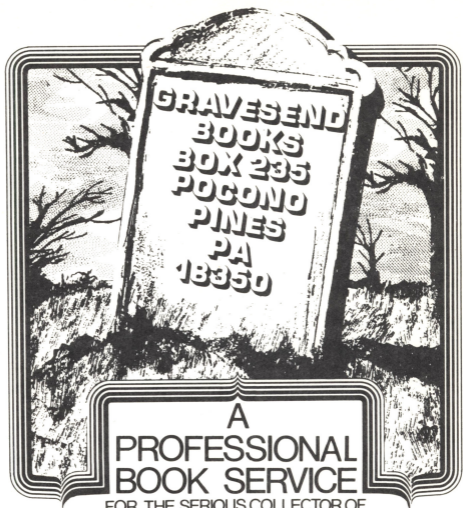


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Feature Articles

- 292 A Detective in Seventh-Century China:
Robert van Gulik and the Cases of Judge Dee
William Antony S. Sarjeant
- 306 The Oriental in Mystery Fiction:
The Orient Part II
Greg Goode
- 316 The Saga of Nick Carter, Killmaster
Will Murray
- 336 Classic Corner: Rare Tales from the Archives
The Mystery of a Diamond Robbery by Harvey Scribner
- 346 Interview with Stephen Greenleaf
Thomas Chastain
- 381 The Problem of Poe's Purloined Letter
Kenneth Gavrell

Departments

- 290 The Uneasy Chair
- 314 Rex Stout Newsletter
John McAleer
- 330 AJH Reviews
- 350 Collecting Mystery Fiction
Otto Penzler
- 357 The Paperback Revolution
Charles Shibuk
- 359 Current Reviews
- 361 Paper Crimes
Raymond L. Obstfeld
- 363 TAD on TV
Richard Meyers
- 365 The Radio Murder Hour
Chris Steinbrunner
- 366 TAD at the Movies
Thomas Godfrey
- 367 Crime Hunt
T. M. McDade
- 370 Catalogue of Crime
Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor
- 372 Minor Offenses
Edward D. Hoch
- 374 Letters
- 378 The Dorothy L. Sayers Newsletter
- 379 Checklist
M. S. Cappadonna
- 383 Mystery Marketplace
-

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THE UNEASY CHAIR

Dear TADian:

Ace/Charter. Fawcett Publishing Group. Leisure. Pinnacle. Popular Library. Playboy Books. Raven House. Tower.

Publishers (or imprints) all. And all have been sold, gone out of business, or announced that they are available for sale. *In the last year.*

What does it mean to us? Well, for one thing, all of these houses published mysteries. They weren't all successful, nor were the books chosen always the best. But they did offer variety, ranging from kinky psychopaths to cops on the beat to little old ladies in floral print dresses, and these offerings are now in jeopardy.

While much of it is rumor and conjecture (a staple of the publishing world, for good or ill), we have heard that Berkley, the new owner of Ace/Charter, is killing the Leslie Charteris *Saint* reissue program and that Nick Carter may be on his last legs there. No one has bid on the backlist, or for the rights to any of the Leisure/Tower books. If Harlequin is unsuccessful in selling off the rights to the Raven House imprint (either as an imprint or as individual titles), their backlist and the books to which they have purchased publishing rights will disappear.

Of course, the companies did not fold because they published mysteries (though Raven House might be an interesting case to pursue); but the fact remains that, when other companies take over a publisher, the size of the list, the books published in a given period, shrinks. That is one of the reasons that Norman Spinrad, acting for the Science Fiction Writers of America, has been in touch with the Justice Department regarding the takeover of Ace Books, which had one of the premier sf lists in the country. Where there once were two publishing houses (Ace and Berkley) each doing a given number of titles per month, there will now be two separate imprints under one roof doing fewer total titles. And this is in one of the strongest categories. If someone does purchase Raven House, however, the loss to mystery readers will not be as drastic. It does not pay, after all, to purchase a list of that nature and then cut it to the bone... though Harlequin had already gone from four books a month to two. In any event, while most of the top names will continue (I wouldn't imagine the new owners of Popular Library dropping P. D. James, for example), the less established writers—in all categories—have lost markets. And we, as readers, have lost as well, no matter what category we purchase and pursue.

The only ray of hope, and a cynical one at that, is that someday Otto may be writing about the value of Raven House titles in complete sets to collectors. That's iffy, of course, so until that time we owe it to ourselves to let the publishers know what books we want... and to buy them when they come available.

● Another loss is the closing of *Mystery* magazine. Just when the rough edges were beginning to be honed down, economic factors, led by distribution and returns, forced Steve Smoke to call it quits. *Mystery* offered a wide range of fiction and non-fiction, making it a joy to read and a necessary publication for mystery fans. 'Tis a pity.

● Another change in TAD. Raymond Obstfeld, an Edgar nominee for his 1981 novel *Dead Heat*, is taking over the chores so ably handled by Bill DeAndrea in the reviewing of paperbacks for the "Paper Crimes" column. I thank Bill for his contributions and am sorry to lose him, but I'm certain Ray will offer some entertaining and instructive comments.

● Plans are progressing for the development of a fan award for mystery writers, to be presented annually at Bouchercon. If the details can be ironed out, New York will be the site of the premier presentations. Any suggestions, ideas, comments, and support should be mailed to Billy Palmer, c/o Bogie's, 249 West 26th Street, New York, New York 10001. Of course, if you want to share your thoughts, letters to the editor will be appreciated.

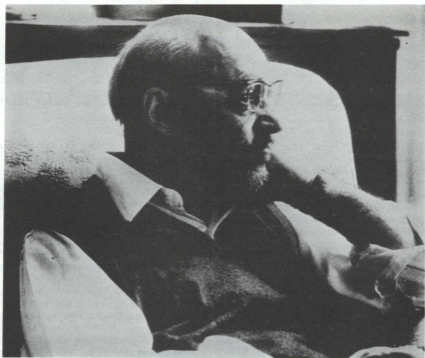
● The first annual Private Eye Writers of America Awards were presented at Bouchercon-by-the-Bay. The winners were *Hoodwink* by Bill Pronzini (St. Martin's Press) as best hardcover and *California Thriller* by Max Byrd (Bantam) as best paperback. The Eye, a life achievement award, was presented to Ross Macdonald. The organization hopes to add several categories for next year and, perhaps, hold a separate convention. Active memberships are \$15.00 annually; associate memberships are \$10.00. Further information is available from Bob Randisi, Vice-president, PWA, 1811 East 35th, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11234.

Well, until I set my creaking bones uneasily down again,

Best mysterious wishes,

Michael Seidman

MICHAEL SEIDMAN



**FREDERIC DANNAY (DANIEL NATHAN)
1905-1982**

On September 4, 1982, Frederic Dannay died after a long illness. Under the pseudonym Ellery Queen, Fred Dannay and his cousin, Manfred B. Lee, created one of fiction's most famous American detectives—Ellery Queen. Together they wrote 39 novels, many short stories and novelettes, and edited numerous anthologies. They received five Mystery Writers of America Edgars and a special Raven award.

The mystery world mourns his passing.

A Detective in Seventh-Century China:

Robert van Gulik and the Cases of Judge Dee

By William Antony S. Sarjeant

To select a real person of past times and involve him or her in a series of fictional criminal cases is nowadays a common practice among writers of detective or mystery fiction. The person chosen might serve as detective, as victim, or merely as an accessory character to impart verisimilitude to the story. Such diverse personages as King Richard I of England, Dr. Samuel Johnson, Abraham Lincoln, Edgar Allan Poe, Queen Victoria, Judy Garland, Laurel and Hardy, Winston Churchill, and the Marx Brothers have been honored in this fashion; and the list grows annually. To take a real-life *detective* from the past, and to involve him, not in fictional retellings of genuine cases, but in entirely fictional events, is much more unusual.

At least, it is unusual in the Western world; in China, where detective fiction of a special kind was being written long before the genre was independently invented in Europe, this approach was commonplace. It is fitting, therefore, that a scholar of Chinese literature should have introduced this type of story to the Western world; and it is fitting also that his novels should be set in ancient China. The scholar was Robert van Gulik; his main character, Judge Dee.

Robert Hans van Gulik was born on August 9, 1910, at Zutphen in the Netherlands. His father was William Jacobus van Gulik; his mother's name before marriage was Bertha de Ruyter. During Robert's childhood, his family moved out to the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, where his father was stationed with the Dutch Army in Batavia, Java. William van Gulik was a collector of porcelain, and it was the Chinese inscriptions on some of this pottery that aroused his son's interest in languages. Robert began studying Chinese in the Chinatown of Batavia and also early attained a very complete mastery of English. When he returned to the Netherlands, to take a first degree in law and languages at the University of Leiden, not only did Robert expand his studies to embrace Japanese and Tibetan, but he also privately studied Sanskrit, Russian, and comparative philology.

This served only to deepen his interest in languages and literature. Jointly with a colleague, C. C.

Uhlenbeck, he produced in 1930 an *English-Blackfoot Vocabulary*, followed in 1934 by a companion *Blackfoot-English Vocabulary*; both were republished as recently as 1977. His own interest was primarily in Oriental languages, however, and, moving to the University of Utrecht, he obtained in 1935 a Ph.D. with honors for his thesis *Hayagiva, the Mantric Horse-Cult in China and Japan*.

At that point, Robert entered the Netherlands Foreign Service, being posted to China, India, and Japan. When World War II broke out, he was interned in Japan for a while but was released through diplomatic exchange in 1942. He served thereafter as first secretary to the Netherlands Embassy in Chungking, China, from 1943 to 1946. During that time, he met and married a Chinese lady, Shui Shih-fang (Frances Shui), in 1943; they had three sons (Willem Robert, Pieter Anton, and Thomas Mathys) and a daughter (Pauline Frances). There were successive new appointments and promotions for Robert; as counsellor successively at the Netherlands Embassies in Washington, D.C. (1946-47) and Tokyo, Japan (1948-52); as Director for the Middle East with the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1953-56); as minister to Lebanon and Syria (1956-59); as ambassador to the Federation of Malaysia (1959-62), during which time he was also Lecturer in Ancient Chinese History at the University of Malaya (1960-61); as Director of Research with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague, Netherlands (1962-65); and as ambassador to Japan and the Republic of Korea (1965-67). During these years, his diplomatic services earned for him many honors and decorations. He was awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of the Cedars of Lebanon, the Order of Merit of Syria, the Grand Cross of the Order of the Rising Sun (Japan), and the Order of Culture of the Republic of Korea, and he was appointed Officer of the Order of Orange Nassau (Netherlands), Knight of the Netherlands Lion, and Commander of the Order of Menelik (Ethiopia).

Robert contrived throughout this busy career to continue his scholarly work. He published three

translations from Chinese into English, Mi Fei's *On Ink Stones* (1938), Wan-Jung Kuei's *Parallel Cases from Under the Pear Tree* (1956), and Shih-hua Lu's *Scrapbook for Chinese Collectors* (1958), and a translation from Chinese into Japanese, *Shukai-hen* (1941). He was the editor of two works, *Tung-kao chan-shih chi-kan* (1944) and *Trifling Tale of a Spring Dream* (1950). His interest in the music of China resulted in two books, *The Lore of the Chinese Lute* (1940; revised edition, 1969) and *Hsi Kang and His Poetical Essays on the Lute* (1941; revised edition, 1968). His interest in art and eroticism, very evident in his mystery stories, was made explicit in three works, the three-volume *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period* (1951), *Chinese Pictorial Art as Viewed by the Connoisseur* (1958), and *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (1961). A combined interest in natural history and literature produced the last of his scholarly works, *The Gibbon in China* (1967), into which a microgroove recording of gibbon cries was incorporated. In addition to these major works, he was co-editor of the journal *Monumenta Nipponica* for many years, contributed to many Orientalist journals, and wrote novels in Dutch.

It was in the course of his researches into Chinese literature that Robert van Gulik chanced upon the work which was to lead him into the writing of detective fiction. This was *Dee Goong An* ("Criminal Cases Solved by Judge Dee"), an eighteenth-century Chinese detective novel. He found it so fascinating that he embarked upon a translation. This was annotated and published privately in Tokyo in 1949 under the title *Dee Goong An: Three Murder Cases Solved by Judge Dee*. It included three reproductions from original Chinese pictures and six plates redrawn by Robert from ancient Chinese originals. This work is hard to find; fortunately, it was republished in 1976 by Dover Books under the new title *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee* (1).

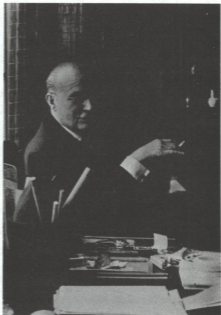
A reading of this work makes it evident how closely Robert van Gulik was to tie his own works to this Chinese model. In his introduction, he wrote:

The central figure, the master-detective of this novel is, as in all Chinese detective stories, a district magistrate. From early times until the establishment of the Chinese Republic in 1911, this government official united in his person the functions of judge, jury, prosecutor and detective.

The territory under his jurisdiction, a district, was the smallest administrative unit in the complicated Chinese government machine; it usually comprised one fairly large walled city, and all the countryside around it, say for sixty or seventy miles. The district magistrate was the highest civil authority in this unit; he was in charge of the town and land administration, the tribunal, the bureau for the collection of taxes, the register-office, while he was also generally responsible for the maintenance of public order in the entire district. Thus he had practically full authority over all phases of the life of the people in his district, who called him, therefore, the "father-and-mother official." He was

responsible only to the higher authorities, viz. the prefect or the governor of the province.

It was in his function of judge that the district magistrate displayed his talents as a detective. In Chinese crime literature, therefore, we find the master-minds that solve baffling crimes never referred to as detectives, but always as "judges." The hero of our present story, who bears the surname *Dee*, is always called *Dee Goong*, "Judge Dee."



Robert van Gulik (16, rear endpaper)

As to the methods followed by the judge to solve a crime, he is naturally handicapped by the lack of all the aids developed by modern science; for him there is no fingerprint system, there are no chemical tests, no photographic experiments. On the other hand his work is facilitated by the extraordinarily wide powers granted him under the provisions of the Penal Code. He can have anyone arrested, he can put the question to suspects under torture, have recalcitrant witnesses beaten up on the spot, use hearsay evidence, bully a defendant to tell a lie and then trip him up with relish, in short he can open and officially use all kinds of third and fourth degrees which would make our (modern) judges shiver in their gowns.

It must be added, however, that it is not by the use of torture or other violent means [that] the judge achieves his successes but rather by his wide knowledge of his fellow men, his logical thinking and, above all, by his deep psychological insight. It is due mainly to these assets that he succeeds in solving many a case that would have been a hard nut to crack for our modern detectives. (1, pp. ix, xii, xiii)



Judge Dee at a birthday dinner with his family. His three wives and a female guest (with covered head) sit beside him; one of his sons is seen behind him, in the arms of a nurse (13, p. 75).

As his translation proceeded, Robert van Gulik came to wonder why the Oriental readers of this century were so fond of poorly translated, third-rate thrillers from the West when their own ancient literature contained such interesting characters and plots. Would it be possible to recast some of these ancient stories into a modern mold, in a fashion that might please both Oriental readers and, at the same time, serve to introduce Oriental detective stories to a Western readership? He decided to try it. The formula proved successful, and, by the time of his relatively early death at the age of 57 (from cancer on September 24, 1967, in The Hague), he had written fifteen full-length novels (1-4, 6-16), two short novels (5), and a volume of short stories (17) about Judge Dee and his investigations.

In the earlier works, he leaned heavily on crime stories or plots discovered during his literary researches, the sources being meticulously specified (e.g. 2, pp.220-22). For the later stories, however, he relied increasingly upon his own imagination, enlarging

the pictures of Judge Dee and his associates that had developed from his own plots. Ideas discovered during this extensive reading of Oriental literature continued to be used, however, and the sources of these ideas were always carefully pointed out (e.g. 16, pp. 207-8).

Robert took pains to present his stories in ways which would conform with classical Chinese styles and observe Chinese conventions. The first six books especially closely with the Chinese model he was following, beginning with an episode that involves a harking back or forward in time, involving an element of the supernatural, and concluding with the description of the punishment of the guilty which the Chinese thought proper. In these stories and the later ones, van Gulik's drawings illustrate the costumes, furnishings, legal procedures, and landscapes of seventh-century China with precision and charm. Chinese conventions are meticulously observed, however. Thus, though he included many erotic scenes, the naked ladies he depicts always have their feet hidden since the Chinese considered the uncovered feet of women to be highly indecent!

Another charm of his books are the plans of the towns, buildings, or countryside of his invention, meticulously drawn in Chinese style. Sometimes these are important to an understanding of the plot; always they help the reader to gain a clearer picture of life in China thirteen centuries ago. Drawings of other items central, or related, to the plots of particular stories are provided where appropriate—a chess problem (4), a dragon-boat race (9), the Chinese zodiacal almanac (5), a scroll-painting (6), an incense-clock (17, p. 7), the four panels of a lacquer screen (3), a willow-pattern jar (15), or a pearl necklace (10). All in all, Robert van Gulik's artistic skills not only render his books more attractive but serve to provide crucial information to readers striving to unravel the puzzles he presents.

JUDGE DEE: HIS LIFE AND HIS CASES

[The following biography is based exclusively on Robert van Gulik's stories of Judge Dee and has been composed in part from the chronology presented by van Gulik (17, pp. 175-78) and in part from my own notes. No account is taken of historical Chinese sources, and Dee's magistracy at Chang-ping, mentioned in *Dee Goong An* (1, p. 8 et seq.), is not included in this chronology.]

In the year 630 A.D., Dee Jen-djih was born in Tai-yuan, the capital of the Chinese province of Shansi. He received his elementary education at home and passed the provincial literary examinations. Shansi. He received his elementary education at home and passed the provincial literary examinations. These were the first hurdles in the path of anyone



Judge Dee discussing a case with Sergeant Hoong
(7, p. 30)

striving for an official position in China, not just during that time but for centuries to come. Around 650, Dee's father was appointed Imperial Councillor, and the family settled in Lo-yang, the capital city of the T'ang Empire. For some years, Dee acted as his father's private secretary; but then he took the metropolitan literary examinations and, passing them with honors, was appointed secretary in the Imperial Archives. During this time, he contrived also to acquire a wide knowledge of medicine, including "the special science of the coroner" (3, p. 52), and to study the ways of the Chinese underworld (6, p. 110). He came to take pleasure in music, choosing as his instrument the seven-stringed lute because "it had been the favorite musical instrument of the Immortal Sage Confucius" (5, p. 114).

In 650, at about the time of the move to the capital, Dee married his First Lady:

... when she was nineteen and he twenty. She was the eldest daughter of a high official, his father's best friend. Having received an excellent classical education and being a woman of strong personality, she directed the entire household with a firm hand. (13, p. 40)

The marriage was to prove a successful one, for they developed a "fond understanding" that was "always a great comfort to him at times of stress" (14, p. 101). They were to have two sons who were "a constant source of joy" (*ibid.*). She was perhaps a trifle formidable, however, and a few years later, when Dee married his Second Lady, he chose a woman of different character, less well educated but good-looking and with "sound common-sense." As his household became larger, she ran it most efficiently under the First Lady's direction. Dee and she had one daughter "who had the same steady character" (*ibid.*). During these years, Dee also grew a magnificent beard of which he was very proud (see 2, pp. 104, 108) and was delighted when an even finer beard, of which he was jealous, proved to be false! (2, p. 201)

But after a while, Dee found himself restless, and, when the position of Junior Secretary to the Imperial Court of Justice was offered to him, he ignored the advice of his friends and turned it down (2, p. 13). Instead, he accepted an appointment as provincial magistrate at Peng-lai, a walled town controlling a district in Shantung Province, on the northeast coast of the Chinese Empire. He was succeeding a magistrate who had been murdered.

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Judge Dee inspects a library (2, p. 48)

Sergeant Hoong and he traveled to Peng-lai with speed, Dee's wives and children following later. While alone on the road, the two encountered two highway robbers. Wielding his ancient family sword Rain Dragon, Judge Dee outfought them and enjoyed the fight so much that, at its conclusion, he showed clemency to the robbers and allowed them to escape (2, pp. 22, 24). That night, when Dee and Hoong were staying in the hotel for traveling officials in Yen-chow, the two robbers appeared and offered their services to the judge. One of them introduced himself thus:

"My name is Ma Joong. I am a native of Kiangsu Province. My father owned a cargo junk, and I helped as mate. But since I was a strong boy and liked fighting, my father sent me to a well-known boxing master and had him teach me some reading and writing too, so as to qualify for becoming an officer in the army. Then my father died unexpectedly. Since there were many debts, I had to sell our boat, and entered the service of the local magistrate, as his bodyguard. I soon found out he was a cruel and corrupt scoundrel. Once he cheated a widow out of her property by extracting a false confession from her by torture. I quarrelled with him, and he made to strike me. Then I knocked him down.

I had to flee for my life, and took to the woods. But I swear by the memory of my dead father that I never wantonly killed a man, and robbed only those who could afford the loss! You can take my word for it that the same goes for my blood-brother here. That's all!" (*Ibid.*, p. 27)

The other is somewhat less frank and more succinct:

"I call myself Chiao Tai, because my real family name is well and honorably known in a certain part of the Empire. A high official once wilfully sent to their death a number of my comrades for whom I was responsible. The scoundrel disappeared, and the authorities refused to take action. Then I became a highwayman, and roamed all over the Empire, hoping one day to trace the official and kill him. . . I'll serve you on one condition, namely that you'll allow me to resign as soon as I have found my man. For I have sworn by the souls of my dead comrades, that I shall cut off his head and throw it to the dogs!" (*Ibid.*)

Chiao Tai is a somewhat smaller man than the massive Ma Joong, with "a finely chiselled face, a straight nose and thin lips." Both he and Ma Joong are somewhat superstitious (2, p. 153), but Chiao Tai is the more sensitive and has a mystical streak. On examining with reverence the sword Rain Dragon, he "admired its dark-green sheen and its hair-sharp edge, which did not show a single nick" despite its great age, then spoke thus:

"If it should be ordained that ever I should die by the sword, I pray that it may be this blade that is washed in my blood!" (*Ibid.*, p. 31)

Though he was to be the servant and friend of Judge Dee over many years and through many adventures, his strange desire was ultimately to be fulfilled and the sword buried with him (16, p. 202).

In the books which follow, we have a developing portrait of these two which adds a human dimension to the stories. Indeed, the two form a counterpoint. Ma Joong was large and not too intelligent, but amiable and very strong; he was also very susceptible, "with an unfortunate proclivity for noisy, vulgar women" (3, p. 127), but usually enjoyed his numerous casual amours. Chiao Tai was more introspective and clever, a chess player (3, p. 63), yet a good hunter of beasts (e.g. 2, p. 181) or men but, in the last analysis, gaining little pleasure from life. He was much more serious about, and consistently unlucky in, his love affairs. Both swiftly became deeply loyal to Judge Dee, and, in his turn, he repaid them with complete trust, though not always did he take them into his complete confidence until a case was over.

Just before the time of Judge Dee's appointment to the magistracy of Peng-lai the Emperor Kao-Tsung, who ruled from 649 to 683, had conducted a military campaign that had established Chinese suzerainty over the whole of Korea. Trade with Korea was being re-established, but there was much unease in the city,

and Judge Dee had need of reliable assistants. Hoong Liang was appointed Sergeant of the tribunal, with the responsibility of supervising all the routine affairs of the chancery. The two ex-robbers took over the supervision of the constabulary and guards, the guardhouse, and the jail. After a disconcerting encounter with a "ghost," Judge Dee had affairs within his grasp. The murder of his predecessor was speedily elucidated and a gold-smuggling ring broken up. He also solved the problem of the disappearance of a bride, the former Miss Tsao, and, when the girl was found but rejected by her overly-proper family, he took her into his own household (2).

A week later, Judge Dee undertook his first unassisted investigation, into a case that might be either suicide or murder (17, pp. 1-19). Within the month, he found himself enmeshed in problems of protocol while investigating a murder in a military fort; its solution depended on the Judge's insistence on the careful filing of papers (17, pp. 20-43). His family had by then established themselves in Peng-lai, and within seven months his First Lady was suggesting that he marry Miss Tsao also. During his investigation of the murder of a pawnbroker (17, pp. 44-72), Dee pondered the question: did Miss Tsao truly wish to marry him, or was she willing to do so merely through gratitude? He knew that, for his own part, he found her very attractive. It was a scene in the women's quarters that made up his mind for him:

About to enter the garden room where his ladies usually passed the morning, he halted a moment, touched by the peaceful scene. His two wives, clad in flowered robes of thin silk, were sitting with Miss Tsao at the red-lacquered table in front of the open sliding doors. The walled-in rock garden outside, planted with ferns and tall, rustling bamboos, suggested refreshing coolness. This was his own private world, a clean haven of refuge from the outside world of cruel violence and repulsive decadence he had to deal with in his official life. Then and there he took the firm resolution that he would preserve his harmonious family intact, always (17, p. 65).

Soon afterward, Miss Tsao became his Third Lady and, incidentally, made up a fourth player for the games of dominoes of which Dee was so fond! (6, p. 46)

One year after his arrival in Peng-lai, Judge Dee was summoned to the Prefecture to take part in an Imperial conference on coastal defense. On the way back, he and Chiao Tai paid a visit, as tourists, to the town of Wei-ping just before New Year. As a result of a courtesy call to its magistrate and the fact that Chiao Tai and he were mistaken for thieves, he became embroiled in three more criminal cases there, with consequences in part happy, in part tragic (3).

Two years later, Dee found himself transferred to a magistracy at Han-yuan, sixty miles northwest of the Imperial Capital but situated on a lake amid mountains. Here another of his acts of mercy fur-

nished him with a fourth lieutenant, an itinerant swindler named Tao Gan whom he rescued from death at the hands of angry villagers (4, p. 139). Tao Gan explains his abilities thus:

"Without boasting... I can say that my knowledge of the tricks and ruses of the underworld is equalled by few in the Empire. I am thoroughly familiar with forging documents and seals, drawing up of ambiguous contracts and false declarations, picking all kinds of ordinary and secret locks on doors, windows, and strongboxes, while I am also expert on hidden passages, secret trap-doors and suchlike contrivances. Moreover, I know what people are saying at a distance by watching their lips. I—"

"Halt!" Judge Dee interrupted him quickly. "Do you mean to say this last item in your catalogue is really true?"

"Certainly, Your Honor! I may add that it is easier to practice lip-reading on women and children than on, for instance, old men with a heavy beard and moustache!" (*Ibid.*, p. 144)

Tao Gan had embarked upon his criminal career purely as a result of a deep bitterness:



Judge Dee in the tribunal of Han-yuan, with Ma Joong behind him, constables on either side of the bench, and petitioners kneeling before it (4, p. 68)

The wife he had loved had basely deceived him, and had tried to bring about his ruin, so that he had to flee for his life. He had then sworn off women and, determined to get his own back on a world that disgusted him, had become an itinerant swindler. (16, p. 18)

Henceforward, he was to ally himself firmly with Judge Dee and to use his criminous skills in the interests of justice. From the outset, they were of value, for Tao Gan's knowledge of the ways of kidnappers forced the Judge to reconsider the evidence in an apparent case of kidnapping and left the way clear to a solution of a difficult problem. Dee's belated discovery of a conspiracy against the Throne brought a visit to Han-yuan of two dreaded officials, the Imperial Censor and the Grand Inquisitor. Because it was belated, even if in time, Dee was reprimanded and came close to forfeiting his magistracy (4).

Despite the assistance he had received in that case from Tao Gan, Judge Dee was for a while, and quite understandably, distrustful of a man with such a past. For ten months, Tao Gan was employed only on probation. It was only when, with his other three assistants away seeking smugglers in the neighboring district of Chiang-pei (5, p. 17), Judge Dee had to draw heavily on the services of the former swindler during the investigation of a murder of a tramp that Dee decided to take Tao Gan permanently into his service.

The decision was a wise one, for not only was Tao Gan to prove a devoted lieutenant to Dee, but also his background gave him a readier entry to criminal circles than had the others. Moreover, he had the facility of assuming simple, but effective, disguises:

He quickly slipped between two large bushes and, shedding his outer coat, put it on again inside out. Tao Gan had this coat specially made. Its lining consisted of rough hemp-cloth such as is worn by workmen and it showed several clumsy patches. He took off his gauze cap which proved collapsible, and stuffed it in his sleeve. He wound a strip of dirty cloth round his head and tucked his robe up so that his leggings showed. Finally he took a thin roll of blue cloth from his sleeve.

This contrivance was one of Tao Gan's many ingenious inventions. When unrolled, it proved to be a roughly sewn bag made of the blue cloth that people ordinarily use for wrapping up the bundles they carry. It had a square shape, but all kinds of queer folds and spare corners had been sewn in. By fitting together, in various combinations, the dozen thin bamboo staves inside, Tao Gan could make this bag assume all kinds of shapes—from the square bundle containing laundry to the oblong package full of books. In his varied career this contraption had often proved extremely useful to him.

Tao Gan adjusted the bamboo staves inside in such a way that the bundle seemed to contain carpenter's tools. His transformation was complete in a few moments and soon he was walking down the pathway, his shoulders bent a little as if the bundle he was carrying under his arm was quite heavy. (7, pp. 57-58)

Tao Gan was a very different character from the hearty Ma Joong and the rather shy, mystical Chiao Tai. He was parsimonious, almost miserly, adopting elaborate stratagems to avoid paying entrance fees (7) or to gain for himself free meals; if he could not, then he would eat very simply indeed. He hated to discard anything, justifying his attitude thus:

"Heaven has presented us with so many good things, sir, and gratis too! A roof to shelter us, food for our stomach, clothes for our body. I am always afraid that someday Heaven'll become angry, seeing that we take all these things for granted, even spend them recklessly. Therefore I can't bear to throw anything away that can still be used in one way or another." (5, p. 136)

When he, Judge Dee, and Dee's family were caught by a storm and, sheltering in a Taoist monastery, became embroiled with three gruesome murders, Tao Gan's parsimony chanced to furnish Judge Dee with a crucial clue toward the solution of these crimes (*ibid.*). Having identified the murderer, and unable to punish him through the normal process of law, Dee found a novel method to ensure that he paid for his



A young maiden surprised by a murderess (12, p. 243)



Judge Dee attacked by two robbers (12, p. 22)

crimes. The responsibility weighed heavily upon Dee, however:

"I represent the law... It's I who take vengeance!" Lowering his gaze, he added in a voice that was suddenly utterly tired, "And it is I who shall answer for it." (*Ibid.*, p. 154)

Judge Dee's fondness for animals, and the fact that his powers of observation operated as well in a bucolic as in an urban setting, enabled him to interpret correctly the behavior of frogs in a pond in identifying the murderer of a poet (17, pp. 73-93). Later he was to use a tortoise as the improbable means for terrifying another murderer into a confession of guilt (8).

In the year 668, Judge Dee was appointed to his third post at Poo-yang, a city on the Grand Canal in a fertile district of the Province of Kiangsü. There he found himself faced with two murders. Before they were solved, Dee and his assistants were caught in an unusual trap and came very close to losing their lives (7, pp. 200-2). Through the courage of two sisters, he contrived to expose wrongdoing in a Buddhist temple and orchestrated the killing of the guilty monks by a

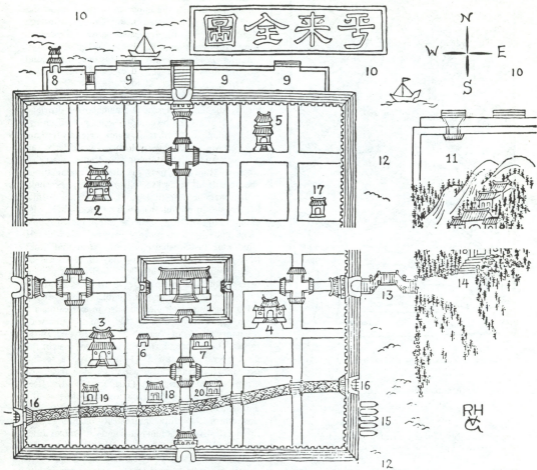
mob. As an outcome of these cases, he attracted the wrath of the Buddhist clique in the capital and of the Cantonese merchants; but, at the same time, he earned for himself the approval of the Censor and the President of the Metropolitan Court. His earlier "inefficiency" was forgiven, and he was awarded an Imperial Inscription (*ibid.*, p. 234). When his responsibilities became deeply burdensome, he found inspiration in its words: "Justice outweighs human life" (*ibid.*, p. 248).

During this adventure Judge Dee paid a courtesy visit to the magistrates of two neighboring districts, Woo-ye and Chin-hwa. Both visits proved enjoyable, though the two magistrates were profoundly unalike; Magistrate Pan of Woo-ye was elderly, "an austere man of wide learning and deep scholarship" who had failed to pass the literary examinations "because of his refusal to follow the literary fashion rather than because of lack of scholarship," while Magistrate Lo of Chin-hwa was "a short, fat, jovial young man" who "affected the thin, pointed mustache and the short beard" without side-whiskers "that were fashionable in the capital at that time" (*ibid.*, p. 88). Lo proved not only to be a lover of poetry and music but also a sensualist and philanthropist. Politely referring to Dee as his "elder brother," Lo was soon finding him invaluable, not only in the solving of difficult crimes but also in extricating Lo from the consequences of his own amours with predatory "ladies of pleasure." On the first occasion, this was by chance, during the New Year case of the dead beggars (17, pp. 94-114); but, on a second occasion, Lo deliberately used Dee as a means of escaping from matrimony. This occurred when Dee, with Ma Joong, was staying for two days at the amusement resort of Paradise Island (8). The visit was to bring them little amusement; Ma Joong had a love affair which cost him much and gained him little, while Dee's solution to two murders, one during his visit and one many years earlier, served merely to expose present and past tragedies and brought him neither credit nor any real satisfaction.

Dee's involvement in three further cases in Poo-yang itself culminated in his rediscovery of a lost Imperial treasure (9). He was able to perform a further service for the Throne and temporarily assumed sweeping powers, when staying for a few days close to the Water Palace of the Third Princess. Though gaining new friends in the Imperial Court through these cases, once again he made powerful enemies (10).

After Dee had been summoned to Chin-hwa for a meeting with the Prefect of the province, he found himself again enmeshed into the doings of Magistrate Lo. This occurred during a gathering of poets at the time of the Mid-autumn Festival. Dee's own views on poetry were that "the only poetry worthy of the name

SKETCH MAP OF PENG-LAI



- 1 Tribunal 2 Temple of Confucius 3 Temple of War God 4 Temple of City God 5 Drum Tower etc. 6 Nine Flowers Pavilion 7 Hostel 8 Crab Restaurant 9 Wharf 10 River 11 Korean Quarter 12 Creek 13 Rainbow Bridge 14 White Cloud Temple 15 Flower Boats 16 Watergate 17 Townhouse Dr Tsao 18 Yee's house 19 Koo's house 20 Restaurant

The city of Lan-fang (13, endpaper)

served either an ethical or a didactic purpose" (3, p. 119). He wrote only one poem himself, and that had a severely utilitarian purpose:

"It was a didactic poem...on the importance of agriculture. I tried to compress seasonal directions for farmers in a hundred rhymed stanzas."

The Academician shot him a quizzical look. "You did,

did you? Why did you choose that, eh...rather peculiar theme?"

"Because I hoped that such directions if put into verse, with rhyme and rhythm, might be remembered more easily by simple country people, sir."

The other smiled. "Most people would consider that a foolish answer, Dee. Not I. Poetry is indeed easy to remember. Not only because of the rhyme, but chiefly because it responds to the beat of our blood, and to the

rhythm of our respiration. Rhythm is the bone-structure of all good poetry, and of prose too." (11, p. 38)

Nevertheless, despite his rather dry opinions, Dee was capable of being moved by the depth of feeling in a poem (14, p. 100). His involvement in Lo's gathering of poets again brought him a difficult problem of ensuring that justice be done, and, once again, it was Lo and not he who gained by his actions (11).

Dee's tenure of the magistracy of Poo-yang was brought to an early close through the machinations of his enemies in the capital. After only two years there, he found himself transferred to a much less desirable appointment, at Lan-fang in the desolate mountainous region close to China's western frontier. Before even he arrived there, his entourage was attacked by robbers; and in Lan-fang he encountered a situation of tyranny and oppression which only the bold use of bluff could set right. In his actions, Dee did not take his assistants fully into his confidence; but indeed, as Sergeant Hoong commented wryly:

"In all these years I have learned but one thing about understanding our Judge. That is to give up trying to!" (12, p. 49)

During this time, Dee at last learned the details of the incident that had caused his assistant Chiao Tai to become a vagrant highway robber; but Chiao Tai's hope for vengeance was anticipated by another. When the magistrate offered to arrange his reinstatement into, and promotion within, the army, Chiao Tai refused, preferring to remain in Dee's service (*ibid.*, p. 215)—a decision that would ultimately cost him his life.

Dee's belief in the system which he was administering, and his awareness of his own powers and responsibilities, are made explicit during this case:

"Look up at your magistrate! Observe carefully those insignia of the power that has been vested in me. Know that on this very day all over the Empire thousands of men wearing these same insignia are dispensing justice in the name of the state and of the people. Since time immemorial they stand as a symbol of the social order decided upon in the wise counsels of ancestors, and perpetuated by the mandate of Heaven and the free will of the uncounted millions of our black-haired people.

"Have you not sometimes seen people trying to plant a stick in a gushing mountain current? It will stand for a moment or so, then it is carried away by the mighty stream that flows on forever. Thus occasionally wicked or ignorant men will rise and endeavour to disrupt the sacred pattern of our society. Is it not crystal clear that such attempts can never end in anything but miserable failure?

"Let us never lose faith in these tokens, lest we lose faith in ourselves." (*Ibid.*, pp. 50-51)

Yet, during these early days in Lan-fang, Dee was having his own doubts. Though, in the exercise of his

powers, Dee might at times be merciless (*ibid.*, p. 212), he was finding his tasks so deeply troubling, and the duty of witnessing executions so utterly repellent, that he came close to resigning from official life (*ibid.*, p. 261). It was only through a perception of his own destiny that he decided to carry on, and, in the accounts of his later cases, never did he quite recover the clear conviction of his duty, and the zest in it, that had earlier been apparent. Indeed, Lan-fang was not a post to generate enthusiasm:

"It's a trying climate here in Lan-fang," Sergeant Hoong remarked in his dry, precise voice. "A cold, wet winter, then this hot, clammy summer, with sudden cold blasts coming in from the desert plain across the border. You must keep fit, sir! One easily catches cold here." (13, p. 16)

Dee investigations were involved again and again with the various religious sects that were flourishing then in China. Though "as a staunch Confucianist, Judge Dee had little time for the idolatrous popular cults" (9, p. 29), he did not discount their power among the common people. He maintained with



Judge Dee drives off a bandit with his sword Rain Dragon (5, p. 77)

reverence an ancestral shrine, though it was opened only in times of great emotion or stress (14, pp. 152-53), and he viewed with dismay the growing numbers and influence of the Buddhists in the China of his time. Though respecting Taoism more profoundly, he had considerable reservations about it.

"Taoism penetrates deep into the mysteries of life and death, but its abstruse knowledge may inspire that evil, inhuman pride that turns a man into a cruel fiend. And its profound philosophy about balancing the male and female elements may degenerate to those unspeakable rites with women. The question is, Tao Gan, whether we are meant to discover the mystery of life, and whether that discovery would make us happier. Taoism has many elevated thoughts, it teaches us to requite good with good, and bad also with good. But the instruction to requite bad with good belongs to a better age than we are living in now, Tao Gan! It's only a dream. I prefer to keep to the practical wisdom of our Master Confucius, who teaches our simple, everyday duties to our fellow men and to our society, and to requite good with good, and bad with justice!" (6, p. 152)

In Lan-fang, Dee found himself confronted also by the primitive, yet powerful, religion of the Tartars, which brought the life and sanity of his lieutenant Ma Joong into jeopardy (10). Later, Dee was caught up in the crisis of the year 672, when the Empire was threatened by invasion from without and treachery from within, and indeed he played a vital part in preserving his country from this double threat (17, pp. 140-62).

Despite this further service to the Throne, Dee served two terms — six years — in the magistracy of Lan-fang. His disillusion was made manifest during a New Year adventure, the last recounted from this largest period of his service as Magistrate (17, pp. 163-73).

When his transfer at last came in 676, it was to an equally undesirable position, the magistracy of Peichow in cold northern China, and to a series of adventures which were to cost him much. Not only was his old companion Sergeant Hoong murdered, but Dee found himself involved in a case that drove him close to despair and a love affair whose ending was deeply unhappy (14). Though there came, at the end of these cases, his promotion to the high position of President of the Metropolitan Court, though he was able to promote Ma Joong and Chiao Tai as Commanders of the Left and Right Wings of the Court Guards and Tao Gan as its Chief Secretary, Dee perceived all too clearly the truth of his own father's words: "It's very lonely — at the top" (*ibid.*, p. 176).

On his journey south to assume his new duties, Judge Dee was involved in an alarming adventure with bandits on the flooded Yellow River (5). After assuming his duties, he found himself in the uncomfortable appointment of Emergency Governor of a



Judge Dee talking with Tao Gan (16, p. 90)

capital city from which the Imperial Court had fled, at a time of drought and plague. This involved him in a confrontation with the waning powers of the old families that had ruled before the time of the T'ang Dynasty (15, p. 65). For Ma Joong, it brought the happiness of a marriage — to twin girls! (*ibid.*, p. 178) Thereafter, Ma Joong settled down in the capital, siring six sons and two daughters; and thenceforward, when Dee traveled, only two of his assistants went with him.

Although, in his august position, Dee was not normally to be involved in investigations, the disappearance of an Imperial Censor was important enough to cause him to travel incognito to Canton in the year 680. Chiao Tai and Tao Gan went with him, the latter reluctantly since his memories of the city were unhappy; yet it brought him the unexpected happiness of a second marriage (16, p. 206). For Chiao Tai, in contrast, it brought a deeply unhappy last love affair and the death he had foreseen. For Dee himself, it brought the realization that this was his last investigation; that, henceforward, his concerns must be exclusively political (*ibid.*, p. 197).

So, indeed, it proved. In the latter part of his career, the real Dee found himself in political combat with the Empress Wu. Though that redoubtable lady, when Empress Dowager, seized power for a few years, Dee prevented her from ousting the legal heir. By thus maintaining the legitimate succession of the T'ang Dynasty, Dee contrived also to maintain the stability of the very Chinese Empire itself. Because of this achievement he has been styled "the greatest man of his generation" (see Lin Yutang, 1959). He died at the age of seventy in the year 700, survived by two sons who had honorable careers as officials. A grandson, Dee Djien-mo, came close to matching his grandfather's eminence, becoming Governor of the Imperial Capital.

In view of the achievements of the real Judge Dee, it is perhaps strange that he is far better known nowadays outside China through his fictional counterpart. Yet so it is; and, though Julian Symons — whose views I can rarely share — might dismiss these stories as proceeding "from such fantastication of style and motive that they remain simply curiosities," I prefer to accord with the judgment of Steinbrunner and Penzler that

Van Gulik's tales are consistently high in quality and contain real detection; the seventh-century background is an intrinsic part of the narrative that never intrudes on the action and yet is often fascinating and instructive.

