Volume 16 Summer 1983 Number 3

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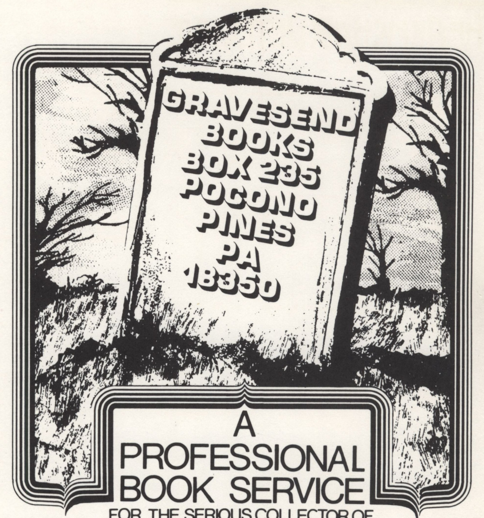
Otto Penzler on
Collecting Father Brown

An Interview
with Elmore Leonard



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The cover illustration is from an original painting of Father Brown. It has been published elsewhere, but we have not been able to locate its original appearance. A free one-year subscription to TAD is offered to the first reader who can identify the magazine or book in which this painting was first reproduced.

Subscriptions to *The Armchair Detective:* $20/year in the U.S., $24 elsewhere. Subscriptions and advertising correspondence should be addressed to: TAD, 129 West 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10019, U.S.A. Submissions of material for publication are welcome and should be addressed to The Editor: Michael Seidman, 129 West 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10019.

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

Postmaster: Please send address changes to: The Armchair Detective, 129 West 56th Street, New York, NY 10019.

The Armchair Detective, Vol. 16, No. 3, Summer 1983. Published quarterly by The Armchair Detective, Inc., 129 West 56th Street, New York, N.Y. 10019.

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THE UNEASY CHAIR

Dear TADian:

Well, it has finally happened. The chains are announcing that the sales of mystery titles have been climbing. They don't break down the figures, of course, so we can't be certain of which areas are surging, or if it is across the board. What this means for us is that any time now publishers will be getting back on the bandwagon and we should be able to find more of our favorites available in just about every sub-genre of the field. Obviously, it will now be up to us to make certain we support the bookstores and publishers. It is generally acknowledged that libraries are the largest purchasers of mystery novels, because that is what the readers want. There's no denying the major reason for this is the high cover price publishers are forced to charge—if you cannot afford to buy a book, you borrow it. Still, if publishers are going to make the effort, and that effort is to our benefit, we are going to have to get behind them.

Speaking of publishers—some exciting news for you and me. After years of talking about it and planning, Otto Penzler is going full time with The Mysterious Press—a regular publishing schedule and a full assortment of the best criminous reading possible. What excites me especially is that after fifteen years as a paperback editor, I'm moving over to the new venture. I humbly submit that this is one of the best things to happen to our field in years. It also means that the call for support becomes a highly personal one...

In the department of promises unkept—the move also means that for the first time since I sat down in this chair, we will have the offices and editor of TAD in the same place, regularly. Up until now, we've had three offices, with me hopping around among them. So, finally (he said, yet again), follow-up and response time should come down to an acceptable period. If it doesn't, I'm prepared to be tarred, feathered, and otherwise made ill-use of.

For the first time since I can remember, "AJH Reviews" will not appear in this TAD. Al is busy updating his *Bibliography of Crime Fiction,* which made the writing of his column impossible. We wish him the best of luck and look forward to reading his column in our next issue.

We have some exciting new features planned for future issues—all possible because of your support. So, while I'm feeling expansive (not one harangue in this column!), let me take this opportunity to thank you all—for your support, kind words, submissions, and patience. I hope your enjoyment of this issue is as great as mine was in putting it together. And, until next time, same place,

Best mysterious wishes,

Michael Seidman

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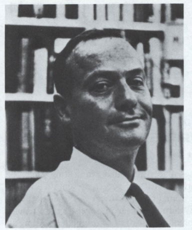

KENNETH MILLAR (ROSS MACDONALD) 1915–1983

On July 11, 1983, Kenneth Millar died—a victim of Alzheimer's disease, from which he had suffered for many years. Mr. Millar's writing career spanned some thirty years; his novel *The Chill* (1964) won the Crime Writers' Association best novel award. He was a former president of the Mystery Writers of America and received their highest tribute when he was the recipient of their Grand Master Award.

The entire literary community mourns his passing and offers sincere condolences to his wife, Margaret Millar.

In Memoriam

By Dennis Lynds (Michael Collins)

Last year I was asked to accept an award from PWA for a tragically ill Ross Macdonald, and it was not an easy task. Now I am asked to write a memorial to my friend Ken Millar, and it will be no easier. It is never easy to say goodbye to a friend. It is never easy to lose a giant of his craft and art.

When I met Ken in 1965, I had not yet written my own suspense novels, had not read the novels of Ross Macdonald. When I did read them, all of them, soon after, I knew immediately that here were books to admire, respect, even follow if I could be good enough. We talked often back then, and I found that we had come to the genre with the same demands on our work, and were going, if I worked hard enough and long enough, to the same hopes. That Ken reached out to help me, as he did so many younger writers, was my great good fortune. That he had written his books was literature's good fortune.

After 1975 we saw less of each other despite living in the same town, largely my fault from the demands of different work habits, different work schedules. Ken always understood. For him, ultimately, there was only the work. To give him the epitaph another great writer said he wanted for himself, "He wrote the books, and he died."

And what books they are. From *The Dark Tunnel* to *The Blue Hammer,* there is not a bad book, and in the middle of the twenty-four are a dozen or more of the best psychological novels in any language. Here was an artist who had learned his craft until it fitted him like his own skin. A unique voice as all great artists are unique. A voice to listen to, hear, enjoy. And a voice that gave his fellow writers a path to follow if we dared.

In the end, that, the path he showed us, is the true measure of Ken Millar, the legacy of Ross Macdonald. The world, the reader, has the books, but we who work in the same craft have something more. Because Ken Millar wrote the books he did the way he did, he proved once again that the suspense genre is a field in which a writer can do serious work, important work, work that can face the real world head-on and in all its aspects. He showed that there can be more to our genre than parlor games or vicarious thrills or wish fulfillment.

He once said of his chosen form that it enabled him to handle hot, dangerous materials, and he wrote books that challenged others to do the same. He opened a door through which the rest of us can take our stories wherever we dare to take them.

Ken Millar, Ross Macdonald, left the art in which he worked more than it had been when he came to it. There is no greater achievement. □

EYE TO EYE

A SURVEY OF THE PRIVATE EYE WRITERS OF AMERICA

By Michael T. Nietzel and Robert Baker

The membership of the Private Eye Writers of America were surveyed in 1982 to assess their evaluations of a comprehensive list of American private eyes and their authors. The survey was organized into two parts covering 1920–70 and 1970–82.

A brief summary of the results is presented here. A more detailed version of the results will be contained in Baker and Nietzel's forthcoming PRIVATE EYES: ONE HUNDRED AND ONE MODERN KNIGHTS.

Part I (1920–70)

Of the 80 questionnaires that were distributed, 27 were completed and returned. A response rate of 34% to a mailed questionnaire is lower than one would like to see but still allows conclusions to be drawn with appropriate cautions. Interpretations of mailed surveys, particularly with a low return rate, requires the following caveats: (1) The results may not be generalizable from the respondents to the nonrespondents; this is particularly the case when there are reasons to believe that respondents and nonrespondents differ in some important ways. (2) The results may not be generalizable from the sample whose opinions were solicited (private eye writers) to some other sample (e.g., mystery fans in general). (3) The conditions under which respondents complete the questionnaire are likely to differ from person to person, introducing many possible, but unknown, influences. (4) Ratings under conditions of anonymity may not be equivalent to other indicators of the same person's opinion (e.g., purchases of books, attributed reviews).

In order to broaden our base of opinion, we sent questionnaires to a number of very well-known critics and reviewers of mystery fiction as well as to nationally known scholars in the area of popular culture. Therefore, the final sample of 27 is composed of 23 private eye writers and four reviewer-critics.

The "average" respondent rated 38 entries from a possible 115 listed in our questionnaire. Five respondents added a total of only eight different private eyes in the spaces provided, indicating that the original, printed list was very representative of the private eye domain. (In most cases, these additional private eyes did not appear in novels, a requirement we placed on our entries.) With respondents rating an average of 38 entries per questionnaire, one can fairly conclude that the sample was reasonably well-read and opinionated about this literature. The greatest number of ratings was 93; the fewest was 7. Ratings were scored 4 (Excellent), 3 (Good), 2 (Average), 1 (Below Average) and 0 (Poor).

Results for the 1920–70 period are summarized in Table 1. The forty private eyes who were best known to the respondents are ordered in terms of the percentage of the respondents who indicated they were "very" or "somewhat familiar" with the novels.

Two ratings are given in each of six categories of evaluation: literary value (LV), overall entertainment value (OEV), character development (CD), plot (P), writing style (WS), and Final Grade. The upper rating is a *mean value,* which is the numeric average of all ratings. The lower rating is a *mode,* which is the rating that was most frequently given by respondents (on occasion, two ratings may be tied for the most frequent score; i.e., the distribution is *bimodal*). A mode is a useful statistic because it is less influenced than a mean by extreme scores. For example, an examination of the literary value score for Hammer–Spillane shows a mean of 2.8, a mode of 4. Although more respondents gave Hammer–Spillane a grade of 4 ("Excellent") than any other grade, a few raters gave grades of 1 ("Poor"), thereby pulling the mean score down. In situations like this, interpretations of ratings are made most accurately by considering both the mean and mode values. An example in the opposite direction is illustrated by the ratings of character development for Noon–Avallone.

The column labeled "Ratings Rank" lists the private eyes by the order of their Final Grade from highest to lowest. In instances in which Final Grades were identical, we computed the means of the five component grades (LV, OEV, CD, P and WS) as a "tiebreaker."

The final column entitled "Not a PI" shows the number of respondents who disqualified the character as a legitimate PI in the hardboiled tradition which we defined as "a sophisticated, worldly wise, full-time private investigator drawing most—if not all—of his income from his PI activities and he is one who carries out his investigations in the tough but sympathetic tradition made famous by Hammett and Chandler." Of greatest interest here is the sentiment regarding *The Thin Man* characters and the two George Harmon Coxe series.

We computed a correlation coefficient between the Percentage Familiar score and the Final Grade for these 40 private eyes. A correlation coefficient is a statistic which shows the amount of relationship among two or more variables. It can range from -1.0 to $+1.0$; a positive correlation means that, as scores on one variable increase, so too do the scores on the other variable. The larger the correlation coefficient, the stronger the relationship, Percentage Familiar Score correlated .46 with Final Grade. This means that, although there is a substantial positive relation between familiarity and opinions of quality, the two variables are by no means synonymous among this group of raters.

WHO IS

JOHN SHAFT?

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Part II (1970–82)

Twenty-eight respondents (35% response rate) completed the second survey covering 1970 to the present. Twenty-four of these respondents also answered Part I. Twenty-two private eye writers and six reviewer-critics comprised the sample for Part II.

The "average" respondent rated 37 entries from a possible 160 listed on the second questionnaire. Three respondents added a total of four different private eyes in the spaces provided, indicating that, as with Part I of the survey, the original list was a comprehensive one. The greatest number of ratings for any respondent was 129; the fewest was 6.

With an identical format to Table 1, TABLE 2 presents the data for the 40 private eyes best known by this group of raters. Scoring and determination of ranks were conducted in an identical fashion to Part I of the survey. We listed Pete Hamil's Sam Briscoe and Max Collins's Nolan out of sequence because of the relative high frequency with which respondents viewed them as not meeting our working definition of a private eye. Three authors (Randisi, Lynds-Collins-Shaw, and Ellin) placed two of their detective-heroes in the top forty. In Part I, five authors (Hammett, Dewey, Gruber, Gault, and Coxe) earned this honor.

Unlike Part I, the correlation in Part II between Percentage Familiar scores and Final Grade was .29, indicating that familiarity and opinions of quality were less related to each other than in Part I. A likely explanation for this finding is that with more recent works there has not been sufficient time for the discovery of quality to translate itself into wide readership. This explanation also fits the discovery that several recent authors who earned relatively high ratings of quality just missed the 35.7% familiarity criterion for the top 40 (Richard Hoyt, Sue Grafton, and Jack Lynch are prime examples).

To the inevitable question of how much confidence we have in the meaning of these results, we would reply "a good deal" for at least three important reasons. First, although the response rate was approxmately 20% less than what we had originally predicted, a sample of 27 (or 28) experts is not an insubstantial one. Ask yourself this: on how many matters of taste or opinion do you have the comparative judgments of 27 people who are well informed about the issue at hand? Second, the level of agreement among raters was extremely high. In the majority of cases, raters did not differ by more than one point in evaluating the various dimensions of quality. Agreement among raters becomes an increasingly important consideration as the number of raters decreases. Third, and to put it most directly, the ratings for the most part make good sense. For example, character development earns by far the lowest grades for Carroll John Daly, plot the lowest for Robert Parker, and overall entertainment value the highest for Stuart Kaminsky. Were these ratings different, one would be concerned about the survey's

credibility, but the pattern of scores for the individual authors is very predictable from a thorough knowledge of this literature.

As a final check on the reliability of the ratings, we deliberately included a number of authors on both parts of the survey. This enabled us to compare the ratings of a given entry made by the same respondent at two different times. We obtained separate-form ratings on very well-known private eyes (e.g. Travis McGee) and those of less notoriety (e.g., Bart Challis and Benjamin Smoke). In one case, we obtained ratings of the same character (Paul Pine) under the author's real (Howard Browne) and pen (John Evans) names. In all instances, we discovered that the mean ratings in every category were identical from Part I to Part II. Modal ratings were likewise from Howard Browne to John Evans. This level of agreement indicates that raters were consistent across time in assigning their grades and were doing so in an attentive and conscientious manner.

We end where we began—with a caution about what these results mean. We believe they are a valid measure of the opinions of professional writers and critics within the PI field. How they might compare with evaluations by mystery fans in general or private eye fans in particular is not known but could be answered by additional survey work.

TABLE 1

Private Eye Survey (1920–70)

Private Eye	*Author*	*% Familiar*	*LV*	*OEV*	*CD*	*P*	*WS*	*Final*	*Ratings Rank*	*Not a PI*
Philip Marlowe	Raymond		3.9	3.9	3.9	3.8	3.9	3.9		
	Chandler	100	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
Sam Spade	Dashiell Hammett		3.9	3.9	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.9		
		100	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	
Lew Archer	Ross Macdonald		3.8	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.8	3.8		
		100	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	
Continental Op	Dashiell Hammett		3.7	3.7	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.8		
		96.3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
Nero Wolfe	Rex Stout		3.5	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.5	3.4		
		96.3	4	4	4	3	4	4	7	**
Mike Hammer	Mickey Spillane		2.8	2.8	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.5		
		96.3	4	3	2	2	2	2	25	
Travis McGee	John MacDonald		3.3	3.5	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.4		
		92.6	4	4	4	3	3	4	6	**
Nick and	Dashiell Hammett		3.5	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.4	3.3		
Nora Charles		92.6	4	4	3	3	4	4	8	****

Private Eye	*Author*	*% Familiar*	*LV*	*OEV*	*CD*	*P*	*WS*	*Final*	*Ratings Rank*	*Not a PI*
Mike Shayne	Brett Halliday	92.6	2.5 2	2.7 3	2.5 2	2.8 2	2.5 2	2.6 2	21	
Shell Scott	Richard Prather	85.2	2.3 2	2.5 2	2.1 2	2.3 2	2.5 2	2.5 2	27	
Race Williams	Carroll John Daly	77.8	2.7 3	2.5 3	1.6 2	2.0 2	2.1 2	2.3 3	31	
Ed Noon	Michael Avallone	74.1	1.7 2	2.4 2	1.7 1	2.0 2	1.7 2	2.0 2	38	
Mac Robinson	Thomas Dewey	70.4	3.1 3	3.3 3, 4	3.2 3	3.2 3	3.2 3	3.3 3	10	
Bertha Cool, Donald Lam	A. A. Fair	70.4	2.7 3	2.9 3	2.5 3	3.1 3	2.5 2	2.7 2.5	19	**
Ed and Am Hunter	Frederic Brown	63.0	3.2 3	3.4 4	3.5 4	3.4 4	3.5 4	3.4 4	5	
Brock Callahan	William Gault	59.3	3.1 3	3.2 3	3.1 3	3.1 3	3.1 3	3.1 3	11	
Simon Lash	Frank Gruber	59.3	2.3 2	2.4 2	2.0 2	2.2 2	2.0 2	2.1 2	36	
Johnny Fletcher	Frank Gruber	55.6	2.1 2	2.1 2	1.9 2	2.1 2	1.9 2	2.1 2	37	
Joe Puma	William Gault	55.6	2.9 3	3.1 3	3.1 3	3.1 3	3.1 3	2.9 3	14	
Tony Rome	Marvin Albert	51.9	2.1 2	2.7 2, 3	2.6 2	2.8 3	2.6 3	2.6 2, 3	22	
Johnny Liddell	Frank Kane	51.9	2.1 2	2.3 2	2.1 2	2.3 2, 3	2.1 2	2.1 2	35	
Pete Chambers	Henry Kane	51.9	2.5 3	2.6 3	2.5 3	2.4 3	2.4 3	2.5 2.5, 3	26	
Max Thursday	Wade Miller	51.9	2.6 3	2.8 3	2.6 3	2.6 3	2.7 3	2.6 3	20	
Bill Crane	Jonathan Latimer	48.1	2.8 3	3.0 3	2.5 3	2.7 3	2.9 3	2.8 3	17	
Honey West	G. G. Fickling	48.1	1.7 2	2.3 2	2.0 2	1.9 2	2.3 2	2.2 2	34	
Pete Schofield	Thomas Dewey	44.4	2.7 2	3.0 3	2.9 3	2.9 3	3.1 3	3.0 3	13	
Ed Rivers	Talmage Powell	40.7	2.6 2, 3	2.9 3	2.8 3	2.9 3	2.8 3	2.8 3	16	
Johnny Havoc	John Jakes	40.7	1.8 2	2.4 2	2.2 2	2.1 2	2.1 2	1.9 2	39	
Paul Pine	John Evans	40.7	3.1 3	3.5 3	3.2 3	3.3 3	3.5 3	3.3 3	9	
Chester Drum	Stephen Marlowe	40.7	2.4 2	2.7 3	2.5 2	2.5 3	2.5 2	2.6 3	23	

