done, we shouldn't be in this mess, but I'm not reproaching you. That's not my way. Never 'as been..."

One is tempted to go on, quoting passages of conversation between these two. In *Dancers in Mourning*, there is the classic scene at the beginning of chapter 22 which adds dimension to the characters of Lugg and little Sarah Sutane. It is when Lugg is surprised by Campion in the very act of teaching Sarah how to pick locks. Sarah scampers off, giggling, and delighted with her new skill. Campion is not amused, a fact that does not impress Mr. Lugg.

"I'm very fond of my fellow creatures... Besides, you never know when a simple little wrinkle like that might come in useful. Every kid ought to learn 'ow to pick a lock. She's a helpful noisy little bit. She's bound to come up against it some time in 'er life. I'm preparin' of 'er for it. I'm doin' 'er a bit of good. You lay off. I like 'er. She's all right."

One may be tempted to linger as well at some of the brief and telling descriptions of places which reveal the feelings of the characters as well.

Campion in the dining room of his club feels secure at the sight of

heavy curtains, corded and swathed with Victorian generosity round the vast windows [which] seemed to resent the strong sunlight which burnished their fringes and strove to disclose the intimacies of their weave, so that the room was made misty by the little war between light and shadow.

When Campion goes to question people who once knew Chloe, he comes to an area of the city which seems to suggest the presence of that deceased person who died trying to make a come-back...

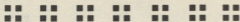
tall houses, their stained sides and chipped stucco hidden in the lamplit half-light, rose up with all their original Georgian symmetry, and only the brightly lighted scenes within their many uncurtained windows betrayed their descent in the social scale of an unfaithful city. It was all very quiet and homely and forgotten.

These are some of the things that make one return to Margery Allingham's work even when the mystery has been dispelled. There is more than an intellectual cross-word puzzle; there is a time receding rapidly into memory that has been caught by her writing. Even her titles are creative. The Dancers in the novel just considered imply gaiety; the contrast lies between the expected gaiety and the tragedy suggested by the word Mourning.

Mr. Campion is considered by some to be the last of the Gentlemen-Detectives. He is not the only one who lives by a personal code of honor in this story, however. Jimmy Sutane knows all along who is responsible for Chloe's death, but feels he cannot reveal this without compromising his ethics. In a poignant scene at the close of the book he explains this to Campion while "a whirl of gears at the drive gates" herald the two police cars which "crackled smoothly over the gravel towards the front door." His world is cracking too.

Mr. Campion, who has been subtly changed by these people who have touched his life as deeply as he has touched theirs, then must step aside for the arrival of the law and the proper ending to a detective novel. Once again he returns to his accustomed role as observer, knight errant, and wanderer in search of other people's troubles. □

The passages quoted from Miss Allingham appeared in "Party of One," *Holiday Magazine* for September, 1963. Those from Agatha Christie appeared in "Margery Allingham—a Tribute" in the *Penguin Book News* for March, 1968.



Lauran Bosworth Paine Interview

By Allen J. Hubin

As I mentioned in "The Uneasy Chair" in the April 1978 TAD, I discovered Lauran Bosworth Paine during my researches for *The Bibliography of Crime Fiction*. His prolificacy was immediately astounding, for his entry in *Contemporary Authors* indicated that he had written 600 books through 1972, and that these had been published under 61 different bylines!

Among these bylines were fourteen under which he had written crime fiction, and so Paine unseated John Creasey as the most prolific author to have written significantly in our field. In fact, as seen below, in terms of book-length works published, he may well be the most prolific author in history.

Perhaps as intriguing as his massive output was another aspect of Paine. Aside from a small fraction (including none of the crime fiction), Paine's work has been published only in England, largely (in recent years) by Robert Hale. I thus had the image of an English gentleman in some obscure village beating typewriters to death in a thatch-roofed cottage. The truth, I discovered, is a trifle different: Paine was born in Duluth, Minnesota (in 1916) and now lives in a small town in—not Devonshire—but Northern California!

During 1978 Paine and I exchanged a few letters, and he agreed to an interview by letter. His responses given below are dated August 4, 1978, and his statistics have continued their march to the skies since then.

HUBIN: How did you happen to turn to writing initially?

PAINE: I started writing while working on cattle ranches as a kid because the Westerns I read were so bad, so false, so lacking in authenticity. With the elan of youth I set out to educate the world. It did not work out that way—I sold nothing until an editor told me to stop trying to educate people, just entertain them. From then on I began to sell.

H: When did your first published work appear, and what was it?

P: First published story must have been about 1948 or 1949 when I sold pulp Westerns to the old magazines such as *Street* and *Smith*.