Whether van Gulik's portrait of Judge Dee is anything like the actuality, who can say? It is a very human and sympathetic one. If it is indeed correct, then I am sure that, if Judge Dee were aware of the reason for his posthumous fame, it would at least amuse and probably truly delight him!

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(all by Robert Van Gulik)

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JUDGE DEE'S CASES, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER
 [Listing based on Robert van Gulik's chronology (17, pp. 175-78) and my own notes]

DATE	LOCATION	NAMES OF CASES	BOOKS
633	Peng-lai, Shantung Province, N.E. China	The Murdered Magistrate; The Bolting Bride; The Butchered Bully	<i>The Chinese Gold Murders</i>
"	"	Five Auspicious Clouds	<i>Judge Dee at Work</i>
"	"	The Red Tape Murder	"
"	"	He Came with the Rain	"
	Wei-ping, Shantung Province	The Lacquer Screen; The Credulous Merchant; The Faked Accounts	<i>The Lacquer Screen</i>
666	Han-yuan, close to Lo-yang, the capital of China	The Drowned Courtesan; The Vanished Bride; The Spendthrift Councillor	<i>The Chinese Lake Murders</i>
"	"	The Morning of the Monkey	<i>The Monkey and the Tiger</i>
667	Morning Cloud Monastery near Han-yuan	The Embalmed Abbot; The Pious Maid; The Morose Monk	<i>The Haunted Monastery</i>
	Han-yuan	The Murder on the Lotus Pond	<i>Judge Dee at Work</i>
668	Poo-yang, Kiangsu Province	The Rape Murder in Half Moon Street; The Secret of the Buddhist Temple; The Mysterious Skeleton	<i>The Chinese Bell Murders</i>
	Paradise Island, near Chin-hwa, Kiangsu Province	The Callous Courtesan; The Amorous Academician; The Unlucky Lovers	<i>The Red Pavilion</i>
669	Poo-yang, Kiangsu Province	The Two Beggars	<i>Judge Dee at Work</i>
"	"	The Wrong Sword	"
"	"	The Dead Drummer; The Murdered Slavemaid; The Emperor's Pearl	<i>The Emperor's Pearl</i>
	Rivertown, Kiangsu	The Murdered Cashier; The Devious Innkeeper; The Stolen Necklace	<i>Necklace and Calabash</i>
	Chin-hwa, Kiangsu Province	The Executed General; The Murdered Student; The Dead Dancer	<i>Poets and Murder</i>
670	Lan-fang, on the western frontier of China	The Murder in the Sealed Room; The Hidden Testament; The Girl with the Severed Head	<i>The Chinese Maze Murders</i>
"	"	The Phantom of the Temple; The Dying Message; The Theft of Gold	<i>The Phantom of the Temple</i>
672	Ta-shih-kou, on the Chinese frontier	The Coffins of the Emperor	<i>Judge Dee at Work</i>
674-675	Lan-fang	Murder on New Year's Eve	"
676	Pei-chow, northern China	The Headless Corpse; The Paper Cat; The Murdered Merchant	<i>The Chinese Nail Murders</i>
	On the Yellow River, some- where south of Pei-chow	The Night of the Tiger	<i>The Monkey and the Tiger</i>
677	Lo-yang, capital of China	The Willow Pattern; The Steep Staircase; The Murdered Bondmaid	<i>The Willow Pattern</i>
680	Canton, south China	The Vanished Censor; The Smaragdine Dancer; The Secret Lovers	<i>Murder in Canton</i>

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The Oriental in Mystery Fiction:

THE ORIENT

Part II

By Greg Goode

Because of the exoticism of the Orient and the powerful effect it has on most of the stories set there, the Orient itself could be called a character. The best stories set in the Orient could not be transplanted to any other exotic locale, such as the South Seas, Latin America, Africa, or the Caribbean, because the plots depend on geographical, psychological, or political elements particular to the Far East. Stories such as Gavin Black's *Suddenly, at Singapore*... combine features of the Southeast Asian waterways, the convoluted self image of the Eurasian and its destructive effects, and a hint of oncoming Communism from China in the north. John Le Carré's *The Honourable Schoolboy* presents the unique relationship between the British colonial mentality and the politics and geography of Hong Kong.

Among thrillers set in exotic locales, there are more set in the Far East than in any other locale. Almost no Asian country or region has been left untouched by crime and mystery writers. From the snowy peaks of the Himalayas, through the Asian mainland, and out to the windswept tropical Indonesian islands such as Bali and Bintan, there has been almost no end to fictional crime, suspense, and intrigue.

Almost every sort of protagonist in mystery fiction has either lived or worked in the Far East, or ventured to it. The types of heroes include the Great Detective, private eyes, professional policemen, spies and secret agents galore, diplomats, martial arts experts, army veterans, active military personnel, Gothic heroines, businessmen, adventurers, travelers, mercenaries, "innocents abroad," and so forth. A rough count yields more than thirty authors who have devoted many of their books (in some cases all of them) to tales set in Asia.¹

The typical protagonist who ventures East is a British or American citizen without a family, in his thirties or forties, handsome and physically able to confront danger. He is almost invariably a loner and a psychological expatriate, for some reason cut off from his family and culture by temperament or circumstances. If he is a government agent, such as Van Wyck Mason's Hugh North, his family is not important or not mentioned. If he is a private individual, such as Gavin Black's Paul Harris or Mark Derby's Patrick Derrex in *Malayan Rose*, his own family has died or has made him an outcast, and he finds a larger home in the Orient. If he is a hard-boiled character, such as James Atlee Phillips's Joe Gall in *Pagoda* or Don Smith's Mike O'Connor in *China Coaster*, then he is cut off from his own society by a rough, possibly criminal personal history but finds temporary asylum in Asia. Sometimes the Anglo-Saxon loners find the Orient so attractive that they establish their homes there, as do Earl Norman's Burns Bannion and Jack Seward's Curt Stone.² Both Bannion and Stone were discharged from the U.S. Army while stationed in Japan and set up housekeeping there as private eyes.

As Marco Polo and others discovered hundreds of years ago, the Orient is rich in natural resources — gems, valuables of all sorts, herbs, drugs, and wisdom uncommon to the West. In the broader tradition of *The Moonstone*, many mysteries feature quests for Oriental valuables which either do not exist in the West, such as the pottery in Marquand's *Ming Yellow*, or which supposedly are not to be found in large quantities in the West, such as the gold in Dan Cushman's *Port Orient*. The over-civilized West seeks the unspoiled natural wealth of the East in such tales. In others, wisdom is sought. In John

Bull's *The Eyes of Buddha*, Virgil Tibbs travels to Nepal to find a young woman who has gone there seeking Eastern simplicity and serenity. In James Melville's *The Wages of Zen*, the Irish murder victim and other Westerners seek the wisdom of Zen in a Japanese monastery. In still other tales, the developing East requires technical expertise which only the West can provide. Hence stories are quite common in which civil engineers, scientists, and businessmen venture East, bringing with them the sophistication of the West. Eric Ambler's Steve Fraser travels to Sunda in *State of Siege* to help the Sundanese build dams and finds himself involved in a double *coup d'état*. In Beresford Osborne's recent blockbuster, *Bushido*, Japanese oil magnate Toshiro Shiba creates a small Western brain drain by using and disposing of so many nuclear scientists. And in some stories, the Orient serves as a proving ground for the heroes' maturity and manhood. Most of J. P. Marquand's New Englanders discover after their thrilling and dangerous Asian experiences what they really want out of life and who they really love, and conclude that they have been expatriates too long. The Far East teaches them, among other things, just how American they really are.

I

The early mysteries set in the Orient, from around the turn of the century until the late 1930s, were tales of adventure, danger, piracy, banditry, and chase. Many of them capitalized on the unrealistic image Westerners of that time had of the Orient, its people, beliefs, and customs. The utter un-Westerness of the settings provided writers with perfect opportunities to create suspense and, sometimes, awe.

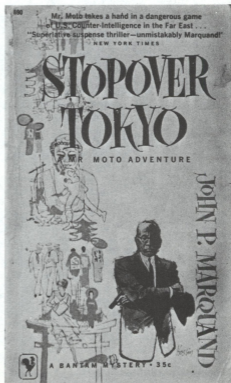
In 1898, an early one of these appeared in *The Century* magazine. "The Two Quick Devils of Totsuka" by sinophile Chester Baily Fernald was a story of pursuit in Japan, from Totsuka to Katase. Two American teenagers had taken a photograph of the Japanese Emperor, and when this "crime" was discovered they were chased by an ever-growing horde of Japanese townspeople until they arrived at their uncle's house. The two teenagers were "quick devils" because their means of transportation was swift and unheard of by these Japanese—bicycles. Fernald emphasizes the "strange ways" of rural Japanese by making a crime out of an American hobby, photography. He emphasizes the backwardness of the townspeople by illustrating their amazement at seeing two people fly through the air on strange machines.

Many stories were set on the various oceans and seas around Malaysia and Indonesia. Basil Carey's *The Dangerous Isles* (1926) was set in the southern part of Indonesia and featured "white women terrorized by Chinamen." Howard Pease, who wrote the

Tod Moran series of juvenile nautical mysteries, set *Shanghai Passage* (1929) in the Sulu Sea area. In his omnibus *Shanghai Jim* (1929),⁴ Frank Packard's muscular young protagonists battled sinister Orientals on the Java Sea and sought hoards of gold on the Indonesian island of Koa-Lon. In one of these stories, "The Impostor," hero Stacey Wallen hunts for the murderous Singaporean, Ram Gulab Singh, and learns that the "outpost East" of the Malaysian peninsula is alien indeed to the West. He is told by an English girl of the colonies:

"You are a Western man, as we speak of the West here, Mr. Wallen . . . and perhaps you do not know the East very well. . . . Conventions here are—quite different. . . . Those of us who live in the islands of the Peninsula are brought up with firearms from the time that we can walk, and conventions with us follow the code framed by the conditions which surround us."⁵

The various mysteries and dangers of the East combined in some stories to create an awesome background for adventures which would seem relatively tame even in London's fog-shrouded Limehouse. Perhaps no early book combines more of these



elements than John Beecham's *The Yellow Spider* (1920). Several Americans, Dutch, and Englishmen travel to Borneo expecting mild excitement but never suspecting what they soon find there. The notorious villain Ah Sing commands the Indonesian-based enterprises of piracy, shanghaiing, and slave-running. Onto Ah Sing's headquarters, the wild island of Borneo, come the tender Western tourists. Imagine their surprise at finding impenetrable jungles, cannibalistic Indonesian tribesmen, ancient superstitions, tigers and rhino, forbidden love with an exotic Dyak princess, piracy, kidnapping, slave-running, colonial skirmishes, typhoons, and the omnipresent spy network of a sinister Oriental!

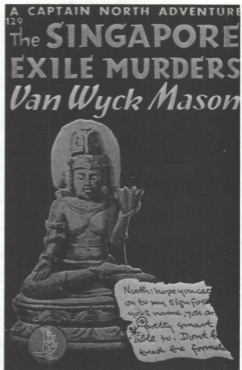
Beecham describes the elements of Borneo quite enthusiastically. One of his characters, a Christian missionary says, "There is always danger for a white man in East Borneo," and expresses Kipling's "East is East and West is West" theme quite well:⁴

"Borneo is preeminently the land of mystery, the last outpost of heathendom. She will be harder to conquer for Christianity than Africa because in addition to the savagery of the Dark Continent she has the cunning of Asia and the fanaticism of Arabia."

Of course, not all of the early tales depended on such vivid contrasts between East and West. Guy Boothby's early *Doctor Nikola* (1896) portrayed the Bund area of Shanghai in a relatively realistic, unsensational way. Charlie Chan's Honolulu in the 1920s was very romantic but not threatening or alien. The Asia of J. P. Marquand was largely a world of struggle among Chinese bandits, insurgents, fallen Manchu princes, and Japanese expansionism. It depended for its suspense partly upon the real-life civil strife in China that took place between the fall of the Manchurian Empire and the onset of Communist rule in the late 1940s. During this time, Japan was "annexing" the Manchurian states.

For Marquand protagonists such as Tom Nelson and Wilson Hitchings, Asia was a locale for white linen suits, dinners at the Club, parties among diplomatic personnel, and awakening romance against a background of danger.⁵ For the obvious reason that Mr. Moto, a Japanese, was an intriguing, sympathetic character, there was almost no hint in the Moto novels of a Japanese threat to the West. Mr. Moto's purpose was served only as long as there was a way for Japanese interests to run parallel to those of Marquand's Western protagonists. In fact, as late as 1938, at the conclusion of the last prewar Moto novel, *Mr. Moto is So Sorry*, Moto says, "All that Japan wants of anyone, of China or anyone, is economic co-operation and a cordial understanding."⁶

Things were different with Van Wyck Mason, whose Hugh North books usually kept somewhat abreast of the times. One can detect the ever-



lengthening shadow of war in the progression from *The Branded Spy Murders* (1932), North's first Oriental adventure, to *The Singapore Exile Murders* (1939), his last in Asia before World War II. In *The Branded Spy Murders*, Captain North is sent to Hawaii to find out why there is fighting between a U.S. fleet of ships in the Hawaiian harbor and a Japanese squadron. Once there, he encounters a series of murders, the only clues to which are mysterious Japanese symbols which are dismissed at first as random scratches on the corpses. But in addition to the elements of Japanese threats, there are elements of Chinese banditry and U.S. corporate holdings in China. The *Shanghai Bund Murders* (1933) dropped the strand of Japanese threat but picked up and continued that of Chinese banditry, strife, and intrigue. The International Settlement in Shanghai, consisting of concessions and legations from the U.S., England, Russia, France, and other Western countries, is in danger of being overrun by bandits. The series of murders North encounters there is related to an illegal arms shipment from one of the concessions to the bandits. The shadow of war is momentarily absent. But four years later, in *The Hong Kong*

Airbase Murders (1937), some sort of war is expected. A U.S. airline has developed an emergency fuel which allows for "unheard of" flying distances. The formula for it has been stolen, and several countries compete in and around Hong Kong for it; everyone needs such a fuel for war.

In *The Singapore Exile Murders* North, now a major, searches for another secret formula invented by the U.S. This time it is a super-light, super-strong metal from which American aircraft can be built. In Singapore, "that most cosmopolitan city in an unsophisticated part of the world," North has to find the formula and solve several murders related to its disappearance. The shadow of war looms large. North carries out his mission against a background of mounting tension on all sides—Nazi agents, the mobilization of warships in the Straits of Malacca, and the marching of Indonesian troops through the streets. And in accord with the best traditions of the romantic espionage novel, North skillfully concludes his task and has an amorous interlude with a beautiful Balinese dancer on her lush Malayan plantation. Mason's neat combination of North's clever execution of his timely and important mission, a touch of bittersweet romance, and the imminence of a world war makes this perhaps the best and most important prewar novel set in the Far East.

II

During World War II, there were relatively few mysteries set in the Orient. J. P. Marquand had taken Mr. Moto out of the East in 1938 and sent him to the Caribbean in *Last Laugh, Mr. Moto* (1942). Van Wyck Mason did the same with Hugh North and sent him to Brazil in *The Rio Casino Intrigue* (1941). In and around the war years, there were several novels set in Hawaii, such as Juanita Sheridan's *What Dark Secret?* (1943). Like Sheridan's other books, this was a murder mystery, but the only hint of war was the initial murder during an island black-out drill. Other Hawaii novels include Cleve F. Adams's *And Sudden Death* (1940) and Leslie Ford's *Honolulu Story* (1946).

But after the war, a whole new generation of crime writers discovered the Far East. There was also a new source of intrigue and danger upon which to build suspense, for China had become the Communist People's Republic of China in 1949-50, and all over Asia, Indochina, and Indonesia spread the danger of Chinese Communist influence and expansionism. As was the case with crime fiction in general, the stories became tougher and more explicitly violent after the war. A new breed of English and American loners went off to the jungles and political turbulence of the Far East, but this time it was to

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help small governments fight Communist insurgents, to search for war criminals, to find Westerners "lost" in the Orient, to bring back Western traitors and Asian defectors, or to destroy Chinese secret weapons.

Two important books came at the beginning of this new trend, which started in the early 1950s. Both books featured war-torn loners as protagonists, one American, one British. Both relied on tension supplied by Communist insurgency in small countries. James Atlee Phillips's *Pagoda* (1951) featured Joe Gall in his first appearance. Gall had been a pilot during the war, and, as happened with so many fictional veterans, went home to find his wife with a lover. In a serio-comic stroke that Phillips used to establish Gall's outcast status, he had Gall murder his wife and the lover with a portable plastic radio. Having pleaded "no sentence" and being freed, Gall was called by a private firm back to Asia, this time to Burma, to fly shipments of guns to both sides of a Burmese war of insurgency. Gall was chosen for the dangerous, amoral job because he was a "loser."

The importance of *Pagoda* comes from its being an early example of the realistic Western mercenary participation in Asian skirmishes. *Pagoda* skillfully combines a postwar brand of American hard-boiled pessimism with the political theme of Asian self-reliance. The only thing that motivates Gall and his gun-running colleagues is money. Political conflict is all around them but lost on them. As Gall concludes to another pilot at *Pagoda's* finale, "The trouble with us... is that we're a couple of businessmen completely surrounded by patriots."⁹

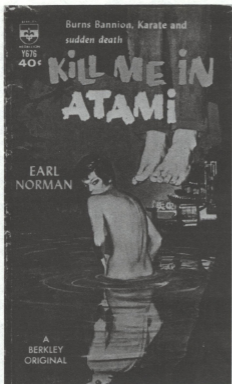
Even worse off than Joe Gall is Britisher Patrick Derrex, the hero of Mark Derby's *Malayan Rose* (1951).¹⁰ Although Derrex comes from a well-to-do family, he becomes the archetypal Western loner in the East. His mother died during his youth, his father has gone bankrupt and finally died as a result of the war, and his only brother died in a wartime commando raid. Derrex himself joined the British Army after the war, served in Java, and was tortured so badly by Indonesian terrorists that he spent four years in psychiatric treatment in a military hospital in England. Finding himself released from treatment with no real home, Derrex casts about for a while and finally takes a strange commission. A former Army captain pleads, cajoles, and finally hires Derrex to go back to Asia—Singapore—to exterminate an Indonesian war criminal who tortured the captain's wife and many other Western women in POW camps. Makota, a Scotch-Javanese Eurasian, has lived the life of a racial outcast and tried to avenge himself upon the wives of Western men. After World War II he took his skills to the anti-colonial Indonesian Army of Liberation, for whom he is working when Derrex finds him. Derrex builds a primitive sort of

suspense as Derrex learns that he must survive the Malayan geography in order to defeat one of its cruellest villains.

In the 1950s, after *Pagoda* and *Malayan Rose*, came several other novels of intrigue with solitary Western protagonists involved in Southeast Asian turmoil, such as the Indonesian uprisings and the first phases of the Vietnamese conflict, in which France was fighting to maintain control. Political themes in these novels were omnipresent, such as democracy vs. Communism, self-determination vs. economic security, and nationalism vs. colonialism. Eric Ambler's *State of Siege* (1956) features Steve Fraser, a quiet engineer for water and power projects, working for the Sundaese government. He is unknowingly and accidentally caught up in a Sundaese coup. Graham Greene's excellent *The Quiet American* (1956) is a warning against naive political idealism. American Alden Pyle, a wet-behind-the-ears representative of the State Department, becomes involved through his democratic beliefs and naïveté in the Vietnam turbulence. Because of his unrealistic ideals, he loses more than his innocence in Asia. Two years later, drawing from and expanding these political themes, William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick published *The Ugly American* (1958). Although not usually classified as a crime or suspense novel, it is worthy of criminous consideration for its espionage, intrigue, and a very clever interrogation, worthy of Earl Stanley Gardner's best courtroom scenes. *The Ugly American* is a self-conscious warning against American ethnocentrism in its Southeast Asian foreign policy, and, like *The Quiet American*, it is set in Vietnam.

With *Malayan Rose*, Mark Derby launched a series of Malaysian-set thrillers. The titles, such as *The Big Water* (1953), *Out of Asia Alive* (1954), *The Sunlit Ambush* (1955), *Sun in the Hunter's Eyes* (1957), and *The Tigress* (1959), promised Asian settings and solitary, physical conflicts, searches and escapes. For example, in *Sun in the Hunter's Eyes*, Derby sends another failed loner to Malaya and Sumatra, this time to find his wealthy but lost cousin. Robert Avery is an unsuccessful playwright and the black sheep of his family. Without strong ties to England, he is sent by his family as the only one fit to take chances in the jungles looking for the rich relative. There have been rumors in Singapore of his cousin's murder, and Avery's search is systematically impeded by a slimy Portuguese moneylender. Derby's novels are excellent stories of Western man versus the Asian climate and topography, and were continued into the early 1960s.

The most successful series with roots in the 1950s was Simon Harvester's Malcom Kenton series. Kenton is another loner, a British salesman of heavy engineering projects. Where Derby's books emphasized the land and physical characteristics of the Far East,



Harvester's emphasize Asian people and politics. Also, Harvester's books, whether or not in the Kenton series, are set all over Asia, including Hong Kong, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Tibet, Burma, Thailand, and Malaya.¹¹ Kenton's series is concerned with the political dangers of industrializing the Orient. While selling his engineering projects, Kenton is routinely pursued and shot at. But he also usually takes a Eurasian lover, and sometimes he reflects on the political and cultural implications of his business.

Kenton's first appearance is in *The Bamboo Screen* (1955), wherein he goes from Taiwan to Singapore to Hong Kong trying to escape being murdered, trying to sell his projects, bedding his two lovers, and discovering that both the Red Chinese and the Nationalist Chinese could have reasons to kill him. Kenton's adventures continue in books such as *Dragon Road* (1956; commonly but erroneously believed to be a Dorian Silk novel), *The Copper Butterfly* (1957), and *The Golden Fear* (1957). Dorian Silk, one of Harvester's secret agents, is the hero of all but one of Harvester's *Road* books. As a secret agent, Silk most often combats Communism or helps

other British agents in exotic lands. Perhaps Harvester's best Asian adventure is *Battle Road* (1967), Silk's first Southeast Asian assignment. Silk goes from Thailand to Vietnam to search for a British agent who might have defected. *Battle Road* gives a vivid, gripping portrayal of Vietnamese people and politics, contains skillfully done escape scenes, and concludes with a courageous surprise act by Silk.

In addition to the series of Derby and Harvester, the 1950s brought several other series heroes to the Far East. Burns Bannion, the first American private eye ever to work exclusively in Japan, started his first case in 1958 in *Kill Me in Tokyo*. He continued his cases in the other books of the "Kill Me" series, such as *Kill Me in Yokohama* (1960) and *Kill Me in Yoshiwara* (1961). Secret agent Mark Corrigan traveled to Bangkok to combat drug smuggling in *Menace in Siam* (1958) and to Malaya to investigate phony gold manufacturing in *Singapore Downbeat* (1959). Fu Manchu remained in his (now Communist) native country in *Emperor Fu Manchu* (1959). Nigel Morland's Mrs. Palmyra Pym went to Shanghai in *Sing a Song of Cyanide* (1953).

The stories featuring Judge Dee, who first appeared in English in 1949, and of Magistrate Pao, who first appeared in English in 1964, are in a class by themselves. They depict, insofar as is possible, ancient China seen from the inside. Because of the prominence in the stories of Chinese names, places, holidays, and festivals, as well as the narrative structure and the fact that the reader is told the punishment that the criminal receives, the stories are not like any of their Western counterparts. The reader forms a fabulous, almost fairy-tale picture of the ancient Chinese countryside, palaces, courthouses, and monasteries. Because the description of person and place is not selected and emphasized so as to appeal to a Western urge for exoticism and travel, the effect of the Dee and Pao stories is often even more exotic than that of Beecham, Derby, and Harvester's stories.

III

The 1960s produced a veritable tidal wave of novels set in Asia. Capitalizing on the Cold War and the James Bond craze, which itself was primarily due to his cinematic appearances, mystery writers sent businessmen, private eyes, and scores of spies and secret agents to the Far East. With both Russian and Chinese Communist agitation in full swing, there was no end of real-life intrigue. Nor did the criminous intrigue cease.

Van Wyck Mason's Hugh North, now a colonel, had now become a veritable Old Asia Hand, for he had gone to Asia five times since World War II and returned twice again in the 1960s. Whereas before the

war North was solving murder cases and rescuing secret formulas, after the war his primary mission was to fight Communism. In *Secret Mission to Bangkok* (1960), North went to Thailand to "safeguard the West's top missile genius from Commie hands." He was sent to Burma in *Trouble in Burma* (1962) to find and destroy a secret payload which had crashed along with a U.S. missile in the jungle. Of course, the Communists were also after the payload.

Other agents were sent to Asia, sometimes to help U.S. efforts in the Vietnam War but mostly on rescue, salvage, or "search and destroy" missions. They included Edward S. Aarons's Sam Durell to Burma, China, and Thailand; Nick Carter to Vietnam, Hong Kong, Macao, China, and almost every other Asian country; Norman Daniels's John Keith to Vietnam and China; James Dark's Mark Hood to Malaya, Japan, and Hong Kong. One of James Bond's best adventures occurred in Japan in *You Only Live Twice* (1964). In its way, it set standards for combining espionage with cultural description, as did the other Bond novels. Adam Hall's spectacularly professional agent Quiller traveled to Bangkok in *The Ninth Directive* (1966). Donald Hamilton's Matt Helm went as far East as Hawaii in *The Betrayers* (1966); Don Smith's Phil Sherman worked in China, Korea, and Tibet in his "Assignment" series. Bill Ballinger's half-Indian, half-Spanish agent Joaquin Hawks worked in Asia, especially Southeast Asia, in every one of his adventures. The list could be multiplied and multiplied...

The 1960s introduced another private eye working out of Japan, Jack Seward's tough Curt Stone, in books such as *Cave of the Chinese Skeletons* (1964), *Assignment: Find Cherry* (1969), and *The Chinese Pleasure Girl* (1969). A combination of Mike Hammer and Travis McGee, Stone would alternately brutalize rough Japanese hoods and protect beautiful bar girls, while expostulating against American ethnocentrism and providing the reader with little-known cultural tidbits about Japan. Patrick Morgan's "Operation Hang Ten" series was set in Hawaii during the surfing craze and was largely devoted to anti-narcotics police procedure *cum* surfing.

In spite of these series and many more set in Asia, the prize for the best series without a doubt goes to Scotsman Oswald Wynd. Having lived eighteen years in the Far East and traveled extensively there, Wynd interweaves Asian settings with his plots in a smooth, authoritative way which few writers of any genre can match. For writing knowledgeably of places such as Hong Kong, Thailand, Borneo, and Singapore, Wynd has been praised by no less than Van Wyck Mason himself.¹² Wynd's mainstream fiction of Asia has been praised by Edwin O. Reischauer, once diplomat to Japan and historian-scholar of Asia.¹³

Although Wynd has written excellent thrillers under his own name, he is best known for his Paul Harris series, thirteen suspense novels written as Gavin Black. Harris is a Scotsman raised in Malaya and part owner of a fleet of freighter junks which sail the various waterways of Southeast Asia and Indonesia. In his first adventure, *Suddenly, at Singapore...* (1961), Harris is forced by circumstances to become the epitome of the loner. His only relative is murdered, his wife betrays him, his lover deserts him, and he distrusts other Occidentals who aren't Malayan natives or long-time residents. In subsequent novels, he travels to Red China, Japan, Bintan, Macao, and other exotic places, with only an occasional Oriental girlfriend and chance business acquaintances as companions. Because of his business, Harris becomes involved in gun-running, royal intrigue, civil wars, and often, business rivalries. In *The Eyes Around Me* (1964), Harris must become a detective to clear himself of the suspicion of murder. To Wynd's credit is that he gives Harris adversaries who are not only spies but sometimes businessmen and scientists, sometimes Occidentals, sometimes Orientals. Wynd has a knack for diversity and an eye for the interesting detail. These qualities, combined with Harris's first-person narration, make the Far East come alive for the armchair traveler. The Paul Harris series lived through the Cold War '60s and thrived all through the '70s until *Night Run from Java* in 1979, the last of Wynd's novels to date.

IV

From the early 1970s to the present, the Far East has been the setting for increasingly diversified kinds of crime and suspense novels. Secret agents have continued to be assigned there and have been joined by a phenomenon largely of the '70s, the "new pulpsters," offsprings of Nick Carter's paperback appearances. Paperback heroes such as "The Executioner," "The Penetrator," the "Death Merchant," "Soldier of Fortune," "The Nullifier," "Soldier for Hire," the "American Avenger," Nick Carter himself, and many others¹⁴ have gone to the Orient in the '70s and '80s to do what was done by the secret agents of the '60s.

Another trend of the 1970s has been the Asian blockbuster, such as Stephen Becker's picaresque chase story *The Chinese Bandit* (1975) or Ian McLachlan's novel of seedy sex and corruption in Hong Kong, *The Seventh Hexagram* (1976). Some of these capitalized on the interests of their day, such as *The Defector* (1970), Charles Collingwood's serious, suspenseful novel of a reporter on a secret mission during the Vietnam War, or the recent *Bullet Train*

(1980) by Joseph Rance and Arei Kato. *Bullet Train* is a terrorist/hijack/ransom thriller, set on one of Japan's newsworthy 130-mph passenger trains. Other Asian blockbusters play up mysterious or faddish aspects of Oriental culture, such as Trevanian's *Shibumi* (1979) with its bizarre forms of martial arts and self-consciously recondite sexual practices, or Bessford Osborne's "Superthriller of the Orient," *Bushido* (1979), re-issued in the wake of the *Shogun* and *Ninja* fads, which exploits the Japanese warrior code. Some are masterpieces, such as Le Carré's *The Honourable Schoolboy* (1977), which combines the best traditions of the colonial novel with vivid descriptions of Hong Kong.

But the most interesting and most important recent development in Asian-set criminous fiction has been the rise of the detective story utilizing Asian elements relevant to the plot. Roger L. Simon's ex-hippy private eye Moses Wine goes to Red China on a "friendship tour" in *Peking Duck* (1979) to see if his liberal ideals work in practice. But when the valuable Peking Duck sculpture is stolen and members of Wine's party are suspected, we see the effects of Chinese Communism and Big Brotherism on his investigation, his romance, and his ideals. Janwillem van de Wetering brings his first-hand knowledge of Japan to the fore with *The Japanese Corpse* (1977), in which detectives Grijpstra and de Gier battle wits with the yakusa and try to keep de Gier from "going native." In Brian Freemantle's *The Inscrutable Charlie Muffin* (1979), ex-secret agent Charlie, now an investigator-on-the-run in Hong Kong, learns that a modern, Westernized, multi-millionaire Chinese industrialist is still motivated by some very ancient, very Chinese ideals. In Peking, Charlie learns that he is just as inscrutable as his Communist adversaries, and his logic just as clever.

James Melville has written a series of procedurals featuring Superintendent Tetsuo Otani of the Hyogo (Japan) Prefectural Police, *The Wages of Zen* (1979), *The Chrysanthemum Chain* (1980), and *A Sort of Samurai* (1981). Since in Melville's books the murder victim and many of the suspects are Western, and since in Japan, it is explained, there is very little murder not connected with family fights or gangland, we see how a Western-inspired crime wave disrupts a quiet Japanese police department. In the hilarious Hong Kong books of William Marshall, such as *Yellowhead Street* (1975), *The Hatchet Man* (1976), and others, Marshall's staccato narrative style and frequent pidgin dialogue combine with the bald-faced description of character and action to form a style of criminous humor which could not be set anywhere else.

Today the crime novel set in Asia is (one hopes) in the continuing hands of Melville, and in those of competent practitioners of realism and intrigue such

as William Diehl in *Chameleon* (1981; Japan), Adam Hall in *The Peking Target* (1982), and Bernard and Marvin Kalb in *The Last Ambassador* (1981; Saigon). A significant proportion of all mystery, crime, and thriller fiction today is set in Asia, from the "neopulp" of the paperback hero to the skillful novel of crime such as Robert Daley's *Year of the Dragon* (1981). And as long as the Far East remains exotic, with cultures, peoples, landscapes, climates, and political systems different from those of the West, thriller writers will continue to set their stories there.

Notes

- Edward Aarons, Philip Atlee (and *Pagoda* by James Atlee Phillips), Bill Ballinger, Gavin Black (and Oswald Wynd), Robert J. Casey, Leon Comber, Mark Corrigan, Frank Crisp, Dan Cushman, James Dark, Mark Derby, Steve Dodge (and Stephen Becker), Robert L. Duncan (and James Hall Roberts), Simon Harvester, Michael Hastings, Max Long, John P. Marquand, Philip McCutchan, Patrick Morgan, Earl Norman, James Norman, Joseph Rosenberger, Jack Seward, Walter J. Sheldon, Juanita Sheridan, Don Smith, E. P. Thorne, Robert van Gulik, Van Wyck Mason, Don Von Elster.
- Norman's books include the "Kill Me" series: *Kill Me in Tokyo* (Berkeley, 1958), *Kill Me in Shimabashi* (Berkeley, 1959), etc. Seward's Stone books include *The Cave of the Chinese Skeletons* (Tuttle, 1964) and *The Frogman Assassination* (Tower, 1969).
- The Century*, February 1898, pp. 622-26.
- The publication date is 1929 (Doubleday), but the stories were copyrighted as early as 1912.
- "The Imposter," in *Shanghai Jim*, p. 292.
- Quotations from *The Yellow Spider* (Watt, 1920), pp. 9, 6.
- In *Thank You, Mr. Moto* (1936) and *Think Fast, Mr. Moto* (1937), respectively.
- In the omnibus edition, *Mr. Moto's Three Aces* (Little, Brown, 1956), p. 446.
- Pagoda* (Macmillan, 1951), p. 165.
- Malayan Rose* (Collins, 1951); printed in the U.S. as *Afraid in the Dark* (Viking, 1952).
- The Bamboo Screen* (1955), Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong; *Dragon Road* (1956), Thailand, Burma; *The Golden Fear* (1957), Indonesia; *The Copper Butterfly* (1957), Japan; *The Yesterday Walkers* (1958), Malaya; *An Hour Before Zero* (1959), South Vietnam; *The Chinese Hammer* (1960), Tibet; *The Flying Horse* (1962), North Korea.
- The Eyes Around Me* (Harper, 1964), *A Wind of Death* (Harper, 1967), and *You Want To Die, Johnny?* (Harper, 1966) all feature jacket blurbs by Mason.
- Long jacket blurb on *The Ginger Tree* (Harper, 1977).
- For example:
Philip Atlee, *The Last Domino Contract*—Joe Gall, the Nullifier (1976); South Korea
Glen Chase, *Made in Japan*—Cherry Delight #10 (1974)
Lionel Derrick, *Tokyo Purple*—Penetrator #6 (1974)
Robert Emmett, *Ride the Tiger*—American Avenger #2 (1981); Thailand
Peter McCurtin, *The Guns of Palembang*—Soldier of Fortune #4 (1982, but first published in 1977); Java
Don Pendleton, *Hawaiian Hellground*—Executioner #22 (1975)
Joseph Rosenberger, *The Shambhala Strike*—Death Merchant #30 (1980); Tibet
Robert Skimin, *Bloodletting!*—Soldier for Hire #4 (1982); Thailand
Dan Streib, *The Hawaiian Takeover*—Hawk #13 (1981) □

REX STOUT

Newsletter

By John McAleer

Rex Stout often mentioned real-life personages in his Nero Wolfe stories. As time passes, of course, the number of people who can say, "I am mentioned in a Nero Wolfe story" is shrinking. Enough still survive, however, to fill a hall with celebrities if anyone wants to give a "Wolfe Saga Survivors Party." Sports figures and movie stars will predominate. In a quick riffle through the complete corpus, I came up with the following names: Joe DiMaggio, Bette Davis, the Duchess of Windsor, Bobby Fischer, Barry Goldwater, Richard Nixon, George Wallace, William H. Kunstler, Billy Graham, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, Willie Mays, Stan Musial, Sir Laurence Olivier, Dana Andrews, Victor Mature, Greta Garbo, Lynn Fontanne, Jack Dempsey, Sandy Koufax, Tom Seaver, Dean Russo, Herblock, Stokely Carmichael, Fidel Castro, Hedy Lamarr, Paulette Goddard, and Ray Bolger.

I can think of a few people who would like to have been mentioned in a Wolfe story, but Rex was impervious to hints. It's melancholy to think about it, but some of the "celebrities" mentioned will, in the long run, be remembered only because the Wolfe stories have kept their memory alive. I can visualize a Nero Wolfe variorum edition in 2000 A.D., explaining in a footnote who Raymond Swing was, or Helen Hokinson, Robert Welch, and Elsa Maxwell. I wonder if it occurred to them, when Rex mentioned them, that some day they would be remembered for no other reason? I was quoted on the jacket of *Triple Zek*. I wonder if that entitles me to go to the Survivors Party?

* * * * *

Czarna, Rex Stout's beloved Labrador, died lately at High Meadow. She was sixteen and had stood guard outside Rex's study window since his death seven years ago.

In an essay on Thomas Carlyle, I came across the following sentence: "In the chapter of *Past and Present* entitled 'Gospel of Mammonism,' he tells of a 'poor Irish Widow' of Edinburgh, a literary descendant of Wordsworth's Martha Ray and an ancestor of Matthew Arnold's Wragg, whose husband died leaving her and her children destitute." Is this the Wragg from whom the F.B.I.'s Wragg, in *The Doorbell Rang*, is descended? Arnold scholars please respond. Incidentally, before Viking published *The Doorbell Rang*, it checked out the New York office of the F.B.I. just to make sure no one named Wragg worked there. After all, Truman Capote was sued by a sixty-year-old prostitute named Holly Golightly, who claimed he had her in mind when he gave that name to the heroine of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Commented Capote: "That's like Joan Crawford claiming she's Lolita!"

* * * * *

In William Vivian Butler's *The Young Detective's Handbook* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), there is a reference, on p. 6, to "the staggeringly fat Nero Wolfe."

* * * * *

"Murder Is No Joke" is reprinted in *The Big Apple Murders*, ed. Isaac Asimov et al.

* * * * *

It's time I released, in its entirety, Mark Van Doren's wonderful letter to me, written shortly before his death, now nearly a decade ago. Van Doren, one of the most distinguished English professors America had produced in this century, taught for many years at Columbia University. For fifty years, he was one of Rex Stout's closest friends. He wrote:

"I can think of no other detective who is helped by a man as intelligent as Archie Goodwin. Usually the helper or friend or companion is either a yes-man or one who oohs and aahs over the master's triumphs—'but sir, how did you ever come to that

brilliant conclusion?' Archie has enormous respect for Nero, but he doesn't show it to Nero (only to us, and then drily, or even a bit grudgingly). He argues with Nero at times; he threatens to resign; he is sarcastic to him within reason. He is, in a word, what Nero wants, namely, a right-hand man who is always available yet never in the way; who can be asked for advice and will give it without letting the fact that he was asked go to his head; who will often be witty but never wait for applause; who notes the master's best moves without exclaiming over them; who—well, comes as near as possible to being the perfect person for his job, and this includes the job of dressing the boss down whenever he needs it.

"Archie is Rex himself. They are identical in brightness, in cockiness, in learning, in hatred of sentiment, in directness and sharpness of speech. I often hear Rex talking between Archie's sentences, or for that matter in them. Both are impatient of fools and pompous persons; both know how to recognize brains and genius in others.

"Rex told me once that he likes to mention his friends in his stories—a book they have written, for instance, or something they have done. This is plausible because Nero reads everything and seems to know everybody.

"The sameness of the settings—the house, the plant room, the front stoop, the front door with its chain, the office with its chairs (the big one for Nero, the special one for those who are to be given the twice-over), the stairs, the room that is Archie's and nobody else's, the magic panel that permits those behind it to see what goes on in the office, the priceless operators who come and go with highly specific assignments (Saul Panzer et al), the ever present Inspector Cramer and the burly Sergeant Stebbins, the beautiful young women who come and cry or don't cry on Nero's shoulder, and who cross their legs when they talk with only Archie appearing to know that they do—you would think all this

sameness would wear thin, but it doesn't. Reason: the intelligence of Archie who is Rex, and the brilliance of Rex when it comes to telling stories.

"He told me once that after he had settled on an idea for a new story he allotted just so many days to writing it, and finished on the last of these. No fooling around.

"He told me too that it was easy to plot a detective story—just know what happened and then reveal or suppress just as much as you need to on the way. Easy—haha.

"Returning to the subject of the repeated setting: Of course it is a classic thing (cf. Baker Street), but Rex realized its possibilities more than any one else ever did except Conan Doyle. Far from being a handicap, it's an added (multiplying) charm.

"Returning to the equation Archie equals Rex, there are times when Nero equals Rex, as in the story (which one?) where Nero systematically tears to pieces a copy of Webster's Dictionary III. Rex hated that too. As a matter of fact, there are plenty of correspondences between him and Wolfe. [See the opening scene of *Gambit*.]

"He once told me that he arrived at the name Nero Wolfe by looking for a first name of two syllables with an 'e' in the first syllable and an 'o' in the second, and for a second name of one syllable with an 'o' for its second letter. Believe this if you want to.

"Another correspondence between Rex and Nero: Rex hated Germans, and at one time, toward the end of World War II, wanted to kill them all.

"I haven't spoken of Rex's skill in storytelling, which actually is a thing nobody knows anything about, but which anybody can be a witness to, for instance me. I can merely say that I have never begun one of Rex's stories without being instantly drawn in to it and fully entertained throughout. He is one of the masters. And incidentally, he has never subscribed to the theory that the detective must be a thug, a drunkard, and a lecher. I agree with Jacques Barzun that the tradition declined when this began to happen. No, the detective story must remain civilized, and the detective must remain a gentleman—a scholar also, if possible. That is what the literature of detection is all about: the protection of civilization by those courageous and competent enough to save it.

"Rex is a perfect writer—economical, rapid, free of cliché, epigrammatic, intelligent, charming. What else? That's enough."

In June 1972, there began in Rex Stout's life an episode which we chronicle as "The Horehound Caper."

At that time, Keppel's, Inc., Lancaster, Pa., got a letter which read: "For years I have been buying your Old Fashioned Horehound Candy Drops from a drug store in Danbury, Conn. (my nearby shopping town) but they have stopped carrying them, and I can't find them elsewhere in Danbury. So I need a

favor. For the enclosed check, will you send me ten dollars worth by mail? I'll greatly appreciate it." The letter was from Rex Stout.

Robert Keppel, Jr., president of the horehound enterprise, sent Rex three dozen bags at once. Impressed by Rex's loyalty to his product, he also wrote him a covering letter. In it he said: "Your name 'rings bells' for me and I can't put it in the right place. It seems to me that you must be a public figure in recent years. Am I mistaken?" Always ready to clear up a mystery, Rex sent Keppel a bio-brief of himself. Pleased to think that Rex probably fueled himself on Keppel's Horehounds while he wrote about the fortunes of Wolfe and Archie, Keppel wrote back offering to send Rex, henceforth, a complimentary supply of horehounds whenever he needed them. The next time the supply ran low, however, Rex sent another ten dollars, explaining, "They give me so much pleasure that I think I should pay for them."