Private Eye	Author	% Familiar	LV	OEV	CD	P	WS	Final	Ratings Rank	Not a PI
Flashgun Casey	George Coxe		2.4	2.5	2.2	2.5	2.4	2.4		
		40.7	2	2	2	2	2	2	29	*****
Bill Lennox	W. T. Ballard		2.3	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.2		
		37.0	2	3	2	2	2	2	32	
Barr Breed	Bill Ballinger		2.3	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.4		
		37.0	2	3	3	3	3	2	28	
Pete McGrath	Michael Brett		1.6	1.9	1.9	1.8	2.1	1.7		
		37.0	2	2	2	2	2	2	40	
Curt Cannon	Curt Cannon		2.6	2.8	2.7	2.4	3.1	2.5		
		37.0	3	3	3, 4	2, 3	3	3	24	
Bart Challis	William Nolan		2.2	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.3		
		37.0	3	3	2, 3	1, 4	3	2, 3	30	
Milo March	M. E. Chaber		2.6	2.4	2.2	2.1	2.3	2.2		
		37.0	2	2	2	2	2	2	33	
Toussaint Moore	Ed Lacy		2.8	2.8	2.9	2.9	2.8	2.9		
		37.0	2, 3	3	2	3	3	2, 3	15	
Jack Ryan	Elmore Leonard		3.1	3.3	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.1		
		37.0	3	3	3	3	4	3, 3.5	12	
Kent Murdock	George Coxe		2.7	2.7	2.4	3.0	2.5	2.8		
		37.0	2	3	2	3	2, 3	3	18	******

TABLE 2

Private Eye Survey (1970–82)

Private Eye	Author	% Familiar	LV	OEV	CD	P	WS	Final	Rating Rank	Not a PI
Spenser	Robert Parker		2.8	3.0	3.1	2.1	3.0	2.8		
		96.4	3	3	4	2	4	3	22	
"Nameless"	Bill Pronzini		2.9	3.3	3.2	3.0	3.1	3.2		
		92.9	3	4	3, 4	3	3	3	8	
Matt Scudder	Lawrence Block		3.0	3.2	3.4	3.1	3.2	3.2		
		78.6	3	4	4	3	3	4	6	
Moses Wine	Roger Simon		2.9	3.0	2.9	2.7	3.0	2.9		
		75.0	3	2, 4	2, 3	2	2, 4	3	20	
Dan Kearney	Joe Gores		2.9	3.3	3.0	3.2	3.1	3.2		
		71.4	3	3, 4	3	3	3	3	9	
Toby Peters	Stuart Kaminsky		2.8	3.1	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.9		
		71.4	3	3	2	2	3	3	21	
Dan Fortune	Michael Collins		2.5	2.8	2.8	2.8	3.0	2.7		
		67.9	3	3	3	3	3	3	24	
Dave Brandstetter	Joseph Hansen		3.2	3.1	3.4	3.0	3.3	3.1		
		67.9	3, 4	3	3	3	3	3	12	
John Marshall Tanner	Stephen Greenleaf		3.0	3.2	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.1		
		64.3	3	4	3	3, 4	4	3, 4	14	

Private Eye	*Author*	*% Familiar*	*LV*	*OEV*	*CD*	*P*	*WS*	*Final*	*Ratings Rank*	*Not a PI*
Harry Stoner	Jonathan Valin		2.9	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.2	3.2		
		64.3	3	3, 4	3, 4	3	3	3	10	
Amos Walker	Loren Estleman		2.7	3.1	2.8	3.1	2.9	2.9		
		60.7	3	3	3	3	3	3	19	
Mitch Tobin	Tucker Coe		3.3	3.4	3.5	3.2	3.6	3.5		
		60.7	3	3, 4	4	3	4	4	4	
Jacob Asch	Art Lyons		3.3	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.7	3.5		
		57.1	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	
Albert Samson	Michael Lewin		2.8	3.3	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2		
		53.6	3	4	3, 4	4	3	3.5	7	
C. W. Sughrue	James Crumley		3.6	3.7	3.8	3.6	3.6	3.7		
		50.0	4	4	4	4	4	4	1	
Shaft	Ernest Tidyman		2.3	2.6	2.5	2.3	2.4	2.3		
		50.0	2	3	2	2	2	2	30	
Ace Carpenter	Hamilton Caine		1.6	1.8	2.2	2.2	2.2	2.0		
		50.0	1	2	2	2	2	2	38	
Jack Levine	Andrew Bergman		2.9	3.1	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.0		
		50.0	3	3	3	3	3	2	17	

THE DOSSIER

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Private Eye	*Author*	*% Familiar*	*LV*	*OEV*	*CD*	*P*	*WS*	*Final*	*Ratings Rank*	*Not a PI*
Joe Goodey	Charles Alverson	46.4	2.3 3	2.8 3	2.9 3	2.7 3	2.8 2	2.8 3	23	
"Mongo"	George Chesbro	46.4	2.3 2	2.3 2, 3	2.7 2, 3	2.3 2	2.5 2, 3	2.5 2	28	**
Chance Purdue	Ross Spencer	46.4	2.0 3	2.3 1, 3, 4	1.4 1	1.3 2	2.1 3	1.9 1	39	*
Miles Jacoby	Robert Randisi	46.4	1.8 2	2.2 3	1.8 2	1.9 3	1.9 2, 3	2.1 2	36	
Benjamin Smoke	Ed McBain	42.9	2.6 3	2.9 2, 3	2.8 3	2.9 3	3.2 3	3.0 2	18	**
Sharon McCone	Marcia Muller	42.9	2.3 2	2.4 2	2.6 2	2.5 2	2.6 2	2.6 2	25	*
Thomas Kyd	Timothy Harris	42.9	2.8 3	3.4 4	3.4 4	3.2 4	3.3 4	3.3 3, 4	5	
Johnny Easy	Ron Goulart	42.9	2.2 2	2.6 2, 3	2.3 2	2.5 2	2.7 3	2.6 2	26	
Sam Marlow	Andrew Fenady	42.9	2.0 2	2.3 1, 2	1.8 1	2.1 1	2.3 2	2.0 1	37	
Henry Po	Robert Randisi	42.9	1.9 2	2.3 2	2.0 2	2.1 2	2.4 2	2.3 2	33	
Harry Angel	Wm. Hjortsberg	39.3	2.3 1	2.3 3	2.3 3	2.5 3	2.8 4	2.3 3	29	
Jake Spanner	L. A. Morse	39.3	2.3 1	2.5 1	2.4 1	2.1 1	2.2 1	2.3 1	32	
Mike Haller	Max Byrd	35.7	2.1 2	2.5 3, 4	2.4 3	2.4 2, 3	2.4 4	2.2 2, 3, 4	34	
Max Roper	Kin Platt	35.7	1.9 2	2.1 2	2.1 2	2.2 3	2.2 2	2.1 2.5	35	
Cody	Jim Reasoner	35.7	3.0 2, 4	3.2 3	3.1 2, 4	3.1 4	3.0 2, 4	3.1 2.5, 4	15	
Murray Kirk	Stanley Ellin	35.7	3.5 4	3.5 4	3.6 4	3.4 4	3.7 4	3.5 4	2	
Jake Dekker	Stanley Ellin	35.7	3.0 3	3.2 4	3.2 4	2.8 3	3.5 4	3.1 4	13	*
Paul Shaw	Mark Sadler	35.7	2.7 3	3.0 3	2.9 3	3.1 3	3.1 3	3.2 3	11	
Ray Chandler	William Denbow	35.7	1.5 0	1.1 0	1.0 0	0.9 0	1.1 0	1.0 0	40	**
V. I. Warshawski	Sara Paretsky	35.7	3.0 3	3.1 3	3.1 4	3.1 3	2.9 3	3.0 3	16	
Sam Briscoe	Pete Hamil	64.3	2.5 3	2.7 2	2.7 2	2.4 2	2.6 3	2.5 2	27	****
Nolan	Max Collins	57.1	2.3 2	2.5 2, 3	2.1 2	2.5 2	2.3 2	2.3 2	31	******

AN INTERVIEW WITH ELMORE LEONARD

By Joel M. Lyczak

My introduction to Elmore Leonard's work began when a friend lent me a battered copy of *Unknown Man No. 89*. I've been an admirer of his novels and short stories ever since. Shortly after initiating a correspondence with Mr. Leonard, I requested an interview, he graciously accepted, and this is the result.

Elmore "Dutch" Leonard was born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1925. His father's job with General Motors kept the family moving around the southwest portion of the United States until they settled in Detroit. After graduating college in 1950 with a B.A. in English, Leonard began selling short stories to *Zane Grey Western*, *Argosy*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, and to Popular Publications' line of Western pulp magazines. Five novels, all Westerns, were also written between 1951 and 1959. One of them, *Hombre*, was chosen as one of the twenty-five best Western novels of all time by the Western Writers of America.

Leonard's ability to clearly visualize scenes has made his novels popular among motion picture companies worldwide, which have bought the rights to his various books. Film rights to seven of his novels, including his latest, *Stick*, have been purchased. Nine movies have been produced based on either his novels or short stories. He has written three original screenplays, two for theatrical release (*Joe Kidd*, starring Clint Eastwood, and *Mr. Majestyk*, starring Charles Bronson) and one for television *(High Noon, Part Two: The Return of Will Kane)*.

In 1974, Leonard began a string of novels that take place in Detroit. Each succeeding novel received more and more critical acclaim. The *New York Times* said in one review that Leonard writes about "decent men in trouble." It doesn't matter whether the character is a police detective, an automotive manufacturer, armed robber, or suburban housewife. Elmore Leonard makes you care about them. He draws the reader into the character's predicament on page one and doesn't let go until the finish. Only then do you realize that you have been in the hands of a master storyteller.

EL = Elmore Leonard I = Interviewer

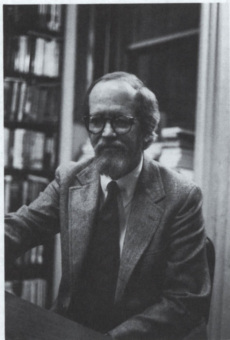
I When did you first become interested in writing?

EL: I began with an inclination, I guess, to tell stories. In grade school in Detroit I fantasized story situations looking out the classroom window: the school besieged by some oppressive army, and it was up to me to slip out through their lines and bring help.

I used to tell movies to my friends, ones that we had seen and liked. *Captain Blood* with Errol Flynn was a favorite they asked me to tell over and over. That was in 1935. Also *Lives of a Bengal Lancer* the same year. *All Quiet on the Western Front* came out in 1930, but it must have been later that I saw the picture and was moved and influenced by it much more than by straight action-adventure stories. I read a serialization of *All Quiet* that was in the *Detroit Times* about 1935, then wrote a World War I play that was put on in our fifth-grade classroom, using the desks as No Man's Land. The hero is caught on the wire, under the German guns, and the coward of the outfit redeems himself by going out and bringing the hero back.

I didn't write anything else until I was at University of Detroit High and wrote a short-short for the school paper. I guess I was too busy reading to write. Began reading popular novelists in the 1940s. Didn't write anything again until 1946, after two and a half years in the Navy, when I was at University of Detroit and entered a short story in a contest sponsored by The Manuscribblers, a school creative writing club. Didn't win. Entered again when I was a senior (didn't write a thing in between) and placed second or third. I was graduated in '50. In '51, I began in earnest to write and sell.

Narrowed my sights to Westerns – not knowing anything about them other than the fact I liked Western movies – researched the Southwest, Apaches, cavalry, cowboys, subscribed to *Arizona Highways*, wrote two short stories that didn't make



it, sold the third, and have been selling ever since. I also picked Westerns because of the market, wide open; slicks were buying them as well as the pulps.

I: Who were the authors you read for inspiration?

EL: I was not greatly influenced by any popular Western writers. My inspiration came from Ernest Hemingway, his lean style. I saw *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as a Western, studied closely how he wrote action sequences as well as dialogue.

Hemingway was the major influence, followed closely by James M. Cain and John O'Hara, primarily for dialogue. Then Mark Harris (*Bang the Drum Slowly*) and Richard Bissel (*Goodbye Ava* and Mississippi River stuff) influenced me in developing a more natural sound that gradually, over the years, became my own style.

I: What are the characteristics of your style?

EL: The style is naturalistic, I suppose; it avoids images and purple passages. It requires that the characters move the story and that I keep my nose out of it. My sound is the sound of the individual characters. I stick to third person and wrote only one in the first person, *Hombre*; a minor character tells the story. But I like to use different points of view; so first person is too restrictive.

I: You switched from the Western novel to those with a contemporary setting with *The Big Bounce* in 1968. What caused you to change genres? Was any prejudice shown towards the acceptance of *The Big Bounce* due to your background as a Western novelist?

EL: During the 'sixties the Western book market dried up to the point the advances weren't worth the effort. I freelanced from '61 to '65 writing industrial and educational films, finally sold *Hombre* to Fox and had enough to live on for a time while I wrote another book. It was time to leave Westerns, and I wasn't that well known as a Western author that it would hinder my branching out. *The Big Bounce* was rejected 84 times, counting Hollywood and New York, but finally sold as a movie to Warner Bros. before Gold Medal picked it up.

I: Critics tend to categorize you as a mystery/suspense writer. What is your opinion of this and the books currently published in the mystery/suspense field?

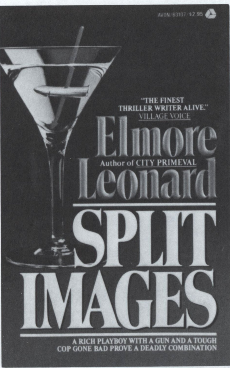
EL: I don't mind being categorized as a suspense writer; I hope my books are suspenseful. But I do object to being called a mystery writer. I don't write mysteries. I'm reading John D. MacDonald again because he influenced me in the '50s and because I think he keeps getting better, a master at writing in the first person and keeping the first person pronoun almost hidden from view. He works at making his prose more readable and interesting, just as I do. I don't read mystery/suspense regularly because most of the stories sound alike. Authors in the suspense field I enjoy are Donald E. Westlake, Ed McBain, Ira Levin, and William Goldman.

I: Do you have a particular starting point when preparing to write a novel?

EL: For the most part I begin with characters. An ex-con goes to work for a millionaire investor who thinks he's a stand-up comic. Add a few more characters, inside and outside the law, throw in a few things I know about Hollywood and how movie deals are made, and see what happens. I don't know myself what's going to happen until I'm well into the story and I see how the characters interact. In *Cat Chaser,* Jiggs Scully shoots Andres De Boya. It could have been the other way around. But which character would provide a more interesting confrontation with Moran in the end?

I: Have you ever based a character on a living individual?

EL: Sometimes a character comes out of a news story—the judge in *City Primeval*—but most often, 99 per cent of the time, I begin with the basic idea of a character and then research to provide the charac-



ter's background. Chichi, the victim in *Split Images,* was based on Porfirio Rubirosa, after searching around to give him a suitable Latin American background.

I: What about your heavies like Clement Mansell, Roland Crowe, and Chucky Gorman? Were these characters born in similar fashion?

EL: Clement Mansell, Roland Crowe, and Chucky Gorman, all began simply as types, stock characters, none based on specific individuals. My job is to give them lives of their own, make them so lifelike that you might think they're based on real people. Roland, Clement, Raymond Gidre, Moke are variations of the same basic type of character that interests me a lot: the redneck out of his element, in high contrast to the setting, usually, and the other characters.

I: Is each character developed by an outline before you begin the story?

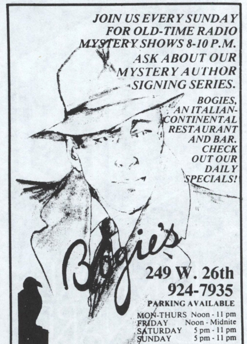
EL: I don't usually outline the characters beforehand—aside from a page or two of notes—but develop them as I go along. Kyle McLaren was extremely sophisticated and stylish, cool, during the planning stages; but she was also boring—until I gave her two older brothers and then her personality changed and she came to life.

For the next book I am outlining my characters in greater depth, writing several pages about where they came from and what they used to do. All in the interest of making the next book better.

I: A few years ago, you spent some time with the Detroit homicide squad for an article you were writing at the time, later incorporating those experiences into *City Primeval.* Your last four books have Miami Beach, Florida as a background to the action instead of Detroit. How did you familiarize yourself with the area and the criminal activities?

EL: For *Split Images,* I called the Chief of Police of Palm Beach and asked him what the procedure would be in investigating the shooting that takes place in the opening chapter.

For the next book, I spent the day with the Miami Beach police asking questions about homicide procedures and getting the feel of their particular attitude about different crimes. Police are very cooperative once they know you are going to play straight with them. I have good contacts now in the MBPD willing to help me any way they can. I also



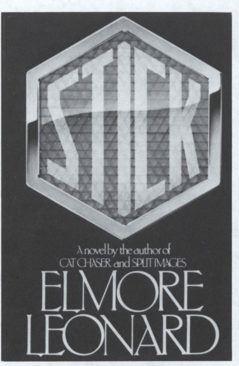
have two South Florida private investigators who can get practically any information I need.

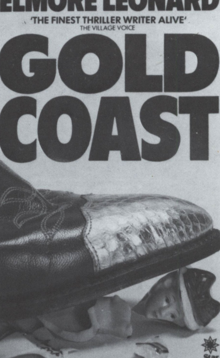
I: When you meet people who have never read one of your novels and they ask what they are about, how do you respond?

EL: I don't waste a lot of time trying to explain what I write to people who haven't read me. "Have you written anything I might have read?" Answer: "I don't know. What do you read?" I don't feel there is anything I might say, for example, that would influence a Ludlum fan to be favorably disposed toward my work.

I: From speaking to fans of your novels, most feel a series character would help your popularity, so why have you refrained from developing one until Stick?