H: What type of writing did you do initially, and why?

P: Exclusively Westerns. I grew up in that environment, knew it backwards and forwards, and was qualified to write of it.

H: How did it happen that you have written primarily for the British market?

P: I started writing for that market because that's where I encountered first and total acceptance of my book-lengthers, and until the devaluation of the pound sterling the pay was as good as any in the U.S. Not true any more although with our recent dollar devaluation the scale has improved some.

H: With your (now) incredible backlog of work published in England, has no American publisher (hardcover or paperback) ever expressed strong interest?

P: I have in fact sold quite a number of reprints in the U.S. My *The Hierarchy of Hell*, a non-fiction book about Hell under the Paine byline, was an alternate book club selection some years back. (It was also a best-seller in France and Belgium.) I am still selling reprints over here.

H: I understand your published books now number 729 (through 1978). How are these distributed by type?

P: Not 729 published works. 751.* Westerns: 440. Paperbacks: 25. Non-fiction: 27. Science fiction: 7. Adventure: 7. Crime-detection: 90. Romance: 155.

H: Which of these do you prefer? Which do you feel you do best?

P: Prefer? Well, I think I'm most qualified to write Westerns, but I also believe anyone who can write one category of fiction can write any other category, and I try to do my best in any category I choose to write in.

H: What special circumstances, if any, caused you to add crime fiction to your repertoire?

P: I decided to write mysteries and detection books because there was a wide-open market when I started out.

*The total through May 1980 is 806!

H: Do you have any favorites among the books under your crime fiction bylines?

P: I have no favorite bylines. Often a pseudonym is made to fit a type of book. Whoever heard of a gory Western written by someone named Barbara Thorn, or a quivery romance written by a guy named Abe Lipschitz?

H: How would you characterize your crime fiction with respect to type?

P: I think most of my mysteries have been police-procedural in style. I was for a time a special investigator for a County District Attorney with close affiliations with other police facilities. That has to some extent been the background for this type of story.

H: You seem to have averaged some 20-30 books per year over your writing career. How many did you turn out in your most productive years?

P: In my most productive years I turned out 48 books annually. Haven't had to keep that up for some time now, although the desire occasionally resurfaces when I think of a string of good plots. But it is easiest for me to write in wintertime when it's too damned cold outside, maybe snowing, for the things I otherwise enjoy doing on the ranch or in the mountains.

H: For some years you seem to have supplied Robert Hale with popular fiction almost single-handedly. How has this come about?

P: John Hale, chairman of Robert Hale Ltd., London, has become a close friend. He takes everything I send him. We have worked out a good relationship over the years. Most of my later works have in fact been done under Agreement with him (not Contract). Much has also been done through hammered-out discussion.

H: How does one of your novels typically take form?

P: I write the way some people "do" sums in their heads: from ideas interwoven or inter-related, or inter-acted (is there such a word? well anyway. . .). I suppose most of my books have started out created around a character and have gone on from there to specific situations which I have had in mind at the first sitting. I do not rewrite nor do I use workup, or plotting, sheets. The first draft is the final draft, except for non-fiction books.

H: Do you write in longhand? Type? Dictate?

P: I write in longhand only on the non-fiction books. All others are typed first from my dictation and sent off exactly that way. I'm sure that if I had ever learned to type it would have been better—and faster—but I'm not going to learn now.

H: When did your output peak?

P: Throughout the Sixties, probably because I was still operating by compulsion and financial need. I

still have the motivation, but not the need—not as much, at any rate.

H: What have you principally tried to accomplish with your fiction?

P: I have not attempted to propagandize nor educate nor subtly extoll our way of life, but simply to tell stories as I know they either did happen or could have happened. To entertain, in other words.

H: I assume most of your mysteries are set in England? Correct? If so, how do you come by your knowledge of English settings, situations, and characters?

P: I do in fact visit England often. Love the countryside, the people, the institutions, and the beer, but not very much the food. But as a matter of fact, none of my stories has ever been set in England. Always in the U.S. or elsewhere.

H: Are you generally regarded by your readers in England as an English or an American writer under your various bylines?

P: I do occasionally get letters from people in Europe or Asia who think I am an Englishman, but more often they either assume or already know that I am an American. I have never sought to appear English nor anything else, to sell books.

H: The market for gothics during the 1960s and '70s was almost insatiable, at least in this country. Could any of your work be considered gothic?

P: I have never done a real gothic in fiction. Perhaps someday, but right now I have all I care to do with what I'm turning out. I'm sure one of these days I'll do an historical because I thoroughly enjoy history.

H: Have any of your novels been filmed or done on TV or radio?