Bob Keppel was not to be outdone. Back

"May I," he wrote back, "suggest that you do not 'look a gift horse in the teeth'? Please allow us to supply you with horehound drops from now until your 90th birthday, at which time we will happily accept your check as your needs for horehound drops occur."

Rex capitulated, but not quite. When *Please Pass the Guilt* came out, he sent Bob a warmly inscribed copy with a postscript appended: "And I need more horehounds." For anyone who knows the story of Rex's relentless pursuit not of the hound of the Baskervilles but of Keppel's horehounds, it is obvious at once that the unique "horehound edition" of *Please Pass the Guilt* is a rare piece of Stoutiana that some day may command an astronomical price at an antiquarian book fair.

Before he died, on the eve of his 89th birthday, Rex good-naturedly wrote to Keppel from time to time, stating merely, "Greetings. My supply of horehound drops is pretty low, and I'm not ninety yet." That's all



A part of the party seated at Nero Wolfe's table at the Third International Congress of Crime Writers at Stockholm in June 1981. Left to right: Mary Higgins Clark, Ruth Delaney McAleer, John McAleer. Photograph by Ray Plotz

came his reply: "It's most gratifying to you to know that we can return to you in our way a little of the pleasure you have given us in your way over the years with your mystery novels. Because you think you should pay for them, we will accept your check in the amount of \$10 with the understanding that you now have paid for a lifetime supply of Keppel's Horehound Drops."

This was getting to be a chess game. But Rex, who often played chess by mail with Norman Cousins, was not to be outdone either.

"I need some horehound drops," he wrote Keppel a few months later. "I appreciate your generous offer of 'a lifetime supply' but from the way I feel now I suspect that I may be around quite a while, so I have a suggestion: I'll pay for them until my 90th birthday and then your offer will take over. So I enclose a check."

Rex was then 86. A clever ploy, but Bob was having no part of it. A man who caters to the horehound market when other candy-makers are capitulating to the fads and converting to Fruti-Pops or Yum-Bows is not readily put to rout.

it took to bring him a fresh avalanche of a tidbit tastier than any Tingley ever devised.

Strangely enough, I now have a craving for a horehound. I hope you all do. Keppel's, Inc., Lancaster, Pa. 17604, Purveyor to His Majesty, Rex Stout. What better recommendation is needed?

* * * * *

Leon Edel, in his *Stuff of Sleep and Dreams: Experiments in Literary Psychology* (New York, 1982), once more pursues "Rex Stout's Conan Doyle complex" and, says the *New Yorker*, "reports his findings briskly, in the manner of Sherlock Holmes."

* * * * *

Royal Decree: Conversations with Rex Stout, published by Pontes Press, is available now in signed, numbered copies, in a limited printing, and may be ordered from me at \$6.50. Subscriptions to *The Thorndyke File*, which includes membership in the R. Austin Freeman Society, continue at \$5.00 yearly, domestic; \$6.50 foreign. Keep the news coming to me at: Mount Independence, 121 Follen Road, Lexington, Mass. 02173. □



THE SAGA OF

NICK CARTER, KILLMASTER



By Will Murray

One of the most remarkable characters in mystery fiction is the seemingly immortal Nick Carter. Created in 1886 by John R. Coryell for Street & Smith's *New York Weekly*, a story paper, Nick Carter evolved into America's forthright and upstanding detective without peer. Although Coryell created the character, Nick Carter became Street & Smith's property, which they turned over to other writers—most notably Frederic Van Rensselaer Dey and Frederick W. Davis—and so began an incredible chain of adventures in dime novel form. Under the house name "Nicholas Carter," over 1,000 separate adventures appeared in various forms. Even after the death of the dime novel, Nick Carter continued in pulp magazines well into the 'thirties. Then came films, and, in the 'forties, a long-running radio show as well as comic book appearances.¹

Today, Nick Carter lives on in Charter Books' "Nick Carter, Killmaster" series. Since 1964, the "Killmaster" books have been quietly but relentlessly piling up until there are now over 160 titles and no end in sight. Nick Carter sales may not be in the John D. MacDonald league (or even in the "Executioner" league), but over eighteen years of nearly continuous publication indicates that this little-noticed series is here to stay.

These days, the house byline is "Nick Carter," and, masked by its anonymity, an amazing collection of

hacks, geniuses, drunkards, beach bums, ex-actors, newspapermen, up-and-comers, down-and-outers, and would-be writers have toiled. There is an amazing story, and a chapter in mystery fiction that deserves to be told in full.

It all began in the summer of 1963, during a discussion between Walter B. Gibson, one of the most influential writers in the pulp magazine field in his day, and packager Lyle Kenyon Engel, who would soon become one of the most influential presences in the paperback industry. As "Maxwell Grant," Gibson had created the character of The Shadow for Street & Smith's *The Shadow* magazine, which had inspired an amazing number of imitators during the Depression—among them, a pulp revival of Nick Carter. Engel, who had started his career editing *Song Hits* magazine in 1935, in time became an author, editor, and book packager. Engel, in fact, originated the concept of "packaging" books for the paperback industry—although he prefers to be thought of as a "producer." At any rate, Engel acquired Gibson's Shadow character from Condé Nast, which had inherited the copyright from Street & Smith, and he and Gibson met over how best to market Gibson's nearly three hundred Shadow novels. They decided that Gibson would write a new novel, *Return of The Shadow*, to introduce the series and that selected reprints would follow. However,

Gibson and Engel had a falling out after that first novel was published by Belmont Books, which decided to update *The Shadow*, and for that they hired Dennis Lynds to write new adventures as Maxwell Grant.

Before the split, though, Gibson had discussed with Engel the possibility of acquiring Nick Carter from Condé Nast and reissuing the pulp novels, many of which Gibson had revised during the 'forties for reprinting in digest form. Subsequently, Engel did go after those rights—but with an entirely different purpose in mind.

This was the time of the great James Bond craze, triggered by President Kennedy's widely-quoted remark that he enjoyed Ian Fleming's books. Cannily, Engel decided to update Nick Carter in the manner of an American James Bond. He made the necessary arrangements with Paul H. Bonner, Jr., book director of Condé Nast, and with Arnold E. Abramson and Robert J. Abramson of Universal Publishing and Distributing Corporation, who were planning a new paperback imprint, Award Books. Nick Carter would launch the imprint.

Lyle Kenyon Engel recalls how he created the new Nick Carter:

I saw how big James Bond was in the United States, and I figured if England has their special agent, why shouldn't America have its special agent? I went to Condé Nast and I spoke to Paul Bonner, and I said, Look you're not doing anything with these publications. Why not let me take over the Nick Carter line and revitalize the whole thing? I don't want any of the plot ideas; as a matter of fact, I want to change him from a detective who says, Hold firm or I'll fire! and I changed it into "Nick Carter, Killmaster," the Killmaster being the 007 designation. In other words, he had a license to kill.

As the series' producer, Engel, his present wife Marla, and his son George, who made up his tiny operation, were responsible for delivering the copy-edited manuscript, as well as blurb and other editorial matter, to Award. Engel chose a young writer, Michael Avallone, to write the series. Engel had discovered Avallone some years before, working in a stationery store while writing his Ed Noon private eye stories. They had worked together frequently. Avallone edited his *American Agent* espionage magazine, wrote an unpublished spy novel, *The Fourth Reich*, for him in 1962, and, just before starting Nick Carter, did *Tales of the Frightened*, which Engel packaged as a book and a record album narrated by Boris Karloff.

Avallone, inspired by the pulp novels he had read as a Depression kid and especially by the adventures of Secret Service agent Jimmy Christopher in *Operator #5* magazine, concocted a one-page profile on the new Nick Carter, which was also based on Engel's preliminary concept of the character. Avallone

initially envisioned an Ivy League superspy who resembles William Holden but who is known by the code name "Susan"—this because he works for Security, U.S.A. Nations, whatever that means. Versed in the martial arts, the new Nick is a World War II veteran who carries a captured Nazi Luger, keeps fit through yoga, and is "devoted to the Ideals of the Bill of Rights." His superior is known only as "7."

The character was quickly changed by Lyle, Marla, and George Engel. All previous incarnations of Nick Carter played up his ability at disguise, but this was a much overdone and unrealistic talent, so they dispensed with it. Nick became a suave ladykiller who worked for America's supersecret espionage agency, AXE. AXE is a last resort when world freedom is threatened, its purpose to infiltrate global trouble spots and "Give 'em the axe." AXE stands for nothing more. Nick works under a superior, Mr. Hawk, who operates out of AXE's Washington, D.C. cover—the Amalgamated News and Wire Services. He carries a Luger, a stiletto, and a gas bomb, called Wilhelmina, Hugo, and Pierre, respectively. Nick is one of AXE's Killmaster agents, trained and



Michael Avallone

sanctioned to kill in the line of duty. His code name is "N-3," later rendered as "N3." There is a tiny blue axe tattooed on his right forearm.

This is the Nick Carter who emerged in the first Killmaster novel, *Run, Spy, Run*. The final product was not entirely Avallone's, although he recalls having a major hand in developing some of the paraphernalia of the series, such as AXE, Hawk, and Nick's weapons.

When the first Nick manuscript was submitted to Award editor Samuel H. Post (who only months before had edited *The Shadow* at Belmont), Post was dissatisfied with Avallone's somewhat pulpish approach and his distinctly idiosyncratic style. Post and the Abramsons conferred and returned the story for revision, along with a synopsis Post had created for the second novel. Avallone's revision and his draft of the second book, *The China Doll*, fell short of the American James Bond the others were looking for. Avallone, preferring to write like Michael Avallone, declined further revisions. Engel then turned the two manuscripts over to a young woman with no previous novel-writing experience named Valerie Moolman, who rewrote them, under Engel's direction. Originally from South Africa, Moolman had written several travel guides for Engel, a background which was thought to be indispensable for writing international espionage. Additionally, she had scripted the British TV series *African Drumbeat* and *Around an African Campfire*.

Valerie Moolman wrote or rewrote the first year's worth of Nick Carter novels. She fleshed out the character somewhat, renaming him Nicholas J. Huntington Carter (the "J. Huntington" was the name of a friend). Later, a "III" was added, along with the hint that Killmaster was the grandson of the original Nick—a suggestion which would have horrified dime novelist Frederic Dey, who once boasted he never wrote a Nick Carter which he would not be afraid to read to a Sunday school class. As it was, the modern novels required a standard three sex scenes each. Times had certainly changed.

Moolman enjoyed writing Nick Carter, but it wasn't always smooth sailing. Sometimes she wrote Nick into tight spots and got hung up, unable to extricate him. Lyle Engels recalls receiving a concerned call from her after she had gotten Nick trapped in a bathroom with two enemy agents outside the door and no other escape. Engel coolly provided one: Nick pulls out a death-gas pen, fires a charge under the door, and escapes in the confusion.

While Moolman wrote Nick, Avallone tried his hand at two more novels. *Saigon* was given to Moolman for revision after only forty pages when Engel's criticisms caused Avallone to throw in the towel. Later, he submitted another, "Operation Scorch," through an agent, using the pseudonym Sydney Stuart. It was rejected; thereupon he revised it as a "Man From U.N.C.L.E." novel after he landed that series. His new publisher didn't take it, however, and it was again revised and published as *The Blazing Affair*, a "Girl From U.N.C.L.E." novel. Avallone maintains that his vision of Nick Carter was incompatible with Engel's concepts. Strictly speaking, while Avallone wrote the first drafts of the

first two Nick novels, he is not, as he had claimed for many years, the sole author of those books, but the co-author.

After her first eight Nicks, Valerie Moolman grew less enthusiastic about writing as "Nick Carter" and took a break. By this time, the Engel operation had worked out its standard operating procedures with Award. It was very simple. Engel and Post (and later, other Award editors) conferred over locale. Award was only concerned with approving or suggesting locales; the rest was up to Engel and his writers. This is why so many of the Nicks bear locale titles such as *Hanoi*, *Macao* and *Amsterdam*—these were the working titles for each project, and some were not changed. From that point, Lyle, Marla, and son George either worked up outlines or passed on suggestions to a writer, whose approved outline would become the novel's basis.

No one realized it at the time, but Engel was making a major innovation in paperback publishing. He was creating the male action series as it is known today. Prior to this, all paperback series were author generated and ran under authors' names or personal pseudonyms. Nothing like Nick Carter had been done since the days of the pulp magazines and their house-created characters and house pseudonyms. Because Nick Carter was both the byline and the lead character's name, the byline acted as the series' title as well. The only thing Engel didn't do was number the books. That innovation would come with Bantam's Doc Savage reprints in late 1964.

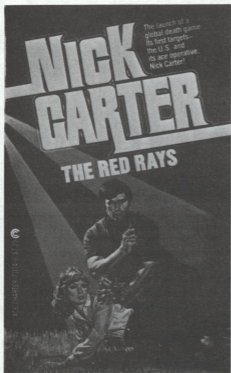
By assuming creative control of a series, Engel set the stage for the explosion of series such as "The Executioner" and "The Destroyer," some of which were created by their publishers in whole or part. Engel himself would produce several such series, but not until after he got Nick Carter off and running.

After Valerie Moolman dropped the series, Engel advertised in the *New York Times* for adventure writers. Award had found that Killmaster sold so well that at least six novels could be published per year. The ad was answered by an industrious and hard-drinking writer named Manning Lee Stokes. Stokes, who in the past had written a little of everything from porn novels to *Classics Illustrated*, had been inactive for a while and anxious for work. His first Nick, *Eyes of the Tiger*, was published in 1965. It introduced a more macho—almost brutal—Killmaster than the Moolman version had been. Over the next six years, Stokes churned out a total of eighteen Nicks, sometimes carrying the series solo for extended periods. He also wrote the first novels for other Engel series, including "The Aquanauts," "Richard Blade," and "John Eagle, Expediter."

Stokes was not only amazingly prolific but could write solid fiction against tight deadlines. Even when he did not adhere exactly to the approved outline,



Nick Carter



usually the result was just what Engel needed. His was the first Nick to be written in the first person. This was 1969's *The Red Rays*. It's not clear how the first-person device was introduced into the series. As Stokes remembered it, it was his idea. He had used it in hardboiled mystery paperbacks during the 'fifties and thought it lent itself to Nick Carter. As Engel recalls it, the idea emanated from Arnold Abramson, who believed it would help homogenize the various writers' styles and disguise constantly changing authorship (which it failed to do). He also wanted to imitate the then-popular Matt Helm novels, which were written in the first person. Engel objected strenuously:

When the publisher insisted after the thirtieth or the thirty-third book on going to a first-person format rather than a third-person format, I was powerless to stop it because Condé Nast didn't give a damn. They said, if that's the way they want it, let's go. And the only reason they had for doing this was that they felt that the Matt Helm series was successful, why shouldn't we do it? I pointed out that Matt Helm wasn't a true foreign agent, because how can you have intrigue when the person who was the star knows everything that's happening? I wanted to open the books with things like, "In the Peking Palace, three stories below

street level, four men pored over maps concerning a project that would hurt the United States." Now, Nick Carter shouldn't know about that!

Nevertheless, the first-person voice became standard with *The Cobra Kill* in 1969. It became a bone of contention between Engel and Award for the rest of their association.

Inevitably, Manning Lee Stokes grew weary of Nick Carter and did other Engel projects—which he wrote right up until his death in the mid-'seventies—and other writers had to be brought in. Valerie Moolman had already returned to write four more Nicks. One of them, *The Mind Poisoners*, was begun by Lionel White, who strayed too far from the established pattern for the series. Engel asked Moolman to write a thirteen-page guide to the series, based on a three-page prospectus by Engel, "The World of Nick Carter," which became the Bible from which all subsequent writers worked. Unfortunately, White resented the intrusion on his work and dropped the novel, which Moolman was obliged to finish. A descendant of Moolman and Engel's guideline is still in use. As for Valerie Moolman herself, she decided that being the anonymous author of twelve Nick Carters was plenty. After that she ghost-wrote a variety of non-fiction books and served on the editorial board of Time-Life Books, for which she still writes and does editorial work. "I actually got quite a lot of fun out of the Nicks," she recalls. "I just didn't want to keep on writing them forever."

In the meantime, others tried their hands at the series. One, Lew Louderback, a writer Engel had gotten from an agency, executed two novels before graduating to writing Engel's "Don Miles" series (about a race-driver-turned-spy) as "Larry Kenyon" and then disappearing from sight. Another writer, Nicholas Browne, literally did that! He did four Nicks and then vanished. It turned out he was a merchant seaman and presumably had sailed for distant points. His Nicks may constitute all his published writing, and many of them had to be extensively revised by the Engels. One strange book was by a writer named Arnold Marmor, who during the 'fifties wrote for various crime and science-fiction magazines. The book was the dual-titled *Peking/The Tulip Affair*, consisting of a short novel and a short story. Marmor's novel came in too short, and, rather than expand it, he simply wrote a short story to go with it. He never did another Nick.

One interesting group of novels was the work of William L. Rohde, a paperback writer from the 'fifties. Rohde did five novels, including the suggestively-titled *Rhodesia*. While he was working on his sixth, "Hijack," Lyle Engel called his home to remind him of the approaching deadline and got a woman who said she was Rohde's widow! She

claimed that her boarder had been impersonating her late husband. Engel never received the "Hijack" manuscript, but some years later he did run into the author, who claimed that his wife had made up the boarder story because they were going through a divorce. Whether William L. Rohde actually wrote those novels is an open question, but they were all the work of a single writer.

Rohde, if indeed it was he, was one author who appeared to enjoy writing Nick Carter. He employed a lot of continuity, and delved into Nick's background quite a bit. In several of his novels, he worked in an AXE agent named Bill Rohde.³ By the time of his Nick work, previous authors had armed Killmaster with a variety of exotic gadgets, so much so that when Nick's weapons are confiscated in *The Human Time Bomb*, the inventory reads like the roll call in a European kindergarden, with Wilhelmina, Hugo, Pierre, Pepita, and Lulubelle coming to light. And that's not counting Pepe and Mr. Fang—this last an extension of Nick's index finger concealing a deadly hypodermic. After Rohde, Engel and his writers rid the series of this ridiculous impedimenta, eliminated Julie Baron, Nick's steady girlfriend (she had been introduced in *Run, Spy, Run* and kept getting in the way of Nick's love life, which became increasingly torrid after Valerie Moolman left the series), and finally tired of Judas, Nick's arch-enemy. Along the way, Mr. Hawk metamorphozed into gruff, lovable David Hawk, AXE's Mr. Waverly.

In all, Judas appeared in ten novels, *Run, Spy, Run*, *Web of Spies*, *Danger Key*, *The Weapon of Night* (in which he plunges to his supposed death into Niagara Falls), *The Judas Spy* (which ignores the previous story), *Rhodesia*, *Peking*, *The Human Time Bomb*, *The Sea Trap*, and *Vatican Vendetta* (which picks up after *Weapon of Night* and ignores the novels in between). Created by Michael Avallone—but used by almost everybody at one time or another—Judas may or may not have been no less than Martin Bormann. Another Nick Carter nemesis was the Chinese terror group CLAW, who appeared in *The China Doll* and *Danger Key*. CLAW was invented by Samuel Post as a counterpart to Fleming's SPECTRE. The early "Killmasters" were big on Chinese Communist menaces, or ChiComs as they were called.

In 1968, two new writers joined the revolving-door Nick Carter stable, both of whom answered *New York Times* ads. The first was Jon Messman, then coming out of a creative dry spell. Beginning with *14 Seconds to Hell*, he produced fifteen novels before leaving to start his own series, including "The Revenger" and "Jefferson Boone, Handyman." The second writer was George Snyder, who lived in a trailer on a California beach in the manner of James Garner's character on *The Rockford Files*.

Snyder wrote only to support his casual lifestyle. He did seven Nicks, beginning with *The Defector*, as well as the "Hang Ten" series for Engel as Robert Morgan, which was about a beach bum detective Snyder evidently modeled after himself. Snyder quickly tired of writing, or fell entirely into the good life, and moved on to other things.

By 1971, relations between Engel and Award were severely strained. The Engels continued to be unhappy with the first-person restriction and with Award's slow and incomplete royalty statements. It did not help that Award neglected to inform them each time it released a new Nick; they had to see them on the stands first and compare them with their manuscript file just to figure out which manuscript had been published under what title, and when. There was constant wrangling with the new Award editor over locales, plots, and other matters, too. In 1971, the series was interrupted for approximately a year. Whether sales were a factor or not is unknown, but this was the time when the new action series such as "The Executioner" and "The Destroyer" were taking off, and those series might have cut into Nick Carter sales. The James Bond craze had long since passed, and "war-against-the-Mafia" series dominated the field. Engel did a few Killmaster-vs.-the-Mafia books such as *The Mark of*

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Cosa Nostra, but this really wasn't what the series was about.

When "Killmaster" returned in 1972 with *The Cairo Mafia*, it was under a new operating arrangement in which Award exercised their option to produce Nicks on their own whenever the Engels could not or would not fill their needs. The first novels alternated between a new Engel writer, Ralph Eugene Hayes, and Award's Martin Cruz Smith, later to gain fame as the author of *Gorky Park*. Smith did only three novels, one supposedly written over a weekend. Of the three, only his *Devil's Dozen* is exceptional.

Hayes did eight novels, most or all of which Award found necessary to revise in-house. This, because they felt Hayes's books were too short and needed expanding. Jim Frenkel recalls getting the galleys of Hayes's *Assault on England* and being horrified to discover it was over ten thousand words too short. He replotted it at editor Agnes Birnbaum's suggestion and turned the rewrite over to an unidentified woman. Frenkel, now a successful science-fiction editor, credits the experience with the self-discovery of his plotting ability. Another Hayes manuscript which had to be expanded was *Butcher of Belgrade*. This was revised at Award by Larry Powell, who recalls revising several unremembered Nicks, probably all of them by Hayes. Powell had taken his unsold Mafia novel, *The Code*, and revised it as a Nick Carter and was then given substandard Nicks to punch up. He later started his own series, "The Liquidator." By trade, he is a newspaperman.

One wonders why Award suddenly found Engel's submissions to be unsatisfactory, but it seems probable that Award preferred to package the series in-house, and the situation continued to deteriorate over several months. Award frequently bounced Nicks back to Engel for revision. Frenkel recalls one, titled "Hong Kong," which came back three or four times. It was never published, and was the work of Hayes and Bill Amidon.

Engel tried new writers on Award, but with little success. *Night of the Avenger* was given to Dan Streib, who writes the "Hawk" series today. Streib wrote it with Chet Cunningham, currently doing alternate books in "The Penetrator" series as "Lionel Derrick." Another writer was law-enforcement officer William Crawford, who wrote three Nicks, "Quemoy," "Right Wingers," and a manuscript called "Pentagon Plot." None of these was ever published, and Crawford went on to greener pastures—including writing an "Executioner" novel as "Jim Peterson."⁴

Ultimately, Lyle Kenyon Engel threw in the towel. His last Nick Carter was *Vatican Vendetta*, Hayes's revision of a George Snyder novel. It was the last appearance of Mr. Judas, fittingly enough. In all,

Engel had produced 83 Nick Carters and established the basic patterns still in use today. It was supremely ironic, perhaps, that Engel should have to disassociate himself from the series at a time—this was 1973—when series fiction was enjoying a boom which conceivably might never have come to pass had he not recreated Nick Carter a decade before. As it turned out, Engel was on the threshold of even greater success than Nick Carter could ever have brought him. He started a new book-producing outfit in 1973, called Book Creations, through which he created the enormously successful "Kent Family Chronicles" with John Jakes. That series went on to spark as many imitators as "Nick Carter, Killmaster" had.

Engel's last Nick writer, Ralph Eugene Hayes, left an unfinished Killmaster book, "Switzerland," and graduated to several series of his own, among them "Agent for Cominsec," "The Hunter," and "Stoner."

By 1973, Nick Carter was back on an intensive publishing schedule (sixteen were published that year), and Agnes Birnbaum instituted a new approach to the series wherein she seems to have preferred a constant turnover of authors—or perhaps she had difficulty keeping authors inasmuch as Award did not pay royalties. Over the next few years, until Award folded, writers seldom penned more than three "Killmasters." This scattershot approach insured against author fatigue, Award now paid its writers more than they ever had to Engel, and continuity was unaffected—simply because continuity was discouraged in the first place. Nick and Hawk were the only real continuing characters, and their basic personalities were locked in lucite. True, sometimes Hawk seems to have problems with his secretary, who was sometimes Della Stokes, sometimes Miss Pryde, and in more recent days Ginger Bateman, and so what if the head of AXE's ordnance section, Special Effects and Editing, changed his name from Poindexter to Stuart to Stewart to Thompson as the series rolled along?

New writers included old pulp writers (like W. T. Ballard), new writers (like Thomas Chastain), film novelizers (like Richard Hubbard), and Gothic novelists (like Marilyn Granbeck, who also co-authored the "Peacemaker" series). One writer, Saul Wernick, entered the fold when Birnbaum turned down an original novel but suggested she'd accept it were he to revise it as a Nick. Wernick's *The Aztec Avenger* was the first of his six Nicks. That was a record for that period. The days of the prolific Nick Carter writer such as Manning Lee Stokes, whose Nick output remains unchallenged, were clearly over. Wernick later did books under his own name, writes for Raven House as "Robert Julian," and is currently ghosting "Executioners" for Gold Eagle Books.

All along, Award continued to reissue the older

titles, with the only changes appearing on the covers. Nick's clean-cut image gave way to an outdoorsy 'seventies look. Somewhere along the line, Award recast Stokes's *Eyes of the Tiger* into the first person and reissued it. This experiment was never repeated.

Late in 1974, Award promoted Agnes Birnbaum and turned Nick Carter over to a new editor, Sybil Pincus, who took a hard look at the sex and violence in the series and effected immediate changes. She cleaned out the old stable and instructed her new writers to make Killmaster more sensitive, to reduce excessive violence, and to replace the "bimbos" with more intelligent female characters. Pincus hoped to turn Nick Carter into the "thinking man's espionage series," but concern over tampering with the all-important formula and the risk of losing faithful readers forced her to settle on the modifications already mentioned. But these were distinct improvements. During the two years she edited the series, it reached a watershed as far as plot and writing were concerned. Experimentation was also at its height. Two Saul Wernick novels—*Snake Flag Conspiracy* and *Fanatics of Al Asad*—were unusual in that they substituted U.S. settings for the standard exotic locales.

Pincus shelved unsatisfactory manuscripts (not all of them had come from Engel, it turned out) by Hal Mosner, Fred Huber, Irving Townsend, and Al Hine.³ One bad novel, Douglas Marland's *Counterfeit Agent*, was revised in-house by an unknown editor and released. Marland is now the Emmy-winning head writer on *The Guiding Light* soap opera.

It was during this period, in 1975, that Award published the one-hundredth Nick, which contained Craig Nova's *Dr. Death*, and reprinted *Run, Spy, Run* and an old Nick dime novel. Nick Carter scholar J. Randolph Cox wrote an introduction to the volume. Because the books weren't numbered, someone goofed. *Dr. Death* was book #98, not #100. Earlier, *The Black Death* had been released as book #50. It was actually #56.

Probably some of the best Nick Carters were published during Pincus's tenure, including Craig Nova's excellent *Nichovev Plot* and Linda Stewart's pyrotechnic *Jerusalem File*. Stewart, who graduated to books of her own like *Panic on Page One*, may have written the quintessential "Killmaster" book in *The Peking Dossier*, despite the fact that the title has nothing to do with the story. This was a common practice with Nicks: a catchy title took precedence over an appropriate one. Sybil Pincus remembers a frantic conference held over a novel which lacked a good title even though the story was in galleys. They brainstormed endlessly until Agnes Birnbaum jumped up and shouted, "I've got it! *The Z Document!*" When Pincus reasonably pointed out

that no such document appeared in the story, Birnbaum said, "Put one in."

Other writers of interest included Dennis Lynds and George Warren. Lynds is best known for his mysteries written as "Michael Collins," and one of his Nicks, *Triple Cross*, is interesting because it was written from an unused outline for a "Shadow" novel he had planned to do for Belmont. Lynds's Nicks were not written for Engel, however. Neither were George Warren's, although he is currently writing for Book Creations. Warren, a science-fiction writer who also ghosted Mike Shayne magazine novelettes, penned the exemplary *Vulcan Disaster*, which had a noteworthy cover. Sybil Pincus, her successor Peter Titus, and Award employee Tony Puzo (Mario's son) all posed for that cover!

Sybil Pincus recalls her stint as "Nick's mom" with fondness:

Everyone and their uncle thought they could write a Nick, and many of the slush Nicks that arrived were staggeringly bad. . . . My favorite authors (among them Jack Canon, Dennis Lynds, and Saul Wernick) submitted very good "single novels" and upon the basis of those manuscripts I suggested that they write a Nick. And they were terrific, and I kept using them.

I suppose the major problem was homogenizing the styles, but the better authors I worked with all seemed to tap into the same frequency, and Nick didn't vary much in

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personality. It wasn't easy coming up with a new Nick every month, but we found a bunch of good authors and had three-or-four-books-a-year contracts for them, and I don't ever remember really panicking.

I tried to make Nick a pleasant guy, with no love of gratuitous violence, and a real liking for women. The women in the books were important to me, and I tried to stay away from sex for sex's sake, although a certain number of sex scenes were obligatory. The fewer bimbos in the books, the better, and some of the female characters were quite wonderful. I tried not to make Nick too much of an MCP.

Despite steady sales, the series stopped abruptly in 1977 with Bob Latona's *Plot for the Fourth Reich*, an unexceptional novel of interest because a character named Frederic Dey appeared within its pages. Award Books had folded due to bad management. For its entire life, Nick Carter had been the bread and butter of the firm.

Numerous Nicks were caught in the crunch; some paid for, others only under contract. Dennis Lynds, for instance, was left hanging in the middle of a multi-book contract. One resourceful writer, Ron Felber, simply changed Nick Carter to Mark Daimon (agent N3 for S.C.I.) and peddled *The Indian Point Conspiracy* to Manor Books. Daniel C. Prince received his check for *Hawaii* and called the office the next day only to find the phone disconnected.

This was not the end of "Nick Carter, Killmaster" by any means. Only a year later, the series was picked up by Charter Books, an arm of Ace. They also picked up the sizable manuscript inventory and some Award personnel, including Peter Titus, who took over Nick, and Sybil Pincus, who, after three grueling years of Nick Carter plots, opted to edit nonfiction. Titus supervised the publication of the remaining Award inventory (or what could be found of it—manuscripts by Irving Townsend, Hal Mosner, and Al Hine seem to have evaporated) beginning in June 1978 with Saul Wernick's *Revenge of the Generals*.

In less than a year, they had exhausted the backlog, and a new editor, a woman named Pat Crain, began soliciting new Nicks. Some of the old Award crew, such as George Warren, Jack Canon, and David Hagberg, returned to the series, but quite a crop of new writers plunged in, too. One of the first of these was Joseph Rosenberger, who did *Thunderstrike in Syria* and who is better known for his "Death Merchant" series. Another was actor-turned-mystery-writer Robert Derek Steeley. Dwight V. Swain, a forgotten pulp writer, resurfaced briefly to try a Nick. John Stevenson, better known as Mark Denning and Bruno Rossi, did three.

By 1980, certain writers emerged as the most capable, and multi-book contracts were signed with them. Jack Canon was one of these. His first Nick, *The Ebony Cross*, was written for Award but published by Charter, and he has written several



since, including two not yet published. Under his own name, Canon writes historical romances and the "Michael Paradise" suspense novels.

Robert E. Vardeman co-authors the science-fiction series "The War of the Powers" and has written "Star Trek" novels. His Nicks, beginning with *Eighth Card Stud*, tend toward scientific extrapolation (he has a physics and nuclear engineering background and did development work on the Mars-Viking lander). In his *Solar Menace*, Nick turns astronaut and infiltrates a Russian space station.

David Hagberg has written everything from Tempo's unbylined "Flash Gordon" novels to best-selling thrillers under his pen name "Sean Flannery." His first Nick was *The Sign of the Prayer Shawl* for Award in 1976. He returned to the series in 1981 with *The Oyster Conspiracy*, which is considered a model for anyone wishing to write for the series. In *The Strontium Code*, Hagberg introduced the first recurring villain since Mr. Judas, Nick KGB counterpart, Nikolai Fedor Kobelev. Kobelev returned in *The Puppet Master* and only Hagberg knows if he'll come back again.

Robert J. Randisi is a young writer whose first mystery novel, *The Disappearance of Penny*, was

published by Charter. His first "Killmaster" was *Pleasure Island*, and he has written several interesting entries since, especially the cerebral *Chessmaster*. Randisi writes some of Warner's "Men of Action" series.

Joseph L. Gilmore is another mystery/thriller writer. *Strike of the Hawk* was only the first of several crackling Nicks he intends to write. He also writes for the "Executioner" series.

These writers are currently working for the latest "Killmaster" editor, Niki Risucci, who was promoted from assistant to Pat Crain to Nick Carter editor early in 1981.⁶ Her first actions were to cease accepting manuscripts while she got the extensive backlog into print and evaluated the series. She quickly decided that it would be better to limit the number of writers working on the series and settled on Hagberg, Randisi, Canon, Vardeman, and Gilmore as her regulars. She also found that, even with the mellowing of the character, Nick Carter needed more work, and she swiftly began pruning the excessive blood and sex scenes. Instead of three main sex scenes, she now prefers that her writers include just one main scene and two lesser, more sensual, interludes. And it's possible that Nick Carter may acquire a steady girlfriend sometime in the future. Risucci is considering the possibility, but so far neither the proper character nor an appropriate writer has been found.

Otherwise, Killmaster Agent N3 continues to charge along just as he always has, his faithful weapons Wilhelmina, Hugo, and Pierre showing not the slightest trace of wear. In the tradition of long-running characters, Nick simply has not aged in the eighteen years since *Run, Spy, Run*. His image may change with the times, but he is still the cool, sophisticated AXE agent created in 1964. Nick may be portrayed with slight variations, depending upon author, being cocky, dead straight, patriotic, or cynical by turns, but he is always recognizable as Nick Carter to the legions of readers who support the series. The novels, because they are devoid of chronology, maintain the characters in a sort of stasis, allowing Charter to reprint the older titles at will. There are occasional lapses, however. In the most recent books, Nick is a former Vietnam Ace in spite of the earlier World War II background. In fact, Nick had been saving the world for AXE all through the Vietnam War! In other books, Nick can't even fly an aircraft. If regular readers ever notice these things, their enthusiasm appears to be unaffected.

In March 1982, Charter did a Nick Carter promotion in which no fewer than seven original novels were issued in one month. Currently, Niki Risucci has a manuscript inventory which will take the series well into 1983. Even with such a backlog, new Nick Carter writers such as Jerry Ahern (author of the

"Survivalist" series) and Bruce Algozin (a protégé of David Hagberg) have been drafted as the most recent "Nick Carters"—although these days Nick Carter functions more as a general series title than as a house name.⁷

So why has this series plowed on indefatigably through two publishers? The reasons are many. Probably one of the things keeping Nick alive is the constant turnover of authors, which can't help but to promote a continual originality of plot material. Few writers stay with the series long enough to become bored. Back in the days of the pulp magazine character, the less imaginative, multi-author *Phantom Detective* series outlasted the superior adventures of Doc Savage and The Shadow for perhaps that very reason. Because there are so many writers doing Nick, chances are that a reader who picks up five books will be reading the work of at least four authors, of which at least one is sure to appeal to his tastes. Nick Carter ranges from espionage to suspense, and even ventures into science fiction.

It may also be that inasmuch as the books aren't numbered and contain little character continuity, new readers feel less inhibited about picking one up, as they might with, say, book #52 in the "Destroyer" series. The way the books are packaged now, the casual reader cannot be put off by the fact that *Earth Shaker* is the 163rd "Killmaster" novel because he has no way of knowing that fact. A new reader can't even differentiate a new title from a reprint, unless he's read them all—and there are readers who have, too!

But most of all, Nick Carter has survived because of the long chain of creative people—from Lyle Kenyon Engel and his writers to Niki Risucci and her team—who recognized that, trends aside, there will always be a market for a solid adventure series with a strong, heroic lead character. They have reduced that need to a somewhat flexible formula, and they deliver that formula packaged in such endless variety that readers keep coming back to the series.

And, too, Nick Carter is a magic name and has been for almost a century.

As of this writing, "Nick Carter, Killmaster" is a very healthy series and gives every indication of being indestructible. That may or may not be. But when the one-hundredth anniversary of the original Nick's creation arrives in September 1986, the chances are excellent that it will be celebrated in a paperback edition of the character's most recent incarnation, "Nick Carter, Killmaster."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article, and the author index which follows, is primarily the work of three individuals—J. Randolph Cox, who made the first tentative moves toward identifying the "Nick Carter, Killmaster" authors in

the mid-seventies; James E. Malone, who provided the impetus for picking up where Randy left off; and the writer of this article, who spearheaded and orchestrated the research. The chronological arrangement of the novels is the work of James E. Malone, who purchased most of the books new and kept track of their order. Because of Award's haphazard distribution, his numbering, while probably 99% accurate, is not beyond dispute. The author assignments are derived from sources too numerous to easily document. Inasmuch as no central file on the series exists, we were fortunate in being able to piece together a complete author list from the files of Lyle Kenyon Engel, Condé Nast, and Charter Books, as well as from numerous communications with authors and editors and from published reference works such as *Contemporary Authors* when no files could be found, as was the case with the Award titles during 1972-76. In addition to the many authors we contacted during the two years this article was being researched, the following people helped substantially: Lyle Kenyon Engel and George Engel of Book Creations; Paul H. Bonner, Jr. of the Condé Nast Publications; Sybil Pincus of Pinc Ink Editorial Services; Niki Risucci of Charter Books; and Kenneth R. Johnson of Twaci Press. To all who unselfishly aided in what may be one of the strangest bibliographic quests on record, sincere thanks are offered.

Notes

1. The early history of the Nick Carter character has been exhaustively documented by scholar J. Randolph Cox in "The Nick Carter Library," a supplement to the *Dime Novel Round-Up*, Vol. 43, No. 7, 1974. Edward T. LeBlanc, Publisher.

2. Information on the genesis of the character was gleaned from the papers of Michael Avallone housed in the Mugar Memorial Library at Boston University.
3. If not Robde, one could speculate that the author's real name was one of the two character names frequently mentioned in these novels—Barney Manoon (an AXE agent mentioned in the same breath with agent "Bill Robde") or Al Bard, a frequent Nick Carter alias in these stories.
4. Several Nick Carter novels, authors unknown, and in various stages of completion, repose in Engel's files. For completists, their working titles are "Israel/Masada," "Maña," "Austria," "Mexico," "Khartoum," and "Black Africa/Red-Black Terror."
5. Presumably, these were stories which did not fit in with Pincus's new Nick Carter personality, and not necessarily substandard manuscripts. Condé Nast records show one novel each by Mosner, Huber, and Townsend in inventory as of early 1975, of which only one, Huber's, turned up after Charter had acquired the series. Curiously, Nick Carter manuscripts designated Al Hine #4, #5 and #6 are also listed. Inasmuch as Hine had only two Nick Carters in print, one wonders why there is no record of Al Hine #3. These manuscripts were logged by number, not title.
6. Just prior to this, Charter had scheduled "Typhoon Ray" by an unknown author as the December 1980 release. The author never turned in the completed manuscript, however, and it could not be located. *Turkish Bloodbath* was published instead, but subsequent releases list "Typhoon Ray" among the backlist. It has never seen print, nor is it likely to do so. Another phantom title appeared on the flyleaves of the Award Nicks around 1967. This was Bruce Cassidy's *Operation Goldkill*, which was listed as a Nick. It was not.
7. One remarkable name was put forth in Dilys Wynn's excellent *Murder Ink*—Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. To this, Harper Lee responded in a letter dated May 14, 1981: "Not only have I never written a Nick Carter story, I've never read one. When I was a youngster, he was coming out in pulp magazines, and pulp magazines were frowned upon by my parents. Therefore I had to make do with the milder fare of Tarzan and the Rover Boys. I cannot imagine how such weird rumors got started." One speculation might be that someone could have floated a rumor that the early Nicks were written by a woman named Lee, somehow confusing or mixing the fact that those early titles were written by a woman, Valerie Moolman, and by Manning Lee Stokes. No more plausible theory suggests itself.