EL: A series character makes selling to the movies extremely difficult, because the studio demands exclusive rights to the character for at least several years. Universal bought *Stick* and owns him until some time in 1986. I can write another book with Stick as the main character, but if Universal passes on it I'm in trouble. I would have to find a studio that agrees—if they want to make the next one into a picture—not to release it for three years. I like Stick





very much, the character. But I'm developing another guy who could work just as well, if not better, for the next book. Most of my main characters are pretty much the same guy anyway.

I: There are seven screenplays to your credit, three of them produced for movies and television. What helped you break into such a difficult field?

EL: I love movies, so I would like to write a successful motion picture. I wrote my first feature fourteen years ago, and I think I'm getting better all the time; but because of the nature of the business, the high risk, it's very difficult to get one into production. I got my first writing assignment at MGM (*The Moonshine War*) because my prose style is highly visual, the story is developed in scenes, and producers can see the screenplay in the novel. That's why, I'm quite sure, I'm able to get work out there.

I: Are you working on a screenplay at this time?

EL: I'm about to begin the *Stick* screenplay for Universal.

I: I understand you have written a screenplay for

***The Rosary Murders.* Would you explain the process you took to remold the story from the book into a screenplay?**

EL: In writing the screenplay for *The Rosary Murders,* I not only read the novel several times, I broke it down and outlined it by scenes for quick reference. Next, I wrote a 50-page treatment that described the continuity of the script scene by scene and included some dialogue. The producer and I had already discussed the story to some extent; but now, with the treatment, we went over it in detail, revised certain scenes, added new ideas. Once we were in agreement, I went on to the first draft of the screenplay.

Screen writing, to some degree, is writing to order—totally different than writing a novel—because sooner or later it becomes a committee project. The producer begins with ideas he has about the material. Then the actors, if they have the clout. So that the screenwriter, going in, knows his words are not going to be held sacred.

I: Was William X. Kienzle, author of *The Rosary Murders,* brought in for consultation about certain aspects of the script?

EL: The author of the book is not included in any of this. Once he sells the screen rights, it's out of his hands. This is not a question of deliberately ignoring the author; it's simply a matter of working in a completely different medium now, looking at the material through the eyes of the filmmakers.

I: How will the screenplay storyline of *The Rosary Murders* differ from the novel?

EL: At this stage of development, I'm not at liberty to discuss the screenplay or how it might differ from the novel. I don't own the material; I'm an employee. Obviously, though, in transforming a 250-page book into a 120-page script, changes are necessary simply to make the material fit.

I: At this time, five of your books and two short stories have been adapted for film. Of them all, which represented your story best?

EL: The only one that didn't represent my story at all was *The Big Bounce.* It wasn't the book at all. In the movie, the character is a heroic figure of a returning veteran. My character couldn't even get in the Army, couldn't do whatever he wanted. He wanted to be a baseball player, but couldn't hit a curve ball. Tried for the Army, but was turned down because of a trick knee, I think it was. He definitely wasn't a hero, but kind of a nice guy looking for his way.

I saw the film in New York when it was first released. I had gotten there a little late, about fifteen minutes or so, and a woman in front of me turned to her husband twenty minutes later and said, "This is the worst picture I ever saw." The three of us left, and I've never seen the whole thing.

The other movies were, at best, okay. I haven't seen a story of mine yet the way I pictured it during the writing.

I: After thirty years at it, does writing ever get to be a grind?

EL: I believe it takes at least ten years for a writer to reach the point that he knows what he's doing. I wrote part-time from 1951–61, thirty short stories and five novels. Didn't write at all again until '65. Changed fields, got into contemporary situations, and had to begin learning all over again, describing things and places that readers know about. Unlike writing about characters who lived a hundred years ago out west. The language, the sound, has to be current. I feel right now that I started writing about 1975 and have been developing, getting better, since then.

I'm disciplined, I write from 9:30 to 6:00 every day. But writing, especially now, is not a grind, and I doubt that it ever will be. Because I write to please myself first, to entertain myself. I'm not writing to order, hacking it out at the request of an editor. I

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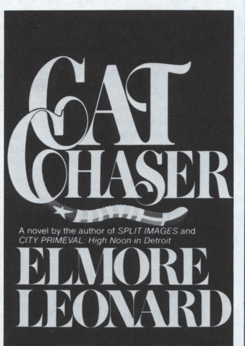
write only what I want to write. And thank God it's what a number of people want to read. Not a million, but the number does keep growing. I'm lucky that I'm able to sell what I like to write, and I'm lucky to be able to make movie sales, too. But then luck is also part of the strategy.

I've established my sound, and I write about what I see going on around me within the context of what might loosely be described as a suspense plot. As long as I can stay current, record changes in customs and language as they occur, I should do okay.



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THE CHANGING FACE OF EVIL

IN THE HARD-BOILED NOVEL

By Frederick Isaac

The understanding of Nemesis, the existence of evil and its manifestation in the world, is among the major identifying elements in the mystery. Without the existence of a wrongful act serious enough to hide, and the need to discover both the deed's results and the identity of the perpetrator, the crime story is essentially indistinguishable from other forms of fiction, and in fact may be impossible.

Traditionally, the tale of detection has dealt with the most heinous of personal crimes, murder. Throughout the genre, though, there is also a strain of other, less absolute deeds which have claimed our attention. Deception of all kinds is a favorite device, traceable to "The Purloined Letter." Robbery is a constant menace, except when performed by such entertaining thieves as Raffles, Arsène Lupin, or Bernie Rhodenbarr. In recent years, personal crimes such as rape have become subjects for serious discussion and exposure through mystery stories. And the steady growth of adventure, suspense, and save-the-world dramas, from Childers to Ludlum and Greene to Le Carré, has provided readers and critics alike with still another tradition. Each of them depends on an *a priori* understanding by creator and consumer that there exists a hero and that he is in some way innately Good. Without such a concept, the entire situation becomes ludicrous.

Throughout the history of crime fiction, its detractors have attacked it on the grounds that it contains nothing more than an extended puzzle. Edmund Wilson, in his three essays about the genre, is especially bitter about the waste of time mysteries take from more productive reading. It is, of course, difficult if not impossible to convince such people. And even accepting the unproductive nature of the form, there are other elements: the personalities of such memorable personages as Sherlock Holmes, Hercule Poirot, Peter Wimsey, and the hundreds of others; the finely-drawn settings; and the delicate interplay of criminal and detective, author and reader make the best whodunits mechanical marvels as well as simple pleasures.

What seems to be missing from the critical literature is a study of Evil as opposed to crime, an examination of the moral backdrop which allows us to accept the actions of the heroes. The qualities of true villainy have not been explored as they pertain to the formally constructed mystery. Those who study the hard-boiled form, though, have only to look to Raymond Chandler for a statement of the concept of malice and of the heroes who conquer it. The description first appeared almost forty years ago, in "The Simple Art of Murder." In this essay, Chandler condemns most of the purists, using A.A. Milne's *The Red House Mystery* as the prime example. He then discusses the English style, taking Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers to task for their lack of realism. He continues by praising the work of Dashiell Hammett. Chandler reminds us that "murder is an act of infinite cruelty. . . . The realist in murder writes of . . . the world you live in." In closing, he presents the key to our understanding of the hard-boiled craft:

> In everything that can be called art there is a quality of redemption. It may be pure tragedy, if it is high tragedy, and it may be pity and irony, and it may be the raucous laughter of the strong man. But down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid.

Since its first appearance in 1944, this has remained the working definition of the private eye and his world.

As we read and re-read the passage (possibly the most famous quotation in mystery criticism), it seems

at first that Chandler is talking about the Good and not about Evil. At one level, what we see is a definition of the detective. But by accepting the statement this simply, we miss all of its internal meanings. What does Chandler contemplate by his repetition of "mean" in the final sentence? What is the awful truth that lies in the reality of the streets? What waits for the man who ventures there? And how do the most popular writers in the form respond to the question of Evil as they present it in their work?

Chandler prided himself on his style. It is with the use of "mean" that we must therefore begin to unravel the problem of Evil. In fact, there is a three-leveled definition which he presents. Each of the interpretations alters the nature of the story, the interaction of characters, and the response we, as readers, will have. The first, and most apparent, usage is the common one. The Mean is the brawling, snarling and vicious life, the "junkyard dog" style of petty crooks and gun-toting punks. The crimes of such people are brutal; rape and torture come easily to mind. Murder, by its finality, must also be included, but we know that the reasons for murder are often subtle, and killers frequently complex.

The second pattern understands the Mean as low, unscrupulous, sneaking, and rotten. In this guise, the criminal is not averse to the use of force; but there are other, less obvious instruments which may be more effective in enforcing compliance. In addition to this, we can see that the enemy can grow organically. Evil is harder to see here, and therefore less correctable. It grows as a weed, or a subterranean monster, sneaking up on the victims. They only recognize it after it bursts through the seemingly placid surface of life to strike and kill. In fact, the victim is not only unaware of the horror that stalks him; the perpetrator also may not realize its power. Even the villain, in such instances, is not innately bad, but caught by a web of events or circumstances.

The last, and most complex, definition descends from mathematics and philosophy. Here the Mean is the average of all other qualities, the precise balance of all of the field's attributes. On one level, it is the only explanation Chandler gives for the hero. The first two, speaking about the atmosphere, the surroundings, the "streets," give us the enemies of right, the villains, the Evil in our midst. This second usage, of "a man...not himself mean," must therefore presume the virtue of the protagonist. The detective is the Good man who will right the wrongs of the world and return it to its pure and innocent state.

This, though, is a simplistic reading. Chandler does not state that the hero is Good. In contrast, he is *not* gruesome or brutal or of low moral character. In

addition, Chandler can be returning us by this definition to the streets themselves; they are not special, they are everyday, and not to be considered the creation of the novelist. As the life that surrounds the detective is ordinary, he is more than just another man. Philip Marlowe and the others are better than average, neither pure nor fundamentally different by virtue of their trade. From this perspective, Chand-

ler's statement is not the positive one we have thought it, but the establishment and immediate contradiction of a negative. Evil, whatever its form, is no longer confronted by Good, but only by the not-Evil. The rest of the paragraph reinforces this idea by chronicling at length the detective's simple moral code. He is not, we see, superior; only a man living by the rules.

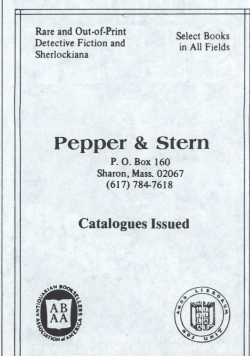
The major figures in the sixty-year history of the hard-boiled story can be placed more or less on a spectrum according to their comprehension of Evil, Chandler's "mean" as we understand it. At one end stands Mickey Spillane, whose concept lies closest to Chandler's first definition. For him and his heroes, Evil is a hulking, brooding menace which gathers force by joining in conspiracies. This ugly side of life is vicious and cruel, pitiless at its heart. The man who defeats the monster must use the same tools, and in the same ways, as his enemies. Lying, cheating, and the dispensation of personal justice are all placed in the hands of the hero. His case becomes a crusade to rid the world of vice. Given a cause, the detective is in control until the brute has been eliminated.

Spillane, and the retinue of gunslingers with whom he populates his books, is the quintessential example of personal motive in detection. Spillane fills the world around these men with a black cloud of unthinking, deadly menace. The job of the hero is to exterminate it at all cost. In employing Mike Hammer, the victim of Evil hires not only the means to rid himself of the malevolent presence. He also accepts implicitly the "moral sense" of the operative. Spillane's alter-egos act compulsively, almost entirely without introspection. To read the books is to have a sense of mechanical beings, tearing each other apart with awesome efficiency. The hero may be kicked around and beaten unconscious, but he retains an absolute certainty that he is superior to his opponents. And when he has them at his mercy, he will blow them away with no second thoughts.

The assumption that Hammer performs his carnage for a "good and just" reason quickly drowns in the blood and loathing which he spreads along his trail. The final act of most Spillane novels seals this horror, as the detective murders his quarry coldly and swiftly. Spillane and his fans might argue that those who plot and scheme to control others do not deserve to live. Their deaths serve as payment for past deeds, warnings to others not to try the same, and to assert one final time the supremacy of the investigator. From a moral perspective, though, there is no difference between the heroes and villains, except that the creator starts with the decision that one will be called Good and the other Evil. There is no discernible difference.

Dashiell Hammett grew more complex in his understanding of the nature and problem of Evil over the course of his five novels. From *Red Harvest* to *The Thin Man,* his detectives dealt in increasingly sophisticated ways with crime and its causes. In two of the novels, the protagonists approach the enemy as if it were a personal nemesis rather than a function of the social system. (Hammett as a leftist could have taken either approach; what was impossible for him was the detachment from action common to the British Golden Age writers.)

At the beginning of *Red Harvest,* the Continental Op arrives in Poisonville to find a community riddled with crime, graft, and its own version of an underworld. Sent from San Francisco on a small job, he decides to clean up the whole mess himself. He does this with help from some co-workers, then tries to justify it to the Old Man, his boss. The ruthlessness of his operation to detoxify Poisonville, and his own cold awareness, give the Op the sense of a hanging judge, or of a *deus ex machina* in Greek theatre. With no reason to act beyond his orders from the agency, he concludes unilaterally that the city should be changed. Completing his self-appointed mission, he feels no responsibility to its people. He leaves the future to them, rather than remain and help them determine their fate. What makes this



situation different from Spillane's is that Hammett identifies the hateful acts in the town at the beginning of the story and also, in the character of the Op himself, keeps the acts of the hero at arm's length. The protagonist not only understands what he does, he hates it. The precision of his loathing, as well as the reader's horror at the original sickness of the town, make Poisonville's return palatable, instead of a novel-length bloodbath.

In *The Maltese Falcon,* Hammett puts more distance between the purely motivated avenger and the less simple real world. The crime which sends Spade into the case is his partner's murder. Miles Archer's death is a personal blow for Spade. It allows him to take a major part in the investigation, and to exceed his normal sphere. The crime brings him into the search for the falcon, and the bird and those who hunt for it return him to the murderer. At the end of the novel, when the final question is the future of the villain(s), Spade gives all of them to the police instead of dealing with them on his own. Here, for the first time, the detective relinquishes the right of revenge.

Slightly extending the pattern, we come to John D. MacDonald. His hero, Travis McGee, has a simplified moral code that approaches the limits of Spillane's world. McGee calls himself a "Salvage Consultant," but throughout his saga we find words that suggest otherwise. "Crusader," "Sheriff," and others denoting an assumption of moral justification are used at some point in all of the more than twenty McGee novels. For him, Evil is a real force, and his job is to keep it away from those who come to him. In his world, people are known by their acts, and the Mean is one of its names. Men's lives are ruled by choices, the results of desires and the means to attain goals. Bad people choose lesser methods. On the other side, the enemy of Right (typified by McGee) is neither all-powerful nor maniacal in its grasp for power.

McGee himself neither condemns nor condones illegality or brutality, in part because he uses it from time to time to his own ends. But in taking no stand, he sets himself apart from those who enjoy bloodshed and who appear to destroy for the pleasure of watching their victims, the one-time victimizers, suffer the fate planned for others. This partial removal salves McGee's (and his creator's) conscience, but it leaves both the series and its hero vulnerable to the charge that McGee is only minimally less Evil than that which he seeks.

McGee avoids the worst excesses of Spillane and Hammett in other ways. Because many of his "clients" are friends, lovers, or people he has protected, their problems and deaths are personal to him. He has a stake in the survival of morality as he sees it. His acceptance of a role allows him greater flexibility of response than would be allowed a hired detective, a certain freedom from ordinary controls. His work is not performed only for the client of the moment, but for the memories of the dead or attacked whom he has known.

The question of violence by the protagonist is less clear, though. In most instances, McGee is satisfied to find the cause of the immediate wrong. Side issues, while they may help or hinder his investigations, do not affect him in all cases. But when attacked directly, as when his fiancée is killed in *The Green Ripper,* McGee becomes feverish. The brutal calculation he shows in exterminating the Church of the Apocalypse destroys him, and is as fiendish as anything in Spillane.

The next authors we come to are a pair—Raymond Chandler himself, and Ross Macdonald. For them and their creations, Evil cannot be separated from ordinary life. Normal people are not immune to it and cannot avoid it. Instead, the Mean, unhappy, and destructive are the results of choices. Having made a decision, the world is forever changed. The actor must live with the altered circumstance; and in destroying it they may also injure themselves.

The distinction cannot be more clear. For the detectives already studied, Evil is something overwhelming, obvious, almost tangible. Once begun, it creeps silently and inexorably toward the conquest of the already determined goal. When discovered, it has the feeling of a slimy monster, horrid and oozing malice like a stale odor. There is no real cure for such situations but the rubbing out of the entire system. The detective is the means to that simple end.

For Chandler and Ross Macdonald, the lines between Good and Evil become fainter. The villains may be victims, and the obvious victims may compound the villainy through their own acts. Bystanders are neither innocent nor uninvolved. The world becomes far more unresponsive to single men or individual acts. The detectives themselves are brought into a case to correct a specific problem or discover a fact or set of facts, in much the way a doctor is consulted by a patient. The client recognizes a problem but cannot control or understand it. The detective, as an outside agent, is the means to alleviate the difficulty, but he cannot bring about a complete cure.

As the hero of the story, the detective is assumed to be superior to those who hire him. In addition, he remains outside the group, allowing himself additional information, an unbiased vantage point. This does not place him beyond the reach of the law, though. Both the laws of the state and a strict, though personal, moral code govern his actions. It is not his duty to make moral decisions for others which neither he nor they will obey. While acting in the best interests of the client, the detective's role is to protect secrets and capture the guilty. Without emotional involvement, he acts dispassionately, and without fear that his decisions will be misconstrued.

Chandler's *The Big Sleep* allows a glimpse of the problems and possibilities he saw in this concept. Called by General Sternwood to answer one question, Marlowe becomes involved with gamblers, pornographers, and the General's two daughters, as well as the local police. When asked about various parts of the problem, he answers directly, but carefully. In effect, he divorces each aspect of the case from the others, though he understands that the basis for all of them is the same. When, finally, he knows the fate of Rusty Regan, he remains detached from the people he has dealt with. The determination of Carmen Sternwood's fate is based on his perceptions and on his external decision of the moral dilemma. He decides to make his judgment both because of her illness and because no one else knows what he does about Regan. Marlowe thereby repays the limited debt he owes, both to the General and to Vivian, and retains his honor.