P: Several of the Westerns have been sold as secondary rights for TV, but offhand I don't remember which ones. Nor am I sure they were ever aired. I once sold three words to Warner Brothers for \$500 to be used in a title and to my knowledge they were never used. Unless you camp right on top of those film things you are never sure when something comes out if it is yours unless you are given credits in the bylines.

H: How much short story writing have you done?

P: Most of my short story writing was done years ago when I first started out. I have not written shorts in years.

H: How have you come to use so many (70) pseudonyms?

P: Simply to supply names not only for a mass of books but also for different kinds of books.

H: Aside from the entry in *Contemporary Authors*, has the story of your life and work ever appeared in print?

P: No, the story of my life—literary or other—

has never been written up and I can't imagine anyone being very interested.

H: Did your Minnesota birth or family background play any part in your writing?

P: Minnesota had nothing to do with anything in my life, writing or anything else. I left there as a baby and only returned once—during World War II—and then just passed through.

H: How did you happen to settle in an (you'll pardon the expression) out-of-the-way village like Fort Jones, California?

P: We settled in Fort Jones (population 524) because we like open country, blue skies, mountains, wilderness areas, few people, lots of animals, good wholesome friends and comfortable living, along with our horses, cattle and so forth.

H: What roles do your wife and children play in your writing?

P: My children have played no part in my writing career. My wife types all non-fiction manuscripts.

(Wives work so cheap, y'see, if you don't let them know about this "Women's Lib" business). She also otherwise—usually but not this time—answers letters, keeps files and so forth. Very helpful, and, well, there are fringe benefits which if a man were to try and develop in a hired secretary might ensure for him a punch in the eye.

H: What does your writing future hold? Have you turned away from mysteries?

P: I intend to go right on writing as long as my mind works properly and my body stays in fair shape. I have no very clear idea of what retirement is, unless it is doing what you like to do, in which case I'll never retire because I do like exactly what I am doing now. As for turning away from mysteries—no—but the plot must be better and tighter than in Westerns, so I'm more selective, which means I'll churn out more, of course, but not with the same facility as I do Westerns and romances, and the others. □

THE PAPERBACK REVOLUTION

PATRICK ALEXANDER

Show Me a Hero (1979) (Playboy) posits an England whose government has evolved into a totalitarian regime. Resistance leader Tom Ashman plans and executes a successful bank robbery to finance a revolution but is captured by his enemies. This is an off-beat and engrossing study in character and conflicting loyalties that is not without its share of action.

MICHAEL ALLEN

Spence at the Blue Bazaar (1979) (Dell) is set in the small English village of Tinley and deals with the brutal murder of a beautiful striptease dancer. Detective Chief Superintendent Ben Spence's investigation leads him to suspect that his case is related to an equally grisly seventeen-year-old double homicide. This is a smoothly written and attractive police procedural whose predecessor, *Spence and the Holiday Murders* (1977), should still be available from the same publisher.

SIMON BRETT

Charles Paris, in a relatively sober mood, investigates two apparent suicides set against the vividly-described background of BBC radio in *The Dead Side of the Mike* (1980) (Berkley). This novel contains much shrewd observation of character and wit, and shows us a Paris who, although he has his ups and downs, is really at his best—as is his creator.

W. J. BURLEY

A girl, no better than she should be, is raped and strangled. Twenty-one years later, her convicted murderer's uncle is killed when his boat explodes in *Wycliffe and the*

By Charles Shibuk

Pea-Green Boat (1975) (Dell). Detective Chief Superintendent Charles Wycliffe is a straightforward but interesting policeman, and the characters and small English fishing village are very well realized, but Burley's detection and ending leave something to be desired.

Wycliffe in Paul's Court (1980) (Penguin) is confronted by the obvious murder of a teenage girl and the apparently obvious suicide of an elderly toymaker. Again, the merits of characterization, background, and readability are present, but the conclusion does not fully satisfy this reader.

MICHAEL COLLINS

A young and attractive girl is found stabbed to death in her bed on East 84th Street in Manhattan, and private eye Dan Fortune is offered \$2,000 to bring the murderer to justice in *Walk a Black Wind* (1971) (Playboy). This is an admirable hard-boiled novel whose intricately conceived puzzle is matched by its well-paced narrative style. (Note: the equally meritorious *Night of the Toads* [1970] [Playboy] should still be available.)