NICK CARTER: KILLMASTER

Title	Year Published	Author
1. <i>Run, Spy, Run</i>	2/64	Michael Avallone / Valerie Moolman
2. <i>The China Doll</i>	4/64	Michael Avallone / Valerie Moolman
3. <i>Checkmate in Rio</i>	5/64	Valerie Moolman
4. <i>Safari for Spies</i>	8/64	Valerie Moolman
5. <i>Fraulein Spy</i>	10/64	Valerie Moolman
6. <i>Saigon</i>	12/64	Michael Avallone / Valerie Moolman
7. <i>A Bullet for Fidel</i>	3/65	Valerie Moolman
8. <i>The 13th Spy</i>	5/65	Valerie Moolman
9. <i>The Eyes of the Tiger</i>	9/65	Manning Lee Stokes
10. <i>Istanbul</i>	10/65	Manning Lee Stokes
11. <i>Web of Spies</i>	1/66	Manning Lee Stokes
12. <i>Spy Castle</i>	1/66	Manning Lee Stokes
13. <i>The Terrible Ones</i>	5/66	Valerie Moolman
14. <i>Dragon Flame</i>	5/66	Manning Lee Stokes
15. <i>Hanoi</i>	1966	Valerie Moolman
16. <i>Danger Key</i>	1966	Lew Louderback

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year Published</i>	<i>Author</i>
17. <i>Operation Starvation</i>	1966	Nicholas Browne
18. <i>The Mind Poisoners</i>	1966	Lionel White / Valerie Moolman
19. <i>The Weapon of Night</i>	1967	Valerie Moolman
20. <i>The Golden Serpent</i>	1967	Manning Lee Stokes
21. <i>Mission to Venice</i>	1967	Manning Lee Stokes
22. <i>Double Identity</i>	1967	Manning Lee Stokes
23. <i>The Devil's Cockpit</i>	1967	Manning Lee Stokes
24. <i>The Chinese Paymaster</i>	1967	Nicholas Browne
25. <i>Seven Against Greece</i>	1967	Nicholas Browne
26. <i>A Korean Tiger</i>	1967	Manning Lee Stokes
27. <i>Assignment: Israel</i>	1967	Manning Lee Stokes
28. <i>The Red Guard</i>	1967	Manning Lee Stokes
29. <i>The Filthy Five</i>	1967	Manning Lee Stokes
30. <i>The Bright Blue Death</i>	1968	Nicholas Browne
31. <i>Macao</i>	1968	Manning Lee Stokes
32. <i>Operation: Moon Rocket</i>	1968	Low Louderback
33. <i>The Judas Spy</i>	1968	William L. Rohde
34. <i>Hood of Death</i>	1968	William L. Rohde
35. <i>Amsterdam</i>	1968	William L. Rohde
36. <i>Temple of Fear</i>	1968	Manning Lee Stokes
37. <i>14 Seconds to Hell</i>	1968	Jon Messmann
38. <i>The Defector</i>	1969	George Snyder
39. <i>Carnival for Killing</i>	1969	Jon Messmann
40. <i>Rhodesia</i>	1969	William L. Rohde
41. <i>The Red Rays</i>	1969	Manning Lee Stokes
42. <i>Peking / The Tulip Affair</i>	1969	Arnold Marmor
43. <i>The Amazon</i>	1969	Jon Messmann
44. <i>The Sea Trap</i>	1969	Jon Messmann
45. <i>Berlin</i>	1969	Jon Messmann
46. <i>The Human Time Bomb</i>	1969	William L. Rohde
47. <i>The Cobra Kill</i>	1969	Manning Lee Stokes
48. <i>The Living Death</i>	1969	Jon Messmann
49. <i>Operation Che Guevara</i>	1969	Jon Messmann
50. <i>The Doomsday Formula</i>	1969	Jon Messmann
51. <i>Operation Snake</i>	1969	Jon Messmann
52. <i>The Casbah Killers</i>	1969	Jon Messmann
53. <i>The Arab Plague</i>	1970	Jon Messmann
54. <i>The Red Rebellion</i>	1970	Jon Messmann
55. <i>The Executioners</i>	1970	Jon Messmann
56. <i>The Black Death</i>	1970	Manning Lee Stokes
57. <i>The Mind Killers</i>	1970	Jon Messmann
58. <i>Time Clock of Death</i>	1970	George Snyder
59. <i>Cambodia</i>	1970	George Snyder
60. <i>The Death Strain</i>	1970	Jon Messmann
61. <i>Moscow</i>	1970	George Snyder
62. <i>Jewel of Doom</i>	1970	George Snyder
63. <i>Ice Bomb Zero</i>	1971	George Snyder
64. <i>The Mark of Cosa Nostra</i>	1971	George Snyder
65. <i>The Cairo Mafia</i>	1972	Ralph Eugene Hayes
66. <i>The Inca Death Squad</i>	1972	Martin Cruz Smith
67. <i>Assault on England</i>	1972	Ralph Eugene Hayes / (?)*
68. <i>The Omega Te</i>		
65. <i>The Cairo Mafia</i>	1972	Ralph Eugene Hayes
66. <i>The Inca Death Squad</i>	1972	Martin Cruz Smith
67. <i>Assault on England</i>	1972	Ralph Eugene Hayes / (?)*

*Revised by unknown author

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year Published</i>	<i>Author</i>
68. <i>The Omega Terror</i>	1972	Ralph Eugene Hayes
69. <i>Code Name: Werewolf</i>	1973	Martin Cruz Smith
70. <i>Strike Force Terror</i>	1973	Ralph Eugene Hayes
71. <i>Target: Doomsday Island</i>	1973	Richard Hubbard
72. <i>Night of the Avenger</i>	1973	Dan Streib & Chet Cunningham
73. <i>Butcher of Belgrade</i>	1973	Ralph Eugene Hayes / Larry Powell
74. <i>Assassination Brigade</i>	1973	Thomas Chastain
75. <i>The Liquidator</i>	1973	Richard Hubbard
76. <i>The Devil's Dozen</i>	1973	Martin Cruz Smith
77. <i>The Code</i>	1973	Larry Powell
78. <i>Agent Counter-Agent</i>	1973	Ralph Eugene Hayes
79. <i>Hour of the Wolf</i>	1973	Jeffrey Wallman
80. <i>Our Agent in Rome Is Missing...</i>	1973	Al Hine
81. <i>The Kremlin File</i>	1973	W. T. Ballard
82. <i>The Spanish Connection</i>	1973	Bruce Cassidy
83. <i>The Death's-Head Conspiracy</i>	1973	Robert Colby
84. <i>The Peking Dossier</i>	1973	Linda Stewart
85. <i>Ice Trap Terror</i>	1974	Jeffrey Wallman
86. <i>Assassin: Code Name Vulture</i>	1974	Ralph Eugene Hayes
87. <i>Massacre in Milan</i>	1974	Al Hine
88. <i>Vatican Vendetta</i>	1974	George Snyder / Ralph Eugene Hayes
89. <i>Sign of the Cobra</i>	1974	James Fritzhand
90. <i>The Man Who Sold Death</i>	1974	Lawrence Van Gelder
91. <i>The N3 Conspiracy</i>	1974	Dennis Lynds
92. <i>Beirut Incident</i>	1974	Forrest V. Perrin
93. <i>Death of the Falcon</i>	1974	Jim Bowser
94. <i>The Aztec Avenger</i>	1974	Saul Wernick
95. <i>The Jerusalem File</i>	1975	Linda Stewart
96. <i>Counterfeit Agent</i>	1975	Douglas Marland (?)*
97. <i>Six Bloody Summer Days</i>	1975	DeWitt S. Copp
98. <i>Dr. Death</i> (reprint of <i>Run, Spy, Run</i>)	1975	Craig Nova
99. <i>The Z Document</i>	1975	Homer H. Morris
100. <i>The Katmandu Contract</i>	1975	James Fritzhand
101. <i>The Ultimate Code</i>	1975	William Odell
102. <i>Assignment: Intercept</i>	1976	Marilyn Granbeck
103. <i>The Green Wolf Connection</i>	1976	Dennis Lynds
104. <i>Death Message: Oil 74-2</i>	1976	Dee Stuart & Ansel Chapin
105. <i>The List</i>	1976	James Fritzhand
106. <i>The Fanatics of Al Asad</i>	1976	Saul Wernick
107. <i>The Snake Flag Conspiracy</i>	1976	Saul Wernick
108. <i>The Turncoat</i>	1976	Leon Lazarus
109. <i>The Sign of the Prayer Shawl</i>	1976	David Hagberg
110. <i>The Vulcan Disaster</i>	1976	George Warren
111. <i>A High Yield in Death</i>	1976	Jim Bowser
112. <i>The Nichovev Plot</i>	1976	Craig Nova
113. <i>Triple Cross</i>	1976	Dennis Lynds
114. <i>The Gallagher Plot</i>	1976	Saul Wernick
115. <i>Plot for the Fourth Reich</i>	1977	Bob Latona
116. <i>Revenge of the Generals</i>	6/78	Saul Wernick
117. <i>Under the Wall</i>	7/78	DeWitt S. Copp
118. <i>The Ebony Cross</i>	8/78	Jack Canon
119. <i>Deadly Doubles</i>	9/78	Larry Van Gelder
120. <i>Race of Death</i>	10/78	David Hagberg
121. <i>Trouble in Paradise</i>	11/78	Robert Derek Steeley
122. <i>The Pamplona Affair</i>	12/78	Dee Stuart & Ansel Chapin
123. <i>The Doomsday Spore</i>	1/79	George Warren
124. <i>The Asian Mantrap</i>	2/79	William Odell
125. <i>Thunderstrike in Syria</i>	3/79	Joseph Rosenberger
126. <i>The Redolmo Affair</i>	4/79	Jack Canon

<i>Title</i>	<i>Year Published</i>	<i>Author</i>
127. <i>The Jamaican Exchange</i>	5/79	Leon Lazarus
128. <i>Tropical Deathpact</i>	6/79	Bob Stokesberry
129. <i>The Permex Chart</i>	7/79	Dwight V. Swain
130. <i>Hawaii</i>	8/79	Daniel C. Prince
131. <i>The Satan Trap</i>	10/79	Jack Canon
132. <i>Reich Four</i>	11/79	Fred Huber
133. <i>The Nowhere Weapon</i>	12/79	William Odell
134. <i>Strike of the Hawk</i> (reprint of <i>Double Identity</i>)	1/80	Joseph L. Gilmore
135. <i>Day of the Dingo</i>	4/80	John Stevenson
136. <i>And Next the King</i>	5/80	Steve Simmons
137. <i>Tarantula Strike</i>	6/80	Dan Reardon
138. <i>Ten Times Dynamite</i>	7/80	Frank Adduci, Jr.
139. <i>Eighth Card Stud</i>	8/80	Robert E. Vardeman
140. <i>Suicide Seat</i>	9/80	George Warren
141. <i>Death Mission: Havana</i>	10/80	Ron Felber
142. <i>War from the Clouds</i>	11/80	Joseph L. Gilmore
143. <i>Turkish Bloodbath</i>	12/80	Jerry Ahern
144. <i>The Coyote Connection</i>	2/81	Bill Crider & Jack Davis
145. <i>The Q-Man</i>	3/81	John Stevenson
146. <i>Society of Nine</i>	4/81	Jack Canon
147. <i>The Ouster Conspiracy</i>	5/81	David Hagberg
148. <i>The Golden Bull</i>	6/81	John Stevenson
149. <i>The Dubrovnik Massacre</i>	7/81	Henry Rasof & Stephen Williamson
150. <i>The Solar Menace</i>	8/81	Robert E. Vardeman
151. <i>The Strontium Code</i>	9/81	David Hagberg
152. <i>Pleasure Island</i>	10/81	Robert J. Randisi
153. <i>Cauldron of Hell</i>	11/81	Mike Jahn
154. <i>The Parisian Affair</i>	12/81	H. Edward Hunsburger
155. <i>Chessmaster</i>	1/82	Robert J. Randisi
156. <i>The Last Samurai</i>	2/82	Bruce Algozin
157. <i>The Puppet Master</i>	3/82	David Hagberg
158. <i>The Damocles Threat</i>	3/82	David Hagberg
159. <i>The Dominican Affair</i>	3/82	Bruce Algozin
160. <i>Deathlight</i>	3/82	Jerry Ahern
161. <i>The Israeli Connection</i>	3/82	Robert Derek Steeley
162. <i>The Treason Game</i>	3/82	Joseph L. Gilmore
163. <i>Earth Shaker</i>	3/82	Robert E. Vardeman
164. <i>Norwegian Typhoon</i>	4/82	Robert E. Vardeman
165. <i>The Hunter</i>	5/82	David Hagberg
166. <i>Operation: McMurdo Sound</i>	6/82	David Hagberg
167. <i>Appointment in Haiphong</i>	7/82	David Hagberg
168. <i>Retreat for Death</i>	8/82	David Hagberg
169. <i>The Mendoza Manuscript</i>	9/82	Robert Randisi
170. <i>The Death Star Affair</i>	10/82	Jack Canon
171. <i>Dr. DNA</i>	11/82	Robert E. Vardeman
172. <i>The Christmas Kill</i>	12/82	Joseph L. Gilmore

Forthcoming:

<i>The Greek Summit</i>	Robert J. Randisi
<i>Operation Round Peg</i>	Robert J. Randisi
<i>The Old Warrior</i>	Robert J. Randisi
<i>The Outback Ghosts</i>	Robert E. Vardeman
<i>Kali Death Cult</i>	Robert E. Vardeman
<i>Those Who Survive</i>	Robert E. Vardeman
<i>Who's Killing the Commissars?</i>	Joseph L. Gilmore

EDITORIAL NOTE: A footnote of sorts: With the takeover of Ace/Charter by Berkley on July 1, 1982, the schedule for the forthcoming titles has been skewed. The books should be appearing . . . sometime. □

AJH REVIEWS



Allen J. Hubin, Consulting Editor

Photo: Robert Smull

Short notes . . .

Ted Allbeury's *The Other Side of Silence* (Scribners, \$11.95) is a very fine "completion" of the Kim Philby case. Philby, British defector long resident in Moscow, passes word that he wants to come home. John Powell of British Intelligence is asked to investigate, with free hand and open mind. He does so, and what initially seemed simple becomes murky and contradictory, full more of questions than answers. Allbeury's recreation of Philby's pre-defection years is most impressive and persuasive. Don't miss this one.

Liza Cody's *Dupe* (Scribners, \$10.95) was judged the best first crime novel of 1980 by the Crime Writers Association in England. Its 1981 appearance in the U.S. was most favorably viewed by CWA's U.S. counterpart, the Mystery Writers of America, who found it one of the best of the year. All of this is well justified, for *Dupe* is a finely wrought tale of a woman private investigator in London. The plotting is sound—Cody avoids the trap of over-tidiness—the dialog exceptionally good, and the characters sturdy. A self-made man wants investigated his estranged daughter's death in a car crash. The police are no longer interested, so he turns to Brierly Security, who give the case to ex-policewoman Anna Lee without the faintest hope that anything will come of it. Anna sets out to reconstruct the years since the daughter left home, to reconstruct her, actually. She's only going through the motions initially, but then with growing interest and the sense of something nasty just coming into sight . . .

S. F. X. Dean's first, *By Frequent Anguish*, was so good I feared for its announced successor and wondered how its publisher, Walker

(not known for prize-winning mysteries), had managed to snare this masterful storyteller. That successor is here—*Such Pretty Toys* (Walker, \$11.95)—and I'm much relieved on the first point and still wondering on the second. The emotional intensity in *Anguish* was so great I felt neither author nor protagonist would have anything left. But both richly do. Prof. Neil Kelly is just leaving for sabbatical in England when visited by a CIA agent who tells him his best friend has been killed by a bomb and the wife, whom Neil had loved—still loves?—years before, has been badly injured, blinded. And is asking for him. Wrenched, drained, enraged, Kelly goes to Santa Fe, where the tragedy took place. He tries to pick up the traces, using a tiny clue the blinded woman gave him, caught in a rivalry between CIA and local officials. Who was the real target of the bomb, and why? Will the answers further tear apart Neil and those who engage his heart? More, Mr. Dean!

William L. DeAndrea's latest, *Five O'Clock Lightning* (St. Martin's, \$11.95), quite pleasantly combines baseball, the 1950s, New York City, politics, and murder. Russ Garrett, whose promising Yankee baseball career ended with

Korean bullets in his knees, is working out of the commissioner's office while trying to convince his knees to do the old tricks again. He's in the middle of the action when a Senator from Missouri is shot in Yankee Stadium. The Senator, an empty-headed opportunist fattening on Red-hunting and the illicit support of a wealthy Kansas City monomaniac, seems to have ruined one life too many. Russ complicates matters by falling in love with the wife of the probable killer, raising the ire of the monomaniac's chief henchman, and getting himself (along with Mickey Mantle) nominated next victim. The final showdown is satisfyingly fitting and cinematic.

The second of John Gardner's continuations of the James Bond saga is *For Special Services* (Coward, \$9.95), and it's a considerable improvement over the first. Which is not to say that it's a very good book or that Bond is very interesting in it. The plot does have a bit of life if not unpredictability, as Bond takes on a reborn SPECTRE at Marcus Bismarquer's fortified ranch in Texas. And Bond does have a moment or two, although one can wonder how an agent who beds indiscriminately and is paralyzed by the sight of a pair of breasts (probably by a single breast, even) can possibly have survived so long in his war against the ungody.

Mr. Calder and Mr. Behrens (Harper & Row, \$12.95), a collection of short stories taken from EQMM, reminds me most forcibly of what a striking stylist author Michael Gilbert is. These twelve tales are small jewels of style, of expert selection of phrase, of mood creation, of economy. Calder and Behrens are semi-retired from British Intelligence, but every so often a problem arises calling for their un-

conventional approach, their unhesitant strike to the heart of villainy. Don't miss this collection—or nearly anything else by Michael Gilbert, for that matter.

And, riches upon richés, we also have a Gilbert novel: *End-Game* (Harper & Row, \$13.50). Randall Blackett has built a large financial empire in London in short order and with the help of very timely accidents. Now we follow the downward passage of one David Rhys-Morgan, caught in its meshes and seemingly pursuing an interest in one of its previous victims. And the rise of David's former girlfriend, Susan Perronet-Conde, whose great abilities have caught the eye of Blackett himself. Down goes David, up goes Susan, and we learn more and more about the financier and his friends—knowledge that has been and will be fatal to some who have it. Beautifully written, with a most satisfying conclusion.

I missed Martha Grimes's first tale about Insp. Richard Jury of the Yard, *The Man with a Load of Mischief*, and if anyone has a spare copy I'd be pleased for the use of it. For by the evidence of Grimes's second, *The Old Fox Deceiv'd* (Little, Brown, \$13.95), detective fiction is blessed with an exciting

new talent. Here we have, despite the author's American residence, a compelling sense of English place: the village of Rackmoor, perched on the cliffs of Northern England and well gripped by winter. And here also an intriguing array of characters, well caught in full step and enmeshed in a worthy plot. A woman, perhaps kin to the titled owner of half the village, is found murdered in costume at Twelfth Night. Jury is summoned, though he's not eager and the local policeman, a proud and capable man of independent means, is even less so. The case first turns on a question of identity, then of motive, then again of identity. Read this!

Although the central idea of Nicholas Guild's latest political intrigue novel, *The President's Man* (St. Martin's, \$13.95), is not new, it's treated freshly and with irresistible suspense. Frank Austin, foot-loose after a term in military intelligence, attached himself to the charismatic California Congressman Simon Faircliff. He became Simon's man, intriguing the path for Simon's climb to the Presidency, establishing an intelligence network, creating indebtedness, finding and using levers, neutralizing opposition. Generally what he did was legal, if very opportunistic, but Simon has another advisor, Diedrich, who seems to supply Faircliff with less principled services. So Simon makes it to the White House, and shuffles Austin off to head the CIA. There, by chance, he comes across the nearly forgotten political prisoner emeritus, the mad Russian Sarebryakov. Who turns out to be the most important man in America . . . Very well done indeed!

Some of today's strongest crime novels from Britain are being written by Reginald Hill, and *Who Guards the Prince?* (Pantheon, \$12.95) will serve very well as an example. Insp. Douglas McHarg lost his wife to cancer and his daughter to a broken relationship, and found himself out in pasture after years protecting His Royal Highness, Prince Arthur. He

The Man of Glass

DONALD ZOCHERT

already had good reason to believe his life was in shreds when things begin to get very much worse. It starts with the discovery of a tongue—a human tongue torn from its unknown owner—on the beach, and moves to a conspiracy reaching to frightening heights and seeming to center on the Freemasons and the Prince. McHarg has precious few (any?) he can trust, the bodies pile up around him, he's deep in professional disgrace—his powerless, it would seem, and yet . . . McHarg is a fascinating, complex creation, fully captured by Hill, and the suspense is well-nigh overpowering.

Lord Mullion's Secret (Dodd, Mead, \$8.95), the latest Michael Innes, is reasonably priced and witty and urbane and fun to read. But it would be a mistake—and here I probably reveal too much—to call it a crime novel. For no crime despoils Mullion's castle, to which Charles Honeybath (of whom we have heard earlier from Innes) is called by the Lord—a college chum—to paint his wife. The castle is blessed with centuries of history, of which the leavings can be found in every passage, a resident madwoman (Great Aunt Camilla, very full of years), and an enterprising romance. One or two odd things having to do

ALLBEURY THE OTHER SIDE OF SILENCE



THE BEST NOVEL OF ESPIONAGE
THAT I HAVE EVER READ
DESMOND BAGLEY

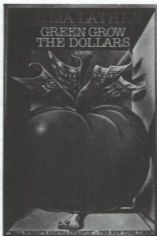
with paintings catch Honeybath's notice on arrival, but more the portrayal of noble life than suspense reward us—and amply, too—in this tale.

An antiquarian book dealer writing mysteries? About an antiquarian book dealer who solves mysteries? Seems a natural, doesn't it? The former is Roy Harley Lewis, whose first two novels are before me. The latter is Matthew Coll, whose shop is in a village near London. Lewis debuts in *A Cracking of Spines* (St. Martin's, \$10.95), which, in addition to a neat titular pun, involves Coll as investigator of a series of rare book thefts. Calling upon his experience with British Intelligence, Matthew soon becomes a thorn in the side of the thieves, who send hired killers to visit him. This tale is well enough told (though a key aspect of the plot fails to convince), but the second, *The Manuscript Murders* (St. Martin's, \$10.95), is even better. Here Coll buys a rare manuscript for an American library and then keeps stumbling across indications that it's a forgery. Indications to him, but nobody else is much interested. Except the odd villain or two, who would have Coll dead. Lewis and his expert handling of the antiquarian book scene will be well worth keeping an eye out for.

John D. MacDonald is almost back in best form in the twentieth McGee novel, *Cinnamon Skin* (Harper & Row, \$13.95). Most of the narrative flows very well—my family kept hollering at me for reading when I should have been doing something else. But the ending in the Mexican jungle hasn't the impact, the sense of completeness, one expects. Meyer is lecturing in Canada when his boat, his niece, and her new husband aboard, is blown to splinters. Meyer initially seems to have been the target, but a fortunate photograph indicates that the husband didn't make the fatal voyage. And his silence suggests he pushed the button. So Meyer and McGee, with revenge in their hearts,

begin to backtrack on a very faint trail.

I suspect John Katzenbach's *In the Heat of the Summer* (Atheneum, \$13.95) will be around when Edgar votes for best first novel are counted next year. Katzenbach, the son of former U.S. Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, is the criminal court reporter for the *Miami Herald*. This story of a psychopath's random Miami killings and the link, almost the dependence, that develops between reporter Malcolm Anderson and the killer is utterly



convincing, tellingly suspenseful, and disturbingly insightful. Katzenbach poses very tough questions about the press, freedom, reporting, and editorial judgment, as he explores what happens to Anderson, the killer, the police, the citizens of Miami, and Anderson's lover, while the toll of bodies rises. And Katzenbach ends his novel with finely judged ambiguity.

The nineteenth case for John Putnam Thatcher (how quickly the years pass!) is *Green Grow the Dollars* (Simon & Schuster, \$13.50) by Emma Lathen. The Vandam

Nursery and Seed Company, an old family firm riddled with Vandams, has been acquired by the giant Standard Foods, and both are poised to enjoy the triumph of the launching of Vandam's revolutionary new tomato, "Numero Uno." But trouble rises on the financial horizon: a rival seed company files suit. The basis of the suit is not entirely clear to me; it fuzzily revolves around patents (surprisingly fuzzy since one of the authors Lathen is a lawyer). In any event, bodies can turn up in Thatcher's vicinity when large amounts of money are at stake, and one does here. The proceedings are enjoyable, urbane, wittily observant. Thatcher cracks the case with ease, and the curtain comes down with botanical satisfaction.

I have to wonder why anyone would pay \$200 for a reprint of a Ross Macdonald novel. That the edition comes with a photocopy of one page of Macdonald's original typescript, that a short final chapter rejected by the author at the time of first printing is included, and that the book is handsomely produced in a limited edition (221 copies)—these facts do not to me translate into sufficient value for the price tag. But perhaps, having sold my crime fiction collection, I now reflect only the reader's viewpoint—for this book, oversize at 10½ x 13 inches, is also not convenient for reading. I refer, if you're still with me, to *The Far Side of the Dollar* (Buccoli Clark, 1700 Lone Pine Road, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan 48013). This novel comes from Macdonald's fine middle period before the vein he's been mining began to run out and the shafts and tunnels flooded with similes. Thus it's a fine work, flowing effortlessly and stylishly and with much insight into character. A boy, son of wealthy parents, is put into a special school when he gets into trouble. From here he promptly escapes, and Lew Archer is hired to get him back. Next comes a ransom demand, then murder, and Archer must be fast on the trail of two

decades' worth of twisted relationships to find a killer.

Amanda Mackay's second story of Dr. Hannah Land and Durham, North Carolina, is *Death on the Eno* (Little, Brown, \$12.95). And quite a successful tale of detection, character, setting, and passion it is, too. Hannah and a friend are canoeing on the Eno, an event which provides her with a badly broken leg and evidence—perhaps—that murder has taken off a member of the illustrious Turnbull family. She enlists her policeman acquaintance, Bobby Gene Jenkins, who is supposed to be cracking a series of truck hijackings, and lodges herself in the bosom of the Turnbull family to observe. But no maiden-in-peril affair is this; it's distinctly more than that well-worn Gothic staple.

Two more are on hand from New Zealand's Laurie Mantell, the second and third featuring Det. Sgt. Steven Arrow. *Murder in Fancy Dress* (Walker, \$9.95) has an interesting premise. A staged "Wild West" bank robbery turns deadly when a retarded teenager is programmed to kill. But the plot thereafter doesn't manage well to hold together or interest, and I moved on to *Murder and Chips* (Walker, \$10.95). This is better. A merchant in Pentone, New Zealand, is killed in what seems to be one of a series of robberies. But Arrow, back from testifying in the matter of a curious death several hundred miles away, finds that the merchant has a nephew with whom he quarreled recently. An opportunistic nephew, faking a robbery to gain an estate? The perceptive Arrow makes an observation, asks some questions, and solves two cases neatly.

Harold Q. Masur's *The Broker* (St. Martin's, \$13.95) tells of a murderous corporate takeover with an impressive air of authenticity. Fred Hanna, tycoon and conglomerate-molder, has his eye on Arcadia Films, a long-time money loser. But Arcadia, drawing new life from strong leadership, wants no part of Hanna, who is working through an

incorruptible Wall Street brokerage firm and various less licit mechanisms. The brokers, headed by Mike Ryan, rashly believe Hanna to be tough but about as honest as one can be at that financial elevation. Hanna marshalls his forces: proxies, market manipulation, a murder or two, a bit of extra money from the mob... Fascinating story!

James Melville, an Englishman who has lived for many years in Japan, launches a series of novels about Supt. Otani of the Hyogo Police Department in *A Sort of Samurai* (St. Martin's, \$9.95). The competently limned Eastern setting does not, however, raise this tale above the crowd. An earthquake (predicted by the movements of catfish!) strikes, and while touring the damage Otani comes across the body of a German businessman. Simple heart attack, it would seem, but Otani's instincts say otherwise, help him sense a connection to a parallel investigation. Who would know enough of a particular martial art to dispatch what proves to be a nasty foreigner, and, however nasty he was, what was the real motive?

Shannon OCork is back with a second case for news photographer T. T. Baldwin in *End of the Line* (St. Martin's, \$10.95). As the title punningly implies, this one is pervasively nautical (the first was equally pervaded by football). Baldwin and her unwilling mentor, Floyd Beesom,

are guests of wealthy Gordon Kittidge on board his boat when the first mysterious events occur (faithfully snapped by T. T.): man overboard, followed by man dead. Also mixed up somewhere in all this is a missing necklace of fabulous value, and an equally missing Jewish jewel merchant, not of equally fabulous value. T. T. is in it up to her lenses, variously assaulted, emperiled, and insightful of villainy. It all got a bit much for me, but OCork will give you a decent run for your money.

Bill Pronzin's nameless private eye hasn't had a particularly fulfilling personal life, as revealed in seven previous novels. In his eighth story, *Scattershot* (St. Martin's, \$10.95), his life falls into the professional and pulchritudinous pits, even though—or, ironically, because—he solves a trio of "impossible crime" cases. Although the tale is far from upbeat, I found it effective and compelling. Nameless has several unrelated investigations to propel him into the public limelight. A simple subpoena delivery turns into murder at an exclusive resort down the California coast. A man in a car he's watching very carefully turns up elsewhere and dead. And, encased in a tuxedo, he incompletely guards a roomful of wedding gifts in a ritzy suburb.

Those whose tastes run to shipboard suspense might fancy *Two If By Sea* (Scribners, \$12.95), a first

London Crimes, Charles Dickens

A collection of short pieces—grimy, humorous, authentic—never before brought together. Dickens's inimitable observations of metropolitan crime, embellished by period illustrations from private sources.

\$8.95

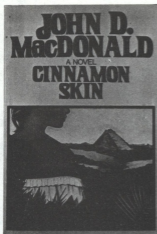
Odd Man Out, F.L. Green

A thriller set in the Belfast of the Troubles. Swiftly paced, well-characterized and an unusually powerful portrait of the writer's native city.

\$5.95

(With each individual order include .75 for postage and handling. Massachusetts residents should include sales tax.)

Rowan Tree Press, 124 Chestnut Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108



novel by EQMM contributor Ernest Savage. But I wasn't convinced at all—either by the revenge motivation of Mike Donahue or by the romantic (if that's the word) onslaught on Mike during the weeks-long cruise of the *Anna M* from Genoa to Los Angeles. Mike's long-estranged wife and their retarded daughter are killed by a careless driver under most peculiar—and also not very credible—circumstances. The police cannot identify the driver, but Mike eventually does. With murder in his heart, Mike boards the ship along with his unsuspecting target and a number of peculiar characters. And so we go sailing along... The narrative is somewhat redeemed by effectiveness in portraying those characters—for example, one which parodies a mystery writer.

Every bibliographic bone in my body is frustrated by lack of information concerning Elizabeth Atwood Taylor. Her debut, *The Cable Car Murder* (St. Martin's, \$11.95), is before me, but it doesn't respond to the irresistible assumption of a relationship to Phoebe Atwood Taylor. The author is said to have been "introduced to murder fiction at an early age by her mother and aunts." And her dedication is "To the Atwood sisters: Stella Margaret, and in memory of Lib."

Where's Phoebe in all this? The double match in names can't be a coincidence—can it? Anyway, this is an agreeably fresh novel, set in San Francisco, in which Maggie Elliott (who is weaning herself from grief, alcohol, and cigarettes, in that order) and an ex-policeman keep poking about in the matter of her wealthy step-sister's accidental death under a cable car one Christmas. Two years have passed, another accidental death has intervened, and still they question, somehow convinced there haven't been any accidents. Intriguing characterizations throughout.

The latest of Collin Wilcox's novels about Lt. Frank Hastings of the San Francisco police is *Stalking Horse* (Random, \$10.50). It's a bit more grim than most of the series, more reminiscent of Ross Macdonald in its exploration of tortured family relationships. Senator Donald Ryan of California is fabulously rich and the power behind the White House. Neither of these facts shield him from a heart attack or life-threatening letters, about which the public must not learn. So with both hands tied behind his back and a muzzle on his face, Hastings has to try to identify, find, and neutralize a would-be killer while keeping the fragile Senator alive. At the same time, he's trying to figure out, in his own personal life, if he should marry to get what he's now getting for free. The ending is cynical and fitting.

David Williams's fifth tale about London financial executive Mark Treasure is *Copper, Gold & Treasure* (St. Martin's, \$9.95). This is very neatly done, with a whole cast of intriguing characters, and a tricky plot which threw me off the scent entirely. A couple of long-retired military men find, when applying to the Ruyard Trust for admission to its home for retired officers, that the trust is on its last financial legs. Without a massive infusion of capital, two hundred men will go out into the street, and of course there's no hope for our Roderick

Copper and Benny Gold. At the same time, it happens that a deposed African ruler, his millions, and his family are resident in London, with Mark Treasure—at the request of the Foreign Office—seeing to it that the millions multiply suitably. Now could President Cruba be induced to contribute to the trust? Copper and Gold never thought it would lead to murder.

Put the second Nick Caine investigation by Donald Zochert, *The Man of Glass* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, \$12.95), in the loser's column. The plot fails to sustain initial interest (or fully hang together), and the catchy phrases (à la Macdonald's similes) don't make a lot of sense. Caine operates out of Denver, and an enigmatic phone call from his old espionage boss plus a corpse on his doorstep start this caper. Its roots seem to go down to action in World War II Italy and the reawakened malefactions of a traitor. A reunion of that wartime team is scheduled for Denver, and Caine's digging reveals what an ill-fated lot its members have been. And he uncovers (you should pardon the expression) a connection to the porn business.

—AJH

STATEMENT OF OPERATING MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION	
OPERATING MANAGEMENT	CIRCULATION
1. TITLE OF PUBLICATION	2. ISSUE DATES
3. NUMBER OF ISSUES PUBLISHED DURING THE YEAR	4. NUMBER OF COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUES SOLD THROUGHOUT THE YEAR
5. NUMBER OF COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUES NOT SOLD THROUGHOUT THE YEAR	6. NUMBER OF COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUES HELD BY SUBSCRIBERS AT THE END OF YEAR
7. NUMBER OF COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUES HELD BY OTHERS AT THE END OF YEAR	8. NUMBER OF COPIES OF SINGLE ISSUES HELD BY THE PUBLISHER AT THE END OF YEAR
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THE MYSTERY OF A DIAMOND ROBBERY

By Harvey Scribner

When Ellery Queen wrote his pioneering bibliography of mystery stories in book form, *The Detective Short Story: A Bibliography*, his research was so thorough that he unearthed collections in which only a single story had elements of crime, qualifying that volume for inclusion in the list.

But there were oversights, inevitably, which in no way detract from the scholarship involved in compiling such a work. Reasons for missing a book abound,

but the most understandable is a book being so scarce that no copy had been seen or reported during the period in which the research was underway.

Such a volume is *My Mysterious Clients* by Harvey Scribner, published in 1900 by The Robert Clarke Company in Cincinnati, Ohio. Neither then nor now was this Midwestern American city a hotbed of publishing, and the suspicion is that not many copies of the book were published.

The stories take place in the city of L_____ (identified only in this manner throughout the volume), which is located somewhere in Massachusetts. As the title suggests, the stories chronicle the adventures of an attorney. Not all the stories recount criminal activity, but several do.

Apart from the fact that Scribner was born in 1850, little is known of him. One further fact may be deduced from reading the story (and the remainder of the volume in which it originally appeared): he was a pretty bad writer. *My Mysterious Clients* was his only book.

—OTTO PENZLER



AT six o'clock on a January evening, in a small flat in the suburbs of London, Mrs. Clarence Hamilton, whose Christian name was Lucy, was busily arranging her dining-room for a quiet dinner party.

This room, like the others in the flat, was quite modest and unpretentious; the walls were hung with a rose-colored paper, relieved by delicate vines and leaves of gold; a silver lamp swung from the center of the ceiling, suspended by gilded chains; steel engravings, with here and there a bit of oil painting, enlivened the room; a quaint old clock rested at an elevation in one corner, with its weights and swinging pendulum exposed; a square table, covered with a snowy cloth, was laid for four; a bowl of glittering cut-glass, filled with fresh roses sleeping on a bed of ferns and sparkling with the water that had just been sprinkled upon them, smiled in the midst of an array of gleaming china and polished silver.

The little housewife looked with satisfaction upon the table and the room, and murmured to herself that everything was as complete as her heart could desire.

She had been but six months married, and was thoroughly enjoying the first triumphs of housekeeping.

Her husband, Clarence Hamilton, was the confidential agent of Goldsmith, the wealthy jeweler. He had general charge of the store, held the keys and combination to the safe, carried the jewels that were left for safe-keeping with his master to the ladies, who desired to wear them for an evening, and after the party or the opera returned them to the ponderous safe in his master's establishment.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton expected to entertain John, or, as he was universally known, Jack Diamond, and Miss Jessie Holden. Jack Diamond seemed to have been named for his occupation. He was an expert diamond cutter and skilled jeweler in the employ of Goldsmith.

Jessie Holden was an old school friend and chum of Lucy's, and affianced to Jack Diamond.

Lucy was short and plump, with light brown hair, grey eyes, round pink face, that was as animated and changeable as the light waves of the bay under the sun that is crossed by fleecy clouds.

The door-bell rang, and Miss Holden, a tall maiden, with brown hair and eyes, overflowing with life and enthusiasm, rushed into the room, embraced her friend, tore off her wraps, all the while talking like a house afire.

"I thought I never would get here. The underground train ran over a dog and was thrown off the track. A detective looking for a burglar examined everyone on the train. I didn't know but I would have to send a messenger from the Old Bailey to Clarence to come and bail me out. What a lovely tea-table! My dear, you are an artist, and your home is just perfect. I envy you every time I come here."

"My dear, you don't envy me at all. You are simply anticipating the same comforts when you and Jack set up for yourselves. You will be the mistress of just as cozy an establishment as this. You will be busy during the day putting things in order, and Jack will come home at night and smoke and talk about old Goldsmith and the customers, and we will visit and go to the Crystal Palace, and have no end of jolly times."

"What a bright prospect, if we can only make it as pleasant as it looks."

"Ah, there goes the bell, and the boys are here."

The boys were there by a considerable majority, as the cheeks of the girls attested after the first greeting. Clarence was of medium height, slight build, light haired, fair, quiet and thoughtful. Jack, tall, crisp black curls, black eyes, classic face, buoyant and full of fire and energy.

"What made you so late, my dear?"

"It is a long story. I will tell you when we get rid of this London dirt. Come, Jack, and I will introduce you to the bath-room."

In a short time the young gentlemen had made their ablutions and the little party was seated about the dinner table, Lucy presiding at the side of the silver coffee urn. While the lamb chops and the roast beef and the salads and fruits were disappearing, Clarence proceeded with the events that raised the first cloud on this happy little household.

"Stanley Douglas you know is our head bookkeeper and has under me control of the cash. Some days ago my suspicions were aroused by certain peculiar entries in the books. I said nothing, but kept a careful eye on the books and the cash and discovered this morning that he had been systematically robbing the concern and covering it up by manipulating the books." "Mercy," exclaimed the girls in one breath. "Yes, and while I was charging him with it and demanding an explanation, Goldsmith came in and immediately took in the whole situation. You know what kind of a man old Goldsmith is. I wanted him to defer any action until we could calmly consider the affair from all points. Douglas is the son of Lady Helen Douglas, the daughter of old General Cameron. Her husband always wished that his son should have a business education, and put a peremptory clause in his will to that effect. To carry out this provision of the will he came into our house. A criminal action against him would bring down the wrath of his mother and do more or less injury to the Goldsmith house. She has been scheming to advance her son to my place and seems to have a special dislike to me. I feel it every time I take her diamonds. But old Goldsmith once aroused wouldn't stop for the Queen of England. Against my protest and appeal for him to consider the situation, he sent for the police, had the young man arrested, and we have just returned from the Court, where I was required to make an affidavit charging Douglas with embezzlement."

"Oh, Clarence!" exclaimed Lucy, and her face assumed the hue of the table cloth. "Now, don't you go to getting scared, my dear," interrupted Jack. "Clarence has Goldsmith at his back, a clear case against this little thief, and, above all, Justice and right and the Courts of England will take care of him. If Stanley Douglas has committed a crime he should be punished for it if he is the son of Lady Helen Douglas. I admire old Goldsmith for his promptness and decision."

"That is all very well, Jack, but I am not a going to get rid of Lady Helen without the biggest kind of a tussle. She is the daughter of General Cameron. In his early life he was a smuggler and became a pirate. At the battle of Waterloo he distinguished himself by reckless dare devil bravery and King George Knighted him and created him Lord of D—. The fact that he was a Lord and she is a Lady does not change her disposition in the least. Her mother was a Spaniard, and she has the piratical Armada blood in her that will stop at nothing. We met her when we were coming from the Justice office. She was in a cab with her attorney, coming no doubt to bail her son. Her face turned purple when she saw me."

"And you have got to meet that monster tonight?"

"Yes, I am due there with the celebrated diamonds in forty minutes," said Clarence, looking at his watch, and then reaching into his inside pocket, produced a leather case; opened

it and held up to the gaze of the ladies a string of glittering stones. They could not restrain an exclamation of delight at the sight of the waving mass of iridescent flashing gems.

"How many are there, Clarence?"

"One hundred, each worth Two Hundred Pounds. They are set in tiny little cups attached to what is called the barrel chain, a gold chain, the tiny links of which are delicate little barrels."

Rolling up the necklace in some tissue paper he replaced it in the case and in his pocket. Just as the party were arising from the table, Mary, who was the cook and first and second girl, announced to Clarence that his cab was waiting for him.

"You folks amuse yourselves until I return, which will be about 8:20," said Clarence, having ensconced himself in his overcoat left the flat and entered his cab.

II

The cabman, a trusted man employed for this special business, cracked his whip and started his horses on the route in the direction of the mansion of the Lady Helen. In about twenty minutes the cab drove up to the gates of its destination, which were opened, and the next moment Clarence hurried with a palpitating heart up the broad steps of the mansion. A servant introduced him into a small reception room just off the main hall. After waiting a few moments the Lady Helen appeared in full dress. She was a large woman with a good figure, barring a tendency to stoutness. Silky hair, black as the raven and eyes equally black, contrasted vividly with a skin white as marble. Her features were regular and of an Italian cast. A tiara of diamonds flashed in her dark hair above her broad, low forehead. A bunch of wood violets rested in the lace that covered her bosom. Her dress was a magnificent combination of silk, satin and embroidery. "Good evening, Mr. Hamilton." "Good evening, Lady Helen. Here are the diamonds and here is the receipt." Lady Helen took the receipt, sat down to a writing desk and signing it handed it back to Clarence, about as cold and stately as usual. A stranger would not have suspected that she would have taken pleasure in annihilating him where he stood.

"For reasons you will readily understand, I shall return from the opera a little earlier than usual this evening. Please be here at half-past ten." Clarence took his departure and was speedily carried by his faithful cabman back to the little flat, where his friends besieged him with questions as to the manner of My Lady, and finally as to her dress. The only thing Clarence could remember about her dress was the tiara of diamonds and the wood violets.

"Clarence, you don't mean to say that the diamonds and the violets constituted her entire outfit?"

"Why, that's scandalous, Clarence."

Poor Clarence made a heroic effort, but in vain, to recall the background, the beads and filigree of the corsage and the colors and material of the skirt and sweeping train. He had only a dim recollection of rustling silks, the colors of which were hopelessly lost and confused, surmounted by an ivory neck and classic head.

"By the way, she comes home early from the opera tonight, and I am to go for the diamonds at 10:30."

"Well, then," said Lucy, "Jack and Jessie shall stay with me until you get back. Half after eleven will not be late for them to stay. Jack can sit here and smoke, and Jessie and I will visit." The table being arranged, the party sat down for a game of whist.

At ten o'clock Mary announced that the cab was waiting and a snow-storm in progress. Clarence put on his overcoat, and assuring his friends he would return before eleven, took his departure. As Lucy had suggested, the two ladies visited and Jack smoked and amused himself going through Clarence's library.

Eleven o'clock struck, and Lucy went to the window, pressed her face close to the glass and looked along the row of yellow gas-lights through the flying snow up the street.

"Clarence ought to be here. His cab is not even in sight."

"He will be here pretty soon. My Lady may not have left the theater as soon as she expected, or she may have detained him," her friend suggested.

"Yes, of course, he will come along all right; but I cannot help feeling anxious, and will be so until he gets here."

The conversation ran along in desultory channels until the half-hour struck. At the same moment a cab drove rapidly to the front of the house and stopped, followed by a sharp ring of the door-bell. Lucy, looking out of the window, exclaimed: "It's Clarence's cab, and he will be right up." The door opened and Clarence entered, whiter than a sheet and the image of terror and despair.

With one voice his friends asked him what was the matter. "Robbed! robbed!" "What, the diamonds?" "Yes, that glorious necklace, trusted by Goldsmith to me as he would trust them to no one else, was taken from me by a trick that any clodhopper would have foiled."

Lucy, who was now as pale as Clarence, exclaimed: "Oh, Clare, we are ruined!"

"You are not any such thing," Jack exclaimed, energetically. "Let us hear how this thing happened, and then we will know what to do. This is no time to talk about being ruined. The game has just begun. Tell us all about it, Clarence."