For Ross Macdonald, the pattern of individual responsibility blurs almost to non-existence. For him, the Mean which Chandler spoke of is impossible to identify. Evil in his novels flows from decisions made long before the present crime. It is in the ramifications of long-past choices that has brought out the current danger. The original actors were not callous or unthinking. They could not foresee the future (now present) filled with death and destruction. In doing what seemed right and of limited duration, they miscalculated.

It is unclear whether this temporal view of Evil makes Macdonald's world fatalistically determinate, or instead implies the author's view that the past infiuences the present. Whichever is the case (and several books indicate each side of the problem), Lew Archer's ability to resolve his client's woes are very limited. Entering a case, Archer faces not a plot against an individual but a combination of circumstances which has developed beyond the capacity of the people involved to alleviate. The enemy is no longer outside the individual, no longer a unified plot, not even the work of a single person. Now the problem is within us, and Archer's willingness to

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combat it runs against his status as an external force.

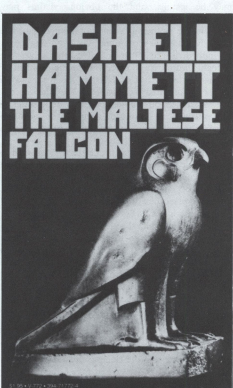
For both Chandler and Ross Macdonald, the detective is progressively farther from the primary group. In attempting to remove the burden of Evil from the backs of the victims while not damaging their lives, Marlowe and Archer keep control over their passions. They are not distracted by emotional considerations from the work at hand. They are thus better equipped to deal with the rest of the characters individually. In remaining *ex machina,* participants unaffected by the drama and limited in their effects on it, they can act as they wish. It is in this sense of a more consistent moral code which restrains them from imposing their sense of judgment on the rest of the participants.

Even so, all five of these writers, from Spillane to Ross Macdonald, work from the premise we noted at the beginning. Evil, in whatever shape the author fashions it, is opposed by the not-Evil, the detective. While the protagonist is presumed to be better than his adversary, there is no inherent reason for this. Spillane, Hammett, and John D. MacDonald all seem more or less oblivious to the significance of the ruthless and lawless actions their heroes commit. The guarantee is not of morality, but of the victory of the predetermined positive over its enemies. The progression is not from Spillane's simplicity to Chandler's complexity, although that is part of it. Rather it is from less to more control over passion on the part of the protagonist. While Ross Macdonald comes closest to the detective as moral man in presenting Archer as exposer of ancient acts and their results, even he has never identified the kind of behavioral limits within which Archer works.

Of presently popular authors, almost all have remained fairly close to the original concept of the hard-boiled; the crusading private investigator, correcting the wrongs done to the innocent in a brutal world. Such significant figures of the past ten years as Michael Z. Lewin, Joe Gores, Bill Pronzini, and Jonathan Valin have been less concerned with the creation of a moral stance than with the development of an interesting character or new, slightly off-beat plots. While their books are well wrought, we should demand more. Should the mystery go beyond the limitations of its past, or is it adequate to continue to be entertained by such diversions as Stuart Kaminsky's Toby Peters?

There is, in fact, one writer who has made a concerted effort to make the mystery an assertion of the positive as he understands it. In nine novels to date, Robert B. Parker has defined not merely the Evil and Mean sides of life but also has opposed to it his personally defined concept of the Good. For Parker and his hero Spenser, immorality springs from everyday people and their emotions. Greed, hatred, anger, and even love are its motivating passions. They sometimes conspire, but can also be the basis of Meanness individually. Their effect is to poison those who have them, and to sour their relations with the world at large. For Parker, it is the act itself, and neither the person nor the motivation which constitutes the enemy.

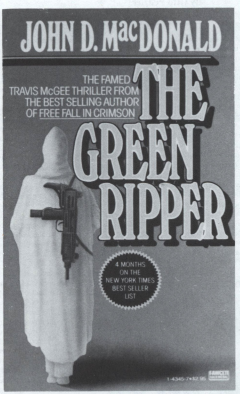
Beyond this, and vital for his concept, Parker claims in his books that Good is not an end. While others, Spillane the most prominent among them, believe that the elimination of an identified agent will



improve the world, Parker disagrees. Good, in his universe, is the very means by which the world is improved. Regardless of the means, there can be no benefit to the actor or his principle.

Starting especially with *Mortal Stakes,* and continuing to the present, Parker's alter ego Spenser has developed a personal ethical "code" for his readers. (Parker's commitment to it is, according to articles, absolute.) In *Early Autumn,* he gives the clearest operation of the Good and its results in today's society. At first, Spenser is hired by a woman to protect her and her son from her ex-husband. After

several kidnappings and retrievals of young Paul Giacomin, Spenser decides to remove the young man from both of his warring parents. The two of them go to the woods, where they live alone for a month and build a cabin. In addition, Spenser takes a stock of weights and other exercise gear, and Paul begins to develop physically. Their night on the town includes a ballet performance, at Paul's request. Spenser tells his charge afterward that although he does not understand or care for the art, he admires and



respects the performers because he identifies with their effort. To become as good as they are demands talent and dedication, which most people do not comprehend and are not interested in pursuing.

When Spenser sees that Paul's parents are unwilling to change their attitude toward their son, he becomes unwilling to return the boy to them. Their hatred of each other has already affected him. To let them continue their war will help none of them, least of all Paul. Spenser therefore takes it on himself to blackmail both of them. When that is accomplished, he becomes Paul's guardian, and the young man is given an opportunity to live his own life. (A similar situation occurs in the recent *Ceremony*. Having retrieved a runaway from the underground teen pornography market, Spenser realizes that she will return to an unchanged family situation and probably will repeat the process. He therefore offers her the choice of going back to the suburbs or going to meet a madam he knows whom he believes will treat the youngster well.)

Parker recognizes, as few novelists have, that the simple answers given in most mysteries are inadequate. His own solutions, while they do not reflect societal norms and are not what we might wish to see, have a consistency and contemporary logic that is missing from almost all other series. The presence of the Code, for all of its situation ethic, is true to our uncertain time. It would, in some respects, be nice if Spillane's vision were true. As it is not, Parker retains the solidity of his own beliefs to oppose the irrationality and insubstantiality of the present reality.

Partially as a corroboration of his moral stance, and also to test himself against the older ideas, Parker has given Spenser a part-time associate. Hawk, a black some-time hood, is the living embodiment of the Code's other side. While Spenser has killed people (he sets up a double killing in *Mortal Stakes* and shoots again in *Looking for Rachel Wallace*), he has little stomach for vicious or cold-blooded acts. But in *Early Autumn,* he defends Hawk's murder of a small-time gangster to Paul. Hawk, he says, is a good man because he lives by a single set of rules. Whether you agree with him or not, you must respect both the severity of the creed and the man who lives by it. But, says Spenser, Hawk is not Good in the larger sense, because his system does not allow for subtleties of law or legitimacy. As it gives consistency, any code is allowable. As a larger vision of right conduct, it is highly questionable.

Thus, the image of Evil in the hard-boiled story is not as uniform as readers and critics have assumed over the years. In relying heavily on a too-simple view of Chandler's Mean, we have over-emphasized the author's view of life and the construction of a world in which Good has no place. From Spillane's cartoon-like concept of "an eye for an eye—and take this, too!" to the carefully delineated, almost surgical idea of the detective as outsider in the world of Ross Macdonald, the opposition has been between the Mean and the not-Mean. Parker's further definition and refinement toward the Good as a specific moral element moves the entire discussion to a different realm. As the mystery continues to grow and change, further alterations will, of course, take place. We should be carefully aware of Chandler's concept, but it should not remain any longer free of scrutiny. After all, Evil is the root of crime, and crime is the reason for the mystery. □

COLLECTING Mystery Fiction

By Otto Penzler

FATHER BROWN

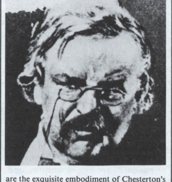
Fredric Dannay, writing as Ellery Queen, was one of the first (and still ranks as one of the most perceptive) of the critics and historians who devoted themselves to a study of mystery and detective fiction. His judgments, for the most part, have stood the test of years admirably. More than three decades ago, for example, he stated that the three greatest detectives of all time were Sherlock Holmes, C. Auguste Dupin, and Father Brown. It would be difficult indeed to mount a strong argument against that evaluation.

The Father Brown stories, particularly the earliest ones, are extraordinary in all ways. The incredibly bizarre situations encountered by Father Brown, the unique and inevitable explanations for apparently inexplicable behavior, the richness of the language, and, above all, the pervading presence of the cherubic priest, combine to raise the stories to the most exhilarating heights.

Edgar Allan Poe invented the detective short story and, in Dupin, created most of the significant elements required of a fictional detective. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes, of course, towers above all others in the world of mystery fiction, having taken on a life of his own to become, as George Bernard Shaw stated, one of the three most famous people ever to have lived, along with Jesus Christ and Houdini.

It is after Dupin and Holmes that the remaining detectives of fiction must be considered. Banners could be raised for Hercule Poirot, or Charlie Chan, or Nero Wolfe, or Ellery Queen, or Philip Marlowe, or a handful of others, but it is safe to say that none has ever appeared in a series of stories that are so memorable, so beautifully written, and so perfectly compatible with their uniqueness. After all, Philo Vance could have solved the Queen cases, Sam Spade could have substituted for Marlowe with no difference in outcome, Holmes could have handled any of Wolfe's problems, and Chan, for all his lovableness, could have been replaced by any competent detective. But who, other than Father Brown, could conceivably have solved a murder-by-beheading in which there is an extra head? And what other detective can boast that he not only discovered who was the criminal but then managed to turn him from a life of crime into an upholder of the law?

G. K. Chesterton was a prolific writer who understood and appreciated mystery fiction but who strayed from it too often. While many of his essays and some of his poems are still a joy to read, he was at his best when he wrote of fantasy and paradox anchored in reality and reason. The Father Brown stories are the exquisite embodiment of Chesterton's strengths as a writer; less than a half-step behind are the stories in such nearly-forgotten volumes as *The Poet and the Lunatics, Tales of the Long Bow, The Club of Queer Trades,* and *Four Faultless Felons,* as well as the novel regarded by some as his masterpiece, *The Man Who Was Thursday.*



It is a well-documented fact that Father Brown was based on the real-life Father John O'Connor, the parish priest of St. Cuthbert's, as well as Bradford Privy Chamberlain to Pope Pius XI. Chesterton knew him for more than thirty years, and his face was not unlike some of the earliest dust jacket illustrations of his fictional counterpart.

Chesterton enjoyed a solid popularity in England and elsewhere during the years in which he produced the Father Brown stories, but the first printings of the five volumes that comprise the series were not very large, so they are not overly common. The first two, in particular, are quite scarce, and they are out-and-out rare in dust jackets. In twenty years of collecting, I cannot recall ever having seen a first edition of either *The Innocence of Father Brown* or *The Wisdom of Father Brown* offered for sale with a dust jacket. It is a logical extension of that fact, then, to state that, while a Father Brown collection may not necessarily be a large one, it would be an excessively difficult one to assemble in true connoisseur's condition.

In addition to the five volumes of Father Brown stories, several other books belong on the shelf of a comprehensive collection. A single short story, "The Vampire of the Village," was written after the last of the collections and had its first book publication in *Twentieth Century Detective Stories,* edited by Ellery Queen, in 1948. Its first appearance in a Chesterton collection was in *The Father Brown Omnibus,* published in New York by Dodd, Mead in 1951. Curiously, it did not appear in England until 1953. Cassell, the British publisher of all the Father Brown books, produced an omnibus volume in 1929 entitled *The Father Brown Stories.* This contained all the stories in the first four Father Brown books, with no new material. It was recast and reprinted in 1947 to include the stories in the last Father Brown book, again with no new material, but it did not include "The Vampire in the Village," which had been published in the August 1936 issue of the *Strand* magazine. Finally, in 1953, a new edition of *The Father Brown Stories* was published by Cassell, including "The Vampire of the Village." The first Dodd, Mead omnibus, incidentally, was published in 1933 and collected the stories in the first four Father Brown collections, with an introduction by R. T. Bond.

Before the book can be closed on the Father Brown stories, however, it should be noted that there exists, in manuscript form, an unpublished story by Chesterton. It had been announced as a feature of a forthcoming issue of *The Chesterton Review* about two years ago, but it was never published. Correspondence with William White (whose Father Brown bibliography appears elsewhere in this issue of *The Armchair Detective*) reveals that the present owner of the manuscript has not permitted its publication, and we can only wonder and wait to see what treasure still awaits the kindly priest's many devotees.

And no Father Brown collection would be complete without the original's very own words on the subject. *Father Brown on Chesterton* by John O'Connor, published in London by Frederick Muller Ldt. in 1937, is not yet a difficult book to locate and is a worthy, if peripheral, addition to the saga of the most famous cleric in literature.

Of an even more ephemeral nature, but still worth noting, is the material relating to the two Father Brown movies made in English (there have been several in foreign languages as well). Walter Connolly played the gentle priest in *Father Brown, Detective* (Paramount, 1934), and Alec Guinness recreated the role in *Father Brown* (released in the United States as *The Detective*), a 1954 production by Columbia Pictures in Britain. Kenneth More played Father Brown superbly in a 1973 British television series which was finally aired in the U.S. a decade later on PBS's *Mystery!* series.

It is giving away some of the puzzle, I fear, but there is no way around it. The titular character in "The Incredulity of Br. Faneworth," collected in *The Anagram Detectives* by Norma Schier, is an anagram of Father Brown, just as the author's name, H. T. Greenstock, is an anagram of G. K. Chesterton. The volume also contains pastiches of Ellery Queen, Sherlock Holmes, Nero Wolfe, The Great Merlini, Lord Peter Wimsey, and others, and is still in print from The Mysterious Press in a first printing at $10 and in a limited edition signed by Schier and Stanley Ellin, who wrote the introduction, at $25.

The Innocence of Father Brown

First Edition: London, Cassell, 1911. Red cloth, lettered in gilt on front cover and spine, with a blind-stamped border on front cover; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

First American Edition: New York, John Lane, MCMXI. Red cloth, lettered in gilt on front cover and spine, blind-stamped border on front cover, two gilt rules on spine; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
First English Edition		
Good	$1,000.00	$ 35.00
Fine	2,000.00	200.00
Very fine	2,500.00	300.00
First American Edition		
Good	$250.00	$ 15.00
Fine	500.00	65.00
Very fine	750.00	100.00

Note: The first English edition was published in July 1911, in an edition of 5,000 copies.

The English edition has eight full-page illustrations by Sydney Seymour Lucas. The American edition is illustrated by Will F. Foster.

There is a rare binding variant of the first English edition. Bound in brown cloth with black lettering on the front cover and spine, it also has a large full-color illustration pasted to the front cover. It is likely, though not certain, that this is the illustration which appears on the dust jacket. The cloth spine is somewhat less rounded on this variant than on other copies of the first edition. The single copy seen of this interesting variant is neither a Colonial edition nor a Canadian edition, nor is it a library binding or one produced by an individual, since other books published by Cassell have been seen in this format. The best guess is that it is a later binding of first edition sheets, but this is conjecture.

The Innocence of Father Brown contains the following stories (listed with their first magazine appearances):

"The Blue Cross" (*Storyteller,* Sept. 1910)

"The Secret Garden" (*Storyteller,* Oct. 1910)

"The Queer Feet" (*Storyteller,* Nov. 1910)

"The Flying Stars" (*Cassell's,* June 1911)

"The Invisible Man" (*Cassell's,* Feb. 1911)

"The Honour of Israel Gow" (*Cassell's,* April 1911; published as "The Strange Justice")

"The Wrong Shape" (*Storyteller,* Jan. 1911)

"The Sins of Prince Saradine" (*Cassell's,* May 1911)

"The Hammer of God" (*Storyteller,* Dec. 1910)

"The Eye of Apollo" (*Cassell's,* March 1911)

"The Sign of the Broken Sword" (*Storyteller,* Feb. 1911)

"The Three Tools of Death" (*Cassell's,* July 1911)

The Wisdom of Father Brown

First Edition: London, Cassell, 1914. Dark blue cloth, front cover blind-stamped with title, author, and border; spine lettered in gilt; rear cover blank. A binding variant, with no priority determined, features a light blue cloth. A third binding variant features a smooth, dark blue cloth, the front cover of which has the title and author lettered in gilt, with a blind-stamped border and a blind-stamped leaf ornament at each corner; the spine is stamped in gilt, with heavy ornamentation; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

First American Edition: New York, John Lane, MCMXV. Red cloth, front cover and spine lettered in gilt, a blind-stamped border is on the front cover, and two gilt rules are on the spine; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
First Edition		
Good	$ 500.00	$ 25.00
Fine	1,250.00	200.00
Very fine	1,750.00	300.00
First American Edition		
Good	$150.00	$15.00
Fine	350.00	50.00
Very fine	500.00	75.00

Note: The first English edition was published in October 1914 in an edition of 2,800 copies. The first edition was published at six shillings. Sheets of the first edition were also used for a Colonial Edition of 1,300 copies, published at 3/6; a Canadian edition of 199 copies, published at fifty cents; and a "Cheap Edition" of 658 copies, published at 2/6, for a total first edition of 4,957 copies. This volume is by far the scarcest of the Father Brown volumes, and one can only speculate about how many copies of the original 2,800 have survived nearly seventy years and two wars.

The English edition has a colored frontispiece by Sidney (note the spelling variant between this title and the previous volume) Seymour Lucas. The American edition has no illustrations.