ELIZABETH DALY

The serenity of a beautiful rose garden is abruptly shattered when a rifle shot rings out, and the lady conversing with Henry Gamadge ceases to exist. *Any Shape or Form* (1945) (Dell) is a subtle, literate, and highly civilized detective novel that is well above average for this author, whose work has been out of print for much too long.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Although many contemporary authors persist in adopting and recounting new exploits of the world's most celebrated detective, I find it rather refreshing to note that Penguin Books is starting to reprint the Sacred Writings. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892) is the first, and perhaps the best and most popular, collection of short stories. The straightforward and gripping full-length *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) also has its share of vocal adherents.

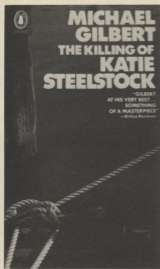
MICHAEL GILBERT

The Killing of Katie Steelstock (1980) (Penguin) is a long, intensely readable police procedural about the murder of a TV star in her home town near London. The net draws tight about the most obvious suspect, but a few loose ends may provide complications in this rewarding display of the usual Gilbert storytelling expertise.

A partner in a stuffy legal firm opens one of his safe deposit boxes for some necessary papers but finds the body of *Smallbone Deceased* (1950) (Penguin) instead. This novel, featuring Inspector Hazelrigg, is witty, clever, well-plotted, enjoyable, and Gilbert's second-best effort. (Note: Barzun and Taylor call *Smallbone Deceased* Gilbert's masterpiece.)

JAMES GOLLIN

The Phlome Foundation (1980) (Avon) is willing to sponsor a European tour for the Antiqua Players, a struggling New York group that specializes in preclassical music, and the pay is very good. Unfortunately,



there's a slight catch: the musicians find themselves obliged to aid a Soviet dissident who's a world-famous cellist to defect from East Germany. This is a quietly understated and entertaining spy thriller that is very much worth your attention.

ROBERT HARLING

A British journalist's investigation of a young Member of Parliament's career leads to hints of Communist tendencies and escalates to espionage and adventure in **The Enormous Shadow** (1955) (Perennial). I'm not sure if I agree with Barzun and Taylor's contention that this is, in some ways, the best spy story of the modern period, but I do agree that it is altogether first rate.

MICHAEL Z. LEWIN

Outside In (1980) (Berkley) is an extremely minor but amusing domestic story about a hard-boiled writer with an approaching deadline who gets curious about, and involved in, the "real-life" murder of a friend. The much more substantial **The Silent Salesman** (1978) (Berkley) features Indianapolis private eye Albert Samson, who is hired by a woman to gain access to her injured brother, who has been held in a hospital for seven months—without any visitors whatever.

JOHN LUTZ

The Jericho Man (1980) (Berkley) has planted dynamite in the foundations of several New York City skyscrapers and now wants a cool million dollars—or else! This is an intelligent, well-written work with a few nice twists, but, curiously, it lacks reader involvement, suspense, and the requisite powerful conclusion.

J. C. MASTERMAN

It seems incredible that such a classic and meritorious work as **An Oxford Tragedy** (1933) (Dover) is so little known to the

student of the form that its name and author are among the missing in most of the usual reference works. Here is the academic detective story *par excellence*: simple and straightforward with admirable and literate delineation of plot, puzzle, person, and setting.

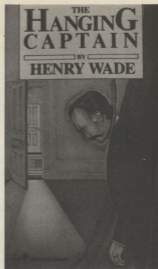
LAWRENCE SANDERS

Joshua Bigg, chief investigator for a prestigious New York law firm, is diminutive in stature but resourceful in ability. While looking into the suicide of one man and the sudden disappearance of another, he discovers that his cases are connected and about to become more lethal. **The Tenth Commandment** (1980) (Berkley) is a very long, well-plotted, absorbing, and appealing example of the procedural novel.

HENRY WADE

A Dying Fall (1955) (Perennial) poses the problem of whether an unwanted wife's fall from a high balcony was suicide or murder. This novel combines Wade's best character delineation, a perceptive view of changing postwar values in England, and an ironic ending. **A Dying Fall** is a sublime and deeply felt masterpiece from the pen of a major talent.

The body of Sir Herbert Sterron is found dependent from a curtain rod in his locked study in **The Hanging Captain** (1932) (Perennial). Again, we have the problem of whether this demise was self-inflicted or caused by an outside agency. I think this novel is *only* average for Wade (but what an incredibly high average!). Barzun and Taylor, however, are much more enthusiastic and consider it to be one of this author's triumphs.



EDWARD YOUNG

The Fifth Passenger (1963) (Perennial) is set in the seaport town of Brixton and concerns the baffled solicitor Peter Carrington, who is asked for help by Captain William Howard, who had saved his life during the war and is now fleeing for unknown reasons. Critic Robert Aucott has called this relatively unfamiliar but highly regarded thriller a brilliant and gripping adventure. □

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