"You know when I left you there was quite a flurry of snow. When I arrived at the Douglas mansion it was a perfect storm. I knew the lady was there, for I saw her cab going to the stable. Notwithstanding that, she kept me waiting in the little anteroom about ten minutes. At last she came, handed me the jewel-case, which I opened, saw the jewels were safe inside, and handed her her receipt. She made some remark about the storm, bid me good-night, and in a minute I was running down the steps through the blinding snow. A footman stood at the side of the cab, holding the door open for me. I jumped in, holding fast to the jewel-case. The door was slammed to, and we rolled down the drive and out of the gates. We had gone about a quarter of a mile when the cab stopped, the door was opened, and a man in a mask poked a revolver into my face. My own revolver was in my hand, and while I was in the act of raising it he gave me a terrific blow on the head, that knocked me senseless. When I came to I found myself lying in the snow, against a fence. I immediately searched my pockets. Of course the diamonds were gone, but my watch, money and everything else was intact. I hurried as fast as I could back to Lady Helen's mansion. I found the gates open, and my cab, with Tom on the box, waiting under the *porte cocherie*. Tom seemed to be surprised to see me coming up the driveway. I said: 'Tom, how did you come to let those fellows stop you?' He said: 'I don't understand you, sir. One of Her Ladyship's servants told me that you would be detained, and that I could drive over to the Queen's Arms, where I could get a glass of grog and be sheltered from the storm, and return in a half-hour. I thought it was strange, knowing how particular you were in this business; but when he handed me some change to buy the liquor with, it seemed there was nothing else for me to do but to drive over to the Queen's Arms, which I did, and have just returned.' The whole scheme was as clear as day. The robbers had replaced my cab with their own, set the trap, and I, like some dumb animal, had deliberately walked into it."

"Did you inform Lady Helen?" Jack inquired.

"No. My first impulse was to tell her and inform the police. After a little reflection, I concluded to drive back here, consult you, and then decide on a plan of action."

"Good boy," Jack responded. "No one knows of this robbery but us four and the robbers. We can quietly lay our plans and recover the diamonds and no one will ever know of it."

"What is the object of keeping it a secret; do you not propose to expose and punish the robbers?" Jessie inquired.

"No, my dear little girl, and for this reason, the exposure and arrest of the culprits means that Goldsmith will learn that Clarence permitted himself to be outwitted by a diamond thief, and no matter how blameless Clarence may have been, he will never trust him again to carry jewels to his patrons. If he discovers this night's work, Clarence loses his position as confidential agent, which is quite valuable and promising, and more than all that, the publicity of an affair

of this kind, the charges that will be made by the guilty parties to shield themselves, and his being mixed up with a diamond robbery, will destroy his future prospects."

Lucy said very decidedly that she would a great deal rather Clarence would report the theft to the police and Mr. Goldsmith, let the consequence be what they would. "Supposing that you should fail to locate the thief and recover the diamonds? Mr. Goldsmith will wish to know, why this silence? Why this delay in reporting this enormous robbery? Suspicion will fall on Clarence. He will not only lose his position, but his good name and perhaps worse may befall him."

"I appreciate the force of your argument," Jack replied, "but if Clarence will take my advice and rely on me, I am sure I can bring him through this all right, save him both his honor and his position."

"What do you propose to do?" Jessie demanded.

"I have not a particle of doubt but the Lady Helen Douglas is at the bottom of this whole business. The affidavit made by Clarence against her son furnishes the motive. She has the disposition and character to carry out an enterprise of this kind. She detained Clarence ten minutes. What for? To enable the cabman to get out of the way and to be replaced by another employed by her. One of her servants lures Clarence's cabman away, one of her servants holds the door of the cab of the robbers open, while Clarence enters to lessen the chances of discovery. All these things show us as conclusively as if she had confessed that she is the guilty party. If we raise a hue and cry, she will declare at once that a job was put up by Clarence to rob himself. Her servants will sustain her. In fact, it is evident to me that she expects him to make an outcry. That is a part of her scheme and for the purpose of placing Clarence behind the bars with her son. When you have discovered your enemy's scheme, the thing to do is not to help it on but to baffle it. As long as we keep silent, she must keep silent too. She dare not move until we do. If she does, she must explain how she knows there was a robbery. If you will leave this matter in my hands, I promise you to checkmate her."

"I think you are right, Jack," Clarence replied, "but what do you propose to do?"

"First, I will go now and see David Carew. He is the best detective on the force. I have a plan in my mind which I want to submit to him. If he can propose no better one, we will at once commence to work this one out, and I promise you that you shall have the diamonds inside of forty-eight hours. This is Monday, nearly Tuesday morning. You shall have the diamonds by Thursday evening at the farthest. You take Jessie home in the cab. I will go with you as far as the Ninth Police Station, where you can drop me, and where I can probably find Carew. By the time you get back, we will have our plans formulated and will discuss them with you."

"The risk is something tremendous, but I believe that I will take it," said Clarence, taking Jack's hand, "there is something in your assurance that inspires me with confidence. Old fellow, do your best, and whatever the result, I will not question the wisdom of your decision."

Lucy shook her head and still insisted that concealment was a risk too fearful to assume.

III

The two young gentlemen bundled Jessie into the cab and were driven rapidly to the Ninth Station, where Jack left them. Jack wound his way up the stairs of the police station and presently found himself in a small dingy room lighted by a lamp, in the presence of a short, thick-set man, with a bull-dog face, grey, stubby mustache, and heavy, overhanging eyebrows. As soon as Jack had stated the main facts of the case, the detective struck a bell, which was answered by an old man in a faded police uniform. He rapidly wrote a short note, which he enclosed and sealed up in an envelope and said, "Take this to the Alhambra and give it to Sergeant Hicks. Wait for an answer."

After the supernumerary had disappeared, Jack proceeded with his story, wondering what

the Alhambra, a celebrated gambling-house, had to do with this case. The Alhambra was not far away, and in the course of about twenty minutes the messenger returned and delivered a note to the detective, which he immediately opened and read. Looking up, he said, "It is just as I thought. Lord Drumly is the man the Lady Helen procured to assist in this robbery. He is her brother. She would not risk twenty thousand pounds worth of diamonds with anyone else. He is a gambler in desperate straits, an adventurer, but her brother. Hicks writes me that he left the Alhambra at ten o'clock and returned at 11:30, and is there now. He was absent at the very time this robbery was committed, and in my judgment he is the man who committed it. He may have the jewels on his person; if so, we could waylay him and make him give them up. The chances are that he has them concealed somewhere. The thing to do is to shadow him until we know he has them, and then take the necessary measures to make him disgorge. I believe we can effect a recovery without any publicity and save your friend his position. Hicks will keep him in view until tomorrow, when I will place a man on him, who will stay by him and who is equal to any emergency."

When Clarence arrived, Carew cross-examined him closely, eliciting all the details of the robbery, which only confirmed his previous opinion. It was two o'clock when the two friends bid the detective good morning and proceeded to their homes.

IV

Before they fell asleep and at breakfast next morning, Lucy continued to express her regrets at the course to which her husband had committed himself, expressing the darkest forebodings. Clarence parried her argument as best he could, suggesting that it was but a choice of evils. That an announcement that he had been robbed would compel him at once to defend himself against the charge of committing the robbery himself, which the Lady Helen would surely make, and which she had planned to make. If he took that course, he would have to meet that charge, and would certainly lose his position and perhaps his credit. If he succeeded in carrying out his present plan, he might save both.

"I think," said his wife, "that you are too easily influenced by Jack. You jump at his proposal and refuse to listen to your wife. He took this whole business with entirely too much composure to suit me."

"Merciful heavens, you don't mean to say, Lucy, that you suspect Jack?"

"No, not of stealing the necklace, though twenty thousand pounds worth of diamonds would tempt many a fair-appearing man. But that is not what I mean. Jack is next in succession to you. He is very ambitious, expects soon to be married, and if you should lose your place he would profit by it. I thought he seemed very little disturbed by the news which simply paralyzed all the rest of us."

"My dear wife, you do one of the bravest, kindest, noblest fellows in the world a grave injustice. If there is any person in this world I know and know thoroughly, it is Jack Diamond. I would trust him with my life."

"You have already trusted him with your honor, which is more valuable."

Clarence took up his daily duties at the store, full of anxiety and impatient for news from the detective. His conscience gave him a twist when he greeted his employer, and he wished from the bottom of his soul that he had taken his wife's advice and made a clean breast of the whole business at the very commencement. Early in the morning he received a note from Carew, saying that Lord Drumly had left Dover by an early boat for Paris, and that the faithful Hicks was on the same conveyance. In the evening he received another message that Drumly was stopping at the La Trapp, a modest hotel in the vicinity of the Palais Royal and some of the richest jewelry establishments in Paris. Everything indicated that Jack and Carew were on the right scent and that the game would soon be driven to bay.

At about eleven the next morning, Clarence, in response to a message from Carew, drove in a cab to the Ninth Station and was soon closeted with the grey and stubby detective. Carew

looked at him gravely, and finally said: "Mr. Hamilton, where do you think Diamond stands in this game?"

"I would as soon suspect my father."

"I am glad to hear you say so. I have some information which made me consider it necessary to set a watch on him. I am inclined to agree with you that he is all right, and what I have done is out of an abundance of caution. In the meantime be careful what you say to him. It is no advantage to us at this time to have him know what is going forward."

Clarence recalled the dark hints of his wife, and the bare possibility that Jack had conspired for his ruin, sickened him. He drove the suggestion from his mind and reiterated his unswerving confidence in his friend.

On Thursday morning, when Clarence arrived at the store, a messenger was awaiting him with a formal note from the Lady Helen, saying that she expected to attend the theater that evening, and she would be obliged if he would bring her diamonds to her house at a quarter to eight. A postscript was added—"The messenger will wait for an answer."

Clarence felt the blood rushing into his face and filling his eyes. He kept his gaze fixed on the note to collect his thoughts. Lady Helen's familiar hand-writing seemed to take the hue of crimson. The warning of his wife rang in his ears—"Both position and honor lost." At length he recovered himself, and requesting the messenger to wait for him he hastened into the shop, where he found Jack in his shirt sleeves, busy at some gold filagree work.

"The game is up, Jack. Read that."

Jack read the note, and was plunged for a moment in serious reflection. Looking up at length he said: "The time is short, but we can have the diamonds here in time for my lady."

"Jack, you have led me to the edge of the precipice. This is no time to talk of impossibilities. How are we to have the diamonds here this evening, when, according to your theory, they are in the possession of a thief in the City of Paris?"

"I am absolutely certain that Drumly has the diamonds in his possession. Cable your detective to take them from him, if necessary, by force."

"That is a very easy thing to say. Suppose Drumly knocks the detective down or has him arrested?"

"Hicks is an extremely shrewd and capable man and a first-class detective. If Carew wires him to have the diamonds here this evening, without fail, he may be knocked down and arrested, but you may depend upon it the jewels will come just the same. Now, Clarence, you have followed my advice and Carew's up to this time. Everything indicates that our judgment is right. If worst comes to worst, we can arrest Drumly and put your name beyond reproach. I do not want to do that. I believe the original scheme will win yet. Write an answer to that note that you will bring the diamonds at the time requested."

"My God, Jack, where will that leave me if we fail?"

"We'll not fail. Write the note, and I'll move heaven and earth, but the diamonds will be forthcoming this evening. Here is a pen, and here is paper. We have no time to lose. Write the note, and I will order a cab."

Clarence, with many misgivings, wrote the Lady Helen that he would deliver her diamonds at her house at 7:45 that evening, in accordance with her request, and gave it to the messenger.

The two young men rolled rapidly in a cab in the direction of the Ninth Station. Clarence was nervous, downcast and blue. Jack was cool and collected, and never for a moment ceased protesting to his friend that everything was coming out all right.

As they entered the room of Carew, he held up a telegram with a smile. "Fortune favors the brave. Hicks wires me that he has the diamonds and will leave Paris in time to reach Victoria Bridge at 7 this evening. At 7:30 he will deliver the jewels to you at your house."

This statement of the detective unbarred the gates of Paradise to Clarence. The clouds that threatened his happy home were breaking, and the pleasant prospect, that had been so rudely interrupted, commenced to resume its accustomed outline and lively colors. Jack

slapped him on the back, saying, "What did I tell you, old man? You see I was right. Everything is coming out exactly as I predicted. You will deliver the diamonds to my lady this evening, and Goldsmith will never know the difference."

"Yes," replied Clarence, "I believe you, but I will not consider myself out of the woods until I hold those diamonds in my hand."

"That is right. Hicks is a pretty safe man, but it is a long ways from Paris here, and Lord Drumly is a desperate character and will not give up the struggle without an effort to regain the spoils," remarked the detective.

Clarence recalled this suggestion many times as he returned home and muttered to himself, "Drumly is a desperate character, and like as not will steal the jewels from Hicks. May kill him, perhaps, who knows, and throw his body in the channel. Murders are committed every day for smaller prizes than this."

V

At seven o'clock in the evening of the day of the events narrated in the previous chapter, when the shadows had fallen, Lucy, nervous as a witch, her whole frame trembling with anxiety and trepidation, trimmed and lighted the silver lamp that swung from its golden cords. The yellow light diffused over the rose-colored walls, disclosing the old-fashioned furniture and bric-a-brac, made an heroic but vain effort to drive away the atmosphere of impending doom that seemed to have an existence of its own in this sweet little home. The quaint old clock ticked solemnly and in ominous warning, that in a few short minutes, in a brief half hour, the fate of this once happy domestic establishment would be decided. Lucy touched the bell, and when her servant appeared said, "Mary, you need not set on the dinner until half past eight," and murmured to herself, "By that time we will know the worst."

Clarence came into the room looking wearied and anxious. "Well, my dear, in twenty minutes more Hicks will reach Victoria Station; in ten minutes more he will arrive here, and if no mishap has befallen him I will take the diamonds to My Lady, and this agony will be over."

"If no mishap befalls him; but suppose some mishap does befall him and he fails to produce those jewels?"

"When the crisis comes we will take our bearings and meet it the best we can."

"If you had only told the truth to Goldsmith in the first place and had that villain arrested."

"Yes, and lost my position?"

"You would at least have saved your honor. Now all may be lost."

"Wait a little, Chickie, I have faith in Jack's judgment that we have acted for the best, and it will all come out right yet. There he comes now." And Mary ushered in Jack and his beautiful fiancée. Jessie looked pensive and anxious, but hopeful. Jack's eyes sparkled, and his face was animated with the anticipation of a coming triumph and exciting dénouement.

"Clarence, old boy, in a few minutes we will have that scoundrel under our feet."

"But suppose Hicks fails us. If, in some manner, those jewels get away from him, what are we going to do?"

"In that case I think I have a coupe to meet the emergency. I have not led you into this course on any uncertainty. I have a card to flash at the last minute that will surprise them and you. Keep a stiff upper lip, old fellow. We will eat the jolliest supper here tonight that this Boffin bower ever witnessed, won't we, Jessie?" With which he clasped the young lady's waist and imprinted a hearty kiss upon her cheek.

"You would put a soul under the ribs of death," Clarence responded, completely revived by the vivacity of his friend. Jack took from underneath his coat a perfect copy of the familiar jewel case that had been stolen and laid it on the piano.

"Empty is the cradle," said Clarence, "baby is dead."

"In a few minutes the cradle will contain a bright and sparkling little infant," responded Jack.

The clock indicated 7:37, when the door-bell startled the little company, and Mary brought in two sealed envelopes, one of which was evidently a telegram, the other bore the seal of Lady Helen Douglas. Clarence hastily opened the dispatch and read:

Victoria Bridge, 7:30 P.M.

Clarence Hamilton:

Jewels stolen from Hicks on boat.
Must arrest D. tonight. He will be at your house with Lady Helen in a few minutes. Detain them until I arrive. I go for the warrant.

CAREW.

"After all we have gone through, the game seems to be up, Jack."

"Read the other note," said Jack, hoarsely.

Clarence opened it and read:

Mr. Hamilton:

I have concluded to save you the trouble of bringing me my jewels this evening. I will call at your house for them on my way to the opera. Please have them ready. My brother will accompany me.

HELEN DOUGLAS.

"Now, Jack, the time has arrived for you to play the last card. If you have succeeded in ruining this family everything is over between you and me," remarked Jessie, with rising excitement.

"Polly, put the kettle on, and never say die," responded Jack, his eyes dancing with the excitement of the promised interview, and continuing, "You forget that the diamonds were taken from Drumly by Hicks. We have positive evidence of his guilt. The game is still in our hands." The bell rang again. "There they are."

The ladies were in an agony of suspense. Clarence, as feverish as the gambler who watches the last throw of the dice that is to settle his fate, nerved himself for the meeting; while Jack maintained the same serene confidence that seemed to have sustained him from the start.

The Lady Helen, brilliant in evening dress, swept into the room, followed by Lord Drumly. She wore a look of triumph that caused at least three of the party the worst foreboding. Lord Drumly was considerably the worse for wear, but still bore an expression of having at least been successful in a hard-fought battle.

Lady Helen commenced without any preliminaries, "I expect to entertain some friends in my box this evening, and in order to get there a little earlier than usual and to save any delay, I concluded to call here for my diamonds. If you have them ready I will sign the receipt and take them."

Her large lustrous eyes rested inquiringly on poor Clarence, who looked as though he was about to receive his death sentence. Jack here interposed, "Clarence, give the Lady her receipt to sign and I will get the diamonds."

Clarence, with trembling hands, produced from his pocket a printed form of a receipt, while Jack pushed an escritoir, furnished with pen and ink, over to the Lady Helen, who had seated herself upon a sofa. The Lady, taking a pen in her hand, looked up at Jack and inquired, "Where are the diamonds?"

"When you sign the receipt the diamonds will be delivered to you," Jack remarked quietly.

"I certainly will not deliver the receipt until I receive the diamonds."

"Why do you say that, Madam? Have you any doubt that Mr. Hamilton is prepared to give you the diamonds?"

"Whether she has any doubt or not," interrupted Lord Drumly, "does not concern you in the least. Sign the receipt, My Lady, and I will see that you get the jewels before it is delivered."

While the Lady signed the receipt, Carew quietly entered the room. She held it up between her fingers, addressing Jack said, "You seem to have taken charge of this affair, now give me my diamonds."

Jack stepped to the piano, picked up the jewel case, and advanced until he stood immediately in front of Lady Helen and her brother. A scornful smile curled her lips, and she could not restrain herself from exclaiming sarcastically, "Of course my diamonds are in that case."

"Yes, Madam, surprising as that may seem to you, your diamonds are in this case, where they have been ever since the last time you wore them. You and your brother have played your infamous game to the end, and I am glad to say you have lost." With that he opened the case and held up to the view of the astonished spectators a string of glittering stones, a hundred dew drops shimmering and flashing a thousand lights, the veritable diamonds of the Lady Helen Douglas. Lucy and Jessie uttered an exclamation of delight. Clarence rubbed his eyes to be sure he was awake. Lady Helen and her brother looked at each other dumb with amazement. Lord Drumly involuntarily placed his hand on his inside coat pocket. Jack caught him by the shoulder, saying, "You d—d scoundrel, there is an officer here with a warrant for your arrest. Produce those diamonds you have stolen or he will take you this minute to the nearest station."

Carew here took a hand. "I have authority here to search him; if he refuses to deliver them, I will use the necessary force to take them from him."

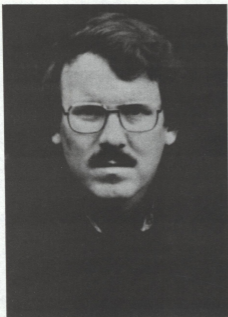
Drumly, with a very bad grace, produced a jewel case, which Jack received and opened, and another string of jewels appeared upon the scene. If the party was astonished before, now they were simply paralyzed. They looked at one another, at the two strings of jewels and at Jack, and waited breathlessly for an explanation.

"These jewels," said Jack, "are simply an imitation of the others. You thought you had stolen the real thing, when in reality you got nothing but paste. I could have ended this game long ago by simply producing the genuine article and permitting the thief to discover at his leisure the worthlessness of his booty, but I determined to unmask an unmitigated scoundrel and hold him and his lovely sister hereafter at my mercy. Now, Madam, if you want to wear your diamonds to the opera, you can have them when you give me the receipt."

The Lady Helen arose, and, with her dark eyes filled with scorn and suppressed passion, said, "It is unnecessary to say to you that I will not go to the opera and will not wear those diamonds tonight. You have taken special pains and made an extraordinary effort to disgrace and humiliate me. The next time you and I cross each other, you will need something more than paste diamonds to save you. He laughs best who laughs last." Then taking her brother's arm the two marched with injured dignity down the stairs, but not soon enough to escape the reply of Jack, "Do not forget that I have in my possession indisputable evidence that you are a couple of highway robbers."

As the door closed on the departing couple, Jessie threw her arms about her lover and gave him an embrace that a bear would have envied, while Clarence received congratulations from his dear Lucy.

And sure enough, they celebrated that evening with the jolliest supper that this Boffins' bower had ever witnessed, while Jack related how he had spent his idle hours in making the paste imitation of the celebrated diamonds. When he met My Lady at the Police Station he saw there was danger ahead for Clarence, and, believing that it would take the direction of the necklace, had secretly substituted the false for the real gems. □



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Interview with Stephen Greenleaf

By Thomas Chastain

SG = Stephen Greenleaf TC = Thomas Chastain

TC: Before we begin the interview, would you please give some of your personal background—before you began writing your books—to the readers of TAD.

SG: I was born in Washington, D.C. in 1942 and grew up in Centerville, Iowa. I graduated from Centerville High School in 1960, from Carlton

College as a history major in 1964, and from the University of California Berkeley Law School in 1967. I was then in the U.S. Army for two years. After that I practiced law in Portland, Oregon for a year and then in Monterey and San Francisco, California. I moved back to Iowa in 1976. My father was a lawyer and business executive, and both my grandfathers were lawyers.

TC: Now let's talk about your novels. The first one was *Grave Error*, published in 1979. How long did it take you to write it, and how did you go about getting it published?

SG: It took me a year to write, and at that time it was done of course entirely on speculation. I knew nothing about publishing and knew no one in the publishing business. Only that I liked this kind of book and thought I would try my hand at it. In the meantime, I studied for and took the Iowa Bar examination and started looking for a job practicing law somewhere. As things turned out, I was literally a week away from accepting a position with the legal services program in Des Moines when Dial Press called and told me they would like to publish the book.

TC: How did the manuscript get to Dial?

SG: When I finished the book, I started sending it out to publishers by myself. It went to approximately seven or eight, I believe, and was rejected by them. But not all were form rejections. Some were encouraging letters, including the very first one I sent it to, Norton. Encouraging letters like that were enough so I thought there was still a chance that something might happen with the book. It took almost a year, really, before Dial called and told me that they would publish it. I sent it to Dial without knowing anyone there. Dial pulled it out of the slush pile, as it's known. I had no contact there at all. In fact, I didn't even know who the fiction editor was or anything else. I just sent it to the fiction department at Dial Press, and a girl who is not there any more—Sosha Wagner—was the first reader of the book, and she called me, so I owe her a great deal for weeding me out of what I know now is a very high pile of unsolicited manuscripts.

TC: What happened then?

SG: When the novel was accepted, I gave my regrets to the legal services program and did the second draft of *Grave Error*, polished it up and made some changes that I wanted to make. A couple of years later, I saw in Iowa City teaching a course at the law school which helped me financially and in other ways too, but basically, since that time I have been writing

full time and today we live in Ashland, Oregon, and I do write full time.

TC: That brings us to your second novel, *Death Bed*. Tell us about it, please.

SG: I believe I started *Death Bed* in the middle of 1978, and it too took a little more than a year—as I recall, maybe fourteen months approximately. It was published in 1980, and I did begin a third novel immediately after *Death Bed*.

TC: That would be *State's Evidence*, right?

SG: Yes, *State's Evidence*. It took me about ten or eleven months to write, and, after I completed it, virtually immediately afterward—approximately April of last year—we fixed up our house and packed up our belongings and moved halfway across the country. I have just finished a fourth novel in the series. The tentative title is *Family Tree*. But my titles haven't fared real well. Two of the three have been changed at some point, so I wouldn't guarantee it. *Death Bed* is the only title that's mine.

TC: Which writers do you think most influenced your work?

SG: Hammett, and probably more so Chandler, certainly influenced my work. There's no question about it. Except possibly for some of the short stories that are more recently in print, I think I've read everything they've both written more than once. There's no question my initial enthusiasm for this form was created by those gentlemen and Ross Macdonald as well, which we'll talk about later. But one of the things I feel strongly is that the so-called hard-boiled detective novel is an American art form as valuable to us as jazz or some of the other peculiarly American art forms, and I thought I would take a shot at seeing to it that the form continued at the level which these gentlemen and a few others began it.

TC: How about current writers who have influenced you?

SG: Ross Macdonald, partially because of the number of his books, partially because he is a more current writer, partially because of the California setting, which the others have as well but he develops a little more. Probably he is the more definite influence on my work, although strangely I think possibly my style is more like Chandler's in a sense than Macdonald's. But in terms of hours spent, I have probably read a lot more Ross Macdonald than the other two.

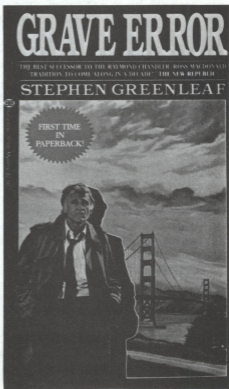
TC: Your novels seem to me to have much more of the complexity of a Ross Macdonald than of a

Chandler or Hammett book. Would you care to comment on that?

SG: I find plotting very difficult. I do not offer myself as a master of plotting in any sense of the word, and I try to get whatever help I can. I certainly have studied Macdonald's plots, and I don't think my plots are as complex as his in some respects. I think sometimes his plots are too complex for my pleasure and detract from some of the characterization. I think you can overdo plotting. I still feel uncomfortable with plotting. I don't feel confident about it. I'm not able to develop a plot in an outline ahead of time. I figure things out as I go along, and I am always quite insecure about the way the book is developing as I'm writing it.

TC: Are there any other writers you feel have influenced your work?

SG: I would have to say Erle Stanley Gardner, even though he's somewhat out of fashion perhaps these days. He's the first one I read. I read Perry Mason



when I was in the fifth grade, and I gleefully took a paperback copy to school to show how advanced I was by reading books with words like "hell" and "damn" in them and was immediately sent home from school with my book and told not to bring it back again. But certainly Gardner as a storyteller is second to none, and his quantity of output obviously is also second to none, so he would be on the list.

TC: Any others?

SG: A current writer I admire a lot and who I've used as an example of the value of the light touch and the humorous touch at times in a book is the writer Ross Thomas. I think he's one of the finest—both stylist and craftsman—writing today, and I certainly read his books as rapidly as I can get hold of them. He hasn't written a series of the private eye type except briefly. I think he's certainly one of the finest writers around.

TC: I'd be interested in hearing about your work habits when you're writing a book.

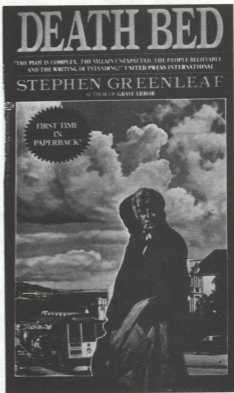
SG: I think my work habits are nothing unusual. I work mostly in the mornings. I write in longhand in spiral notebooks through the first draft, although I think with *State's Evidence* I wrote in longhand and then typed it up immediately rather than waiting until the entire book was done. I feel I compose much better in longhand than at the typewriter. While I'm writing the first draft, if I can work four hours a day then I feel real good about it.

TC: Since you have a legal background, did you ever perhaps consider making your protagonist a lawyer instead of a private eye?

SG: Well, I thought of that, of course, and I think probably I've taken some criticism for writing just another private eye novel which I might have avoided by simply having him be a lawyer instead of a private eye. I made a decision that unless there was going to be a meaningful reason to have the man a lawyer I didn't want to do it. And I didn't want to make these books overly legal.

TC: Actually, your style of writing fits the private eye genre perfectly.

SG: Well, I like the style. It is like Macdonald's and Chandler's, perhaps, but it's not that I sit down and say, How can I make my book like theirs? Rather, there is something about the style which really creates vibrations, if that's the word, within me. I mean I was attracted to it when I first started reading it. I find that particular line of books—the Chandler, Hammett, Macdonald line—to be almost therapeutic in the effect it had on me. I think I absorbed that style without really knowing it and without really trying to write like these people.



TC: Do you do much rewriting of your books?

SG: I do a lot of rewriting. My basic procedure is a first draft because I don't have a new plot developed and it is very sketchy in parts. That usually takes about six months. Then when that's completed, I generally know what I want the book to be about, just purely in plot terms. Then I go back and do a second draft, fill in the gaps and throw some writing out, add some other things that fit with the plot as I've then decided upon it. Then I go back and do a third draft which is primarily a stylistic review. After that, I usually look at it for a fourth time.

TC: I think the care you take with your writing shows in the published books.

SG: Thank you. I try to cut a great deal. I think probably few writers cut as much as they should. One of the things I always heard about Hemingway was he was ruthless with his own prose, that he threw a great deal of his work away or cut it from the books and that he was very serious and ruthless about what fit and what didn't.

TC: Would you tell us what else you like about the form?

SG: Another important thing about private eye fiction of course is the freedom. You can take your detective almost anywhere. You can have him observe, talk to, encounter, shoot, be beaten up, and you can comment on whatever in society there is you happen to want to make a comment on. It's a very free form in a way, although it has limitations in other ways. Still, you can have him go almost anywhere and have a valid encounter, with a prostitute, or a bag person on the corner, or a corporate executive, and anything in between, and say whatever it is you have to say about it.

TC: Do you spend much time thinking about the names you give to characters in your books?

SG: I think my primary focus on names is there are certain names that just don't fit with certain kinds of people. As a reader I'm always annoyed when someone has a name that I stumble over when I read it in a book. People have complicated names in life, but I don't understand why writers use them in books when a reader can't pronounce them right or has to stumble over them. It jerks you out of the rhythm of the prose. So I try to avoid that. Prose rhythms are important to me. I think a sentence and a paragraph, and even a book for that matter, should have a natural kind of rhythm of its own, words and names included.

TC: Have you given any thought to where the private eye novel ought to go in the future, in the sense of breaking new ground?

SG: Well, I have given some thought to it. I guess my problem would be to decide what would be a meaningful departure or step forward and what is just something that really doesn't matter. That's a hard decision for me to make. I was reading Chandler's letters not long ago, and I think he considered one time writing a Marlowe book that didn't have any mystery in it. That's something I have thought of, but I'm not sure that really is a very meaningful thing to do. I mean, if you want to write a domestic novel, it's maybe just a trick to use a detective as a protagonist in that novel. If you want to say something, just do it. So I haven't reached any firm conclusions. But I have thought about it.

TC: Is there anything else you'd like to mention in our discussion?

SG: As maybe a concluding remark, I would like to say one thing. I was 35 years old and well into a profession that I thought I liked, and I liked part of it very much, when I started to write without any encouragement or any thought of success. Actually, if I had known then what I know now about the odds

of getting something published, I might not have started. I wrote a book and sent it off, and I was lucky enough to have it accepted and two more books after that. So I would just like to encourage other people who may have thought that some day they'd like to write a book.

TC: I think that should encourage other writers.

SG: You don't need to have 24 hours ahead of you with nothing to do in order to write. You can write an awful lot of words in an hour or two and with perseverance, and a little luck—a lot of luck, I guess—is all it takes. And there are publishers who will read unsolicited work and publish it and back it, and the success I've had is not unique to me and can be had by others. Also, I think it's important that people who have done other things write books. I think one problem with a lot of fiction today is that the same type of people are writing it. They go to college, go to grad school, and they go to an academy and teach English and that's all they do. I would like to encourage people who have an interest in books and who have always read books and who think that someday they'd like to write a book to have that day be tomorrow, to buy a pencil and a pad of paper and sit down and start writing the great American novel. □



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S.S. Van Dine

Whether or not it is true, reputation suggests that the great American editor of the twentieth century was Maxwell Perkins, the legendary genius employed by Scribners in the years approximately between the world wars. It has become a superfluous litany to list the authors who came under his wing and flourished because of it: Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ring Lardner, Thomas Wolfe, S. S. Van Dine.

S. S. Van Dine? And how does this stilted pedant fit into that conclave of the most distinguished and influential American authors of their era? Only as an example of one of the most successful of them, or of any writers in his time.

Even allowing for the passage of a half-century and the concomitant changes in taste, Van Dine's books about Philo Vance are so hopelessly dated that it is difficult to imagine that they ever enjoyed the kind of popularity equalled in recent years only by the thrillers of Robert Ludlum. On second thought, perhaps it isn't so difficult to imagine, at that.

While there had always been a few American mystery writers whose works gained enormous popular success, such as Anna Katharine Green and Mary Roberts Rinehart, it took a Philo Vance novel to be the first detective story ever to make it to the bestseller list—an event repeated each year in which the early books in the series were published. They became a national rage, spawning a long string of movies (many of which are among the best detective films ever produced), a full-length parody by Corey Ford (one of the leading humorists of the day), board games, and so many imitators

COLLECTING Mystery Fiction

By Otto Penzler

that it became impossible to keep track of them all (the most famous and long-lived of them being Ellery Queen).

As the quality of the series diminished, so did the scope of the fad; by the time the twelfth and last of the Vance novels was published, Van Dine had died and his readership was skimpy. He once commented that no mystery author had more than six good plots in him, and he evidently attempted to prove his theory by writing twelve books, the last six of which are a lackluster group indeed, far inferior to the first six. Nevertheless, his popularity never vanished entirely, and many of today's most illustrious mystery writers, readers, and collectors point to a Vance novel as having been a huge influence on their tastes.

While the Vance character was insufferably arrogant from the first, at least the plots of the first half-dozen cases were as well constructed, baffling, and intriguing as anything ever conceived by Agatha Christie (no small achievement), with each element (excluding the endless extraneous lectures on esoteric subjects delivered by Vance at the drop of a "g") carefully and perfectly fitting into another, ultimately forming a complete picture. (Of American detective story writers, only Ellery Queen could be regarded as Van Dine's equal over a series of adventures. The early Queen was as prissy and irritating as Vance, but, when the character became more endurable, the puzzles lost some of their originality and perfect inevitability.)

When the histories of detective fiction are written, then, it is reasonable to predict that the Philo Vance novels of S. S. Van Dine will find a lofty spot on the list of the most historically significant works written by an American. For this, as well as other reasons, it is an important and exciting series to collect.

Like Charlie Chan and the mysteries of Clayton Rawson, a collection of first editions of the Philo Vance novels (Van Dine wrote no short stories about his detective) is a modest-sized shelf of books. Beginning with *The Benson Murder Case* in 1926 and concluding with the posthumous *The Winter Murder Case* in 1939, Van Dine wrote an even dozen books about his hero. The series has the added aesthetic appeal of being uniform in size and format, each volume having an

essentially black dust jacket with white lettering on the spine. All the books, furthermore, are bound in black cloth (except the bright yellow *The Gracie Allen Murder Case*, which is also the only one of the twelve to employ more than six letters to identify the particular murder case; it has the further distinction of being the worst novel in the series). While the physical appearance of the books has no special grace of style or noteworthy beauty, they are tastefully neat, for those who think about such things. And, when the twelve books stand alongside each other on a shelf, it is difficult *not* to think about such things!

Van Dine himself, no doubt, approved of the design. A literary and art critic for several publications, beginning with the *Los Angeles Times* in 1907, and later the editor of *Smart Set* and a prolific writer of scholarly articles, he aspired to writing serious fiction, producing *The Man of Promise* in 1916; it was a failure.

Suffering with a heart ailment in 1923, he was confined to bed, and, according to the often-repeated and apparently true story, he read mainly detective fiction for the next two years, amassing a library of 2,000 volumes. He decided that he could do a better job than his predecessors, resolving to aim his work at a higher level of readers—the more intelligent and better-educated.

He rapidly produced three outlines of 10,000 words each and sent them to Perkins at Scribners, who was immediately enthusiastic about them. It became Van Dine's work method to increase the outlines to about 30,000 words as a second draft—virtually complete novels lacking only the fleshing out of characters, mood, and dialogue to be complete. When the third draft of approximately 60,000 words was completed, it was submitted and published with virtually no editorial work being necessary. When Van Dine died, the third draft of *The Winter Murder Case* had just been started, and it was published in that semi-completed state.

Van Dine (the pseudonym of Willard Huntington Wright, 1888-1937) must have modeled his effete dilettante detective after himself. Both men (the real and the fictional) flourished amidst the upper levels of New York society. The author even adopted his famous pseudonym (taken from an old

family name, Van Dyne, combined with the steamship initials) so that he would not embarrass himself among his intellectual friends and associates. The detective, admittedly well informed on a wide variety of subjects, found few pleasures greater than delivering jaunty monologues on barely-related subjects while corpses piled up around him. As Ogden Nash, America's funniest poet, once wrote: "Philo Vance / Needs a kick in the pance."

While Van Dine's detective novels were enormously popular, his other books were not. (Since this column is concerned only with mystery fiction, only a brief list of his complete non-detective fiction appears at the end of this article, without illustrations or bibliographic description.)

Acquiring the Philo Vance novels is where virtually all collectors focus their energy. For anyone interested in the lost era of high society, the art deco world of New York in the 1920s and 1930s, it is a remarkable series of books and an unquestioned cornerstone for collectors of detective fiction.

There are only twelve primary titles, most of which were published in fairly large quantities in solid, well-made editions by a publisher who cared about the quality of his books at every level, from the editorial content to the most trivial production decision. The obvious virtue of well-designed and well-made books is that they hold up well to the passage of time, suggesting that it ought not to be difficult to acquire copies of all the volumes. And it's true—it is not overly difficult. It is even possible to find dust jackets for at least half the series with relative ease.

But to put together a complete set in truly fine collector's condition is another matter. As noted, the twelve books were issued with black dust jackets; no color, not even white, is as fragile. The slightest bit of rubbing or scraping removes the black ink coloring the jacket, revealing spidery lines of white where a smooth coat of black ought to be. Always, it seems, are the tips of the spines frayed, however slightly, to detract from their pristine condition and cause the finicky collector to wait for a better copy. For several of Van Dine's books, that better copy may never be found because of the fragility of the jackets. It should be remembered that the books themselves, even first editions in very good condition, are seldom difficult to find. But superb copies for the demanding collector are extremely scarce and the price difference for the two kinds of book is substantially greater than it is for most other authors.

A good (if extreme) example of a huge price range occurred in a recent catalogue in which Peter Stern listed the dedication copy of *The Greene Murder Case* at \$2,000; another copy of the same book, also inscribed by Van Dine, was also listed, at \$145; a third copy, unsigned, was listed at \$15. Each of the prices was fair and was attached to its respective book for very good reasons.

The dedication copy of a book is generally unique and of supreme importance. Most books are dedicated to only one person. To

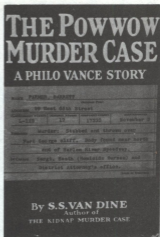
own the copy that once belonged to the dedicatee, with an inscription from the author to that person, is a rare opportunity indeed. When an author thinks so much of a person (books tend to be dedicated to parents, spouses, and closest friends, as a rule) that he dedicates a book to him, one can imagine the special moment when the book is inscribed and presented to the dedicatee. In the case cited here, Van Dine went so far as to have a special leather presentation binding made for the book before he presented it to Norbert L. Lederer.

Coincidentally, a collector attempted to sell a signed copy of *The Greene Murder Case* shortly after that catalogue was issued. He allowed that he wanted a good deal of money for his copy because of "the astronomical price" it was now fetching. When he was offered a sum comparable to the inscribed copy in that catalogue, he displayed enormous puzzlement, indicating in every way (short of calling the police) that he was convinced he was the intended victim of a thieving scoundrel. There was no way that he would part with his book (which he valued at \$2,000) for a sum commensurate with the value of the \$145 book. Selective memory may, on occasion, be used to effect if one wishes, but it should be kept in mind that *feigned* ignorance, when done as blatantly as this, is a splendid illustration of *genuine* stupidity (or worse).

For the serious collector of Philo Vance, a dedication copy, however desirable, is probably unobtainable, and inscribed copies may seldom appear, but there are other important rarities which also should be considered.

One of the most remarkable rarities of twentieth century detective fiction is *The Powwow Murder Case*. This Philo Vance title had always been assumed to be a "ghost" title (that is, a book which never existed), as are *The Linden Murder Case*, *The Mother Goose Murder Case*, *The Autumn Murder Case*, and *The Purple Murder Case*, all of which had been listed in other editions of Vance novels as being "in preparation" but were never issued, presumably undergoing title changes before publication.

A partial copy of *The Powwow Murder Case* actually exists, however, and is illustrated below. Produced as a salesman's sample, or dummy, it was issued in a cloth cover to fit into the series and had a matching dust wrapper. Although the title had been announced as "in preparation" in *The Grace Allen Murder Case* and it is logical to assume that it underwent a title change and became *The Winter Murder Case* upon publication, the fact is that the text and list of proposed chapter titles do not correspond to the last Vance novel. If more of *The Powwow Murder Case* were actually written, there is no known evidence of it. The single reported copy, sold at auction in December 1981 for \$2,500, seems to be unique, with no other copies ever offered for sale or catalogued. Whatever happened to this planned novel, how much of it was written, and why it was abandoned are all mysteries that require a good literary detective for a solution.



Like other collecting areas, a Philo Vance shelf may be expanded well beyond the basic cornerstone volumes, depending upon the energy, imagination, enthusiasm, and budget of the collector.

As occurred with Charlie Chan (and several other series detectives of the time), Philo Vance was a popular film hero. Grosset & Dunlap produced several handsome editions of the novels for his photoplay series, the volumes being illustrated with scenes from the movies and the colorful dust jackets portraying the actors who starred in the films.

Many of the novels were serialized in magazines before book publication, and, while copies of the *American* magazine, *Cosmopolitan*, *Pictorial Review*, and *Scribner's* magazine may not be easy to find in collector's condition, they are well worth the search and are not terribly expensive when unearthed. These issues enhance the stories with wonderful illustrations, typical of the era, which are not reproduced in the books.

All the movie-related esoterica and ephemera noted in previous columns apply equally to a Philo Vance collection. The colored posters and lobby cards issued for the films were often spectacular, the press books are fascinating, the scripts are important but elusive, and there is an endless supply of stills (8" x 10" glossy photographs).

Less common (and, except to scholars, perhaps, less interesting) is material related to the *Philo Vance* radio series. It first aired on NBC on July 5, 1945, as a summer replacement starring the talented and resonant-voiced José Ferrer. Although short-lived, it was a far better program than the 1948 production of the Frederic Ziv Company, which was nationally syndicated. This flaccid series, starring Jackson Beck as Vance and George Petrie as District Attorney Markham, lacked the fair-play elements of detection so important to its concept, and it quickly died. Curiously, there has never been a Philo Vance television series.

There were, however, sixteen Vance films, plus twelve shorts produced by Vitaphone and written by Van Dine himself. Vance also appeared in *Paramount on Parade* (1930) along with Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Fu Manchu, and *The President's Mystery* (1936), based on the book of that title which evolved from an idea by Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

With most collections, the basic volumes are almost assumed, or taken for granted. It is the variety and quality of esoterica and unique material that make it interesting and important, and a Philo Vance collection is not different.

Among the scarcest of Philo Vance collectible material is a map of New York City (actually lower Manhattan) produced as a Christmas greeting by Frank E. Robbins in 1938. Only a handful of copies was issued, and none has been offered for sale in several years; the original is in the hands of a private collector.

During the golden years of Van Dine's career, he had his brandy delivered from France in blue porcelain bottles especially manufactured for his use, each bearing his name. Whether any has survived to the present time is unknown, but wouldn't one of those personalized bottles be a striking addition to the Vance shelf?

The information on these bottles comes from a slim volume edited by Sterling North and Carl Kroch entitled *So Red the Nose Or—Breath in the Afternoon*, in which thirty famous authors provide cocktail recipes. S. S. Van Dine is represented by "The Canary Murder Case Cocktail."