The Wisdom of Father Brown contains the following stories (listed with their first magazine appearances):

"The Absence of Mr. Glass" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* March 1913)

"The Paradise of Thieves" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* Aug. 1913)

"The Duel of Dr. Hirsch" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* Aug. 1914)

"The Man in the Passage" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* Sept. 1913)

"The Mistake of the Machine" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* Oct. 1913)

"The Head of Caesar" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* June 1913)

"The Purple Wig" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* May 1913)

"The Perishing of the Pendragons" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* June 1914)

"The God of the Gongs" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* Sept. 1914)

"The Salad of Colonel Cray" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* July 1914)

"The Strange Crime of John Boulnois" (*Pall Mall Magazine,* July 1913)

"The Fairy Tale of Father Brown" (no prior magazine appearance located)

The Incredulity of Father Brown

First Edition: London, Cassell, (1926). Black cloth, front cover lettered in red, with title and author in a rectangular box, which is itself contained in a box with wavy top and bottom lines but ruled sides, with a wavy border within a blind-stamped border; spine lettered in red, with a red frame around the publisher's blind-stamped device, all within a red border (wavy top and bottom, ruled sides), with a blind-stamped border; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

First American Edition: New York, Dodd,

Mead, 1926. Tan cloth, lettered in black on front cover and spine, with a blind-stamped publisher's device and border rule on the front cover; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
First Edition		
Good	$ 50.00	$10.00
Fine	200.00	25.00
Very fine	300.00	35.00
First American Edition		
Good	$ 25.00	$ 5.00
Fine	100.00	20.00
Very fine	150.00	30.00

Note: The first English edition was published in June 1926 in an edition of 7,500 copies.

The Incredulity of Father Brown contains the following stories (listed with their first magazine appearances):

"The Resurrection of Father Brown" (no prior magazine appearance located)

"The Arrow of Heaven" (*Nash's Magazine*, July 1925)

"The Oracle of the Dog" (*Nash's Magazine*, Dec. 1923)

"The Miracle of Moon Crescent" (*Nash's Magazine*, May 1924)

"The Curse of the Golden Cross" (*Nash's Magazine*, May 1925)

"The Dagger with Wings" (*Nash's Magazine*, Feb. 1924)

"The Doom of the Darnaways" (*Nash's Magazine*, June 1925)

"The Ghost of Gideon Wise" (*Cassell's Magazine*, April 1926)

The Secret of Father Brown

First Edition: London, Cassell, (1927). Black cloth, lettered in gilt on spine, with two gilt rules; front cover blank except for blind-stamped border; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

First American Edition: New York, Harper & Brothers, 1927. Blue cloth, lettered and with ornamental rules and devices in green on front cover and spine; rear cover blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
First Edition		
Good	$ 50.00	$10.00
Fine	200.00	20.00
Very fine	300.00	30.00
First American Edition		
Good	$ 25.00	$ 5.00
Fine	100.00	15.00
Very fine	150.00	25.00

Note: The first English edition was published in September 1927 in an edition of 8,000 copies.

The Secret of Father Brown contains the following stories (listed with their first magazine appearances):

"The Secret of Father Brown" (no prior magazine appearance located)

"The Mirror of the Magistrate" (*Cassell's Magazine*, April 1925; published as "The Mirror of Death")

"The Man with Two Beards" (*Cassell's Magazine*, May 1925)

"The Song of the Flying Fish" (*Cassell's Magazine*, Aug. 1925)

"The Actor and the Alibi" (*Cassell's Magazine*, March 1926)

"The Vanishing of Vaudrey" (*Storyteller*, Jan. 1927)

"The Worst Crime in the World" (*Cassell's Magazine*, Nov. 1925)

"The Red Moon of Meru" (*Storyteller*, April 1927)

"The Chief Mourner of Marne" (*Cassell's Magazine*, July 1925)

"The Secret of Flambeau" (no prior magazine appearance located)

The Scandal of Father Brown

First Edition: London, Cassell, (1935). Dark blue cloth, lettered in gilt with two gilt rules on spine; front and rear covers blank. Issued in a pictorial dust wrapper.

First American Edition: New York, Dodd, Mead, 1935. Green cloth, lettered in black with black rules on front cover and spine; rear cover blank.

Estimated retail value:	*with d/w*	*without d/w*
First Edition		
Good	$ 50.00	$10.00
Fine	200.00	20.00
Very fine	300.00	30.00
First American Edition		
Good	$ 25.00	$ 5.00
Fine	100.00	15.00
Very fine	150.00	25.00

Note: The first English edition was published in March 1935 in an edition of 6,000 copies.

The Scandal of Father Brown contains the following stories (listed with their first magazine appearances):

"The Scandal of Father Brown" (*Storyteller*, Nov. 1933)

"The Quick One" (*Storyteller*, Feb. 1934)

"The Blast of the Book" (*Storyteller*, Oct. 1933; published as "The Five Fugitives")

"The Green Man" (no prior magazine appearance located)

"The Pursuit of Mr. Blue" (*Storyteller*, June 1934; published as "Mr. Blue and Mr. Red")

"The Crime of the Communist" (*Storyteller*, Sept. 1934)

"The Point of a Pin" (*Storyteller*, Oct. 1932)

"The Insoluble Problem" (*Storyteller*, March 1935) □

G.K. CHESTERTON'S FATHER BROWN
A Bibliography

By William White

Some bibliographies start from scratch, but a lot of them have been more or less lifted—that's a euphemism for stolen—from others. This one, of G. K. Chesterton's wonderful priest Father Brown, would not have been possible without books by the late John Sullivan: *G. K. Chesterton: A Bibliography* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1958), *Chesterton Continued: A Bibliographical Supplement* (London: University of London Press Ltd., 1968), and *Chesterton Three: A Bibliographical Postscript* (Bedford: Vintage Publications, 1980).

I am especially grateful for the section on translations, and, if the material is occasionally incomplete, it's because John Sullivan is no longer in London to answer my queries. All G.K.C. enthusiasts will miss him. As for the list of secondary sources of chapters in books about Chesterton and the articles, which is the first list on such Father Brown material, I make no claims for its completeness. (Reviews of Father Brown books have been excluded.) Without the use of a major university or research library here in Florida, where it has been compiled, it's just about as full as I've been able to make it. I hope readers of *The Armchair Detective* will find it of some use and value.

FIRST EDITIONS

The Innocence of Father Brown. London [etc.]: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1911. Reprinted from *Cassell's Magazine* and the *Storyteller*. American edition—New York: John Lane Co., 1911.

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The Father Brown Stories. London [etc.]: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1929. New edition, to include *The Scandal of Father Brown*, 1947. American edition (as *The Father Brown Omnibus*)—New York: Dodd, Mead, 1933. "The Vampire of the Village" was added to the 1951 American printing and to the 1953 English printing.

Pocket Book of Father Brown. New York: Pocket Books, 1943. Philadelphia: The Blakiston Co., 1943. [17 Father Brown stories]

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The Wisdom of Father Brown. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York [etc.]: Penguin Books, 1982. 200 pp.

The Incredulity of Father Brown. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York [etc.]: Penguin Books, 1982. 192 pp.

The Secret of Father Brown. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York [etc.]: Penguin Books, 1982. 176 pp.

The Scandal of Father Brown. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England; New York [etc.]: Penguin Books, 1982. 175 pp. [Includes "The Vampire of the Village." All of these Father Brown volumes were issued in a similar format, with a portrait of Kenneth More on the front cover, and the legend: "A Father Brown Mystery, Now a *Mystery* Television Presentation."]

TRANSLATIONS

Czech

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Tajemstvi otce Browna [The Secret of Father Brown]. Translated by Rudolf Uhl. Praha: J. Albert, 1947.

Pribehy otce Browna [The Father Brown Stories]. Translated by J. Z. Novak. Introduction by Jaroslav Hornát. Praha: SNKLHU, 1960. [13 stories]

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Danish

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Ein Pfeil von Himmel: Kriminalerzahlüngen ["The Arrow of Heaven" and 5 other Father Brown stories]. Translated by D. S. Kellner. Berlin: Die Schmiede, 1927.

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A Jambor Brown Atya [The Innocence of Father Brown]. Translated by T. Bartos. Budapest: Europa, 1958.

Italian

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Il Segreto di Padre Brown [The Secret of Father Brown]. Translated by I. Lori. Milan: Bietti, 1931.

Lo Scandalo di Padre Brown [The Scandal of Father Brown]. Translated by E. Pivetti. Milan: Garzanti, 1949.

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Brown Kitan [Selected Father Brown stories]. Translated by Sanjugo Naoki. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1930.

Brown Shinpu no Muchi [The Innocence of Father Brown]. Translated by Toshiro Murasaki. Tokyo: Hayakawa Shobo, 1955.

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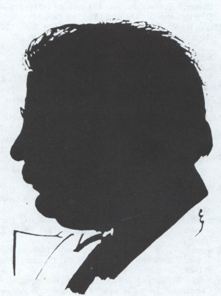

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The Oriental in Mystery Fiction:

MARTIAL ARTS

Part IV

By Greg Goode

One of the more colorful, though less important, Oriental contributions to crime fiction is the use of forms of hand-to-hand combat which are largely unknown to Western culture. Although the West does have its forms, such as French *savate* foot fighting and Afro-Brazilian *capoeira* wrestling, the East has excelled in unarmed combat to the point at which "martial arts" is synonymous with "Eastern fighting styles." Judo, karate, Samurai swordsmanship, kung fu, t'ai-chi ch'uan, and several more obscure forms have all been used in the crime genre to add color, action, and a dash of the esoteric. *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.'s* Napoleon Solo was able to fell his enemies with a single karate chop to the neck. He engaged in more karate chops than fisticuffs, it sometimes seems. Besides efficiently deadly *unarmed* styles, the criminous martial arts sometimes include ingenious or bizarre weapons, such as Oddjob's razor-sharp hat brim in *Goldfinger* or Nicholai Hel's simple-but-deadly plastic ID card in *Shibumi.* Although such techniques and devices do not usually advance the plot, they do make fight scenes (which are probably inevitable anyway) more interesting.

Sometimes martial arts are present in mysteries as lore or arcane knowledge, imparted to impress and intrigue the reader. Because the principles of an art such as ninjutsu are so secret, and because the techniques of a deadly kung fu blow are so hard to master, martial arts can be employed so as to be mysterious when merely talked about. This seems evident in passages such as Tiger Tanaka's ninjutsu lecture in *You Only Live Twice,* the discussion of the uncanny ability of Samurai swordsmen in Poul Anderson's *Perish by the Sword,* or Virgil Tibbs's remarks about karate in *In the Heat of the Night.* There are several stories in which martial arts are integral to the plot, such as James Melville's *A Sort of Samurai* or Nan Hamilton's AHMM story "Seeds of Murder" (see checklist). In each of these, the mystery revolves partly around the relationship between the murder method and a particular style of martial arts.

A word about the history of martial arts. Legend has it that systems of unarmed combat originated in India and that several were practiced there as early as 3000 B.C. by warrior classes. Indian Zen and yoga students, especially Daruma Taishi, learned these arts and are said to have traveled to China, where they taught them to the Shaolin monks for the sake of the monks' protection from bandits and for their physical fitness. This was as early as the fourth century B.C. In time, the Chinese monks improved and developed their own style, kempo. By way of social and commercial routes, martial arts spread throughout the Far East. In some cases, particular forms of unarmed combat arose because of arms and weapons prohibitions. For example, because of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century arms bans on the island of Okinawa, there arose the unarmed styles of shurite, nagate, and tomarite. These were systematized around the turn of the twentieth century into what is now karate. Today there are hundreds of styles and sub-styles of martial arts, and many Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines have their own variations.

The predominance of various forms of martial arts used in mysteries has changed several times. The first forms used were Chinese wrestling and boxing styles

such as ch'in-na, t'ai-chi ch'uan, and kung fu. This is evident in the fourteenth-century Magistrate Pao play *Selling Rice at Ch'en-chou* and in Robert van Gulik's translation of the eighteenth-century *Dee Goong An*. But there seems to be no predominance of any form until the period between the 1920s and 1950s, when jiu jitsu and its more civilized offspring judo were used. Authors such as Earl Derr Biggers, Walter B. Gibson, Erle Stanley Gardner, Sax Rohmer, and others had characters use one of these two forms of Japanese wrestling. Nothing much was heard of the Japanese striking style, karate, until after World War II. It arrived on the scene in a big, brash way in Earl Norman's "Kill Me" paperback series in 1958. The next year, Ian Fleming gave karate an air of respectability and wonder with *Goldfinger;* he inspired amazement (and imitators) when he introduced the Korean karate killer Oddjob and his board-breaking feats. It is interesting to note that these two early introductions of karate came just a few years after the founding of the Japan Karate Association, the first of its kind, in 1955.

The next form to reach dominance actually reached faddish proportions. The advent of the big wave of kung fu mysteries was primarily due to the popularity of kung fu movies such as *Five Fingers of Death* (1973) and the cultish Bruce Lee films *Fists of Fury* (1972) and *Enter the Dragon* (1973). Although both Bill Ballinger and James Dark had mentioned kung fu in 1965, it did not reach fad status until about 1974, when four or five paperback action series cashed in. There were, for example, the "K'ing Kung-Fu" series, two series called "Kung Fu," and even a comic book series starring Fu Manchu's son, i.e., *Master of Kung Fu: The Hands of Shang-Chi.* There were several others, and several single novels, employing kung fu around 1974.

In the late '70s and early '80s, writers have tried to outdo each other and amaze readers by using more and more esoteric styles of martial arts, by combining styles in bizarre ways, or by just plain dreaming up styles. There was the deadly, stealthy art of ninjutsu, which, according to legend, was practiced by secret warrior classes in Japan and which is supposedly still used by an international group of assassins. Although it was introduced to the criminous world as early as 1964 in Ian Fleming's *You Only Live Twice,* it is now used by Wade Barker in his current "Ninja Master" paperback series. Even The Shadow has fought ninja at least once. Patrick Lee's "Six-Gun Samurai" paperback series combines the Eastern deadliness of the Samurai warrior with the Western efficiency of the cowboy. And with exuberant self-consciousness, Trevanian attempts to strike his audience with awe by declining to explain the details of his (invented) art of Naked/Kill in *Shibumi.*

Although these obscure and sometimes outlandish forms of combat have not helped make the best mysteries, they *have* been responsible for several criminous trends or fads, such as the kung fu/crime-fighter series of the '70s and the hundreds of karate chops delivered by secret agents of the '60s. Of course, writers like Ian Fleming can sketch exotic and interesting backgrounds which contain lethal martial arts warriors and their secret practices—and make it compelling reading. And sometimes martial arts can be made an important plot element in a mystery. But such cases of good writing and adept plot construction are relatively rare in martial arts mysteries. Most often, martial arts are a colorful diversion; they make for unusual lore and action scenes if done well, and just get in the way if done poorly.

What follows are a glossary or martial arts weapons and styles and a descriptive partial checklist of stories in which martial arts are used. In the checklist, there are novels, short stories, a play, and even several comic book entries which I though warranted inclusion. I would like to emphasize that this is merely a partial checklist, although, to the best of my knowledge, the series, where listed, are complete as of July 1982. Along with each entry is a brief description of the form(s) of martial art used.*

GLOSSARY OF EASTERN MARTIAL ARTS TERMS

Styles:

aikido—Japanese; combination of judo, jiu jitsu (qq.v.); wrestling which emphasizes "ch'i" (q.v.), that is, spiritual, intrinsic energy, as opposed to physical energy or strength.

atemi—Japanese; art of striking the vital points of the opponent.

bo jutsu—Japanese; stickfighting with the bo or wooden stave.

ch'i—Chinese; intrinsic, internal, or spiritual energy; sought in the practice of most of the Eastern martial arts.

ch'in-na—Chinese; art of seizing, locking and grabbing.

ch'uan-shu—Chinese; generic term for fist work or boxing.

hapkido—Korean; combination of judo, karate, and aikido; art of wrestling and striking.

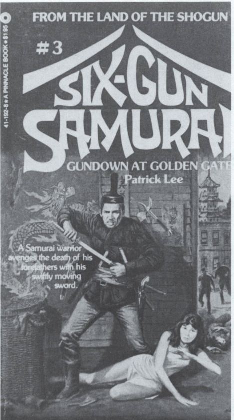
jiu jitsu—Japanese; art of seizing and twisting joints of the opponent, with special emphasis on balance and leverage. Older and slightly less disciplined than judo.

judo—Japanese; term for "the gentle way"; wrestling with emphasis on leverage and balance. Strictly standardized as to moves, positions, and even ethics. The only Eastern martial art which is an Olympic event.

karate—Japanese; term for "empty hand"; art of kicking and striking.

kendo—Japanese; Samurai swordsmanship with katana (q.v.); in practice, bamboo staves are used.

*I would like to thank Mr. Jeffrey Mehr, black belt in tae-kwon do and student of martial arts, Zen and Chinese, for assistance with the technicalities and nomenclature of several of the martial arts.



ki—Japanese form of the Chinese term "ch'i."

kung fu—Chinese; (i) generic term for unarmed combat using "skill, time and ability"; (ii) art of striking and kicking.

ninjutsu—Japanese; art of fighting by stealth, and of employing surprise and everyday objects as weapons.

pa-kua—Chinese; similar to t'ai-chi ch'uan (q.v.); boxing with emphasis on strength of ch'i or internal energy.

seppuku—Japanese; proper term for "honorable suicide," which is done usually with a knife.

shuai chiao—Chinese; form of wrestling.

t'ai-chi ch'uan—Taoist Chinese; term for "supreme ultimate boxing"; has very great emphasis on strength of ch'i and deceptively gentle movements. Some say that this is the most effective martial art.

Weapons:

bo—Japanese; wooden stave approximately 2 inches in diameter by 5 feet in length. Used in bo jutsu and ninjutsu. Ninja sometimes use hollow bo to propel poisoned darts, pellets, or knives with the flick of a wrist. One of the first weapons.

katana—Japanese; the Samurai sword; when wielded by a master, can slice through 3 bodies at a stroke.

nunchaku—set of 2, 3 or 4 wooden dowels from 6 inches to 30 inches in length, connected at ends with rope or chain. One dowel is held, another swung, twirled or used for blocking. Used especially in kung fu and ninjutsu; made famous by Bruce Lee.

shuriken—small metal stars with 4–8 sharpened points, sometimes dipped in poison. Thrown like a small frisbee. Used especially in kung fu and ninjutsu.

tetsu-bishi (calthrops)—bent sheetmetal spikes with sharpened points, shaped roughly like children's jacks. Thrown on ground in front of pursuers; no matter how calthrops land, at least one point sticks up. Used primarily in ninjutsu. Appeared in the film version of *Casino Royale* (1967).

PARTIAL CHECKLIST OF
MYSTERIES FEATURING MARTIAL ARTS

Anderson, Poul. *Perish by the Sword.* Macmillan, 1959. Samurai lore and kendo murder.

Ball, John. *In the Heat of the Night.* Harper and Row, 1965. Virgil Tibbs uses judo and gives a small lecture on it, aikido, and karate. Calls karate "the last word."