There are two games with Philo Vance themes. The more famous is the "S. S. Van Dine Great Detective Game: Philo Vance."

Created and copyrighted by Parker Brothers in Salem, Mass., in 1937, the board game is similar in design and appearance to the manufacturer's famous "Monopoly" game. It is contained in a blue box with a paper label, printed in various colors. A board with a blue cloth back is also printed in various colors. The instructions are printed on a single large sheet of white paper, printed in black, folded in half to make a four-page booklet. The game is comprised of the following items: two Philo Vance pieces (cast metal), one judge (cast metal), six men (various colored playing pieces of turned wood), 100 clue cards, ten clue confirmation cards (one for each suspect), six court cards, and two dice.

Less well known, and evidently rarer, is "The Gracie Allen Murder Case: A Game," produced and copyrighted in 1939 by Milton Bradley, still one of the country's largest manufacturers of games and a competitor of Parker Brothers. The box, largely blue with a yellow and white background, portrays the zany comedienne brandishing a rifle—an illustration clearly tied to the movie of the same year. The instruction sheet (a single sheet of white paper, printed in black, folded in half to make four pages) provides the rules of the game and refers only to "the private detective." The cover and the board make the same designation, Philo Vance remaining

unnamed. The game is comprised of the following items: ten playing pieces (six black and one each of green, yellow, red, and blue, all of which are wood turnings), twenty-four cards (sixteen clue cards—four each of four clues—and eight non-clue cards), and two dice. One example only of this game has been reported during the past two decades, though the possibility exists that others are gathering dust in attics or antique shops somewhere.

If there has ever been a fictional detective easier to parody than Vance, he remains undiscovered, and many authors have taken advantage of the splendid opportunity afforded them.

The longest parody is *The John Riddell Murder Case* by John Riddell (the pseudonym of Corey Ford). A book reviewer is found dead in his library with his mouth open and his feet asleep. Vance notes that, since the walls are lined with the previous year's best-sellers, the open mouth must have been induced by a yawn and that the reviewer was simply bored to death.

In *The Smiling Corpse* by an anonymous author (actually Phil Wylie and Bernard A. Bergman), S. S. Van Dine finds himself at a cocktail party (along with Dashiell Hammett, Sax Rohmer, G. K. Chesterton, James M. Cain, and other celebrities of the literary world) at which a critic (that obviously very risky profession) is murdered.

Jon L. Breen wrote three pastiches of Vance for *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, the best of which, "The Circle Murder Case," was collected in his *Hair of the Sleuthhound*.

Among Van Dine's more significant introductions to books written by others (and, again, we are concerned here only with mystery fiction) is his famous, if brief, preface to Anna Katharine Green's *The Leavenworth Case*, in which he ranks Green second only to Edgar Allan Poe in her influence on American detective fiction. He also provided an introduction to Richard M. Baker's *Death Stops the Manuscript*, *The Mystery Puzzle Book* by Lassiter Wren and Randle McKay, and *The Great Detective Stories: A Chronological Anthology*, compiled and edited under his real name.

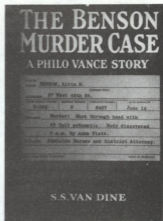
The following compilation is divided into three parts: Part I provides descriptions of the twelve Philo Vance novels by S. S. Van Dine; Part II describes other Vance and mystery fiction material written by Van Dine; Part III describes related material by other writers.

I

The Benson Murder Case

First Edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926. Black cloth, lettered in orange on front cover and spine. Issued with a black dust wrapper, printed in white with an orange "file card" on the front and rear panels. As in the entire series, the background color for the "file card" approximately matches the color in which the cloth is lettered.

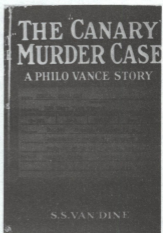
Note: The first Philo Vance novel and a selection for the Haycraft-Queen Definitive Library of Detective-Crime-Mystery Fiction:



Two Centuries of Cornerstones, 1748-1948. An uncommon book that is rare in dust wrapper. The 1926 date must appear on the title page. While it has been stated that there were numerous printings during its first year, all bearing the 1926 date on the title page and identical in every other respect as well, it seems unlikely that this is true in view of the scarcity of the volume.

Estimated

retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$ 35	\$ 500
Fine	75	1,000
Very fine	100	1,500



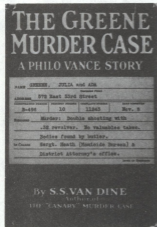
The "Canary" Murder Case

First Edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927. Black cloth, lettered in green on front cover and spine. Issued with a black dust wrapper, printed in white with a green "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Note: The second Philo Vance novel and

also selected as a Haycraft-Queen cornerstone volume. Originally serialized in Scribner's magazine in four parts (May-August 1927).

Estimated retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$10	\$ 35
Fine	25	75
Very fine	35	125



The Greene Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928. Black cloth, lettered in white on front cover and spine. Issued with a black dust wrapper, printed in white with a white "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Note: There are two variants of the copyright page, the priority of which had not been positively determined until the discovery of the dedication copy, which presumably is one of the first copies to come off the press. The first issue has a line which reads: "Copyright, 1928, by Charles Scribner's Sons"; the second issue has a line which reads: "Copyright, 1927, 1928, by Charles Scribner's Sons." Further evidence to support the contention that the single date is the earliest issue is the fact that obvious later printings of this title, dated 1929 on the title page, bear the two dates on the copyright page. Originally serialized in Scribner's magazine in four parts (January-April 1928).

Estimated retail value	without d/w	with d/w
(first issue):		
Good	\$10	\$ 35
Fine	25	75
Very fine	35	125

The Bishop Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929. Black cloth, lettered in blue on dust wrapper, printed in white with a blue "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Note: Originally serialized in six parts in the *American* magazine (October 1928-March

1929). A proof copy, in tan wrappers, is in the collection of Norman S. Nolan.

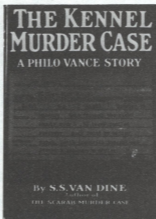
Estimated retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$10	\$ 35
Fine	25	75
Very fine	35	125

The Scarab Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930. Black cloth, lettered in yellow on front cover and spine. Issued with a black dust wrapper, printed in white with a yellow "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Note: The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. The "A" was dropped from all subsequent printings, the method by which Scribners identified its first printings from 1930 to 1972. Originally serialized in seven parts in the *American* magazine (December 1929-June 1930).

Estimated retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$10	\$ 35
Fine	25	75
Very fine	35	125



The Kennel Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933. Black cloth, lettered in purple on front cover and spine. Issued with a black dust wrapper, printed in white with a purple "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Note: The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. Originally serialized in four parts in *Cosmopolitan* (November 1932-February 1933).

Estimated retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$15	\$ 40
Fine	30	100
Very fine	40	150

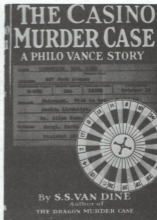
The Dragon Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933. Black cloth, lettered in red on front cover and spine. Issued with a black

dust wrapper, printed in white on the spine (to match the other volumes in the series) and on the real panel, which has a red "file card"; the front panel is unique in the twelve-book series in that it has a brightly colored illustration.

Note: The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. Originally serialized in six parts in *Pictorial Review* (June-November 1933).

Estimated retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$15	\$ 40
Fine	30	100
Very fine	40	150



The Casino Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934. Black cloth, lettered in green on front cover and spine. Issued with a black dust wrapper, printed in white with a green "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Additionally, there is an illustration of a roulette wheel on the front panel.

Note: The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. Apart from *The Benson Murder Case* and possibly *The Winter Murder Case*, this is inexplicably the scarcest of the Vance novels to find in first edition. Originally serialized in four parts in *Cosmopolitan* (August–October 1934).

Estimated

retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$25	\$ 65
Fine	45	125
Very fine	65	175

The Garden Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935. Black cloth, lettered in gold on front cover and spine. Issued with a black dust wrapper, printed in white with a gold "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Note: The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. Originally serialized in four parts in *Cosmopolitan* (July–October 1935).

Estimated

retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$15	\$ 35
Fine	25	75
Very fine	35	125

The Kidnap Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. Black cloth, lettered in silver on front cover and spine. Issued with a black dust wrapper, printed in white with a silver "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Note: The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. Originally serialized in five parts in *Cosmopolitan* (August–November 1936).

Estimated

retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$15	\$ 35
Fine	25	75
Very fine	35	125

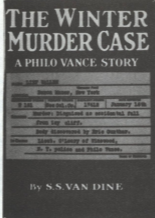
The Gracie Allen Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938. Yellow cloth, lettered in black on front cover and spine. Issued in a black dust wrapper, printed in white with a yellow "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Note: The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. The only one of the twelve novels in the series to be published in any color cloth other than black. Not previously serialized. An inscribed copy of this book has been noted in which the author thanks William Weber for his help and absolves himself of responsibility for this effort by writing "all credit—or blame—is his." The copy inscribed by Van Dine to Gracie Allen was recently sold at auction.

Estimated

retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$20	\$ 45
Fine	35	100
Very fine	45	150



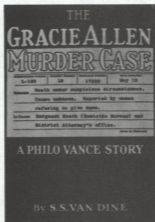
The Winter Murder Case

First edition: New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939. Black cloth, lettered in red on front cover and spine. Issued with a black dust wrapper, printed in white with a red "file card" on the front and rear panels.

Note: The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. The final Vance novel by Van Dine, published posthumously in a semi-completed state. The publisher must have expected smaller sales, owing to the unfinished state of the manuscript, and issued a smaller print run than customary. First editions are, consequently, scarce. Not previously serialized.

Estimated

retail value:	without d/w	with d/w
Good	\$25	\$ 65
Fine	45	150
Very fine	65	225



A. Mystery fiction and related writings by S. S. Van Dine

The Great Detective Stories: A Chronological Anthology. Compiled and edited with an introduction by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927. A long essay which is essentially a critical history of detective fiction. It was reprinted in its entirety in Howard Haycraft's excellent collection of essays, *The Art of the Mystery Story*, published in 1946 by Simon and Schuster.

I Used To Be a Highbrow but Look at Me Now. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929. A rare volume published under the author's S. S. Van Dine pseudonym. Originally published (under the same title) in the September 1928 issue of the *American* magazine, it was altered only slightly for its publication in volume form. The author condensed it drastically when he submitted it to the Harvard Alumni Directory Office in 1934 as his 25th Anniversary Report. The article appears again as the introduction to *Philo Vance Murders Cases* (see below), restored to its full length.

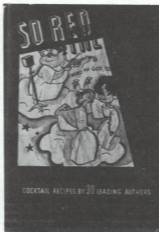
The Mystery Puzzle Book by Lassiter Wren and Randle McKay. New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, [1933]. With an introduction by S. S. Van Dine.

The Leavenworth Case by Anna Katharine Green. New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, [1934]. Issued in cloth (in a dust wrapper, at \$2.00) and paper wrappers (at 50¢). With an introduction by S. S. Van Dine.

The President's Mystery Story. Propounded by Franklin D. Roosevelt. Solved by Rupert Hughes, Samuel Hopkins Adams, Anthony Abbot, Rita Weiman, S. S. Van Dine, John Erskine. With a preface by Fulton Oursler. New York, Farrar & Rinehart, [1933]. (Note: The publisher's colophon must appear on the copyright page, else it is a later printing.) This is the famous anecdote about a conversation F.D.R. had with Oursler, then the editor of *Liberty* magazine, in which he asked the question, "How can a man disappear with five million dollars in any negotiable form and not be traced?" Oursler proposed that the problem be posed to several illustrious mystery writers who would attempt to solve it—in the pages of *Liberty*, of course. The President agreed, and the serial began in the issue of November 16, 1935. Van Dine's chapter featured several of his series characters (Sergeant Heath, District Attorney Markham, Dr. Doremus, but not Philo Vance). The book version was published on December 27, 1935. A new edition of the novel, now titled *The President's Mystery Plot*, was published in 1967 by Prentice-Hall of Englewood Cliffs, N.J. It featured a new introduction by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and a concluding chapter, allegedly to tie up loose ends, by Erle Stanley Gardner. The Farrar & Rinehart edition was issued with a dust wrapper (as was the Prentice-Hall edition),

and advance review copies had a second dust wrapper over the dust wrapper, on which was printed the information that the story had been first published in *Liberty*. Advance reading copies, bound in paper, were also issued. It was published in London in 1936 by The Bodley Head.

So Red the Nose or Breath in the Afternoon edited by Sterling North and Carl Kroch. New York, Farrar & Rinehart, [1935]. Published in purple cloth and a green dust wrapper. Although Farrar & Rinehart regularly indicated a first impression of a book by using its colophon on the copyright page and dropping the colophon for subsequent printings, no copies examined have the colophon, and it is a reasonable conclusion that none was used on any edition of the book. Third authors contributed cocktail recipes, Van Dine's being "The Canary Murder Case Cocktail." A splendid caricature of Van Dine by Roy Nelson enhances the contribution.



Death Stops the Manuscript: Franklin Russell's First Case by Richard M. Baker. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. With an introduction by S. S. Van Dine. Baker wrote two other mystery novels featuring the same detective.

Philo Vance Murder Cases by S. S. Van Dine. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936. Contains *The Scarab Murder Case*, *The Kennel Murder Case*, and *The Dragon Murder Case*. Of greater significance is the introduction, previously published as "I Used To Be a Highbrow but Look at Me Now," in which Van Dine writes about the inception of the Philo Vance stories and many other autobiographical details, and the complete list, slightly amplified from its original magazine publication (in the September 1928 issue of the *American Magazine*) of his "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories." Each of the three novels has an individual introduction, there is a lengthy biography of Van Dine by William Stanley Braithwaite, as well as a similar treatment of Philo Vance by Y. B. Garden, including Vance's *Who's Who* entry. Ten full-page illustrations of Vance, as depicted by outstanding illustrators and movie actors who portrayed him, plus numerous drawings and maps, further enhance this remarkable volume. Published in linen-colored cloth, printed in black on the front cover and spine, it was issued with a black dust wrapper printed in white, with three "file cards" on the front cover in yellow, purple, and red. A salesman's dummy was produced, containing all the material except the three novels themselves. This rarity may be unique, as only a single copy has been recorded.

A Philo Vance Week-End by S. S. Van Dine. New York, Grosset & Dunlap, [1937]. Contains *The Canary Murder Case*, *The Greene Murder Case*, and *The Bishop Murder Case*. There is no new material.

The Powwow Murder Case by S. S. Van Dine. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938. Black cloth, dust wrapper. Contains only four pages of text. Only one copy known.

B. Non-mystery fiction and related material by S. S. Van Dine (Willard Huntington Wright)

Songs of Youth by Willard Huntington Wright. (Not seen) 1913

Europe after 8:15 by H. L. Mencken, George Jean Nathan, Willard Huntington Wright. New York, John Lane, 1914.

What Nietzsche Taught by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, B. W. Huebsch, 1915.

Modern Painting, Its Tendency and Meaning by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, John Lane, 1915.

The Creative Will: Studies in the Philosophy and the Syntax of Aesthetics by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, John Lane, 1916.

**S. S. Van Dine's
THE CANARY MURDER CASE
Cocktail**

1/2 JIGGER DRY GIN	1 JIGGER ORANGE JUICE
1/2 JIGGER COGNAC	1 DASH ORANGE BITTERS
1/2 JIGGER YELLOW VERNOUTH	Shake Well

THIS COCKTAIL was "fiendishly plotted, with murder in mind" by the creator of that superleuth Philo Vance, who knows more about ceramics, Scotties, liquors and Broadway than any living art critic.

Willard Huntington Wright, who may be Van Dine to you, got his literary start as a bookie at a Western race track. He is often seen these days at Belmont and other New York tracks, but outside the barred window.

He loves food, good wine, fine dogs and horses. English tweeds and Regie cigarettes—sold by only four tobacconists in the world. He imports his own special brandy from France in fancy blue porcelain bottles that bear his name.

Van Dine is a familiar figure at Dempsey's, Tony's, the Stork Club and other resorts. He helps young writers and painters; plays, studies, and writes like a fiend; thoroughly enjoys his penthouse, and is generally conceded to be a darned good guy.



The Man of Promise by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, John Lane, 1916. (Fiction)

The Forum Exhibition of Modern American Painters, March Thirteenth to March Twenty-fifth, 1916 by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, Mitchell Kennerley, 1916.

Informing a Nation by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, Dodd, Mead, 1917.

The Great Modern French Stories: A Chronological Anthology. Compiled and edited with an introduction by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, Boni & Liveright, 1917.

Misinforming a Nation by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, B. W. Huebsch, 1917.

The Future of Painting by Willard Huntington Wright. New York, B. W. Huebsch, 1923.

Some Famous Medical Trials by Leonard A. Parry. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928. With an introduction by Willard Huntington Wright.

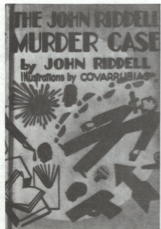
The Book of the Scottish Terrier by Fayette C. Ewing. New York, Orange Judd, 1932. With an introduction by S. S. Van Dine.

Tropical Fishes and Home Aquaria by Alfred Morgan. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935. With a foreword by S. S. Van Dine.

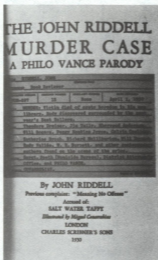
The Philosophy of Nietzsche. New York, The Modern Library, 1937. With an introduction by Willard Huntington Wright.

III

Philo Vance and *S. S. Van Dine* books and related material by authors other than S. S. Van Dine



The John Riddell Murder Case by John Riddell (pseudonym of Corey Ford). New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930. Published in yellow boards with black lettering on the spine and a vignette of a body with a knife in the chest on the front cover. Issued in a yellow dust wrapper, white background,



printed in black and red. The capital letter "A" must appear on the copyright page. Illustrated by Covarrubias. A book-length parody of Vance. At the end is a seal, in imitation of the famed Harper's Sealed Mysteries, with the following "sporting offer": "With tragedy in the air, with the ruthless murders in the John Riddell library still unavenged, with Philo Vance about to reveal the hideous truth at last—can you leave this seal unbroken? We make this sporting offer. Return this book with the seal intact—and you are out \$2.50. Break it—and the mystery is over. Either way, you lose." A British edition was also published in 1930 by Charles Scribner's Sons.

The Smiling Corpse [by Philip Wylie and Bernard A. Bergman]. New York, Farrar & Rinehart, [1935]. Published in gray cloth, printed in red, with a colored pictorial dust wrapper depicting caricatures of Sax Rohmer, S. S. Van Dine, Dashiell Hammett, and G. K. Chesterton. They, and other literary celebrities, are characters in the novel. The publisher's colophon must appear on the copyright page.

Hair of the Sleuthhound: Parodies of Mystery Fiction by Jon L. Breen. Metuchen, N.J., The Scarecrow Press, [1982]. Published in black cloth, printed in gold on the front cover and spine. No dust wrapper was issued. Contains, among many parodies and

pastiches, a Vance pastiche, "The Circle Murder Case."

Additional research may be done with the aid of *Philo Vance: The Life and Times of S. S. Van Dine* by Jon Tuska, published by the Bowling Green University Popular Press in Bowling Green, Ohio (1971), and "Willard Huntington Wright: A Bibliography" published in the *Bulletin of Bibliography*, May-August 1963, compiled by Walter R. Crawford.

Correction

The reason I picked Charlie Chan for the first column (TAD 15:2) which provides bibliographical description is that the six books which make up the complete collection of first editions have always proved to be bothersome. Bobbs-Merrill changed its policy for identifying first editions so often that confusion reigned. Well, it still reigns.

To simplify the process of identifying first editions, I used illustrations of the all-important copyright pages so that no mistake would be made. So—I made one.

There are two variant copyright pages for *The Black Camel*, both of which were illustrated, with the notation that no priority had been established. That much is true. But it also doesn't matter at all, since neither is the first edition. The first edition of *The Black Camel* bears the words "FIRST EDITION" on the copyright page.

Carol Brener called almost immediately after the issue of TAD with the Chan column arrived. "I checked my copy of *The Black Camel*," she said, "and it doesn't match either of those you illustrated." "Oh? And in what way does it differ?" I asked, thinking that a third variant had been found to further complicate the identification of this title. "Mine says 'First Edition,'" she replied.

So there it is, but I'm not going to take the fall alone. These lists are not compiled in solitude. Every word is read by Marvin P. Epstein, one of the finest collectors of detective fiction in the United States, whose collection of Sherlock Holmes material is awesome and whose command of the language is an inspiration. He has saved me from embarrassment more than once. The description of *The Black Camel* seemed adequate to his learned mind. And Peter L. Stern, for some years one of the country's leading dealers in detective fiction first editions, was as sure as I was that the question of identifying Chan first editions had, at long last, been settled. When I reported the copy that now must clearly be regarded as the first edition, he agreed that he had neither seen nor suspected the existence of such a copy.

Apologies are therefore in order for having committed the error, and thanks are in order to Carol Brener for having spotted it. This is the way it will eventually be made right. I very sincerely solicit and welcome other corrections and emendations, especially if they can be supported by evidence, rather than vague recollection or rumor. □

THE PAPERBACK REVOLUTION

PETER ABRAHAMS

The Fury of Rachel Monette (1980) (Pocket Books) is aroused by the murder of her husband and the kidnapping of her small child. The usual law-enforcement agencies are impotent, but the discovery of an old swastika-inscribed document in a safe deposit box leads Rachel from New England to Europe and Africa, and finally to Israel, where a Nazi plot to overthrow the government is brewing.

WILLIAM S. BARING-GOULD

Nero Wolfe of West Thirty-Fifth Street (1969) (Penguin) is a delightful and fascinating glimpse of one of the most famous of private detectives. Almost all the facts known about Wolfe and his entourage are cited, plus some rather interesting speculation about material not revealed by Rex Stout—including Wolfe's parentage. A survey and chronology of the recorded cases (up to 1969) is also included.

CHRISTIANNA BRAND

Inspector Cockrill's Mediterranean tour leads to his incarceration as the chief suspect in a murder case in the stunning **Tour de Force** (1955) (Perennial). I think this memorable masterpiece of the classic form is Miss Brand's greatest achievement, and one of the very best detective stories written after World War Two.

JAMES BYROM

Or Be He Dead (1958) is one of the many good books that were originally published in England, achieved a paperback edition, but failed to cross the Atlantic. This original tale is about a novel based on a true Victorian murder case that is about to cause unexpected threats of a lawsuit for libel, and personal danger for its creator. It now appears in its first American edition courtesy of Perennial Books.

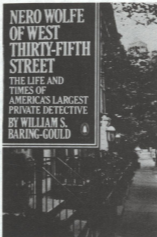
DAVID CARKEET

Double Negative (1980) (Penguin) is a bright and entertaining first novel that casts a satiric glance at a group of linguists who study children in an Indiana day nursery. When a murder victim is found in expert Jeremy Cook's office, he becomes the obvious suspect, is forced to turn detective and find an essential clue held by a sixteen-month-old child in order to solve this case.

AGATHA CHRISTIE

There are many potential victims for those who choose to commit murder, but no one should ever select a dentist—especially when Hercule Poirot has an appointment. **An Overdose of Death** (1940) (Dell) was originally published in England as *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe* and in America as *The Patriotic Murders*. Barzun and Taylor call it one of its author's half-dozen triumphs of plotting and detection.

By Charles Shibuk



DOUGLAS CLARK

The Gimmel Flask (1977) (Dell) is the bearer of poison that dispatches the senior member of an auction house in the small English town of Limpid. Superintendent George Masters is a straightforward and intelligent policeman—refreshingly devoid of annoying mannerisms or extra-curricular problems that impede his investigation. *The Gimmel Flask*, making its first American appearance, is an outstanding example of the police procedural, and a pleasant and refreshing surprise.

Golden Rain (1980) (Dell) deals with the poisoning of the headmistress of a prestigious girls' school and Masters's efforts to prove this case of murder and find the criminal. This is another first American publication, and it's almost as meritorious as its above-mentioned predecessor.

COLIN DEXTER

The obvious murder of a church warden and the apparent suicide of the vicar are but the prelude to three further fatalities in **Service of All the Dead** (1979) (Dell). This author's fourth and, I think, best and most complex novel has one splendid bit of misdirection worthy of an Agatha Christie.

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Penguin Books continues to reissue the saga of the world's foremost consulting detective. The first two novels, **A Study in Scarlet** (1887) and **The Sign of Four** (1890), plus the third short-story collection, **The Return of Sherlock Holmes** (1905), are currently available.

HELEN EUSTIS

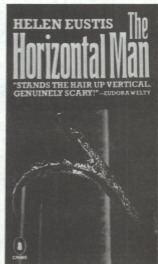
The Horizontal Man (1946) (Penguin) is an unusually literate and original first novel that describes the murder of a professor of English at a major university for women. This devious fair-play detective novel delves into the psychology and motives of its characters and attracted wide and deservedly favorable notice upon its original publication. Rex Stout thought it a remarkable performance.

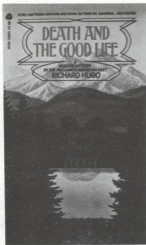
RICHARD FORREST

Excavation for a new condominium in a small Connecticut town results in the discovery of three dead bodies in **A Child's Garden of Death** (1975) (Dell). This is the initial (and probably the best) entry in the Bea and Lyon Wentworth series and boasts a fresh and ingenious plot, appealing characters, the sport of ballooning, and a locked-room problem.

JONATHAN GASH

While indulging in an amorous interlude, Lovejoy witnesses a case of vehicular homicide—and the victim turns out to be his best friend. **Spend Game** (1980) (Penguin) is a much better organized than usual example of its creator's work and contains many antiques lore, wit, and suspense, as well as a buried treasure at its entertaining climax.





EDITH PIÑERO GREEN

Aging sleuth Dearborn V. Pinch discovers an unknown corpse outside a Greenwich Village funeral parlor in *Sneaks* (1979) (Berkeley). The promise of a \$5,000 reward immediately propels Pinch to a deluxe Florida hotel resort to discover a surprising murderer's identity in this smoothly-written and amusing narrative.

CYRIL HARE

The Wind Blows Death (1949) (Perennial) details Frank Pettigrew's investigation into the unexpected death of England's foremost female violinist, who had been scheduled to perform with a local music society. This is an authentic masterpiece that has been called the best of all the Hare stories by Barzun and Taylor. *Tenant for Death* (1937) was reviewed in TAD 14:4 and has recently been reprinted by Perennial.

P. M. HUBBARD

High Tide (1970) (Perennial) is an understated British thriller that stresses mood and seaside atmosphere over plot and dialogue.

This novel is relatively short, features quite a bit about boating, and contains enough narrative momentum to hold this columnist's interest, although it cannot be guaranteed to appeal to all tastes.

RICHARD HUGO

Death and the Good Life (1981) (Avon) is set in Montana and features ex-Seattle homicide cop Al "Mush Heart" Barnes, who is now a deputy sheriff seeking peace and quiet. Two axe slaughters and the twenty-year-old murder of a high school girl, however, are not conducive to the contemplative life. This is an extremely interesting debut from an author heretofore noted for his poetry.

MICHAEL INNES

The Long Farewell (1958) (Perennial) concerns John Appleby's investigation into the apparent suicide of a noted Shakespearean scholar, who was also a friend. This classic detective novel, as one should usually expect from Innes, is over-literary and a trifle extravagant, but it is also witty, readable, entertaining, and very much worth your time and attention. *Death By Water* (1968) and the wartime thriller *The Secret Vanguard* (1940) both feature Appleby and are available from Perennial.

MICHAEL Z. LEWIN

Indianapolis private eye Albert Samson is hired by a visitor to his city to locate her friend, who seems to be a *Missing Woman* (1981) (Berkeley). The case dissolves inconclusively but later resumes with the discovery of a murder victim, and what seemed a straightforward affair becomes more complex and violent in this much better than average hard-boiled caper.

ALLAN MACKINNON

House of Darkness (1947) (Perennial) is an expert amalgam of several devices used by such thriller writers as Ambler, Buchan, and Household, and it's fresh, vivid, and very well written in smoothly flowing, compelling prose. It's a superior example of its genre with lots of excitement and romance that unexpectedly turns into a fair-play detective story at its climax.

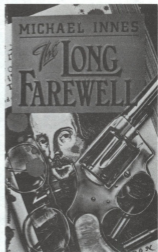
NGAIO MARSH

This author abandons her usual theatrical milieu in favor of a jazz background and tells

the story of an eccentric aristocrat's attempt to play a practical joke that backfires into the death of a musician in *A Wreath for Rivera* (1949) (Jove). (Note: This novel was published as *Swing, Brother, Swing* in England.)

Portcarrow Island's fanged healing springs become the scene of unhealthy murder in the average effort *Dead Water* (1963) (Jove).

Murder for Christmas at a manor house is the subject of *Tied Up in Tinsel* (1972) (Jove), and the suspects are numerous since every member of the household staff has been convicted of murder.



LEREOY L. PANEK

The Special Branch (1981) (Bowling Green University Popular Press) is a survey of the British spy novel (1890-1980) which analyzes seventeen of the most important or representative practitioners. Panek is a major critic, and this work is highly perceptive and always interesting. Aficionados of several of the authors involved may take exception to Panek's iconoclastic attacks, but no one will ever find him dull.

CHARLES MERRILL SMITH

Reverend Randolph and the Avenging Angel (1977) (Avon) deals with a robbery and the murder of a bride just one hour after her wedding. Set in a wealthy Chicago church, this mystery novel boasts attractive characters—including the titular sleuth—a reasonably rapid plot movement, and just plain, old-fashioned entertainment.

Crime fiction elements, involving two murders by poison, in *Reverend Randolph and the Fall from Grace, Inc.* (1978) (Avon) are given short shrift in favor of more ecumenical concerns, but, even so, it would be churlish to neglect to mention such an appealing entertainment. □

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Literature

CURRENT REVIEWS

The Midnight Man by Loren D. Estleman. Houghton Mifflin, 1982. \$12.95

As Loren Estleman's third Amos Walker tale unfolds, it becomes increasingly apparent that there is a second "lead" in these novels. Detroit itself, as the author sees it through Walker's eyes, struggles and triumphs through difficult times. Walker in some ways is like Pierre on the battlefield in *War and Peace* as he careers and careens through shot and shell and keeps on going. He and his city are dogged cars receiving direct hits and glancing blows on their way—safely—to where they think they should be going.

Walker receives a kindness from a policeman. That officer is grievously injured—paralyzed, in fact—and Walker is called in by the now silent man and his wife. A man who participated in the shooting of Van Sturtevant is a fugitive. Others want him dead, Sturtevant and his wife say they want him alive.

The trail leads to McDougal Street in a beyond-being-faded area. What seems to have been or perhaps still be a haven for revolutionaries started life as a gymnasium in the late nineteenth century. It becomes a kind of arena of beatings, discoveries, and death, and then disappears from the story.

A modern-day bounty hunter named Bum Basset is looking for Alonzo Smith too. Walker and Basset come to each other's aid as they come close to Smith and then move away from him and each other.

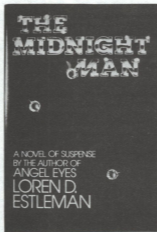
Walker comes upon a political aim which if carried to fruition means deep trouble for his city. With the help of John Alderdyce, his friend on the force, the mysteries are unraveled. But not before Walker and Alderdyce come to conflict over Walker's failure to reveal who his client is. Alderdyce figures it out but does not like it. Basset does not like it either. But Estleman, this year's "Golden Spur" winner for Western writing believes in honor. Walker is honor itself. An old-fashioned American whose quick tongue hides from many (but not the reader) that his creed is valor and integrity. He rejects Sturtevant's wife although drawn to her. He rejects Alonzo Smith's cause but not Alonzo Smith. He finds a body in his trunk. Someone he hardly knew, and knew only in tension. Yet Estleman conveys the humanity of Walker's feeling for this girl in some of his best writing yet. Walker succeeds as well as he can—not perfectly, but believably.

Walker and Detroit have deep meaning in this novel. Action, thought, and hope abound. Barry Stackpole, the *Detroit News* reporter who has pipelines everywhere, is back and very important in this story. Walker is still with Iris, who is patient and impatient at the proper times. But Walker's main companion remains his city. This is an excellent series and getting better...

—Peter B. Spivak

The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction 1850-1940 by William F. Wu. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982. 241 pp. \$25.00

A consequence of Wu's doctoral dissertation at the University of Michigan in 1979, this book attempts to "explore the depiction of Chinese immigrants and their descendants in American fiction, from the mid-nineteenth century entrance of the first Chinese immigrants in significant numbers to the eve of World War II" (p. 1). With chapters on the pulps, Charlie Chan, and Fu Manchu, as well as on early Chinese invasion, frontier, and Chinatown stories, Wu covers much fiction of a criminous nature.



Wu argues throughout that Yellow Peril is "the overwhelmingly dominant theme in American fiction about Chinese Americans" (p. 1). He includes several definitions and stipulations to clarify his subject. For example, Yellow Peril in literature is characterized as emphasis on at least one of the following:

1. Possible military invasion from Asia
2. Possible Asian competition for American jobs
3. Asian infiltration into America's alleged superior genetic pool
4. The alleged moral degeneracy of the Asian (cf. Knox's Decalogue, rule V)

Wu's criteria for non-racist Chinese-American characters include requirements that the character have no biologically determined character traits but be a full-fledged individual with a full range of emotions.

Although Wu treats the works of mainstream authors such as Ambrose Bierce, Bret

Harte, Jack London, and Frank Norris, the authors to whom he devotes the most time are Rohmer and Biggers. Wu summarizes several of the Fu Manchu novels, emphasizing the elements and passages which tend to show that Fu Manchu was a racist character endowed with all of the evil traits of the Asian image. Charlie Chan, however, fares hardly better. Wu charges Biggers with having bent over backwards to make Chan the antithesis of the threatening, sinister Oriental. Whereas "the villain is tall, bony, and yellow; the detective is shorter, chubby and pink. The former is angry and threatening; the latter stays calm and apologetic" (p. 180). Because of Chan's unrealistic humility, subservience, and sexlessness, he is seen by Wu as an over-compensation to the Yellow Peril image, and thus still a reflection of it.

In the chapter on the pulps, Wu states that, with the exception of Dashiell Hammett's villains—Tai, in "The House on Turk Street" (1924), and Chang Li Ching, in "Dead Yellow Women" (1925)—almost all of the Chinese villains were unoriginal stereotypes based on Fu Manchu. Examples cited are the Spider's foe Ssu Hsi Tse, Robert J. Hogan's Wu Fang, Donald E. Keyhoe's Dr. Yen Sin, and Secret Agent X's foe Chang. Hammett's villains were more realistic, intelligent, elegant, and sophisticated.

Wu appears to have gone to some length to gather stories that support his thesis, but he does not seem to have searched as hard for Chinese protagonists who do not reflect the Yellow Peril. Although British crime fiction had more Chinese protagonists than American fiction (such as Joan Cowdroy's Li Moh, Cecil Bishop's Ah Foo, and Chinese Brown, among others), there were still characters such as Richard Foster's Green Lama and Harry Stephen Keeler's intelligent, independent, ethnically aware Yung Cheung. Of course, these protagonists in no way vitiate Wu's thesis that the Yellow Peril was the dominant Chinese/Chinese-American image in American fiction up to 1940, but one still wishes that Wu gave more of a sense of proportion by citing a greater variety of characters. Also, having stated (p. 5) that he believes that he has been exhaustive in mentioning works of fiction under the chapter headings such as "Early Novels of Chinese Invasion" (Ch. II) and "Chinatown, 1882-1908" (Ch. IV), Wu does not use as evidence any of that vast body of xenophobic fiction, the Dime Novel, or its younger cousin, the Boys' Weekly.

Despite these unimportant shortcomings, *The Yellow Peril* succeeds in what it sets out to do and is an important book for several reasons. It is a rich bibliographic source for early crime stories in the vein of the early Hugh Wiley or Thomas Burke. More im-



portantly, to my knowledge it is the only book-length treatment of the Yellow Peril in fiction.

—Greg Goode

The Big Enchilada by L. A. Morse. Avon, 1982

The author of last year's *The Old Dick*, which featured a 78-year-old private eye, returns here with a new private eye character, Sam Hunter, who is to the '80s what Mike Hammer was to the '50s. This has got to be one of the finest parodies of the private eye form, whether it was meant to be or not. The first chapter alone is a study in parodying the hard-boiled private eye style. It is as if someone told the author that he had to get sex and violence into the first chapter in order to capture the reader's attention, and it worked with me. I couldn't wait to read the rest of the book.

The plot is fairly simple. Sam Hunter is involved in a couple of cases which on the surface appear to be separate but are actually connected, and he ends up getting involved with someone called "Domingo," who is the king of sleaze in L.A. The first chapter opens with Hunter being thrown around his office by a six-foot-eight, five-hundred-pound character called "Mountain Cyclone" and being warned to stay away from "Domingo," whom at this point he has never heard of. As a result of this incident, during which Hunter's desk is destroyed, he goes looking for Domingo. At the very least, he feels that Domingo owes him a new desk.

Hunter figures out that one of his three current cases must have brought him across this Domingo's path, so he starts to retrace his steps and discovers that more than one case is involved. In fact, stretching coincidence even for a parody, all three cases lead to Domingo.

The style is hard-boiled, pure and simple. In fact, it's hard-boiled brought to its simplest level.

A prime example would be this passage from Chapter 18, after he discovers his secretary brutally murdered in his office:

"...I would exact vengeance. Not for Maria—it made no difference anymore to her—but for myself. I would shatter their plans. I would shake their power. I would destroy their riches. I would shoot fire into their bellies and make them puke and squirm on the floor. I would splatter the walls with their brains. Vengeance! I could taste it in my mouth. A red haze dropped before my eyes, and I saw vengeance, red vengeance. It would be mine. It would be good."

Could even the immortal Mike Hammer have said it any better?

—Bob Randisi

The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling by Lawrence Block. Pocket Books, 1982

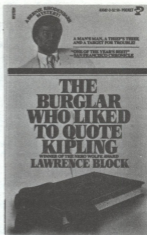
Lawrence Block's wonderful winner of the Nero Wolfe Award, *The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling*, is now available as a Pocket Books paperback. Bernard Rhodenbarr is the burglar, and Kipling is the appropriate vehicle for this tale of greed and its many practitioners. The story is preceded by an excerpt from Kipling's "Loot" ("Ow the loot / Bloomin' loot! / That's the thing to make the boys git up an' shoot!"). Except for Disney's *Jungle Book* and graduation cards exhorting the imperial virtues of "If," Kipling's work is not widely known today, and Block apparently wants to make sure at the outset that his readers understand that no one goes to the author of "The White Man's Burden" for significant form.

Rhodenbarr is the proprietor of a used book store that stocks only hardbounds. (He sells the paper mysteries to Carol Brenner of Murder Ink). In general, the book business is slow and shoplifters nibble away at the profits. But some old books are worth a great deal, and Bernie is willing to burgle on consignment. His own literary tastes are fairly catholic, and he has the cultivated scruples of a Jesuit. In other words, he realizes that we are all sinners and some sins are worse than others.

Bernard is a professional. He steals because he is good at it, but only from those who can afford to share some of their worldly goods. He recognizes that in most of us there is at least the potential for petty larceny, and he knows that at the end of the long arm of the law there is usually a palm waiting to be greased.

There is a little bit of Robin Hood in Rhodenbarr. When he steals a car, he returns it with a full tank. He has character. ("If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, / Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch.") He also has a terrific friend named Carolyn, who describes herself as "a dyke who shaves dogs." When Bernie is framed for a murder after heisting a rare volume of Kipling's doggerel, Carolyn hides him and becomes his partner in finding the framer and nailing him to the wall.

This takes some doing. The plot is clever, complex, and nearly plausible. Block's pacing



is flawless, and the dialogue is exactly right and very funny. Bernie and Carolyn are the spiritual children of Nick and Nora Charles:

"There's only one thing to do."

"What's that?"

"What I always do in time of stress. Bribes a cop."

Happily, Block respects his readers and his characters too much to turn Bernie and Carolyn's friendship into an exercise in which the love of a good man results in the magical sexual re-orientation of a woman's woman. In fact, Bernie is rather literally instrumental in enabling Carolyn to effect a reconciliation with her estranged stewardess lover.

In the first Rhodenbarr adventure, *The Burglar in the Closet*, Bernie was a fast-talking fall guy—a likeable but predictable character superficially similar to James Garner's Rockford in the television series. *The Burglar Who Liked to Quote Kipling* is a sequel stronger in plot and fuller in character. Mrs. Rhodenbarr's boy is doing very well.

—Patrice K. Loose

Erasmus Magister by Charles Sheffield. Ace Books, 1982. 217 pp. \$2.50

Erasmus Darwin was one of the more interesting figures in eighteenth-century intellectual life. A scholar, a physician, an experimenter, and a poet, he anticipated the theory of evolution long before his grandson, Charles Darwin, developed it in the nineteenth century. Charles Sheffield uses Erasmus Darwin as the investigative protagonist of the three stories in *Erasmus Magister*. He is always accompanied by his friend Colonel Pole, whose goal is invariably the quest for treasure. Darwin's purpose, on the other hand, is to provide a rational explanation for events that seem fantastic or supernatural. For example, what is the sea monster that lurks near a sunken ship? How does a rival physician appear to be in two widely separated places at the same time? For these and

strange lights on the side of a mountain, and where do they disappear to? What is the curse that kills several generations of a family? Darwin's solutions are based on science, medicine, and anthropology. His method of investigation is that of the detective, and though his discoveries are often improbable, they are within the realm of possibility. Some readers may become a bit impatient with the slow pace, but Sheffield balances this with excellent characterization of Darwin (who was not especially appealing physically) and with vignettes of eighteenth-century life. By the last story, "The Lambeth Immortal," the best of the three episodes, the reader is fascinated by the interesting eccentric. *Erasmus Magister* should please readers who like Lillian de la Torre's stories of Dr. Samuel Johnson, the strange stories of Gerald Kersh, and possibly the deductions of Jeremy Cork (*Fatal Flourishes* by S. S. Rafferty), though

Darwin's mysteries are much more fantastic than those of Cork. Charles Sheffield has developed an interesting series character in Erasmus Darwin, who, if the series continues, may eventually rival the detections of Dr. Sam Johnson. Though the cover calls *Erasmus Magister* "an historical fantasy," the spine and title page indicate it is Ace science fiction, so look for this book in the science-fiction sections of newsstands and bookstores.

—Edward Lauterbach

* * * * *

P. D. James by Norma Siebenheller. Frederick Ungar, 1981. 149 pp.

Norma Siebenheller has written a book-length book report on the novels of P. D. James as part of Ungar's "Recognitions" series. Siebenheller interprets the James canon as a continuous effort to explore such major themes as alienation, death, and

punishment. She is primarily interested in chronicling James's progressive mastery of her genre. James's novels are discussed chronologically and are classified according to the decade in which they appeared. Siebenheller contrasts Adam Dalgleish and Cordelia Gray's opinions of the coupling of justice and law. In another chapter, she emphasizes the stylistic affinities between James and James's favorite author, Jane Austen. This book is useful for its plot summaries, cross-references, annotations, and bibliography. Since relatively little critical attention has been given to James's work, this volume is welcome as the initial book-length treatment of an increasingly popular and important writer. Thus, it may be ungrateful and unfair to fault Siebenheller for failing to offer a more philosophically imaginative reading.

—Patrice K. Loose

PAPER CRIMES

By Raymond L. Obstfeld

I don't remember where I lost it. In the back seat of my parents' green Dodge. At a cheap motel on Route 80, where the ice machine never worked. Maybe at college, in our co-ed dorms, between the bomb scares and drug busts.

Wherever it was, it was painful. And therefore symbolic. That's the best way to endure change, by making it mean more. But no matter where it happened, that loss of—sure, let's call it what it was—innocence, was final. Irrevocable. At some time, someplace, maybe one of the places mentioned above, I lost it—lost the compulsive need to finish every damn book I start. To plow through every single torturous page, no matter how turgid the prose, convoluted the plot, shallow the characters. I can't remember which book finally shoved me over the edge, but it was a freeing experience, one that marked a change in life and lifestyle. Like getting your braces off. Changing from boxer shorts to bikini briefs. Getting a vasectomy.

For the past ten years, I've lived as a free man, tossing unfinished books aside with glee when they failed to capture my interest within fifty pages. Fifty pages. That's a lot. A lot more than most publishers would give them, but less than the author's mother would. Still, I never throw them away. Up they go into the bookshelves to be taken down and picked at again, like a leftover Brussels sprout casserole that you don't like but you know is good for you. Sometimes I'm surprised and delighted to find the book seems much better the



second time around. But most of the time I'm appalled it was ever published in the first place.

The Delphi Betrayal (Pinnacle) by Lewis Perdue is one of those books that didn't pass the Fifty-Page Test the first time around. I

didn't make it past fifteen pages before becoming angry and disgusted. Within that time, I found the characters stereotypical, the humor flat and forced, the prose style parched. For the purposes of this column, I went back and dutifully reread the book, all the way to the last bitter page. But it was like force feeding a political prisoner on a hunger strike.

Everything about the book is overdone. The front cover blurb claims that it's the "#1 THRILLER OF THE YEAR!" That's not a quote from some reviewer; that's a claim by the publisher, probably the same person who described the plot on the back of the jacket as "an awesome conspiracy that would create economic chaos and bring the entire universe to its knees." The entire universe, no less. Gee.

The hero, Beckett Snow, is likeable, though insufferably adolescent in his relationships with women. ("They'd broken up last night. Both had cried for hours. It was inevitable, Snow thought bitterly. He was beginning to doubt that a man and a woman could have a relationship without one or the other being destroyed.") The dialogue isn't much better. While being held at gunpoint in his living room by a beautiful, mysterious woman, Snow quips, "Uh, I would offer you something but I wasn't expecting company. This is, ah, the maid's day off." A real wit, this guy. By the way, the "uhs" and "ahs" aren't a speech defect, merely his way of being, uh, natural.

Perdue's second book, *Queen Gate Reckoning* (Pinnacle) is also touted as the year's "F1 THRILLER!" The claims for this book are more modest. Instead of bringing the entire universe to its knees, this one tracks a CIA operative and a defecting Soviet ballerina as "together they hurtle toward the hour of ultimate international reckoning..." Well, international, sure, as long as it's not universal.

Actually, this book is much better than the first one, though still far short of good. The first chapter is smooth, with easy humor and taut suspense. After that, it begins to revert to the same stereotypical characters and scenes we've read a hundred times before, but without adding any redeeming twists. Nat Worthington, CIA agent coping with the painful after-effects of a recent wound, becomes entwined in the usual international double-dealings. The prose style is better this time, more relaxed yet more controlled. But it's still all very contrived and predictable.

I can't blame Mr. Perdue, whose books are often engaging, though not engrossing. His editors should have been able to isolate the obvious flaws here and suggested some changes. With a little guidance, and a couple of rewrites, he could have been a contender. Nevertheless, the amount of improvement from *The Delphi Betrayal* to *Queen's Gate Reckoning* leaves me with the hope that one day I'll read one of his books all the way

through, not because I have to but because I want to.

THE SERIES SERIES. Many of us grew up on them. And a lot of us are still reading them, anticipation that Norman Mailer's ex-wives await alimony checks. That's why I intend to review a different mystery/detective/suspense series in each column.

Warren Murphy made quite a name for himself as the author (sometimes co-author) of the zany "Destroyer" series (Pinnacle). But Murphy has a new series out with Pocket Books, called "Digger." There are three books in the series so far, though whether or not there will be others, Murphy wasn't certain when I asked him. Certainly, the covers aren't much help in keeping the series alive. The top half featuring the series logo is dynamic, but the bottom half featuring scenes from the books makes it look like a cheap romance.

Still, when I read *Dead Letter* (Digger #3), I was sufficiently impressed to hunt through three different bookstores that same day until I found the other two in the series, *Smoked Out* and *Fool's Flight*. There's no point in reviewing each book separately, since they rejoice in the same strengths and suffer from the same weaknesses. In the strength department, the books are wildly funny and easy-going. They're fun to read. Julian Burroughs

is Digger, an investigator for an insurance company whose qualifications for the job are suspect. He's based in Las Vegas with his girlfriend, a Japanese part-time booker, whom he calls whenever he needs some heavy-duty brainwork. Sounds fun, huh?

But there are weaknesses. Digger is occasionally Too Much. Too much is the male chauvinist. Too much the quick-fisted roughneck. And the plots are very incidental and predictable. I'll be surprised if you can't figure them out halfway through the book. Which leaves the reader with one nagging question: How smart is Digger if he's got to call his girlfriend up to figure out what was obvious all along?

Still, it's the kind of book that provides enough action and wit that you're willing to ignore a few imperfections. If more are published, I'll read them. Cover to cover.

RECONSIDERED. "I'm in the mood for a real good suspense novel. Whatya recommend?" People drop by my place and ask me that with unerring regularity. Often that question strikes me dumb. I sputter. Look at my bookcases with glazed eyes. Pull thirty or forty volumes down and shove them into my friend's arms.

In an attempt to handle that question with more efficiency, I intend to make RECONSIDERED a regular feature of this column. This is where I take a moment to talk about a paperback book, though it doesn't have to be a paperback original.

There's always one suspense book I can recommend without hesitation to those who ask. *Marathon Man* by William Goldman. It crackles with intrigue, humor, and intelligence. The characters are full-blooded, well defined. The prose style ripples like tight muscles. It's terrific.

Goldman has had a lot of experience, not just as a novelist (*Control*, *Magie*, *No Way to Treat a Lady*, etc.) but as a screenwriter (*Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *A Bridge Too Far*, etc.). Nevertheless, his books don't always succeed; *Tinsel* was shallow and boring. But when he's good, he's one of the best. As in *Marathon Man*.

It's the typical innocent-man-caught-in-a-web-of-intrigue that we've seen before in *North by Northwest*. But Goldman makes the story sing. He starts by creating breathing, sympathetic characters, then running them through the paces of the plot. There's a difference between archetype and stereotype, a difference which Lewis Perdue could learn from this book. Babe, the young runner/graduate student whose life is dangerously fixated on proving his dead father's innocence, is an endearing character. Scylla, the super-agent past his prime, is riveting. Even the evil men and women they become involved with are fascinating because, unlike lesser novels of this genre, we understand and sympathize with their motivations. No wire characters, ever!

Got an evening to kill? Do yourself a favor and read *Marathon Man*. □

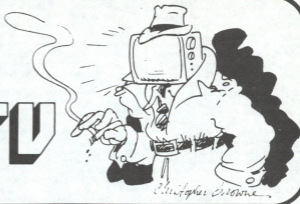
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TAD ON TV

By Richard Meyers



One of this columnist's great pleasures is to view and then review something interesting and fresh. One of this columnist's great pains is to then see the critique four to six months later, when even I have forgotten about the series, telefilms, and specials included. So while this is being formulated in the fall of 1982, y'all are probably shaking off the winter of '83.

So think of this as a time capsule of mass media mystery buried in *The Armchair Detective* some time ago, only to be dug up now. Well, a half-year back, television was in the purgatory between the heaven of hit shows coming to a seasonal close and the hell of new shows being unveiled in September.

The new detective series will be evaluated next column, no doubt, but for the moment all three networks are trotting out specials. There's one classic whodunit, one classic hard-boiled private eye, one science-fiction effort, one comedy, one Jack Webb production, and two movie ripoffs.

The first and foremost show to be considered given anyone's priorities would be the "General Foods Golden Showcase" presentation of *Rehearsal for Murder*, written by Edgar winners Richard Levinson and William Link, the creators of *Mannix*, *McCloud*, and *Columbo*, among others. Originally titled *Cold Reading*, this two-hour CBS mystery sported an interesting environment (the theatre world), an interesting plot (the death of a Broadway actress on opening night), and an engaging assortment of suspects (the young ingenue, the aging co-star, the has-been director, the miserly producer, etc., so on and so forth).

All the program really needed was a convincing mystery. Actually, it was a clever concept that didn't quite come off. The wonderful Robert Preston starred as a playwright whose fiancée is murdered after opening in his soon-to-close play. A year later, he gathers the suspects together to read his new play: a recreation of the events leading to his love's death.

It seemed as if every cliché audiences have

learned from *Sleuth* and especially *Deathtrap* about "the Theatre" (with a capital "T") was in place as all the red herrings were trotted out. Only Levinson and Link were too smart to leave it at that—the twist here was that all the acting was in reality simply that... acting. It was a fanciful plot (worthy of the Impossible Missions Force) by all concerned to get the real killer—essentially a total stranger—to confess.

Unfortunately, the damning bit of evidence was rather slim and far-fetched, and it came about a half-hour early. All the murderer was left to do then was confess for twenty minutes, dragging the all-important finale down to a snail's crawl. Otherwise, the direction by David Greene could not be faulted. He did much to create an atmosphere



The marvelous Robert Preston starred as playwright Alex Dennison in the Levinson and Link-written telefilm whodunit *Rehearsal for Murder*.

© CBS Inc.

of intrigue when the script required it. Sadly, the whole thing got too labored as it wheezed on.

Levinson and Link have gone on record against the long-winded, padded two-hour mystery versus the leaner, tighter ninety-minute effort (see their *Prime Time* book). It seems that *Rehearsal for Murder* is a perfect example of their problem. But if their latest work limped slightly, the sf private-eye movie called *Computercide* was paraplegic.

The central idea of this two-hour pilot, originally made in 1977, was neat: in the computer-run world of the future, there's only one private detective left—an egg-loving lug named Michael Stringer. There are one or two half-way decent lines in the story of Stringer tracking a genetic scientist found wandering in the desert twenty years younger than when he went in, but most of it was pathetic to the point of uproarious laughter.

Besides the fact that the script was painfully rudimentary, Joseph Cortese was totally miscast as the detective. He's supposed to be a wisecracking P.I., but he comes off as a monosyllabic lout with a pronounced Brooklyn accent. Add ridiculous soundtrack music reminiscent of the worst 77 *Sunset Strip* themes and obvious dramatic padding, and the result is an NBC TV movie that shows its age and is worth seeing only for its crud value.

Sadly, the same is true for *Rooster*, an ABC movie presentation that starts well, then degenerates completely with a bad case of the cutesy-poo. Diminutive singer/songwriter/actor Paul Williams starred as a police psychiatrist who teams up with a ponderous ex-cop turned insurance investigator played by Pat McCormick to track down a murdering arsonist.

These two worked together before in both farcical *Smokey* and the *Bandit* movies, and that's the general tone of this endeavor. It's bad, but only despicable if one is adverse to massive amounts of padding and a continuous flow of cameo guest star shots.

There are some good insult jokes here as

the boys make fun of each other's size ("You're so big Stevie Wonder could hit you," Williams retorts when McCormick says a hit man will never shoot him), but the direction is abysmal. At one point, a nurse reports an emergency as if she were giving the correct time. Suffice to say that a viewing of *Roaster* should only be done by accident or in the company of a Don Rickles freak.

A viewing of the sixty-minute **The 25th Man/Ma**, should only be done in the company of a Jack Webb or murder movie fan. The justly famous Webb chose to executive produce Sean Blaine's screenplay that combines *The Rookies* with *He Knows You're Alone*. Ellen Regan plays a trainee cop who is almost washed out of the Academy because a psycho starts dogging her every step. In other words, she's sitting pretty in cliché city.

Edward Winter plays the head of the Academy with traditional Jack Webb thin-lipped reserve, but ever since the actor portrayed the even-tempered but psychotic

Not quite totally beyond me was **The Renegades**, a new work coming from the typewriter of *T. J. Hooker* creator Rick Husky (in the company of Steven E. deSouza). This was a combination of *The Mod Squad* and *The Warriors*. Instead of three kids recruited by the fuzz, here there were seven street gang members taken under the wing of a crusty, tough cop played by James Luisi.

There's a black named Eagle, an Oriental named Dragon, a Hispanic named Gaucho, a slick car thief named Bandit, a con man named J. T., an innocuous WASP named Dancer, and a tightly packed blonde named Tracy. Clever, eh? Original, huh? The character development is all this superficial—when the filmmakers want to peg a high-ranking cop as a fink, they simply name him Scanlon and put a picture of Nixon on his wall.

The case is to stop a load of Saturday-night-special revolvers from hitting the streets; a carbon copy of a similar gun-

something that might give Clint Eastwood grounds for a lawsuit.

Hardcase was "Dirty Harry in New Orleans" but with a telling difference. While Harry shot up mad-dog rapists and killers, L.I. Casey roughs up prostitutes' johns and doggnappers. When reminded for such unnecessary force on the latter, he grunts, "Ask the little kids whose dogs he stole."

This is what TV can do. On the big screen, Harry's actions seemed justified. On the small screen, Casey's actions are overwrought in the extreme, not to mention derivative and forced. Casey is also completely without the nobility that was Harry's stock in trade. Beau Kayser, who plays the lead, seems to be a cunning cross between Eastwood and Kurt Russell—who did a lame Eastwood impersonation for the movie *Escape from New York*.

Because of its borrowed concept and tacky presentation, *Hardcase* is one of the sleaziest things I've ever seen on TV. I'll admit I like some sleazy things, but I like my sleaze with at least a modicum of originality in format or presentation. No such luck here. But there was plenty of such luck with **The Big Easy**, an ABC pilot episode aired just an hour prior to NBC's back-to-back telecast of *The 25th Man/Ms.* and *Hardcase*.

While *Hardcase* came across as a hunk of slime, this Dan Curtis production seemed like a tribute to the Chandler/Hammett school of tough P.I.s with a heart of gold. All the clichés were in place, but in this case it was comforting to see all the familiar touches. There was soundtrack narration by the movie-fixated detective who played the clarinet and enjoyed cooking. He hung out at a New Orleans bar called "The Big Easy" before, after, and during a case.

This case was to find a missing girl who dated the wrong kinds of men—one a gambler in hock to his eyeballs and another the "kept" plaything of a wealthy woman. So who hired the hit man to kill whom? That's what private eye Jake Rubineaux was out to discover.

William Devane was perfect as Rubineaux, a sensitive, no-nonsense detective who really looked as dangerous as he was supposed to be. Most TV detective stars don't live up to the hard-boiled dialogue they are given. Devane, on the other hand, really looks as if he doesn't give a far-flung damn. "I don't like your manners," says one man. "That's all right," he replies. "They're not for sale."

Rubineaux/Devane was sharp on detecting details but somewhat stupid on the overall picture, thanks to a Lee Hutson script that made everybody a bit slow on the uptake. But the whodunit aspect of the screenplay wasn't as important as the hard-boiled atmosphere. And there was a goodly amount of that, thanks to the solid cast and crew led by director Jud Taylor.

After all the dreck the networks trotted out for new summer viewing, *The Big Easy* is not only worth a rebroadcast but a full season of episodes. Let ABC know that Jake Rubineaux deserves to take his place next to the great TV detectives. □



Is this the new *Avengers*? No, it's Lynn Redgrave as murder victim and Broadway star Monica Welles; with Patrick Macnee as her co-star, and red herring David Matthews. From *Rehearsal For Murder*. © CBS Inc.

Col. Flagg on *M*A*S*H*, all his performances seem satirical no matter how tough he plays it. The only other unusual casting touch is that Bobby Troup—the ex-musician and co-star of *Emergency*—has a walk-on as the obessed psychotic!

One last comment: get me the names of the real estate agents who supply these rookie cops with their apartments! How anyone on a rookie cop's salary can afford the uniformly sumptuous digs these characters live in is totally beyond me. With all the decorating dough Regan's character obviously lavished on her apartment, you'd think she could afford a phone answering machine to field psychotic obscene calls. (And for those dying to know, the title refers to the one out of twenty-five police recruits who make it through training.)

running episode on *T. J. Hooker*. The whole show is one big similarity which doesn't keep the actors from being engaging, but it doesn't keep the show from getting dull either. A good finale fight livens things up a bit, but *The Renegades* creaks under the weight of all the ideas it "borrows."

There's a thin line between borrowing and stealing. *Hardcase* crosses that line constantly. If it might be fitting to hang a "Welcome to Cliché City" sign across *The Renegades*, a "Welcome to Ripoff Territory" sign would not be out of place on *Hardcase*. In a previous column, I dubbed James Arness's canceled show *McClain's Law* "Dirty Old Harry." Well, it seems Silliphant-Konigsberg Films and 20th Century-Fox TV weren't satisfied with that. Sterling Silliphant wrote and Frank Konigsberg executive produced

The Radio Murder Hour

By Chris Steinbrunner



Quite a few mystery figures from comic books and strips were taken over by radio during its Golden Age, far more than can be dealt with in this space. Here, though, are some of the most memorable radio dramas drawn from a large gallery of comic heroes.

Most prominent, of course, is Dick Tracy.

Tracy, the professional urban lawman personified, has had the longest life of all newspaper crime strips, almost creating the



genre. On radio, his success was not as long-lasting, but he still had three very respectable runs of several years each, starting in the '30s. He began each show by tersely identifying himself and his current case and then barking: "Stand by for action. Let's go, men!" The cases themselves, and some of the more colorful villains, were often drawn from the parent strip, and—unlike the four Republic movie serials—most of the endearing friends and associates with which creator Chester Gould had surrounded Dick were at hand. Tess Truheart, Pat Patton, Vitamin Flintheart were all given radio voices—and in the case of bravura Shakespearean actor Flintheart, his radio persona betrayed even more clearly his John Barrymore inspiration. Of course, such villains as Flattop—though played with more than a hint of Peter Lorre—were not quite as bizarre on the radio as they were visually on the printed page.

In its heyday as a Monday-to-Friday serial begun in the mid-'30s, the show wisely borrowed a favorite Gould technique—placing interesting, sympathetic characters in jeopardy and even sometimes allowing them to die. In its last years, in the '40s as a Saturday evening half-hour program, it even allowed (at least in one stunning incident) young, ambitious police officers you liked to be gunned down, just to get your attention. And action was often slowed for atmosphere, surprisingly enough: as whickered a device as the dimming of penitentiary lights during an execution was (in one show) dramatically well handled. But such slowing down was not frequent; mostly the show kept up the brisk, tense pace of the comic strip, the bullet-ready promise of the announcer's intro: "Dick Tracy, protector of law and order!" Guns ready.

Other policemen from the comics made the radio transition. Perhaps the most curious was the costumed character called the Blue Beetle. In his nine-to-five life, he was a rookie patrolman, but in his off hours he wore a blue mask, tights, and chain mail to wage a battle against evildoers unhampered by due process. "Criminals beware," the introduction to each show warned, "the Blue Beetle is everywhere!" He was played by Frank Lovejoy.

The most satisfying costumed hero, however, fought crime on another's program,

never having—on radio—a show of his own. Batman shared accommodations with Superman on the latter's Monday-through-Friday series, making substantial guest appearances from time to time. Interestingly, the Man of Steel from Krypton was one of few people who knew Batman's secret identity (millionaire playboy Bruce Wayne), yet the latter had no suspicion about the true relationship between Superman and reporter Clark Kent. One long sequence on the series was especially memorable. Robin, Batman's young helper, comes to Kent worried about his friend, who is missing. Walking down a dark street in an unsavory part of town during their search, they pass an arcade—and see the figure of Batman in the window of a waxworks! The first episode of a very bizarre tale.

(Many years after, Batman came into his own on television, in a colorful if not subtle series which nonetheless made full use of creator Bob Kane's outrageous villains.)

Radio drew many heroes from the pulps—starting, indeed, with Nick Carter—but the comics were sources of inspiration as well. Crime fighters of various stripes and settings, from Jungle Jim to military-academy student Dick Cole, from the Black Hood to Mandrake the Magician, added imagery for the ear to four-color graphics for the eye. □



TAD at the MOVIES

By Thomas Godfrey

Buried beneath a summer of technological and extraterrestrial blockbusters was a fair sampling of mystery-suspense films. Some of them, such as *Hanky Panky* with Gene Wilder and Gilda Radner, left town before I got around to seeing them.

Death Trap was also missed, but in this case because I procrastinated too long. Although it won a special Edgar from the M.W.A. in 1981, Ira Levin's Broadway play (from which the movie derives) has never impressed me much. The first act is crackling good theatre, gimmicky, brash, but with enough theatrical flourish to bring it across. The second act is a letdown. One begins to suspect the author used all his best material in the first act. The third and final act is an embarrassment, slapdash and crude in a amateurish way. The net effect is that of a good one-act play padded out to a whole evening.

Nevertheless, I hope to see it when it returns again, most likely on a double bill at one of the second-run houses.

I did catch *Partners* as it passed through, presumably on its way to oblivion. It was quite honestly a film without any redeeming social or entertainment value. As a mystery, it was rudimentary. As a comedy, it was timid and stale. As social drama, it was a comedy. As yet another attempt to mine the urban homosexual milieu as a background for a story, it was preposterous.

Ryan O'Neal plays a macho Hollywood police officer who is paired off with the closet gay member of the department's clerical division (John Hurt). They are assigned to go under cover, posing as a couple to trap the murderer of models for beefcake magazines. Both are too old for their parts, and Hurt is further mistreated by the production which has him running around in lavender sweat shirts keeping house for O'Neal. Even Kenneth McMillan, who gave such commendable supporting performances last year in *Ragtime* and *True Confessions*, comes up empty-handed in the role of their superior officer.

The script can't seem to decide whether to be funny, moralistic, or suspenseful. Before it does, it's over. I'm not sure who this movie was designed to appeal to. Certainly not any potential investors.

More successful by far was *Diva*, a new first effort by French filmmaker Jean-Jacques Beineix. My first reaction to it was astonishment that anyone thought all these disparate elements belonged in the same picture.

Maybe they don't, but it is certainly entertaining watching them all crowd in on the plot—opera singers, drug dealers, Chinese record pirates, crooked cops, socked-out bathtub philosophers, and teeny-boppers on roller skates. The hero is an adolescent messenger on bicycle who's a hi-fi and opera nut. Someone slips him a cassette which exposes massive corruption in the local police and the plot is off and running at an exhilarating pace.

One or two moments look overly contrived or artistically pretentious, but this is a film which is daring and diverse in a glitzy, high-tech fashion, which may well set the tone of mystery-suspense films for some time to come. We could do much worse.

Also from France comes *Garde à Vue* (meaning beware, or, as in this case, preventive detention), a psychological police study in the tradition of *Police Story* or *An Inspector Calls*. Most of the action takes place inside a police station during a New Year's Eve tour of duty. There are no chase sequences, no gun battles, no pulse-stopping walks down shadowy back alleys to give the story a quick fix from time to time.

Lino Ventura is once again cast as a tenacious police inspector interrogating Michel Serrault, the chief suspect in a series of child rape-homicides. As Serrault is a well-to-do, respected local attorney, the investigation proceeds much like a chess match. With the appearance of Serrault's embittered, vindictive wife, played by the late Romy Schneider, the emotional heat goes up several degrees, until it erupts into a scalding ending of surprise developments.

The acting is flawless. Ventura plays the tireless police officer as if he were born into the part. Schneider is likewise smooth in what must have been one of her last roles. The girlish charm had given way to a certain worn maturity that suggests Simone Signoret. Honors, however, go to Michel Serrault's repressed lawyer, worlds away from the flaming queen he played with such success in *La Cage aux Folles*.

Ultimately, your reaction to this picture will come down to your liking of this sort of crime drama. The first half-hour or so moves methodically in its set-bound environment. If the script were in English, brilliant writing or finely honed insights might make this time pass unnoticed. The terse functional English of subtitles suffices, but ultimately the depth of characterization in the persons of these

fine actors made the film work for me. Others may choose to pass.

The obvious attraction of *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* is the novelty of seeing bits of old 1940s black-and-white classics grafted skillfully onto a modern spoof of the hard-boiled genre. There is great fun in trying to name all the clips or trying to guess what will appear next as each new sequence builds. Some of them are genuinely funny. The Barbara Stanwyck clip from *Sorry, Wrong Number* is a guaranteed laugh. And there are others. Steve Martin's style (I am not particularly a fan of it) is neatly grafted onto the central role of the bumbling detective. He does not dominate the film, as he does in *The Jerk*; the gimmick is the thing here.

Where the film falls down, inevitably, is on the main plotline, which is a flimsy filament holding together some rather pregnant sequences. It all gets snarled up in a stock Nazi-uber-ales finale that looks like something Mel Brooks dreamed one night after hot dogs and sauerkraut.

Given the basic idea, I'm not sure writer-actor Carl Reiner hasn't done just as much with it as is humanly possible. Supposedly other clips were supposed to appear in the film (including one with Lauren Bacall), but they were eliminated before release, presumably in favor of strengthening the plot.

A curiosity, then, but an interesting one.

Under the Rainbow, with Chevy Chase, Carter Fisher, and Billy Barty, finds Chase in yet another dud. This time he's supposed to be Bruce Thorpe, a G-man assigned to protect an eccentric duke and his wife who are visiting Hollywood during the shooting of *The Wizard of Oz*. Naturally, there are several assassination attempts, along with a dwarf Nazi spy, a lethal Japanese agent, a busful of harmless Japanese tourists taking pictures, a missing intelligence map, a harried special casting staff, and a hotel full of debauched Munchkin actors.

It sounds hilarious on paper, but in actuality it never gets off the ground. Director Stephen Rash and his writers keep falling back on the comedic potential of the material when invention (often) fails them. Consequently, *Under the Rainbow* has a loose, under-developed quality that spells disaster in the long run. A film in which Eve Arden can't get a laugh with a line must have something seriously wrong with it. And she doesn't, and it does. □



CRIME HUNT

By T. M. McDade

THE LINDBERGH KIDNAPPING

Is revisionism a phenomenon of the times, or have famous trials always been the subject of reappraisal? In an area in which finality of judgment is not only desirable but fundamental, can the continuous re-examination of cases aid or hinder faith in the judgments themselves? The literature of assassination is one vast field of research and criticism, nor did this begin with the Kennedy cases; more than a century old, the Lincoln assassination still provokes study, and claims of guilt are traced back to the President's cabinet.

I have always thought that the evidence against Bruno Richard Hauptmann for the kidnapping and death of the Lindbergh baby was as convincing as it is possible in a modern trial. This was also the view of the principal writers at the time, Adela Rogers St. Johns, who attended the trial as a journalist, now writes, "Believe me, every single reporter, and there were twenty or twenty-five of the best reporters in the country there—every single one of us felt that Hauptmann was guilty."

But today, with the fiftieth anniversary of the crime just passed, new writings question the conviction, raising not only the old questions but new ones based on supposed revelations found in the ensuing years. Staid *Life* magazine notes the event in an article captioned "Did the Evidence Fit the Crime?" which skips through the case, asking questions but producing no new answers.

A brief résumé of the events may be of help to the reader. The twenty-month-old Charles Lindbergh, Jr. was kidnapped from the Lindbergh home in Hopewell, New Jersey on the evening of March 1, 1932. The actual time of the taking could be placed between 9 and 10 P.M., and the kidnapper was extraordinarily lucky, as the disappearance of the child was discovered only a short time after he had been taken. A home-made ladder had been brought to the house, located in the remote Sourland Mountains where the Lindberghs sought the privacy they were unable to find elsewhere. With this ladder, the kidnapper entered the second-floor nursery through a window near which he left a ransom note as he departed with the child. This original ransom note contained a "signature" in the

form of two intersecting circles, the circles outlined in blue; the ellipse formed by the overlapping circles was colored in red, and each of the three elements contained a square hole.

Amid the public furor raised by the crime, Dr. John F. Condon, a retired professor and inveterate letter-writer to the *Bronx Home News*, offered his services as intermediary. Very shortly thereafter, he received a note using the same symbol as the original ransom letter, and he engaged in negotiations which lasted several weeks and concluded with him delivering \$50,000 of Col. Lindbergh's money to a man in a Bronx cemetery. In exchange, he was given a letter instructing that the child would be found on a boat *Nelly* in Long Island Sound. Efforts to locate the boat were fruitless, and it was the last the kidnapper was heard from. A little more than a month later, on May 12, 1932, the child's body was found in some woods about five miles from his home. The child had obviously been dead since his disappearance.

From this time, the investigation went on in several directions, although the principal hope was in tracing the ransom bills which had begun to appear immediately after they had been paid. One circumstance which greatly facilitated the investigation was that most of the ransom money had consisted of notes stating that they were redeemable in gold. In the spring of 1933, during the financial crisis, President Roosevelt had called in all the gold certificates, and this fact aided in getting merchants to identify the money so received. Hundreds of bills had appeared in New York City and the Bronx when the careful legwork of the investigators paid off. A ransom bill deposited by a gasoline station was found to bear, in writing on the back, the license number 4U 13-41. The license was for the auto of Bruno Richard Hauptmann, who was arrested on September 19, 1934. In the search of his garage, more than \$14,000 in ransom notes was found hidden under the floor. Extradited to New Jersey, where he had been indicted for the murder of the Lindbergh child, Hauptmann went to trial beginning in January 1935 in Flemington, and on February 13, 1935, the jury found him guilty of murder as charged. His subsequent appeals to higher courts in New Jersey and even the United States Supreme Court failed, and he was finally executed in the electric chair at Trenton state prison on April 3, 1936.

What was the evidence which convicted Hauptmann? While it is not possible to tell exactly which part of the state's case the jury

found convincing, there were three major areas which represented the core of the prosecution's case and which directly tied Hauptmann to the kidnapping.

(1) The ransom money. It was the passing of one of the bills on the list of ransom money which resulted in Hauptmann's apprehension. When first taken into custody and questioned, he said that he had only a couple of hundred dollars in gold certificates. Then, when a search of his house disclosed only a few gold coins, he claimed that was what he had had in mind. When the further search of his garage produced over \$14,000 in ransom gold notes, he again changed his story. He now said that a former friend and business associate, Isidor Fisch, who had returned to Germany in December 1933, had left a cardboard box with him for safe-keeping. The box had been kept on a closet shelf, and, when a leak soaked the box, it broke apart and its contents were revealed as the money now found. In the interim, Fisch had died in Germany in 1934. According to Hauptmann, Fisch owed him about \$7,500, so he began using some of the bills. He never did explain why the money was concealed under the floor of the garage and in holes bored in a wooden block.

(2) The ladder. The second most important piece of evidence was the ladder left at the scene of the crime. A few months after the kidnapping, Arthur Koehler, a wood technologist for the United States Forestry Service, began a long and meticulous study of the wood and its construction. For eighteen months, he made a unique and unparalleled examination, during which time he traced some of the boards back to the lumber mill where they had been cut. From the planing strokes on the boards, Koehler was not only able to identify the type of machine used, but, from irregularities peculiar to the cutting heads of the machine which planed one of the rails in the ladder, he found that very machine in a mill in McCormick, South Carolina. Tracing shipments from that mill, he identified the National Lumber and Millwork Company in the Bronx as the recipient of some of those peculiarly-marked boards. All this was done long before Hauptmann was arrested or even known of, and, when that occurred, it was discovered that Hauptmann had not only worked in the mill but that an invoice had been made out to him for a purchase of \$9.32.

But even more damning was the evidence of the four nail holes, square rather than round, in one of the ladder rails. These holes, made by old-fashioned square-cut nails, had

nothing to do with the construction of the ladder; the piece of wood had evidently been used before and when put into the ladder had already contained these four holes. Koehler found that the holes perfectly matched four other square holes in a rafter in Hauptmann's attic from which part of a board had been removed. Further, the grain could be matched with the grain in the remaining portion of the board in the attic from which it had been cut.

(3) The ransom letters. The principal handwriting experts in the United States identified the ransom letters as having been written by Hauptmann. Six such witnesses testified at his trial. Not only did they all agree that they were in his handwriting, but the spelling was identical with some of the words which in the ransom letters had been misspelled. As there were fourteen ransom letters, there was a considerable body of writing to use for comparison. The specimens taken from Hauptmann had been dictated from an innocuous text which contained the words which were misspelled in the notes. Thus the word "boat" was spelled "boad," "our" was spelled "Ouer," the word "later" was "latter," and "not" usually appeared as "note." The kidnapper had used a "d" instead of a "t" in "anything" and "something"; so had Hauptmann.

In the thousands of documents in a case such as this, there are bound to be contradictions, wrong opinions, guesses which proved false, dead ends, inconsistencies, and unresolved matters. These do not disprove the original case; to change the opinion of Hauptmann's guilt, it would be necessary to come to grips with the cumulative effect of all the bits and pieces of evidence which collectively are damning. Here are some of the items, any one of which, standing alone, might be explainable, but, when taken all together, lead one conclusively to his guilt.

(1) A three-quarter-inch chisel was found outside the Lindbergh home near the ladder. The chisel of that size was missing from Hauptmann's tools.

(2) The plane in Hauptmann's toolbox had irregularities in the blade which matched the planing on boards in the ladder.

(3) Hauptmann stopped working on April 2, 1932, the day the ransom was paid. Although he was only 33, he never worked again. What did he live on?

(4) In a dark closet in Hauptmann's apartment was found a pencil notation of Dr. Condon's telephone number and address. Hauptmann, explaining how he might have written it, said, "I must have read it in the paper about the story. I was a little bit interested."

(5) Hauptmann was a convicted felon—he had committed several burglaries in Germany, one involving entry on a second floor, and was sentenced to five years. Paroled, he was re-arrested on new charges but escaped from jail and fled to America.

(6) Although Hauptmann wrote to the Fisch family after Fisch's death, telling them of the trucks he held for Fisch, he never

mentioned the parcel containing the money he had found.

(7) Hauptmann's total net worth on April 2, 1932 was less than \$5,000. Though he quit his job and did not work again, this carpenter who had been earning \$3.33 per day for his labors, immediately after the ransom payment, spent \$396 for a new radio in May 1932, \$126 for German field glasses in July, \$706 in the same month to send his wife to Germany, and later \$200 for two hunting trips including the cost of a new rifle, plus another \$100 for a motor trip to Florida.

(8) Hauptmann claimed to have left the shoebox full of ransom money on the top shelf of the broom closet, the same closet where his wife kept her apron. In testifying, Mrs. Hauptmann admitted that she cleaned all the shelves but the top one, and had even gotten material and other things from the top shelf, but had never seen the shoebox. She was probably telling the truth.

(9) Having lied when first questioned about the gold certificates, Hauptmann then said that he had discovered the money in the box only two weeks before his arrest. In addition to the bill found on him when arrested, as well as the one given the gas station, he had given one to his landlady to pay part of his September rent. But he had also paid part of the January rent with a gold note which the landlady had kept and which was recovered. Thus he was using bills long before he claimed he had found the money.

(10) Hauptmann tried to explain how he made enough money in the stock market to live on, but an analysis of his account showed that in fact he had lost money in the market. The accountant who analyzed the figures easily showed that money was going out rather than coming in from his market transactions.

The case is, in fact, a striking illustration of the value of circumstantial evidence as contrasted with direct evidence. We have all heard the classic illustration of circumstantial evidence: Robinson Crusoe sees the footprint on the beach and concludes there is another person on his island. Or the case of the farmer prosecuted for watering his milk: the evidence—a trout in the milk. In each case, a conclusion is drawn from an observed fact; in direct evidence, the witness claims to have observed the fact itself. Circumstantial testimony can be more probative than eyewitness testimony because it does not depend on the word or observation of a single person but can be demonstrated from concrete evidence. Actually, the weakest part of the case against Hauptmann was the direct evidence—the cashier in the movie theater who claimed to identify Hauptmann as the passer of a ransom bill, the 87-year-old man who testified he had seen Hauptmann near the Lindbergh house on the day of the kidnapping, or John Perrone, the taxi driver who was given one of the ransom letters to deliver to Dr. Condon and who identified Hauptmann as the man who gave it to him. Though these are what we call eyewitnesses and their evidence is direct evidence and ought to be convincing, there are reasons why their stories are less

reliable than the irrefutable evidence of the possession of the ransom money, the handwriting in the letters, and the connection of the ladder with Hauptmann's apartment.

Hauptmann's conviction was appealed to the New Jersey Court of Errors and Appeals, the highest appellate court in the state. Normally a court of sixteen members, the appeal in this case was heard by fourteen judges. While the bulk of the appeal was based on questions of law rather than of fact, the whole record of the trial, consisting of a trial transcript of one-and-a-half million words, was part of the appeal record. It took the court almost four months to announce its decision, but when it did in October 1935, its fourteen members were unanimous in affirming Hauptmann's conviction. In a long and carefully worded decision, Judge Charles W. Parker answered each of the points raised by the defendant's attorneys both in oral argument and in the briefs they had filed with the court. Central to its decision was its opinion on the convincing nature of the evidence against Hauptmann. Not only was the judgment not against the weight of the evidence as they had argued, but the decision that Hauptmann was guilty was the sole and inescapable conclusion to be drawn from it. They concluded that the evidence, though circumstantial, "pointed to guilt from so many directions that there was no room for reasonable doubt."

Later, an application was made to the United States Supreme Court to review the case, but certiorari was denied as the case did not involve questions of constitutional dimensions for the court to pass on.



Those books and articles which question the guilt of Hauptmann are unsatisfactory and unconvincing because they consist of peripheral sniping rather than a reasoned analysis of all the evidence. Despite the overwhelming consensus of expert opinion that the ransom notes were written by Hauptmann, one writer questions their validity on the basis of a memo made by the head of the New Jersey State Police in 1934. In fact, it is the bits and pieces dredged up under the Freedom of Information Act which are the bases for many of the new questions. The same writer tries to raise doubts about the testimony of Koehler, the wood expert, but he never comes to grips with the real evidence such as explaining the nail holes in the ladder (photographed months before the arrest of Hauptmann) which matched perfectly with the holes in the rafter in Hauptmann's attic.

That recurring phenomenon—the newly-discovered person thought to have died or been lost—has reappeared in this case. Several fifty-year-old men have claimed to be the deceased Lindbergh baby for whose death Hauptmann was executed. Shades of John Wilkes Booth, Jesse James, and Charlie Ross, all of whom came to life in the persons of claimants years after the original had died. It would seem that famous old cases have a powerful attraction for people seeking new solutions—or at least to upset old ones. A very successful true-crime writer in doing a book on Lizzie Borden strained all logic and sense to prove that Annie Sullivan, the maid, had murdered the Borden. Now, after fifty years, the Lindbergh case is attracting the "revisionists."

That parts of the investigation were badly handled, certainly early in the case, is quite true. The New Jersey State Police at the time were little more than traffic cops and were not equipped by training or experience for the job. Even more serious were the conflicts between the enforcement agencies; for a while there was no effective co-operation and information found by one was withheld from the others. For months, the New York City Police did not see the ransom notes. Valuable clues were undoubtedly lost, but blind assumptions about what might have been prove nothing.

That there are unanswered questions is not surprising; real cases do not have the neatness of the detective story. Just who was the man J. J. Faulkner, who changed \$2,980 in ransom money at the Federal Reserve Bank when gold notes were recalled? Why did Violet Sharpe, the maid at Mrs. Lindbergh's parents' household, first tell contradictory stories about who she was with on the night of the kidnapping and then, when pressed under police interrogation, commit suicide? Whose was the Italian voice which followed that of John, the kidnapper, who talked on the telephone to Dr. Condon? There must be dozens of others equally baffling, but it is in the nature of police investigations and in all inquiries that all the questions do not get answered. And in this case, the trail was further muddled by chiselers posing as the

kidnappers or by plain con men trying to fleece people who were anxious to help recover the Lindbergh child. Gaston B. Means and his associate known as the Fox billed Mrs. Evelyn Walsh McLean of \$104,000, claiming they were in touch with the kidnappers. Means and his friend got fifteen years for grand larceny. John Curtis Hughes, a Norfolk shipbuilder, concocted a fictitious story of being approached by the kidnapper, and for weeks he purported to be negotiating for the ransom of the child. Eventually, his scheme collapsed, and, as he was making no effort to collect money himself, it was difficult to find a basis on which to prosecute him. Ultimately, he was fined \$1,000 for his acts.

The most egregious behavior was that of Ellis Parker, Chief of the Burlington County detectives, who arranged for the kidnapping of fifty-year-old Paul Wendel and forcing him to confess to the Lindbergh crime. Three associates were convicted in Brooklyn, where Wendel had been held, and also were later convicted in Federal court in New Jersey. When Governor Hoffman refused to extradite the Parkers, father and son, to Brooklyn for trial, the Federal Government caused them to be indicted under the new Federal kidnapping law. Tried in New Jersey, Parker Senior was sentenced to six years, dying in prison. His son got three years.


The literature of the Lindbergh case is not so extensive as might be expected for perhaps

the most sensational case of the twentieth century. *The Trial of Bruno Richard Hauptmann*, edited by Sidney Whipple (1937), is a standard reference work on the case. It has a comprehensive summary and a transcript of the major portions of the testimony in the words of the witnesses. Whipple did another book, *The Lindbergh Crime*, enlarging on the introduction in his first work. *Kidnap: The Story of the Lindbergh Case* by George A. Waller (1961) is also a careful, complete, and well-written volume covering many issues collateral to the main investigation and trial. Dr. John F. Condon's name appears on a volume which republished his magazine articles under the title *Jafisie Tells All*.

Scapgoat: The Lonesome Death of Bruno Richard Hauptmann by Anthony Scaduto (1976) is the first of the revisionist literature. The bulk of the book concerns the author's interviews with one of those convicted of kidnapping Wendel. This fanciful tale peters out, and we are left with Scaduto's efforts to prove that the case against Hauptmann was a vast conspiracy in which all the principal witnesses lied.

Undoubtedly, there will be other revisionists who, scratching in the debris of the case, will find new theories and new villains. Unfortunately, readers disillusioned by a record of corruption in high places will accept specious judgments where they are not warranted. As always, the reader must be his own watchman. □

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A CATALOGUE OF CRIME

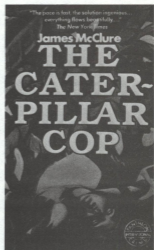
S175 Hodge, Harry
The Black Maria or Criminals'
Omnibus
Gollancz, 1935

All who enjoy true crime know that the series of Notable British (Scottish, English) Trials is a storehouse of original documentation, coupled with a treasury of astute comment. At the behest of William Hodge, bookseller and publisher in Edinburgh, the finest writers in the genre began in 1905 to contribute masterly introductions to the nearly full verbatim reports of the most engaging capital trials since that of Charles I. What is not generally known is that after thirty years and over three score volumes published, Harry Hodge had the idea of issuing fifteen of the best introductions in a volume of a thousand pages titled as above.