____. *Five Pieces of Jade.* Little, Brown, 1972. Tibbs, it is learned, has a black belt in karate. Kung fu is mentioned before the fad started in 1973–74.

Ballinger, Bill. *The Spy in the Jungle.* Signet, 1965. Hero Joaquin Hawks uses kung fu but calls it wrestling. He also knows karate.

Barker, Wade. "Ninja Master" series. Warner Books, 1981–present. Ninjutsu, but poorly done, with very little of what ninjutsu is for, i.e., stealth. Fairly violent series based on a revenge motive.

(#1) *Vengeance Is His,* 1981
(#2) *Mountain of Fear,* 1981
(#3) *Borderland of Hell,* 1982
(#4) *Million-Dollar Massacre,* 1982

Biggers, Earl Derr. *The Chinese Parrot.* Bobbs-Merrill, 1926. Charlie Chan uses a little judo throw which is, he says, about the only thing he has learned from his assistant Kashimo.

Caillou, Alan. *Assault on Ming.* Avon, 1969. Karate and kung fu, but described vaguely.

Chang, Lee. "Kung Fu" series. Manor Books, 1973–75. Stars Victor Mace, the Kung Fu Monk-Master, who works with the CIA. Filled with Oriental technical terms for martial arts moves. Kung fu of several different styles as indicated by the animals of the titles; nunchaku, and shuriken. Violent and comic-bookish.

(#1) *Year of the Tiger,* 1973
(#2) *Year of the Snake,* 1974
(#3) *Year of the Rat,* 1974
(#4) *Year of the Dragon,* 1974
(#5) *Year of the Horse,* 1975
(#6,7) Might not exist; no record at all could be found of them
(#8) *Year of the Ape,* 1975

Cunningham, E. V. *The Case of the One-Penny Orange.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977. Masao Masuto uses karate against a gang.

Dark, James. *The Bamboo Bomb.* Horowitz, 1965; Signet, 1965. Atemi, judo, kung fu, and ch'uan-shu. Hero Mark Hood faces a Chinese version of Oddjob, Chiao, who does amazing karate exercises. The book seems to revel in the description of martial arts techniques.

Davis, Robert Hart. Series of lead stories in *Charlie Chan Mystery Magazine.* Features Charlie Chan; not seen, but

according to Jon Breen's "Who Killed Charlie Chan?" in TAD 7:2:100–1 (1974), in the first two stories there are Eastern martial arts, and Charlie Chan seems to be a combination of Sidney Toler, Warner Oland, and Bruce Lee. Probably kung fu.

"Walk Softly, Strangler," *Charlie Chan Mystery Magazine* (CCMM), Nov. 1973

"The Silent Corpse," CCMM, May 1974.

"The Temple of the Golden Death," CCMM, May 1974

"The Pawns of Death," CCMM, Aug. 1974

Dennis, Jim. "Kung Fu Master" series. Award, 1974. Judo, karate, aikido, kung fu, savate, and nunchaku (which is systematically misspelled). Richard Dragon, martial arts instructor, fights to recapture a student, Carolyn Wotami, from a sinister Swiss. Also attempts to solve Wotami's uncle's murder. This is supposed to be a kung fu exploitation novel, but Dennis's approach is innaccurate; he substitutes Japanese karate expressions for the Chinese kung fu expressions and uses the term "ki."

(#1) *Dragon's Fists,* 1974; apparently no more in series

Fleming, Ian. *Goldfinger.* Jonathan Cape, 1959; Macmillan, 1959. Korean Oddjob gives karate demonstration for Bond's benefit. Goldfinger himself says, quite innaccurately as it turns out, that Oddjob is one of only three men in the world to have the black belt in karate. There were hundreds, if not thousands, of black belts in the late '50s. This book, and the movie version in 1964, could have started the karate-chopping craze of the '60s.

____. *You Only Live Twice.* Jonathan Cape, 1964; NAL, 1964. Tiger Tanaka, Bond's Japanese contact, and a seventh-grade blackbelt in judo, gives Bond instruction in ninjutsu. Instructs his own men in bojutsu. Very well handled by Fleming, and very intriguing.

Gardner, Erle Stanley. "Sugar." *Detective Fiction Weekly* 134:2:6–34, Jan. 20, 1940. Judo: Ishi Shinawara, the red herring prime suspect in a robbery-murder case, gives Lester Leith's valet (really a secret agent) a lesson in judo. Well done.

Grant, Maxwell. "The Teeth of the Dragon." *Shadow Magazine,* Nov. 15, 1937. Reprinted in *The Crime Oracle/The Teeth of the Dragon,* Dover, 1975. The Shadow uses jiu jitsu while in his Chinese disguise as Ying Ko.

Hall, Adam. *The Mandarin Cypher.* Doubleday, 1975. Quiller uses karate and kung fu.

____. *The Scorpion Signal.* Doubleday, 1980. Quiller uses a a bit of t'ai-chi ch'uan.

Hamilton, Nan. "Seeds of Murder." *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine,* Dec. 9, 1981, pp. 31–43. Detective Sam Ohara uses judo, and the case revolves around the finer points of kendo.

Hammett, Dashiell. "Dead Yellow Women." *Dead Yellow Women* (Jonathan Press Mystery No. J29) (Jonathan Press, 1947); more recently in *The Big Knockover: Selected Stories and Short Novels of Dashiell Hammett* (Vintage, 1972). The Continental Op fights someone using what he calls "jiu jitsu or its Chinese equivalent." What he was encountering was probably shuai chiao or ch'in-na.

Hayden, George A. "Selling Rice at Ch'en-chou." In Hayden's *Crime and Punishment in Medieval Chinese Drama* (Harvard University Press, 1978). Kung fu and ch'in-na: a young thief boasts of kicking, hitting, and stamping on his victims. Hayden traces the Chinese manuscript to a fourteenth-century source and speculates that the play might be older yet. One of the very first detective stories with martial arts.

Lee, Howard. "Kung Fu" series (non-mystery). Warner, 1973–75. Features Kwai Chang Caine, Master of Kung Fu. Based on the TV show. The books carry the following blurb: "Based on the teleplay by Ed Spielman and Howard Friedlander, Story by Ed Spielman. From the Warner Bros. Television hit series starring David Carradine on ABC." Hero Caine is not a detective or a crime-fighter *per se,* but he does battle with men who break the law to imprison and kill him. The series depends on the xenophobia and fear of Yellow Peril on the frontier of the late nineteenth century. Kung fu and lots of Shaolin philosophy.

(#1) *The Way of the Tiger, the Sign of the Dragon,* 1973

(#2) *Chains,* 1973

(#3) *Superstition.* 1973

(#4) *A Praying Mantis Kills,* 1974

Lee, Patrick. "Six-Gun Samurai" series. Pinnacle, 1980–present. Kendo and Samurai ethics. Tom Fletcher was born in the U.S. but raised as a Samurai warrior in Japan, where he took on the name Tanaka Ichimara Tomi. The plot of the series is loosely based on hero Tanaka Tom Fletcher's desire to avenge the death of his parents; from book to book he looks for their killers, whom he suspects are in the southern U.S. Less action and fewer fight scenes than one would expect, but the martial arts are accurate and fairly well described. The series title is from Fletcher's dual abilities with weapons of the East and West. Includes glossaries.

(#1) *Six-Gun Samurai,* 1980

(#2) *Bushido Vengeance,* 1981

(#3) *Gundown at Golden Gate,* 1981

(#4) *Kamikaze Justice,* 1981

(#5) *The Devil's Bowman,* 1981

(#6) *Bushido Lawman,* 1982

Macao, Marshall. "K'ing Kung-Fu" series. Tandem, 1974; Freeway Press, 1974. Kung fu: Hero Chong Fei K'ing is the eighteen-year-old Master of the Earthly Center and a kung fu expert. The series plot is based on K'ing's ongoing battles with the gangster Kak Nan Tang, Lord of the Earthly Underworld. Kak has killed K'ing's kung fu teacher, and as K'ing seeks revenge, he fights crime. Not very violent; mystical in parts.

(#1) *Son of the Flying Tiger,* Tandem, 1974

(#2) *Return of the Opium Wars,* Tandem, 1974

(#3) *The Rape of Sun Lee Fong,* Tandem, 1974

(#4) *The Kak-Abdullah Conspiracy,* Tandem, 1974

(#5) *Red Plague in Bolivia,* Tandem, 1974

(#6) *New York Necromancy,* Freeway Press, 1974

(#7) *Mark of the Vulture,* Freeway Press, 1974

McDaniel, David. *The Vampire Affair* ("The Man from U.N.C.L.E" #6). Ace, 1966. Karate: Napoleon Solo uses karate to defeat savate fighter. Other books in the series not examined, but is is probable that the entire series has martial arts, especially karate, to figure in fight scenes.

Master of Kung Fu: the Hands of Shang-Chi (Marvel comic book series), 1974–present. Started as *Marvel Special Edition,* #15, 16. From #17 (April 1974) to present, has gone by *Master of Kung Fu* title. Kung fu, shuriken, calthrops, nunchaku, and comic bookish weaponry. Shang-Chi is reputedly the son of Dr. Fu Manchu, and has vowed to be as *good* as Fu Manchu was *evil.*

Minick, Michael. *The Kung Fu Avengers.* Bantam, 1975. Kung fu, shuriken, calthrops, and sharpened chopsticks. Revenge plot. Ben and Jan Wade avenge the murder of their teacher Master Tsao by the Black Phoenix group. Minick is a magazine sports and adventure story writer

who also has several nonfictional "how-to" books on the martial arts to his credit. Surprisingly few fight scenes, but accurate.

Norman, Earl. "Kill Me" series. Berkley, 1958–62. Karate: ex-G.I. Burns Bannion is now an unofficial private eye in Japan, where he takes karate lessons. The novels are detective novels with karate as an added interest. Bannion, in his first person narration, gives several lectures about the deadliness of karate. The books marketed as a martial arts series, if the cover blurbs are any evidence. Probably the first martial arts series.

Kill Me in Tokyo, 1958
Kill Me in Shimbashi, 1959
Kill Me in Yokohama, 1960
Kill Me in Shinjuku, 1961
Kill Me in Yoshiwara, 1961
Kill Me in Atami, 1962
Kill Me on the Ginza, 1962

Olden, Marc. "Black Samurai" series. Signet NAL, 1974–75. Primarily kendo, but also, to a lesser degree, judo, karate, bo jutsu, archery, knife fighting, ropes, spears, etc. Robert Sand, a black trained by Japanese Samurai, is a combination of Nick Carter and John Shaft. The series is based on his desire to do good after having seen so much evil. Sand is incredibly dedicated to the martial arts and knows 26 of them; he is supposedly the first non-Japanese Samurai. Unfortunately, however, there are very few detailed fight scenes. Martial arts are talked about but not really described very well. A well-written series, however, that cashed in on the dual film fads: martial arts films and black hero films.

(#1) *Black Samurai,* 1974
(#2) *The Golden Kill,* 1974
(#3) *Killer Warrior,* 1974
(#4) *The Deadly Pearl,* 1974
(#5) *The Inquisition,* 1974
(#6) *The Warlock,* 1975
(#7) *Sword of Allah,* 1975
(#8) *The Katana,* 1975

Rohmer, Sax. *The Trail of Fu Manchu.* Cassell, 1934; Doubleday, 1934. Sir Denis Nayland Smith fears the use of jiu jitsu from a huge Burmese executioner.

Roote, Mike. *Enter the Dragon.* Award, 1973. Kung Fu.

St. Louis, Robert. *The Bushido Code.* Fawcett Gold Medal, 1981. Kendo and seppuku: Mitzu Nagata goes on a sword-slashing campaign against nuclear power, then ends it all.

Sapir, Richard, and Warren Murphy. "The Destroyer" series. Pinnacle, 1971–present. From #1 to #38, and #48, under joint byline; from #39 on (with the one exception) as by Murphy alone. Remo Williams and the acerbic Korean, Chiun, use the so-called Sinanju form of karate, which, according to the authors, originates in the Sinan province in Korea. Although there is such a province in Korea, there is most likely no real form of Sinanju. The karate and judo, however, as well as the philosophy behind the martial arts (as taught by Chiun), are accurate and well handled.

(#1) *Created, The Destroyer,* 1971
(#2) *Death Check,* 1972
(#3) *Chinese Puzzle,* 1972
(#4) *Mafia Fix,* 1972
(#5) *Dr. Quake,* 1972
(#6) *Death Therapy,* 1972
(#7) *Union Bust,* 1973
(#8) *Summit Chase,* 1973
(#9) *Murder's Shield,* 1973
(#10) *Terror Squad,* 1973
(#11) *Kill or Cure,* 1973
(#12) *Slave Safari,* 1973
(#13) *Acid Rock,* 1973
(#14) *Judgment Day,* 1974
(#15) *Murder Ward,* 1974
(#16) *Oil Slick,* 1974
(#17) *Last War Dance,* 1974
(#18) *Funny Money,* 1975
(#19) *Holy Terror,* 1975
(#20) *Assassin's Play-Off,* 1975
(#21) *Deadley Seeds,* 1975
(#22) *Brain Drain,* 1976
(#23) *Child's Play,* 1976
(#24) *King's Curse,* 1976
(#25) *Sweet Dreams,* 1976
(#26) *In Enemy Hands,* 1977
(#27) *The Last Temple,* 1977
(#28) *Ship of Death,* 1977
(#29) *The Final Death,* 1977
(#30) *Mugger Blood,* 1977
(#31) *The Head Men,* 1977
(#32) *Killer Chromosomes,* 1978
(#33) *Voodoo Die,* 1978
(#34) *Chained Reaction,* 1978
(#35) *Last Call,* 1978
(#36) *Power Play* 1979
(#37) *Bottom Line,* 1979
(#38) *Bay City Blast,* 1979 (from #38 on, except for #48, the books are under the Warren Murphy byline)
(#39) *Missing Link,* 1980
(#40) *Dangerous Games,* 1980
(#41) *Firing Line,* 1980
(#42) *Timber Lane,* 1980
(#43) *Midnight Man,* 1981
(#44) *Balance of Power,* 1981 (with blurb: "Special Collectors' Edition. 10TH ANNIVERSARY. 20 million Copies in Print!")
(#45) *Spoils of War,* 1981
(#46) *Next of Kin,* 1981
(#47) *Dying Space,* 1982
(#48) *Profit Motive,* 1982 (with blurb: "A Supernovel" and under byline of Warren Murphy and Richard Sapir)
(#49) *Skin Deep,* 1982

Shadow, The, Vol. 2, No. 6, Aug–Sept. 1974 (DC comic book). "Night of the Ninja." Ninjutsu: The Shadow's own American-style stealth and cleverness prove to be too much for Ninja criminals and their weapons, such as knives and shuriken.

Sullivan, Sean Mei. *SuperManChu, Master of Kung Fu.* Ballantine, 1974. Novelization of the film of the same name (Capitol Productions, 1974). Kung fu, t'ai-chi ch'uan, karate, hapkido. Han Ching seeks revenge for the murder of his parents and the rape of a young girl.

Trevanian (pseudonym of Rodney Whitaker). *Shibumi.* Crown, 1979; Granada, 1979. Naked/Kill: similar to the weapons-at-hand technique of ninjutsu. Hero Nicholai Hel either ponders the use of or uses everyday objects as weapons. E.g., keys, match covers, plastic ID cards and drinking straws. The techniques, when they are explained, are described in hushed, secretive, but quite show-offish tones.

Van Gulik, Robert, trans. *Dee Goong An.* Privately printed by Toppan Printing Company, 1949. Reprinted as *Celebrated Cases of Judge Dee,* Dover, 1976. Translation of an eighteenth-century Judge Dee detective novel. Dee's assistant Ma Joong uses pa-kua and t'ai-chi ch'uan against the kung fu of the villain. □

TAD at the MOVIES

By Thomas Godfrey

Margot Kidder struggles against a deficient script in *Trenchcoat.*

Take a gauche, but not totally naïve, court stenographer from San Francisco with a yen to write an international mystery thriller. Drop her down on Malta where she plans to peck out her *chef d'oeuvre* during a two-week holiday at a quiet villa guest house. Surround her with some quirky, suspicious types—say, a Basque jai a'lai player with a flair for back-alley throat surgery, a hot-and-cold running German travel mistress with the instincts of a home computer, a molto-Italiano economy-size beachcomber who keeps turning up in the oddest places. Add an impoverished, epicene marquis, a merchant marine chef with a pharmacologic sideline, a nightclub chanteuse with more than the mostest, two or three Arab heavies with halitosis. Send them all after a mysterious postcard with a message which has been innocently purchased by the abovementioned court stenographer. And what have you got? A rousing, rollicking crowd-pleaser of a movie?

Actually, no. **Trenchcoat** turns out to be a creation with all the right ingredients, but somehow the recipe just doesn't work.

We have seen variations on the theme of *Trenchcoat* before—the saga of the harmless American schnook out for a good time who gets dragged into international intrigue and dirty doings which almost cost him his life. Hitchcock's *Saboteur* (1942) is just such a plot, with the ordinariness of its players Robert Cummings and Priscilla Lane actually working to the film's advantage in setting them apart from and above a treacherous carnival troupe and some mean-spirited subversive socialites. Hitchcock knew the audience would easily identify with this unexceptional pair. And he was right.

His remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956) is another film of the innocent American abroad and at risk, even closer in its story to *Trenchcoat.* This time the Americans (James Stewart and Doris Day) are more glamorized but still the right side of just-plain-folks to let contemporary audiences accept them as Mom-and-Dad-caught-up-with-a-bunch-of-foreign-intriguers. The perils they endured were more cleverly calculated and smoothly wrought than those which beset Leslie Banks in the first, British version (1934) (and those which beset Cummings and Lane in *Saboteur*). Hitchcock had, in fact, taken the American Express Traveller's Cheques commercial and perfected it to high art. He was practiced at keeping the suspense going smoothly, diverting his audience with bits of humor that never intruded on the motion of the plot because the scene was played out at the same pace. Witness the wonderful, frantic scene in the Ambrose Chappell taxidermy shop, and the quick, harried moments as Day's friends cooled their heels back at her London apartment.

Of course, the greatest moments and most galvanizing elements came from the musical mortar of Bernard Herrmann's deliciously excruciating expansion of the "Storm Cloud Cantata" which forms the cornerstone of the assassination plot at Albert Hall. Long after the rest of the film fades from memory, the images of Day's panicked search contrasted against the bovine pacificity of the cymbal player persist. If *The Man Who Knew Too Much* is not Hitchcock's finest film, not even his finest American film, it is still a masterpiece of the innocents-abroad theme of American fiction which finds its roots in Henry James and Hawthorne's "Rappacini's Daughter" on the one hand and the had-I-but-known school of mystery writing descended from Victorian Gothics through Mary Roberts Rinehart and Daphne du Maurier on the other.

Trenchcoat is, of course, light years away from *Rebecca* (or *Daisy Miller,* for that matter) but squarely of that tradition. Some of the plot maneuvering strongly suggests that scripters Jeffrey Price and Peter Seaman have at least passing familiarity with the Hitchcock films and some understanding of what must be done to put a plot of this sort across to an audience. But they lack the technical facility and requisite imagination to bring it off. There are moments of humor and intended glamor, but they have no dazzle or zing. They know enough to keep the dialogue minimal, but you still notice that what *is* there is rather tedious and mealy-mouthed. The scenes that must supply the thrills and chills are perfunctory and flat.

Director Michael Tuchner has his assorted eccentrics going through the proper motions, but there is none of the chic slickness that ensures fascination in the Hitchcock films and Stanley Donen's *Charade* (1963), nor the sort of divine looniness that transforms cult favorites such as *Beat the Devil* (1954) and *Winter Kills* (1980) to leaven the formula work. And without it, *Trenchcoat* becomes a plain, tasteless biscuit of a film.

Margot Kidder (*Superman's* Lois Lane) has a fidgety intensity that could have made her aspiring writer as rewarding a screen tourist

as Katharine Hepburn was in a different context in *Summertime* (1955). There is a similar sense of the awkward ex-coed now staring spinsterhood in the face. Both are very aware of the parade of life that has almost passed them by, and both are reaching out almost in desperation for some last thing to save them from loneliness and insignificance. Kidder tackles the part without flinching. There's no glamor to her part at all. Most of her clothes look as if they'd been thrown at her, and when she begins stalking about Malta in a trenchcoat and crumpled Adams hat, she is more than a little ridiculous. But she's always in there trying. It's more than a shame that the writers seem so uncertain what to make of her.

There is not much romance between Kidder and co-star Robert Hays (*Airplane!*), not even the obligatory bedroom scene. No great loss, however, as the characters and actors are decidedly mismatched. Hays's playing is relaxed all the way. His screen presence is that of a former high school heart-throb and campus hero now turned loose on the general public. There is no mystery to his persona, which makes it all wrong for the part. In spite of all the lying, scheming, and con-artistry, there is never any doubt where Hays will be when the final lines are drawn at the end of the film.

The supporting players are competent if dull. I single out John Justin as the impoverished marquis who has turned the family villa into a guest house, if only for seeing the young hero of Korda's *Thief of Baghdad* (1940) unexpectedly turn up as a fey, seedy Continental.

Trenchcoat tries hard but only succeeds in proving that writing and playing to formula are not as simple as they may look.

★★ **Scene of the Crime** (1949) Van Johnson, Gloria DeHaven, Arlene Dahl (D: Roy Rowland)

This is one of a dozen or so mystery-suspense films with a San Francisco setting made in Hollywood at mid-century. Johnson plays respected police Lt. Mike Conovan, who gets into trouble when he becomes romantically entangled with a suspect in a murder case (DeHaven). As usual, Johnson does not give his lines enough voltage to make them interesting. Similarly, Dahl, as his unsuspecting wife, is out of her league in the dramatic scenes. Only DeHaven, also cast against type, makes a favorable impression, often suggesting Gloria Grahame, who could have played the part in her sleep.

Charles Schnee's script is alternately dim-witted and ham-fisted, full of dialogue that sounds hardboiled and warmed-over. Rowland's direction is methodical and unimaginative.

One of MGM's few belated attempts to get into *film noir,* so even the sleaze has a high gloss. But almost no one involved seems to know how it's all supposed to go.

★★½ **Raffles** (1930) Ronald Colman, Kay Francis, Alison Skipworth (D: Harry D'Arrast and George Fitzmaurice)

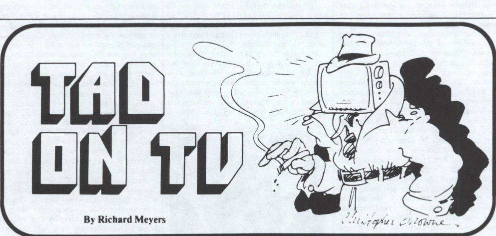
The cultured, pearly tones of Ronald Colman still sound like one of the wonders of the sound era in film, but this film version of E. W. Hornung's play *The Amateur Cracksman* is a badly dated, lead-weight affair, lacking either the warmth or style that redeem Conan Doyle or S. S. Van Dine. Colman, as expected, is perfect as the suave, aristocratic safecracker, but even he cannot overcome the musty, yawn-a-minute story.

Kay Francis, the pre-Bette Davis queen of the lot at Warners when this film was made, has a part that consists mostly of exits and entrances. She contributes her fascinating lisp and a curvaceous, if rather full, figure as Gwen, Raffles's love-mate, but that's about it.

Anything resembling verve or fun is supplied by Skipworth as Lady Melrose, the old cow whose jewels Raffles means to pinch. She plays it in her full-speed-ahead, all-jowls-a-quivering style, familiar to anyone who has seen her films opposite W. C. Fields (*Tillie and Gus, If I Had a Million*).

Bramwell Fletcher's Bunny, so integral to the Raffles series, is most charitably described as negligible. The film runs (a very long) 71 minutes.

Unfortunately, the only mystery to *Raffles* is why Samuel Goldwyn decided to remake it (in 1939, with David Niven and Olivia de Havilland). □



By Richard Meyers

Take it from me. 1982 was a tough year. Not only was I writing this column, but I was on the Edgar nominating and voting television committee. Coming up with three worthy mystery telefilms was tougher last year than any other in recent memory. 1983 will also be tough, but for different reasons. At this writing, not even four months have passed in the new year and there have already been four Edgar-worthy TV features broadcast on one network alone.

CBS seems dedicated to presenting the gamut of TV detective work. Of their quality quartet, one was a terrific police procedural, one a cracker-jack mystery, one a high-class, high-nostalgia adventure, and one the finest adaptation of a hardboiled classic character.

First up was *Murder in Coweta County* (pronounced *kye-yee-tah*), a fine, low-key telling of a true story. Andy Griffith was totally believable as an egomaniacal Southern despot who murders a farmhand in 1949. His intense performance harkens back to his leading role in Elia Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* (1957) and might come as a surprise to those who only know him from *No Time for Sergeants* (1958) or as Sheriff Taylor of Mayberry R.F.D.

But Griffith isn't the biggest surprise or the main star here. The biggest surprise was the work of supervising producer and director Gary Nelson. After having helmed one of the worst science-fiction movies of all time (*The

Black Hole), he continues his winning TV detective ways here. His earlier teleflicks include *To Kill a Cop,* the *Police Story* spinoff starring Joe Don Baker that led to the abortive *Eischied* series.

Coweta's main star was Johnny Cash, eminently credible as Sheriff Potts, a slow-walking, soft-talking lawman's lawman. He purposefully goes after the murderer, not with guns blazing but with clarity of purpose, dogged intellect, and a quietly burning love of the law. Like Joe Friday and Steve McGarrett before him, Potts isn't flashy, but he gets the job done with passion and compassion. The only thing that gets him really upset is discovering a corrupt cop.

Otherwise, he uses his swamp sense to gather a noose of evidence around the killer's throat. Adding dimension to the drama is the Griffith character's fervent belief in who he is and what he stands for. Although admitting his guilt, he refuses to believe that he was wrong—even until the very last moment, head shaven and strapped in the electric chair, he maintains he did what he should have.

Murder in Coweta County is a wonderful story of murder, the law, and justice. It is a true fable of absolute power corrupting absolutely which harks back to the "good old days" when a homicidal, pathological maniac couldn't hide behind his own insanity to escape punishment. "How powerful is a man who can't control himself?" Potts/Cash asks in the closing minutes of this resonant entertainment. He is one policeman and actor I wouldn't mind seeing again. And again, and again, and again.

Interestingly enough, Gary Nelson was also the director of *Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer: Murder Me, Murder You,* the decidedly superior follow-up to last year's Mike Hammer TV movie starring Kevin Dobson. Dobson's portrayal was undermined by an ignorance of the character, an incomprehensible plot, and a cowardly approach to the brutal Spillane histrionics. None of these problems afflicted this second attempt to adapt Hammer to the teleflick form.

If anything, this Jay Bernstein production is the best Hammer movie ever done, up to and including *Kiss Me Deadly* starring Ralph Meeker and *The Girl Hunters* starring Spillane himself. No doubt there is much groaning following that last statement, since I've already heard *Murder Me, Murder You* complaints on several scores. I still maintain that writer Bill Stratton and star Stacy Keach have encapsulated the most realistic and believable Hammer on screen while losing little of the original Spillane spirit.

In truth, Keach may not have been playing Hammer as much as he was playing "Mike Marlowe," a cunning combination of militant hardboiled dick and knight in tarnished armor. Even so, the perverted Spillane plots, the right-wing sermonizing, the bevy of "fantasy girls," and the Hammer violence was all on ample view. Earl Hagen scored the effort, using his "Harlem Nocturne" as Mike Hammer's theme. I knew I was in for a corking good time when the first commercial break followed a classic Hammer declaration: "Whoever killed Chris is going down... piece by piece!"

Chris is Chris Johnson, the love of Hammer's life played by Michelle Phillips. She gets poisoned, leaving Mike to find their daughter, Michelle, played by Lisa Blount. Hammer's road of vengeance is further enhanced by the knowledge that he is the girl's father. Assassins, antagonistic policemen, angry clients, and gorgeous dames dog his trail as he shoots and slugs his way through the mystery of a murdered courier and a cash-filled attache case.

Keach is the best actor ever to play Hammer, and it shows in his performance. He uses his wise-cracking mouth, his fast fists, and his .45 automatic "Betsy" to good purpose. Stratton's script may be salted with research inaccuracies concerning Grand Juries, but it is peppered with nifty dialogue and neat characters, not to mention the largest collection of stacked women this side of cleavage. Almost every female in view had a neckline cut down to her ankles.

Tanya Roberts, Charlie's last Angel, made a skintight Velda, and Don Stroud was a good Pat Chambers. The finale brought all the divergent private-eye influences into focus. *Murder Me, Murder You* combined the literary Mike Hammer with Hammer's exaggerated reputation as well as that of Philip Marlowe and Sam Spade. After he savagely slugs and kicks a killer whom he has already killed with a .45 bullet fired at close range, Hammer/Keach is left to stare out his office window. "Thank God for Velda," he says on the soundtrack narration, "...and the City." Roll credits to the haunting refrain of the "Harlem Nocturne."

Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer: Murder Me, Murder You was a magnificent tightrope job by all concerned—for the first time making an outlandish character come to believable life in the jaded, cynical '80s. Also coming back to life in the '80s was Napoleon Solo, the Man from U.N.C.L.E. After a

David McCallum and Robert Vaughn in *Return of the Man from U.N.C.L.E.*
© 1982 CBS Inc.

labyrinthine negotiation by Michael Sloan, the writer/producer secured the rights to mount a new teleflick based on the name and fame of the best James Bond ripoffs the '60s had to offer.

Solo was created by Ian Fleming, and U.N.C.L.E., the United Network Command for Law and Enforcement, was created by Edgar-winning Sam Rolfe. Although the program didn't catch on until the first season was over and only lasted three and a half years, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.* inspired a legion of fans—probably the most voracious of whom was special effects man Robert Short, who served as technical advisor on the new project: *The Return of the Man from U.N.C.L.E.: The Fifteen Years Later Affair.*

Fifteen years after the disbanding of the evil organization THRUSH (Technical Hierarchy for the Removal of Undesirables and the Subjugation of Humanity), Justin Sepheran, as enacted by Anthony Zerbe, escapes from prison and resurrects the organization after stealing a nuclear weapon. He demands that the ransom for an undisclosed threatened city must be brought to him by Napoleon Solo.

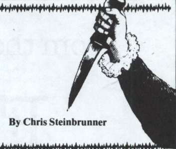
Solo has remained a bon vivant but has left U.N.C.L.E. to run his own computer company. When called back into service, he demands the participation of ex-partner Illya Kuryakin, who left the agency to become a fashion designer after being betrayed by a double agent. The old team reunites for an effective battle against THRUSH, Illya managing to settle his score with the double agent in the process.

The Fifteen Years Later Affair marks the difference between a ripoff and an hommage. Although it steals concepts and scenes from almost every James Bond film (as well as *Juggernaut,* director Richard Lester's taut satire of disaster movies), it did it in such an open way that the robberies seemed comfortably charming. It also helped that all the scenes which were not direct loans were done with clever charm and a fond remembrance of episodes and characters past.

There was much audience pleasure to be found in the returning U.N.C.L.E. stars. Although Robert Vaughn had a little more girth and a little less hair as Solo, David McCallum looked as if he had struck a deal with H. G. Wells to borrow the Time Machine in order to play Illya more than a decade after. The late Leo G. Carroll was replaced as U.N.C.L.E. boss Alexander Waverly by Patrick Macnee, playing Sir Ralph Raleigh. Curiously enough, director Ray Austin started his career with Macnee's original series *The Avengers* and couldn't break himself of calling the Raleigh character "Steed" on the set.

The Return of the Man from U.N.C.L.E. was blatantly derivative and incredibly unoriginal but wildly enjoyable just the same. Austin and Sloan stretched a very low budget with imaginative production work, and all the actors seemed to be having a high old, straight-faced time. *The Fifteen Years Later Affair's* saving grace was that semi-serious approach. If camped up, this resurrection would have resulted in a wake. As is, the high ratings seem to dictate a new U.N.C.L.E. in television's future. ☐

The Radio Murder Hour



By Chris Steinbrunner

As has been said before in these pages, John Dickson Carr, as much as any writer from the mystery's Golden Age, bridged the gap between the printed word and the medium of radio. Indeed, Carr brought to dramatic radio some of its finest hours—and many of them are remembered in Douglas G. Greene's outstanding collection of Carr scripts published recently by the Doubleday Crime Club, *The Dead Sleep Lightly*. Professor Greene, who teaches history at a Virginia university, previously included a number of Carr's radio works in another tribute to the author, *The Door To Doom,* an anthology which contained the *Suspense* classic, "Cabin B-13." But this new book is totally a gathering of radio shows (the other contained short stories and essays as well), and it is a total delight. Radio murder was never better.

It is not easy to read a radio script—especially a *book* of radio scripts. Awkwardly, one must "speak" the dialogue in one's mind, playing all the roles. The Carr collection in *The Dead Sleep Lightly* is so satisfying, however, that these plays become a joy. The reader can perceive the skillful, calculating way Carr constructed superb puzzles in a colorful, atmospheric—and misdirecting—half-hour tale. He did his first radio work for the BBC in England, debuting in 1939—not only mystery plays but propaganda dramas. Sometimes this latter genre, Doug Greene tells us, dealing with such topics as avoiding the black market and women in the war effort, had mystery twists tacked on. When the United States entered the war, Carr returned to his native country—he was an American living in England—to enlist, and while waiting for a military assignment began contributing to the CBS show *Suspense* ("radio's outstanding theater of thrills"), which had premiered in 1942 with an adaptation by Kelly Roos of the Carr novel *The Burning Court*.

In 1943, however, Carr was sent back to England to continue his propaganda radio work for the BBC. Val Gielgud, the head of the BBC's drama department, persuaded him to bring out his *Suspense* scripts for use in a British program, "a series of thrillers handled in the American manner, with all the trimmings of atmospheric bass-voiced narrator, knife-chords and other specially composed musical effects, and a regular length of half an hour timed to the split second." The BBC had hitherto eschewed elaborate production on their radio dramas, even downplaying sound effects...and Carr was a master at using sound to orchestrate atmosphere. The show, *Appointment with Fear*—with actor Valentine Dyall as the doom-laden narrative voice, "The Man in Black," a device borrowed from the early *Suspense*—was an immediate smash. "Cabin B-13," already so popular on *Suspense* in America, was the story which began the series.

When Carr returned to the States in 1948, CBS convinced him to spin off this story into a series. Alas, most of the *Cabin B-13* programs—with such intriguing titles as "The Nine Black Reasons" and "The Island of Coffins"—seem vanished forever; not even script versions exist today. At about the same time, Carr himself became the stern narrator of the Mutual series *Murder By Experts,* which dramatized stories by well-known mystery writers. Except for a 1955 BBC revival of *Appointment with Fear*—for which Carr wrote six scripts—it was the end of his involvement in radio. (The Boris Karloff Colonel March series for television was based on Carr's *Department of Queer Complaints*—the book has been revived by Gregg Press—but was adapted by other hands.)

Writing for radio, Greene points out, needs special skills: everything must be suggested by sound and dialogue, everything must be perceived by a single sense rather than all the senses. But when "a radio play is successful, it is less limited than other forms of drama; it can range as far as the imagination of the listener." Carr understood radio very well; even from his earliest scripts he demonstrated his mastery of the form.

"The Black Moment," the second show he was to do for the BBC (and the first drama included in Greene's collection), illustrates his superb control and construction. Wind howls across a London street, a cab pulls up. A nervous girl knocks on a door and is admitted. It is the home of a well-known and possibly fraudulent medium, and the girl has come to plead with him to end his involvement with her father, an elderly man grieving over the death of his wife. A séance is planned for later that evening, and she begs the medium to stop it. Each line of dialogue tells the listener some new dramatic revelation; each underscoring sound effect—the whistling wind, tree branches rapping against the window pane—building atmosphere. The séance, of course, cannot be cancelled, and Carr's Chestertonian detective Dr. Gideon Fell is one of the participants. Because it is to be held in a totally dark room, the hushed exchanges between those present, linking hands and whispering, are admirably suited for the audience's ear, as Carr informs us and misdirects us and bedevils us. Naturally, murder occurs, and the solution is both baffling and perfect radio.