He calls himself the conductor of the Black Maria, and what he drives us through is a journey that begins in 1752 with Mary Blandy

**By Jacques Barzun
and Wendell Hertig Taylor**

(in the hands of William Roughead) and ends in 1931 with Alfred Arthur Rose (brought to book by Helena Normanton). Those in between are equally notable, in deed and writing up, the authors being: David Mackay, Eric Watson, H. B. Irving, J. B. Ailay, Sir John Hall, W. T. Shore, H. L. Adam, F. Tennyson Jesse, Fletcher Moulton, Filson Young, and Donald Carswell—two among them doing double duty. As for the enterprising "perpetrators," they are: James Stewart, Thurtell and Hunt, Jesse McLachlan, the Wainwrights, Adelaide Bartlett, Dr. Cream, George Chapman, Samuel Herbert Dougal, Steinie Morrison, the Seddons, George Joseph Smith, and Ronald True.

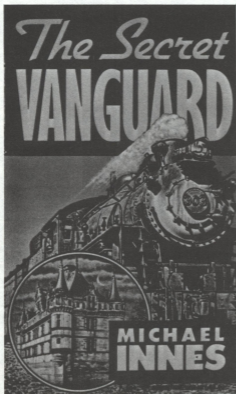


S176 Innes, Michael
The Secret Vanguard
Harp 1982 (DM 1941)

It is always interesting to note how an abundant producer distributes his energies among the related species of his chosen genre. Dame Agatha did not stray far from the mainstream of the unaccountable death and its elucidation. Michael Innes has been more restless, and we have had from him the humorous semi-pastiche and the cock-and-bull fantasy, besides the mainstream and the semi-procedural. During the last large war, he also yielded to the pressure of events and produced *The Secret Vanguard*, a would-be spy story, now reissued in paperback. It is not a success. There is some delightful writing in it—post-Dickensian periphrases of the satirical kind—and tolerable scenery in the wilds north of the border; but the author does not believe in his well-disguised enemy agents and neither do we. The scientific boffin who wanders off, professor-like, and the nice girl who gets "involved" are but the old stage props, and we soon cease to care what happens to them. Such is the penalty of writing after a fashion.

S177 McClure, James
The Caterpillar Cop
Harp 1972

This is the second in the series of South African mystery tales featuring Lt. Tromple Kramer and his Bantu assistant, Sgt. Mickey Zondi. As in the first tale (*The Steam Pig*) and two or three more that follow this one, the local color comes off better than the detection. A twelve-year-old boy, Boetie, in



his efforts to do enough work for his "detective club" to win him the approbation of the local police, stumbles upon a serious crime and gets murdered for his pains. There is only one clue, a peculiar one that serves to exploit the title of the story. But just why poor Boetie had to suffer mutilation as well is not made clear, though there is a suggestion that the "respectable" killer had a reason. Kramer and Zondi make a good pair; the working of apartheid remains as appalling as ever, and perhaps it accounts for the complete absence of humor or other light touch.

S178 Marin, A. C. (pseud.)
A Storm of Spears
HBJ 1971

Not surprisingly, the widespread student unrest of the 'sixties spawned a number of stories of the so-called "suspense" variety. The present tale is surely one of the strongest and best. Frank Charles is an instructor in English at a large university in California and is blackmailed into becoming involved in the ambitious "Project White Knight." This incredible organization intends to bring about "civil order and tranquility" by clamping down violently on subversive groups. Twenty-one of these are listed, including the Black Panthers, the NAACP, the Communist Party, U.S.A., and the American Civil Liberties Union. The conspiracy is ruthlessly smashed, and Charles's doubtful fate supplies the reader with a large dose of solid suspense, interspersed with some well-handled presentation of contemporary racism. Good reading about potential crime, scarcely detection.

S179 Paretsky, Sara
Indemnity Only
Dial 1982

When Christie Opara, a policewoman in the N.Y.P.D., was introduced to readers of detective fiction ten years ago (see S7), it appeared likely that Dorothy Uhnak's competent and believable heroine would soon be followed by several more of her sex and profession. The flood has not materialized, but this book marks the entry into the field of the woman private eye, modern style. Sara Paretsky is a Chicagoan who obviously knows the insurance business from the inside. Her heroine, "Vic" Warshawski, faces in her first murder case a complex but clearly-presented tangle of corruption engineered by big business and deadly union tactics. Vic's part is not over-played; she goes in for the conventional trailing of suspects, gets vandalized and beaten up, and winds up successful. The shoot-out shows her competence. There are several well-drawn characters, a bit of love-interest, and some veiled but plain enough sex. A newcomer worth watching.

S180 Perry, Thomas
The Butcher's Boy
Scrib 1982

The hero, a hit man who is never named otherwise than as in the title, has been hired to do in a Senator from Colorado, but things go wrong and suddenly the failed assassin finds himself on the run. Looking for his huge fee in Las Vegas, the B.'s B. gets closer

to bright young Elizabeth Waring, who has been sent out from Washington to look into — things. Events and meetings, shots and upshots happen rather too much by chance. A number of descriptions show that the author knows his way around beds and bedrooms, but scarcely suffice to redeem what for us must remain, in spite of tough, crackling prose, an unmemorable book.

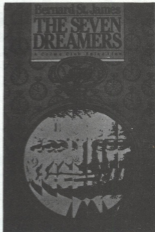
S181 St. James, Bernard
The Seven Dreamers
CCD 1982

This story, set in Napoleonic France, is the second about Chief Inspector Blanc of the Paris Police, the able subordinate of (the quite historical) Minister Joseph Fouché. As before, the local color is admirably done, that is, accurate but unobtrusive. No details of dress or custom are thrust at you because the author has them on hand, and the language shows similar tact — it is just "off" modern English, never Frenchified or "antiqued." One curious point, though, is that several of the French characters have unlikely names, such as *Emil* without an e, *Bastard*, and *Terrell*.

The drama begins with the discovery of seven respectable people sitting around a table with their throats cut. A red herring is soon disposed of and the true questions pursued: who did it, why, and how? The chase leads Blanc to the underground haunts of smugglers and to a foreign capital where unusual information is to be obtained. Meanwhile, the continuing tussle between Blanc and his enemy, the *Préfet Dubois*, adds a bit of tension, not overdone. Neither is Blanc's peaceable liaison with a charming (though incredibly even-tempered) prima donna. The pleasure to be had from these elements of the story is great. This time, unfortunately, it is marred by what we are asked to believe was the method of the murder. Its motive is fair enough, and the detection also, but the flaw where plausibility must be unquestioned tends to damage our belief in the rest. Better work next time!

S182 Siebenheller, Norma
P. D. James
Ungar (New York) 1981

It is by now open season for all writers who want to make something out of the once-



despised crime-fiction genre. Lists of titles, reference works on various aspects of the literature, essays in criticism, sociological interpretations at learned society meetings, biographical studies of the masters and mistresses — all these are outlets for the ambitious "discoverers." They are now sure, if not of large sales, at least of quick and respectful attention. If proof were needed, see this small book of 154 pp.; it is one of the series "Recognitions," which so far includes Sayers, Chandler, and Sons of Sam Spade.

The work in hand is a good introduction to P.D.J.'s varied production. It is systematic in its handling of "development," "themes," "characters," and the social views implicit in "law and justice." Indeed, it goes a little far in digging out "symbols" in the manner of academic termites. But it is also plain and outspoken in criticizing the author's recent specializing in unpleasant characters. The author is a poet and librarian and the author of a *Companion to Agatha Christie*. □

MURDER DID PAY

(Newark, N.J.: New Jersey Historical Society, 1982); 193 pages, illustrated. ISBN 0-911020-04-7. Hardbound, \$12.95. Here is crime non-fiction at its best! John T. Cunningham, prize-winning historian, presents reprints of four famous murder pamphlets from 19th-century New Jersey, to which Donald A. Sinclair has contributed "Murders in Print" about forty celebrated cases. Add \$1.50 for postage/handling. Make checks payable to the New Jersey Historical Society (230 Broadway, Newark, N.J. 07104).

Minor Offenses

By Edward D. Hoch

It's always good to report the arrival of a new mystery magazine on the publishing scene, but this time the "new" magazine happens to be 26 years old! It's *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, completely redesigned, with a new editor, new features, and 32 extra pages. The editor, Cathleen Jordan, took over late last year, and the extra pages were added in July, but it wasn't until the August 1982 issue that the full extent of the changes were visible.

If Cathleen Jordan's task were to make the magazine as different as possible from its sister publication *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, she has succeeded quite well. One need only look at the covers of the August, September, and mid-September issues to see that striking new graphic design is in evidence, with strong emphasis on a single lead title and author. A year ago at this time, the photographic covers of EQMM and AHMM were virtually indistinguishable from each other on newsstands.

The new interior design of the magazine lacks an overall "look," with some stories set

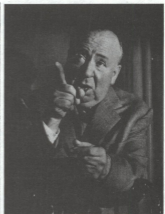
July issue was perhaps better suited to the pages of *Boys' Life* than AHMM. Because the stories are longer, and space is given over to a variety of features, there are only six or seven new stories in an issue—about half the number there used to be.

As for the features—true crime, a reader contest, a puzzle, book reviews, and two movie columns—they're a mixed bag ranging from good to indifferent. More successful is the new mystery classic feature, which shows the wide range of the editor's taste. The first three classic reprints have been stories by Daphne Du Maurier, Damon Runyon, and Arthur Morrison—a truly diverse trio of crime writers!

Editor Cathleen Jordan is also responsible for the new look in Hitchcock anthologies, as shown by *Fear*, the twelfth in the series to be published by Davis. Abandoning the lengthy titles of former Hitchcock anthologies in favor of one short word, the paperback (\$2.95) edition also uses a stark black, white and red cover in contrast with the previous full-color covers. Only nineteen stories here, about ten fewer than usual, again showing the editor's preference for the longer tale. And, surprisingly, the stories aren't just from AHMM this time but from EQMM and a number of science-fiction magazines. There are even reprints of old fantasies by Arthur Conan Doyle, M. R. James, and Algernon Blackwood. (By the way, editor Jordan becomes a mystery writer herself next spring when Walker publishes her first novel.)

Three other anthologies are worthy of note. *The Big Apple Mysteries*, edited by Carol-Lynn Rossel Waugh, Martin Harry Greenberg, and Isaac Asimov (Avon, \$2.75), collects thirteen stories about murder and mystery in New York. If many of the stories are familiar, all are first-rate, and it's good to have them collected here. *The Great British Detective*, edited by Ron Goulart (Mentor, \$3.95), offers fifteen stories starring famous fictional sleuths such as Holmes, Poirot, Wimsey, Father Brown, and Dr. Fell. Ruth Rendell is the only living author to be included, but the book does offer stories about Loveday Brooke and Sexton Blake, two detectives rarely reprinted on this side of the Atlantic.

Another new anthology, in hardcover, is *Great Short Tales of Mystery and Terror* (\$14.98 plus shipping from Reader's Digest Association, Pleasantville, NY). The 45 mystery and fantasy stories collected here are all by well-known writers, and many are classics. But be warned that about half of them have been slightly condensed. If you can't bear tampering with "The Red-Headed League," "The Hands of Mr. Ottermole," or

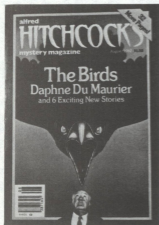


"The Cask of Amontillado," this isn't the book for you. Interestingly enough, both the Goulart volume and the Reader's Digest one reprint the same John Dickson Carr story, "The Incautious Burglar." A fine tale, I'll admit, but not one I'd choose to show off Carr's speciality, the locked-room/impossible crime mystery.

The summer months produced several fine stories in EQMM worth noting. I read Clark Howard's "Death Snow" while flying back from London on board a 747, the same type of aircraft that serves as a hiding place for narcotics in this story from the mid-July issue. I missed guessing the hiding place in the story, though I was looking right at it in my own plane. The ending of "Death Snow" might upset some traditionalists, but it's a fine, powerful tale—as is just about everything Clark Howard is publishing these days. After more than 25 years of writing mystery short stories (we appeared together in the January 1957 issue of *Crime & Justice*), he's a writer at the peak of his skills.

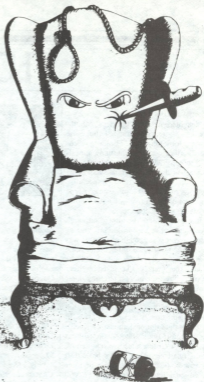
Clark Howard has another fine story, "Old Soldiers," in the September EQMM, and it's good to see Lawrence Block's Ehrengraf return in the same issue after too long an absence. "The Ehrengraf Alternative" is one of his best. Also in the September issue, be sure to read Geoffrey Bush's "The oo y Trap," a story that's great fun and makes use of a typographic plot device which obviously drove the EQMM proofreaders wild.

Next time, I'll take a long overdue look at some of the newcomers to the mystery magazine field, notably *Spiderweb* and *Black Cat*. □



in single columns on a page and others in double columns. Some pages have borders around them and others do not. The story illustrations, however, are generally an improvement over the old ones. As for content, it's good to see authors such as Hal Ellson and Pauline Smith back in the pages of AHMM, though some of the longer stories—mainly by authors new to the magazine—could be a bit better (the cover story in the

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LETTERS

From Bob Aucott:

I've delighted in Otto Penzler's column "Collecting Mystery Fiction": I hope he continues it for a long time. The more recent one on Charlie Chan was unusually appealing. I thought, with its glimpse into the glamorous world of first editions and with its many attractive illustrations (especially, perhaps, the one on p. 125 of a sinister type peering from behind a tree—obviously either a murderer or a book collector).

I know I'm behind the times, although some catalogues I've seen in the last year or two have given me the rough idea, but I was startled by the present big difference in value between the jacketed and the un-jacketed (the sheep and the goats?). I've saved mystery fiction catalogues, the more interesting ones, for some ten years and more, and I got some out and looked them over. It would appear that it was not until about 1977 or 1978 that jackets started to really move up in price. In 1980, their values doubled almost overnight. In '82—whoof! Book prices, plain, without jackets, have, over this same five-year period, remained relatively stable. Why have dust jacket values, just in the last two or three years, zoomed into the stratosphere? Will they ever come back? I don't know.

But let's look at jackets for a minute or two. In his book *ABC for Book Collectors* (5th Edition, revised 1972), the well-known critic and bibliographer John Carter (we could call him, perhaps, "the Otto Penzler of his day") defines "dust jacket" as "the paper jacket... which is wrapped round most modern books to protect the cloth covers in transit between the publisher and the reader... [they] were—and functionally still are—ephemera in the most extreme sense: wrappings intended to be thrown away before [the books] they were designed to accompany were put to use" (his italics). "Until about fifty years ago, therefore, it would probably be true to say that any dust jacket that had survived had done so by accident."

Now, this definition appears in a book printed in 1972, and Mr. Carter does admit that, as of that time, a jacket often being, for any of several reasons, of interest in itself, probably "most serious collectors are willing to pay the premium that booksellers normally charge for its presence."

What did this premium "normally" amount to, in 1972? I can answer that pretty well. The following listings and prices are from an extraordinary catalogue, *Detective Fiction First Editions*, issued by J & S Graphics, Chicago, about 1973, which describes and prices over 4,500 entries, from Abbot to Zangwill. The entries I have used consist of two copies each of twelve titles, one with, and one without, a dust jacket. I have not included any presentation nor signed copies and have noted any comments made about



condition, which are few. I've picked all these by author, but otherwise at random—the first ones I came to. I know I could find more such pairs, but, I think, twelve should do us. There was no other Chan pair listed: there were no Queen, no Sayers, no Hammett, no Ross Macdonald pairs at all. I have omitted names of publishers as being unnecessary. Here they are:

Nos. 322 and 323 Berkeley, Anthony: *The Second Shot*, Garden City, 1931, black cloth. First American Edition. (Without dust jacket, \$7.50; with jacket, \$10.00)

Nos. 343 and 344 Biggers, Earl Derr: *The Chinese Parrot*, Indianapolis, 1926, green cloth. First Edition. (Without jacket, \$20.00; with jacket, \$35.00) ("Jacket somewhat worn, book fine, scarce in dust jacket")

Nos. 566 and 567 Carr, John Dickson: *Death Watch*, N.Y., 1935, black cloth. First American Edition, following the English edition by two weeks. (Without jacket, \$10.00; with jacket, \$15.00)

Nos. 580 and 581 Carr, John Dickson: *He Wouldn't Kill Patience* (by Carter Dickson), London, 1944, pink cloth. First English Edition. (Without jacket, \$8.50; with jacket, \$10.00) ("jacket mended")

Nos. 643 and 644 Chandler, Raymond: *The High Window*, N.Y., 1942, brown cloth. First Edition. (Without jacket, \$35.00; "bookplate," with jacket, \$55.00) (Jacket chipped)

Nos. 761 and 762 Christie, Agatha: *Hercule Poirot's Christmas*, London, 1939, orange cloth. First Edition. (Without jacket, \$25.00; with jacket, \$35.00) ("jacket nicked at backstrip top")

Nos. 781 and 782 Christie, Agatha: *A Murder Is Announced*, London, 1950, orange cloth. First Edition. (Without jacket, \$12.50; with jacket, \$17.50)

Nos. 968 and 969 Crofts, Freeman Wills: *Found Floating*, N.Y., 1937, yellow cloth. First American Edition. (Without jacket, \$10.00; with jacket, \$15.00) (in copy with jacket, cloth is noted as "bright yellow")

Nos. 3963 and 3964 Rex Stout: *Mountain Cat*, 1939, green cloth. First Edition. (Without jacket, \$10.00; with jacket, \$20.00) ("jacket worn along edges")

Nos. 3979 and 3980 Stout, Rex *Where*

There's a Will, N.Y., 1940, red cloth. First Edition. (Without jacket, \$10.00; with jacket, \$15.00)

Nos. 4198 and 4199 Van Dine, S. S.: *The Bishop Murder Case*, N.Y., 1929, black cloth. First Edition. (Without jacket, \$15.00; with jacket, \$25.00)

Nos. 4200 and 4202 Van Dine, S. S.: *The "Canary" Murder Case*, N.Y., 1927, black cloth. First Edition. (Without jacket, \$20.00; with jacket, \$25.00) ("jacket lightly worn")

Only once or twice, briefly, you will note, is condition of the book, either of binding or contents, specified. But a copy of *Hercule Poirot's Christmas* (No. 763), described as with "both front and back covers discoloured and spotted. A good copy only," is offered for \$7.50. So we can assume, I think, that all these listed are probably fine or better.

Well, we have seen what an experienced, and presumably major, bookseller charged for a jacket just about ten years ago. Taking all the various prices, we find (if I have done it right) that the twelve books without jackets were, on the average, priced at \$15.29, and the twelve with jackets were priced, on the average, at \$23.13. This shows the "premium charged" to be just about 51%—can we agree on 50%? (The premium on the one Chan jacket was high—though not the highest—at 75%. But it was the only jacket of the group described as "scarce.")

Before we go back to Mr. Penzler and Charlie Chan, to find the average premium we can expect to pay for a jacket today—at least for one of the Chan tales—we should note that Mr. Penzler has, certainly wisely, not at this time gone into the complicated question of just how well the Chan books with jackets compare, in "premium charged," to those of Carr, Christie, Van Dine, etc. Are Chans without jackets a little more common, or less in demand today, and so cheaper? *With* jackets, are they relatively more scarce? Not knowing, I can only guess, but, all in all, they're probably not too far out of line.

Now, to Charlie Chan: Omitting the merely "good" category, which I think we did in our 1972 listings, the six Chan firsts should sell, with no jacket, for an average of \$14.17 if fine, \$18.33 if very fine. *With* jackets, fine copies would average \$116.67, very fine copies \$183.33. Don't forget that the values Mr. Penzler gives us are "probably near the center of a fairly wide range." At this center, the average premium charged today for a jacket—on a fine or better Charlie Chan first—is, give or take a few points, just about 800%. Until I know more, I am going to assume a similar premium charge for Carr, Christie, Crofts, etc. jackets, all of them up from somewhere near 50% to somewhere near 800% in ten years. Our rich uncles—and our rich grandmothers—had they but known what to buy us, ten, twenty, thirty years ago!

But things are happening. And hot on Mr. Penzler's heels, winged though they be, comes James Pepper with his gift to us, a peep into the equally glamorous world of the Goldstone Auction. (A nice man, Mr. Goldstone: I corresponded briefly with him some fifteen or more years ago, and he kindly sent me, to help me, lists of some of his collection, which I still have. I hope he is sitting somewhere laughing at us, and I mean no disrespect to his memory when I say: what a name for what an auction! Talk of gold and precious stones!) To me, though, and possibly to many, the most amazing thing about it is the prices that some important un-jacketed books brought. Among all the dazzling prices paid for famous books, there were, according to Mr. Pepper, some considerable sums put out for some well-known classics without jackets—\$300, \$400, \$500, \$1,300. What would they have brought had they had jackets? Mr. Pepper's "ten, twenty, or even thirty times more?" Even at a mere 800% mark-up, they'd have set some records, and Agatha Christie's *Mysterious Affair at Styles* might well have brought \$10,000 or up. Do you believe it? You may be wrong. Are these books, "rare in any form" as Mr. Pepper says, really rarer than jacketed books which sold for little more—and sometimes for less? I wonder.

Prices brought at auction are, of course, not necessarily significant—unusually fine or somehow defective condition, fierce (or no) competition, a "sense of destiny," a holiday mood, weariness, other variable factors all can affect them. Yet, it seems to me, an unprecedentedly important auction such as the Goldstone auction may have an unprecedentedly explosive effect in many ways. One writer's popularity emerges untouched; another's is blown away over the hills. Relative unknowns come out walking like kings. It is even possible that we have begun to realize that—of late—we have been overvaluing dust jackets simply because they were scarce, overvaluing them relative to the great books they merely guarded from dust. Its scarcity—though still desirable—becoming less desirable than historical importance, greatness of performance, beauty of condition? Should it not?

* * * * *

From Jon Breen:

TAD 15:2 is an excellent issue. I congratulate you. I especially liked Nevins on Ard, Pepper on the Goldstone auction, and Bill De Andrea's paperback reviews.

Pass along to Otto my thanks for the article on Charlie Chan collecting. My own collection of Chans are all jacketless and only half firsts. However, my copy of *The Black Camel* has the words "First Edition" on the verso of the title page and thus presumably antedates either of the states shown in the articles. A great article, though, and I look forward to more like it.

Is book reviewer Jim Fixx the author of the bestselling running books? I suppose not, but in either case I enjoy his work.

In response to Mel D. Ames's charge of

British bias in American mystery periodicals: nonsense! A quick look at the contents page of TAD 15:2 shows that this issue at least does seem to favor the British, but a check of the last few shows that the American/ British bias is about even. If TAD does have a British bias, it is very slight, and Ames's 80/20 estimate is absurd. Checking the last few issues of EQMM, I find three or four British contributors out of a dozen per issue. AHMM has fewer. My book reviews in EQMM I consider to have a pronounced American bias, something I periodically feel the urge to correct, though the ratio is probably not too out of line with the ratio of books received for review.

Again, felicitations on a fine (and provocative) issue.

Thanks for the kind words, Jon. They're the payment for the effort.

No, Jim Fixx is not the runner, but he does have some pace in his reviews.

—Michael

* * * * *

From John Jagers:

This is just a short note to tell you how much I enjoyed Otto Penzler's piece on the Charlie Chan novels. In checking my own copies against the bibliographical data you provided, I found that my copy of *The Black Camel* states "First Edition" on the copyright page and lacks the Curtis copyright line. Once again, congratulations on a fine article, illustrated in first-rate fashion.

* * * * *

From John L. Apostolou:

It seems that whenever I put together a checklist, something happens to make it incomplete. Arriving too late for my article on Japanese mystery fiction in TAD 15:2 are two mysteries by Japanese authors in the July 1982 issue of EQMM. The stories are "The Humble Coin" by Seicho Matsumoto and "I Can't Help Loving Him" by Shizuko Natsuki.

One of the letters in Frank MacShane's *Selected Letters of Raymond Chandler* could serve as a postscript to my article on Norbert Davis in TAD 15:1. The letter was written in April 1949, just three months before Davis's death by suicide and is addressed to Chandler's agent, Carl Brandt. In it, Chandler

thanks Brandt for responding to his request for advice about lending Davis \$200.

The following excerpt from the letter is most revealing and requires no further comment from me. "It was very kind of you to send me a wire about Norbert D. However, right or wrong, I am sending him a couple of hundred dollars. Who am I to judge another man's needs or desserts? It's a pretty miserable thing to live off in the country and watch them all come back and be scared. He says he has sold one out of fifteen this last year. Say it's his fault, say he got big-headed or drunk and lazy or what have you—what difference does it make? You suffer just as much when you're wrong. More. Write it off, call it waste, and hope the guy won't hate you for helping him, or rather for having to ask you to help him. . . ."

And finally, let me recommend a recent issue of *Clues*, 2:2, which contains an excellent section, over 100 pages long, on pulp detective fiction. Nicely edited by E. R. Hageman, the section includes articles by Bill Pronzini, William Nolan, Will Murray, Robert Sampson, and others. Unfortunately, the price for this issue—\$6—is a little high. Fans of the old pulps will find it well worth the price.

* * * * *

From Robert L. Lauritzen:

I think it ironic that the ad for the Allen J. Hubin catalogue appears in TAD 15:2 next to the article about the Goldstone collection. I once met Mr. Goldstone in connection with a donation he made to the Steinbeck Research Center at San Jose State University. At that time he was liquidating his Steinbeck collection and talked briefly about his plans to collect mystery fiction. I would be surprised to learn that he had ever read a mystery novel for pleasure—or a Steinbeck novel either, for that matter. He seemed interested only in the search for the nearly unobtainable.

How refreshing to learn of a collection of 27,000 volumes "primarily a reader's library"! My own much more modest collection is just that—a reader's library. I am afraid most of the buyers at the Goldstone auction were more interested in possessing a trophy than in obtaining a book to read. \$2,500 for a book that was never written (*The Powwow Murder*

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Case) is, to quote the late Georgette Heyer, "the outside of enough!"

* * * * *

From Martha Steinbach:

I enjoyed the article on the Manning Coles stories, "A Toast to the Secret Service" by William A. S. Sarjeant, in TAD 15:2. There are just a couple of questions I would like to ask.

On p. 101, reference is made to *The Emperor's Bracelet* (1947) as a juvenile written for the University of London Press. On p. 105, reference is made to the same title (between *A Brother for Hugh* and *Let the Tiger Die*). The reference on p. 105 sounds as if it is part of the Hambleton series and that it includes Hyde as do *Brother for Hugh* and *Let the Tiger Die*, and the plot description sounds like that of *Without Lawful Authority*. I am confused.

I was interested to learn that he wrote under "Frances Gaité" (on p. 101, spelled Guite on p. 113). Certainly that name was for the English editions of the ghost stories, as my American ones use Manning Coles. Also that he had collaborators for the books after Manning died.

But it was a pretty good article. Manning Coles must definitely not have been publicity-conscious, as there is very little to be found about them in reference works, and I've always felt their books deserved more attention than they have received (some would make wonderful movies if properly done).

As the letter following indicates, the confusion was our proofreader's.

—Michael

* * * * *

From William A. S. Sarjeant:

It was a pleasure to see "A Toast to the Secret Service" in the latest TAD. Generally it looks fine; but there is one weird and inexplicable misprint! On p. 105, top of right-hand column, is a whole paragraph which was not in the original manuscript and appears to be an editorial/printer's artifact! This is item VIII—mostly a repeat of the previous paragraph. I left this out entirely, but if something were to be inserted, it should be:

[VIII] *The Emperor's Bracelet* is not a Hambleton story; see earlier discussion, p. 101.]

I'd be grateful if you'd either publish this letter or insert an appropriate corrigendum in the next TAD.

Here's the letter. Our proofreader has been sufficiently attuned. Sorry.

—Michael

* * * * *

From Jane S. Bakerman:

I write in response to Marvin Kaye's letter printed in TAD 15:2, in which he maintains that five page references cited in "Advice Unheeded: Shakespeare in Some Modern Mystery Novels" (TAD 14:2) are incorrect. In no case are the page numbers mentioned by

Mr. Kaye in error; each passage is cited correctly. I enclose photocopies of the pertinent pages to demonstrate the accuracy of the citations. The bibliographical citation of my copy of *Bullets for Macbeth* as printed in TAD 14:2 is also accurate (New York: Saturday Review Press, E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1976). Unfortunately, perhaps, there is no allowance in current footnote form for identifying book club editions beyond careful reporting of the publication data as was done here. Since this book club edition is textually sound, I used it. I own that copy and could mark the pages as would not have been possible in a borrowed book. A copy of these materials goes to Mr. Kaye in this same post.

Marvin Kaye's response follows, a dialogue of sorts pleasantly resolved.

Personally, and beside the point, I've always hated footnotes...

—Michael

* * * * *

From Marvin Kaye:

I received a copy of Ms. Bakerman's letter regarding that alleged mispaging of passages from my *Bullets for Macbeth*. I had no idea that the pagination for the book club edition was different from the original Dutton hardback. I have certainly done Ms. Bakerman a disservice and wish to apologize for doubting her scholarship.

I do hope you will be able to print her reply and my public apology on the subject. I stand enlightened...and can only say I did not know the difference because I do not have a copy of the B4M book club edition. The color registration on the dust jacket was not nearly so nice as the hardback original, so I did not bother to place it in my collection.

* * * * *

From Fred Dueren:

I'm a bit slow about it, but all the letters in TAD 15:1 finally moved me to write a letter too. TAD will always have a special place in my heart. It is, after all, the magazine that brought together all the fans and readers across the country and gave them an opportunity to meet each other and express views. (That's a lot of all those letters in the first issues.) It also gave me the chance to do my own writing and be able to share the enjoyment of working out the biographies of some of the more famous detectives. And I got to review books for several years, in some small way making my own impression on the crime field.

By the way, those comments on my work in those last letters are greatly appreciated. There's nothing like those strokes from other readers to keep me working on new projects.

But let me get back to the letters. I suggest that TAD succeeded all too well. Think back to 1967. Or if your memory is as poor as mine, look at the copyright dates on all your reference works. How many of them pre-date 1967? Very few. In the first years of TAD, people wrote letters because it was the only place to go. Now there are literally

hundreds of reference books to check into before writing asking for help to locate something. TAD itself has an index to help readers find particular articles and essays. Even finding reviews of a certain book is easier than it was before.

The letters in those first years were very chatty and gossipy. They read like a large, close group, sharing views and finding for the first time that others enjoy reading mysteries and keep records and files and lists of various sorts. But as specialized mystery bookstores opened, and crime fiction classes were taught in the colleges, mystery fanatics became more respectable and readers found local outlets. Here in Kansas City, one of the cable television stations has a half-hour program called "The Mystery Forum" which discusses books, movies, authors, themes, anything about crime fiction. A kind of TAD of the air. How many other cities have some type of release for the addicts?

I, personally, would prefer more articles and essays on particular authors or detectives. Keeping things more directly related to the mystery books themselves and not drawing in too much from other fields. (I refuse to say that I want them less academic.) But it is my pet theory that 99% of all mysteries were written to entertain, to provide enjoyment and a few hours' relaxation and escape. Yes, authors being authors have certain views and ideas that they express in the course of providing that entertainment, but those ideas and views are not what the readers are reading the books for. I'd like to see the articles kept on the level of entertainment rather than that of working toward a college degree. But that means other readers and myself have to write the articles about the things we want to see written and in the way we want it written... Well, enough about all that.

Where applicable, I enjoy having the editor's comments mixed in to the letters, or a kind of reply at the end of the letter. Not that Mike can or should look up all the answers, but if he knows something or can give a response it makes it more interesting.

And finally, I wanted to let you know how much I enjoy H. Edward Hunsburger's "Minor Offenses" column. It is a field that gets too little critical attention for itself, so I'm glad we now have a starting point from which to check up on the short story area. I like the combination of reviews of individual stories and collections. My only complaint is that I wish each column were longer.

Fred, if I knew anything, would I be doing this? I will try, though, to respond to letters where appropriate.

And it is appropriate here to thank you for taking the time to write.

—Michael

* * * * *

From J. Randolph Cox:

I was pleasantly surprised to see my article on Margery Allingham in TAD 15:1. I wrote

that back in the good old days for which Marv Lachman yearns in his letter. If I am no longer a subscriber, it is not because I do not believe in TAD but because I like to support my local bookstore (Fine Print: Books, advt. —ahem), which is usually able to get every issue.

I agree with much of what Marv Lachman says, but I never really thought of TAD as a "fan" magazine, even in its earliest, mimeographed days (or was that multithrift?). It was always more than that, a scholarly journal which I was not ashamed to include in my vita and annual report to prove that I was keeping up with current research in the genre and even contributing to it in some small way. We have come a long way since the most useful scholarship was a biographical sketch and checklist of a favorite writer.

Perhaps TAD does lack the enthusiasm of those days. Let's hope it returns. In reading reviews of the current novels, I find little to excite me into trying an author who is an unfamiliar name. The fault of the reviewer or the novel? The most exciting mystery (and the most entertaining) most recently read was *Trial by Fury* by Craig Rice. Not exactly a recent book, but it had the sense of joy and wonder that I found in mysteries when I first discovered them. The only "new" author who has done that for me in the past year is June Thomson. And before that...let's see...probably Charlotte MacLeod.

Your stance in 14:3 did put me off a bit, but it appears to have started some people thinking, judging by the letters in 15:1, and that's good. Each publication in the genre has its editorial bias or requirements. They are all different. Some are not as obvious as others. It was only recently that I realized that *Baker Street Miscellanea* does not accept unsolicited contributions, that *The Mystery FANcier* does not publish anything unless the writer agrees to subscribe to the magazine (it's not writing for "free," Marv—it costs \$12 a year), and DAPA-EM, while accepting material from all sources, actually restricts its readership to those who belong to the club. Some of us are fortunate enough to be on the mailing lists of a few members who spread their contributions to a slightly wider readership. But they seem to have fun, and there is a long waiting list for membership. (TAD may well be the most democratic publication of them all.)

No, I don't even object to footnotes. "Crabgrass" to fandom, perhaps, but they prove the writer cared enough to verify his/her information. Judiciously placed at the end of the article, they may be consulted or avoided as the reader chooses. When someone swipes my stuff, it is only courtesy that I receive credit for having said it first.

While I happen to very much believe in my stance, as stated in 14:3, I was also aware of the possibility of a storm to follow. I was pleased to see how right I was.

And I won't say another word about footnotes...today.

—Michael

From Dean Richardson:

In "TAD at the Movies" (15:1), Mr. Godfrey briefly discusses *film noir* and reviews *Union City* and *Body Heat*, noting the latter's many similarities to *Double Indemnity*. I have not seen *Union City*, but, in general plot and characters (as described by Mr. Godfrey), it sounds very much like a Cornell Woolrich story, "The Corpse Next Door" (*Detective Fiction Weekly* 1/23/37; reprinted in *Nightwebs*, edited by Francis Nevins [1971]). Can anyone who has seen the film and/or the film credits verify this? (And why isn't more Woolrich currently in print?)

I haven't seen the film... anyone else able to help?

As to the Woolrich question, I was unable to convince the marketing department at Ace to take such a project on. They had done a number of titles a few years ago. Ballantine, however, has just reissued three titles and plan more. Now, if enough of us buy them, perhaps the series will continue.

—Michael

* * * * *

From Bruce Taylor:

After six years of reading TAD and grouching over changes I haven't liked, I'm finally getting a letter off. This isn't really a letter as much as it is a Thank You and Amen! for Marvin Lachman's letter in 15:1. He has written the letter I have wanted to write for five years.

My introduction to TAD came at about the same time as its move to San Diego. After reading several issues, I found it pedantic and OH SO BORING. I couldn't understand what all the fuss was about, and frankly, Scarlett, I didn't give a damn. I found myself reading about half of each issue and then waiting quietly for the next issue of *The Poisoned Pen*.

TAD has a lot going for it:

It looks great!
DeAndrea's reviews are crisp and opinionated

Godfrey's movie column is fun
All the review departments are well done
THE LETTERS ARE STILL THE BEST

Things I could live without:

The Rex Stout Newsletter
Barzun and Taylor
Anything to do with Albert Campion
The Rex Stout Newsletter
Fiction
Articles that run in consecutive issues over eleven years
The Rex Stout Newsletter


TAD is comin' back. Otto has done us all a service by salvaging it when it was in trouble. If at times it takes on the appearance of a blank organ for The Mysterious Fill-in-the-Blank, I'm sure it's accidental. TAD started as a Fanzine—I can live with it being a Fan Journal. I'm enjoying it more with each new issue. But I haven't given up my subscription to *The Poisoned Pen*...

From Michael J. Tolley:

T. M. McDade's article in TAD 14:4 on the Wallace case reminded me of a novel not mentioned in his brief list of "Major Works on the Wallace Case." Angus Hall's *Qualtrough* (Herbert Jenkins, 1968) is perhaps not well known in the U.S.A. but is worth reading. In this version, the husband is presented as the murderer, using Qualtrough as his alibi and suspect; Qualtrough, however, turns up and occupies the murderer's home, blackmailing him. Another woman is involved.

A further accessible recent piece may be noted—the article in No. 9 of *Crimes and Punishment Weekly* (1973-75) entitled "Dial M for Murder," pp. 231-37, well illustrated (with a plan of the Wallace house showing the position of Julia's body). Angus Hall was the editor of this encyclopedic publication but is not perhaps himself responsible for the article.

Very likely, someone more learned in the field than myself could list other novels using the Wallace story. Theoretically, there should be one by John Dickson Carr somewhere. The whole story, however, looks to belong rather to Stanislaw Lem's territory and could be neatly slotted into a novel of time travel. □

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★  ★
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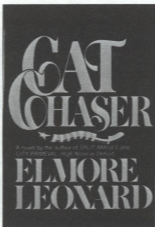
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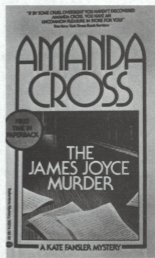
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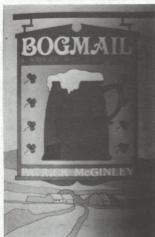
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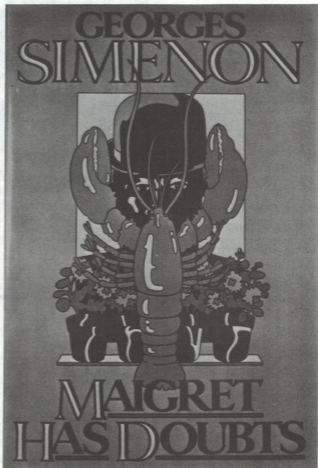
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The Problem of POE'S PURLOINED LETTER

By Kenneth Gavrell

In his excellent *Mortal Consequences: A History from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel*, Julian Symons points out that the flaw in Poe's "Purloined Letter," "not seriously damaging to the story,"* is that Dupin could not see both the letter's seal and its address at the time of his visit to the Minister D.'s apartment, since he could not see both sides of the envelope. Symons adds that many writers have noted this flaw in the story.

I would like to suggest that the problem here is more complicated than Symons or previous critics have noticed and that there may be other possible flaws in the logic of this story. Perhaps I am taking this matter too seriously, but I tend to take my detective fiction seriously.

First of all, not only is there no indication in the story that the letter is in an envelope, but, on the contrary, there are many indications that it is not. The queen, when surprised by the king while reading the letter, is forced to lay it quickly on a table with its contents down and its "address. . . uppermost." When the Minister D. joins them, he recognizes the handwriting of the address, immediately guesses the nature of the letter, and takes out one of his own to read; this he lays next to the queen's, and when he leaves, takes hers instead of his. She notices this. (The king notices none of these things. One is tempted to conclude that the king is an idiot.) Later on, when Dupin sees the letter in the Minister's apartment, he notes, from its edges, that it has been "turned, as a glove, inside out," refolded in the reverse direction. All of this clearly indicates that the letter has no envelope.

We are dealing with a period (circa 1840, during the French Restoration) when it would be very unlikely that Duke S. posted his dangerous love letter to the queen. Almost certainly it was delivered by a

trusted messenger between the two lovers. It was written on the stiff, heavy paper of those days, folded, and sealed with wax. Why it needs any address (particularly one written in a manner "markedly bold and decided") is one of the problems Symons doesn't mention, nor why Duke S. would use his own easily-recognizable seal on such a letter.

But if the letter has no envelope, and if one side contains the message and the other the address and seal, how could the Minister D. reverse the letter to camouflage it? Presumably the side he would want to put the false address and seal on would be covered with the message. Here is the chief problem presented to the detective-reader.

The letter could not have been folded thus:

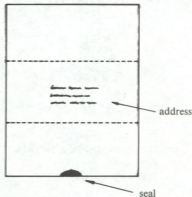


Figure 1

Yet Poe tells us that the letter displayed in the card rack has clearly been refolded to reverse it and a new address and seal put on the other side. I think that the clue to the mystery may lie in the words "had been turned, as a glove, inside out." Given the fact that

*Julian Symons, *Mortal Consequences: A History from the Detective Story to the Crime Novel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), p. 35.

there was no paper shortage in those days, that envelopes were commonly not used, and that the letters were sealed with wax, a most logical way of folding the letter would be:

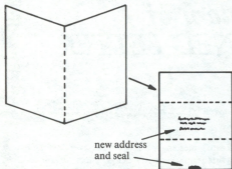


Figure 2a

Now we have something like a large greeting card which can then be folded again in the normal way for sealing. This leaves us with one side of the sheet perfectly blank, and the Minister D. can indeed turn the letter inside out like a glove and use this blank




Figure 2b

side for the new address and seal. The only way that Dupin could see both of these at the same time would be if the letter were open in the rack as in Figure 2b. There is nothing in the story to suggest this is not the case. The letter has been refolded to hide its true contents as in 2a, but not closed as in 2b.

Poe, with his love of puzzles and his rather devious nature, would be quite capable of having exactly such a device in mind. I believe he purposely set this puzzle for the reader.

But there is still one other difficulty to be dealt with. How can Dupin, wearing dark glasses for his perusal of the apartment, make out that the "diminutive" address was to the Minister and written by a woman—or that the edges of the refolding are "more chafed than seemed necessary." He must have marvellous eyes indeed, especially since, as he remarks, the letter was "soiled and torn." To have avoided this problem, Poe need only have had Dupin move close to the letter, but there is nothing in the story to suggest that he did, for that would have made the Minister D. suspicious of his design. Dupin examined it from a distance, but apparently with the eyes of a .400 hitter in the major leagues. This makes "The Purloined Letter" as slightly incredible as the story from which Poe borrowed the bones of his plot, Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*.

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Continued on p. 384 →

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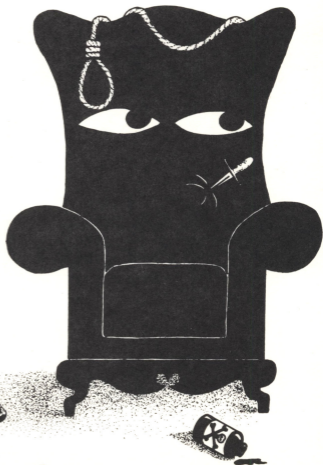
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