All the other scripts included are equally as absorbing. "The Devil's Saint," when first done on *Suspense,* starred Peter Lorre as a mysterious Hungarian count we meet at a European costume ball. Imagine the mental images conjured up when he talks about his guests: "Shapes of nightmare. Shapes of delirium. Great goblin masks where only the eyes move. Mightn't you be terrified if you could look inside those painted masks to the real faces they hide?" The play ends in a castle chamber where no occupant spending the night leaves alive. "Don't you understand that the worship of evil can be as strong and compelling as the worship of good? That the devil can have *his* saints too?"

"The Dragon in the Pool" is lethal and terrifying, Carr's descent into horror. The title script, "The Dead Sleep Lightly," again features Fell, a mystery with a ghost voice, and a wonderful, exhilarating curtain line. "White Tiger Passage" is a comedy mystery demonstrating Carr's sharp sense of humor, for—Greene quotes Anthony Boucher—"death and laughter are old friends." In "The Villa of the Damned," set in Mussolini's Italy, sensible English visitors see an entire house seemingly disappear, perhaps the ultimate impossible crime.

But this is just a sampling of a supremely good collection, long overdue. Dorothy Sayers once said that Carr "can lead us away from the small, artificial, brightly-lit stage of the ordinary detective plot into the menace of outer darkness. He can create atmosphere with an adjective" and can write "in the sense that every sentence gives a thrill of positive pleasure." John Dickson Carr's own credo was a stone tablet to fair play: Present the evidence fairly. Upset the applecart with a twist at the end. And, in all his writing, "deal with *diablerie* in one form or another." God, in radio as elsewhere, how he did that mission well! □

From the Dawn of Television

FRONT PAGE DETECTIVE

By Francis M. Nevins, Jr.

It was one of the earliest of TV's many filmed detective series, and in terms of production value one of the cheesiest, but bits and pieces of it still linger in the memory thirty years later. *Front Page Detective* was a 39-episode series, independently produced by small-screen pioneer Jerry Fairbanks, first broadcast on the short-lived Dumont network in 1951 and rerun times without number on local stations throughout the rest of the '50s. The series was nominally based on a pulp magazine of the same name, but the title role of café-society columnist and amateur detective David Chase—described as a sleuth with an "eye for the ladies, a nose for news, and a sixth sense for danger"—was created especially for TV. "Presenting an unusual story of love and mystery!" an unseen announcer would purr in dulcet tones at the start of each week's episode. His introduction concluded with: "And now for another thrilling adventure as we accompany David Chase and watch him match wits with those who would take the law into their own hands."

Starring as Chase was one-time matinee idol Edmund Lowe, a name familiar to moviegoers for a third of a century prior to his entry into television. Lowe had been born in San Jose, California on March 3, 1892. The son of a judge, he was educated in Santa Clara and taught school for a short while before commencing his acting career with a Los Angeles stock company. After a brief stint on Broadway, Lowe returned west and joined the movie business in 1917. For several years he specialized in suave romantic roles complete with waxed mustache, but the biggest boost in his film career came when he was cast opposite Victor McLaglen in the first of the Captain Flagg and Sergeant Quirt pictures, *What Price Glory* (1926). His foremost contribution to the detective film came ten years later, when he portrayed Philo Vance in MGM's *The Garden Murder Case* (1936), but he was just as good playing a New York plainclothesman of the 1890s opposite Mae West in Paramount's *Every Day's a Holiday* (1938). By the early 1950s, Lowe had begun to show his age, and in *Front Page Detective* he looked all to convincingly like a man of almost sixty who's determined to pass himself off as twenty-five years younger. Later in the decade, he settled into a number of excellent roles as

a vigorous old man in movies such as John Ford's *The Last Hurrah* (1958) and television films like Budd Boetticher's "The War of the Silver Kings" (1957), the premiere episode of *Maverick,* in which he played the villain. Lowe died on Aprill 22, 1971, soon after his seventy-ninth birthday.

Front Page Detective's format gave Lowe the opportunity to reprise all three of the major facets of his career: suave ladies' man, brilliant amateur detective, and virtuoso with fists and guns. In many an episode he would romance the woman in the case, rattle off a few deductions—once he reasoned that a letter supposedly from an Englishwoman was a forgery because the writer used the U.S. spelling "check" rather than the British "cheque"—and top things off by collaring the villain personally after a pistol battle or fistfight underscored by Lee Zahler's background music for Mascot and early Republic cliffhanger serials.

Supporting Lowe in the series were Paula Drew as Chase's fashion-designer girlfriend and crusty George Pembroke as the inevitable stupid police inspector. Surviving records list only a few of the actors who appeared in individual episodes, but they include such stalwarts of the early days of the small screen as Joe Besser, Jorja Curtright, Frank Jenks, Jonathan Hale, and Maurice Cass. Filming was almost entirely indoors, on some of the cheapest sets ever seen by the televiewer's eye. The names of the personnel behind the scenes are apparently lost to history, but considering the number of episodes that ended with action climaxes I suspect that the directors' and writers' roots were in serials and B Westerns.

Like many early TV producers, *Front Page Detective's* Jerry Fairbanks never bothered to register any of these thirty-minute telefilms with the Copyright Office, and the entire series is now in the public domain. Since there's no way of determining the order in which the 39 episodes were shot or first telecast, I've arranged them alphabetically.

"Alibi for Suicide"
Believing that his wife is about to kill herself under circumstances that will make it seem as if he murdered her, a harried husband forces newspaper columnist David Chase to provide an alibi by invading Chase's apartment and keeping the columnist and his girlfriend confined there with him during the crucial period.

"The Case of the Perfect Secretary"
Chase tries to find out why Dr. Owens, the inventor of a synthetic cortisone, didn't show up for a scheduled lecture. He finds Owens's laboratory deserted and later discovers that the doctor has been murdered and the letter M imprinted on his forehead.

"Clean Sweep"
Chase learns that a criminal he helped send to prison for peddling narcotics has escaped and is seeking revenge.

"Dead Wrong"
Chase receives a letter from a woman he doesn't know, containing a $500 check and the request that Chase investigate a man for her. When he calls the woman, their phone conversation is interrupted by a shot, and the woman is subsequently found murdered.

"The Deadly Curio"
A woman with whom Chase was once involved calls on him for help after she visits a girlfriend's apartment and finds it empty except for a dead man clutching a note.

"The Deadly Root"
When a private detective is murdered the morning after offering Chase an item for his column about a prominent socialite, Chase investigates and becomes caught up in the blackmail schemes of the socialite and his sister.

"The Death of A Hero"
While trying to track down a fifteen-year-old stickup artist who sports a fantastic rubber mask, Chase finds himself face to face with two escaped convicts.

"The Devil's Bible"
Chase picks up the major clue in the murder of a man whose body was found beside a $50,000 Bible when he notices another Bible in a shop window.

"Echo from the Dead"
The half-crazed relatives of a man Chase killed in self-defense become his reluctant hosts when Chase is caught in a blinding snowstorm and seeks shelter in their isolated farmhouse.

"Framed for Murder"
Chase is set up as the fall guy in a murder case after he refuses to sell his column to a corrupt politician.

"The Friend of the Corpse"
A publicity woman with a shady past begs Chase for help when her ex-fiancé is found murdered.

"Galahad"
Chase helps out a former showgirl who's being framed by someone who wants to stop her from marrying her late husband's wealthy brother. With Jorja Curtright, Frank Jenks.

"Gold Venom"
Chase becomes involved in another adventure when he helps a friend deliver a golden cobra to a museum.

"Honey for Your Tea"
Chase investigates the claim of a young actress that her fiancé was brutally murdered by her drama coach, a gnarled and crippled old man whose hobby is beekeeping. With Maurice Cass.

"The Intruder"
An uninvited guest invades Chase's apartment and demands that the columnist write a story about the recently murdered gangster Little Angelo.

"The Invisible Hand"
While in London, Chase helps Scotland Yard detectives search for an atomic scientist who vanished with top secret information.

"The Las Vegas Caper"
The promise of an exclusive interview with a gambler at his secret hideaway brings Chase to Las Vegas, but he finds himself in a peck of trouble when a gun blast interrupts the meeting and the gambler falls to the floor.

"The Little Black Book"
Chase becomes involved when a small-time gangster finds in his closet a bullet-riddled body and a diary which exposes the operations of a coast-to-coast gambling syndicate. With Joe Besser.

"Little Miss Fortune"
Chase's small niece arrives for a visit, carrying a suitcase that isn't hers and which turns out to be full of twenty-dollar bills.

"The Lonely One"
Chase receives in the mail an anonymous gift accompanied by a poem, but his pleasure fades when he learns that another man who received a similar gift and poem died soon afterward.

"The Man with the Lisp"
Confined to a chair and recovering from a broken leg, Chase tries to help a young woman who has recently inherited a fortune and has received a phone call from a mysterious lisping man, demanding $50,000.

"Murder Can't Win"
Chase gets into trouble at the racetrack when he sees a brutal horse owner slapping his pretty secretary.

"Murder Rides the Night Train"
While riding on a night passenger train, Chase becomes entangled in the efforts of gangsters to keep a former associate from testifying before a Senate investigating committee.

"The Murderer Is Anonymous"
Chase receives an unsigned threatening letter which is soon followed up by two shots fired at him.

"Napoleon's Obituary"
A man named Napoleon visits Chase's office and asks the columnist to write his obituary. The next day Napoleon is found dead, and Chase follows the trail to a house whose inhabitants are all named after historic personages.

"The Other Face"
Chase investigates the death of a handsome actor who told his psychiatrist of his desire to fall through space and soon afterwards "accidentally" fell from the terrace of his penthouse.

"The Penthouse Jungle"
Chase helps a Mayan princess and her explorer husband when they are threatened by a blackmailer.

"Récipe for Murder"
Chase interrupts his enjoyment of Mardi Gras to interview a New Orleans food expert, but the man drops dead shortly after sampling a new salad dressing which turns out to be laced with cyanide.

"Ringside Seat for Murder"
While attending the wrestling matches, Chase witnesses a bizarre murder: one of the wrestlers is stabbed in the back with a poisoned dart while pinned to the mat by his opponent.

"Seven Seas to Danger"
Chase runs into murder and intrigue when he visits a warehouse to interview its female owner and discovers a moving bag of abalone shells.

"Shadow over Hollywood"
Chase reopens the twenty-year-old unsolved murder of a famous movie director when the actress in whose house the filmmaker was killed attempts to make a comeback.

"Toying with Murder"
Chase's apartment is invaded by a criminal who refuses to leave until he has obtained a special delivery letter which Chase is about to receive.

"The Triangle"
Chase's crusade against slot machine racketeers brings the gamblers down on his neck.

"TV Murder Mystery"
Chase is on hand for the murder of an actress during a live television mystery drama by someone who replaced the blanks in a prop gun with real bullets. Suspects include the prop man, the makeup lady, and the performer who fired the shot.

"Twice Dead"
Chase receives a call from the widow of a man he had exposed as an embezzler. The woman claims she has the final chapter in her late husband's story. With Jonathon Hale.

"The Willing Victim"
Although warned by her doctor that she has only six months to live, a woman leaves the sanitarium where she was being treated and plans to resume her career as a singer. As the friend of her twin sister's husband, Chase takes a hand when the woman becomes involved in murder.

"Worth a Plugged Nickel"
Chase investigates the machine-gun murder of a night club patron on whose body was found a plugged nickel, the underworld symbol of a man marked for death.

"You Kill Me"
After a friend borrows his car, Chase picks up a newspaper and is startled to read of his own death in an auto accident.

The experienced fan should have no trouble solving some of these mysteries even from the brief plot descriptions. I wouldn't mind betting a small sum that the M in "The Case of the Perfect Secretary" turned out to be a W, that the gimmick in "Honey for Your Tea" was the old bee-venom poisoning shtick, and that the murder victim in "The Other Face" turned out to be not the actor but his look-alike understudy. But other episodes seem to have intriguing storylines indeed, and I'd love to see some of them again. *Front Page Detective* never pretended to be a classic, but for all its clichés and Grade-Z production values it was a pioneering effort in television detection that deserves just a bit more than to be totally forgotten. □

THE UNIQUE MYSTERY MAGAZINE

HUGO GERNSBACK'S SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE MONTHLY PART VII

By Robert A. W. Lowndes

Ruger's cover for the July issue shows the head of a python looming above the head of a properly terrified-looking man. Inside, we're told that "a brilliant author has written a story—well, we don't want to disclose the secret of the strangest mystery you have ever read." Whether or not "Horror House" was the strangest mystery I or anyone else had read before picking up that issue of *Amazing Detective Tales,* one can be amazed at that statement. What is left to disclose after you've seen that cover except who was responsible for the python's being at large?

Hugo Gernsback's editorial this time, "How Criminals Are Identified," deals with criminals' attempts to avoid fingerprint identification by treating their fingertips with acid that obliterates "the original loops and whorls, which make up the impressions of the finger tips" but notes that, while some such attempts have been successful, "the destruction of the marks is in itself a confession that there is something wrong." At any rate, there are other means of identification which are just as good, such as footprints and tooth structure. (However, a miscreant is less likely to leave bare footprints or toothmarks at the scene of a crime than fingerprints—something the editor overlooked in his article.)

"The Tower Mystery" by Ernest Zorbas opens with his detective, E. C. Prawn, receiving a mysterious telephone call at night saying that he and his partner should come right over to the Parker mansion near the seashore—something has happened. When they arrive, the mansion is quite dark except for a light in a tower at the rear. After banging on the front door for some time, they are admitted by a Japanese who expresses ignorance of any phone call. Prawn asks him to call Mr. Parker downstairs; they have business with him. While he is gone, Prawn and his partner Dale look around.

They were in a large hall which connected with a main room, about which the other rooms on the first floor were grouped. The hall was filled with antiques, statues of Indians, exceedingly life-like, a row of knights in armor, several wax figures of different men, some of which Prawn and Dale had seen, and one other statue. This one, particularly, attracted Prawn's attention, and Dale became interested, too, when he came closer to it.

It was exactly the size of a man and was of polished copper—not brass, or bronze. It represented a man in middle age and the two men marveled at its workmanship—so perfect was it. There was a beard and a mustache, neatly trimmed, and the eyes were closed. The face wore a pained expression.

"Do you know whose statue that is?" asked Prawn after a while. "No? Well, that is a perfect likeness of Mr. Parker."

They are interrupted by the return of the Japanese servant, who is in a state of considerable excitement. Finally, he calms down enough to impart, "Mr. Parker is gone! There is much blood in the laboratory! Maybe he is dead! He..." Prawn interrupts to order him to lead them to the lab, which is up in the tower.

They were now in a comparatively large laboratory. It was circular in form, as with the shape of the tower, and circular shelves extended about the room. There were a number of benches and their tops were littered with all manner of instruments—microscopes, flasks, bunsen burners...

And on the floor was a large pool of blood, caked and dried.

The servant reveals that Parker was trying to manufacture a synthetic drug; and that while he had not been successful in that respect he had nonetheless discovered a new list of organic dyes. Prawn analyzes the blood with the aid of the instruments in the laboratory and finds peculiar things about it, although it does seem to be human blood. A trace of blood is also visible on a scalpel. With that there is no problem.

"Yes, it is human blood," he murmured, motioning Dale to look, too. "And that scalpel is the instrument used, if I don't miss my guess."

His eyes roved the entire room. A large trough, from which there issued a strong odor of nitric acid and the oxides of nitrogen which compose it, stood to one side, beneath a ventilating canopy. The trough was filled to about half its height and capacity with a greenish half-liquid, half-solid substance.

It turns out to be freshly-made copper nitrate. Prawn says that it has been prepared within twenty-four hours, "as can be deduced from the presence of the fumes."

For those who had read Dorothy L. Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey adventure "The Abominable History of the Man with the Copper Fingers" (in the collection *Lord Peter Views the Body,* 1928), there was no longer any mystery, if they did not suspect the truth somewhat earlier. The "perfect likeness of Parker" which they saw in the hall is, in fact, Parker's copper-plated mortal remains. The peculiarity about Parker's blood seems to get lost in the general revelations of motive and guilt, and what I'd call the prime mystery is never satisfactorily explained: What did the conspirators hope to gain by calling Prawn to solve the mystery when the police might just possibly have been baffled long enough? (But then, many other detective stories have the same fault—many of them novels otherwise of high caliber.)

"The Grey Shadow" by W. F. Hammond is a nicely-done suspense story which can be termed science fiction, since it deals with a phenomenon that even now scientists have not been able to duplicate. The culprit has found a way to make himself invisible through

"a chemical preparation that would produce a neutral effect; that is, one that would neither absorb light nor reflect it, thus rendering invisible any fabric to which it might be applied."

And after years of patient effort, strange as it may seem, that is precisely what Klugman eventually succeeded in doing. Not only did he provide himself with an invisible cloak or mantle, but he also applied the same preparation to the woolen socks he wore over his shoes to deaden the sound of his steps, while a transparent film of the same chemical over his glasses effectually screened his eyes from those whom he encountered.

His one difficulty, and a very real one, as he himself confessed in his writings, was the fact that despite this disguise he still cast a shadow; for it must be remembered that light rays did not pass through him, but were simply neutralized.

For this reason he was careful to confine his excursions to cloudy weather and, when venturing into a lighted room to flatten himself against the wall instead of venturing beneath or in front of the illuminating medium. Only once was he in danger of detection, that being the night he crossed the room to Wharton's bed while Burke stood at the window.

In one instance, when he is carrying out one of his acts of retaliatory justice, one person in what seems to be an empty room believes he momentarily sees a gray shadow. (For some reason, Gernsback's editors preferred the English spelling "Grey," as we see from the title.)

How is the elusive gray shadow caught? The detective, Cole, makes his arrangements for a trap as the intended final victim wonders whether any protection will be of avail.

Upon reaching No. 47, he tapped on the door and uttered the word "Scotus," as agreed upon. At once the door swung open and Colton motioned him to enter. As if unconscious of so doing, Errell left he door open for an instant while he exchanged greetings with the publisher, and then closed it.

"Your business with me is urgent, I think you said," remarked Colton pleasantly.

"Yes. Please be seated," was the reply and his visitor slipped into a chair in front of a table in the center of the room and motioned his host to another opposite him.

And at that critical instant the door opened again and the dog bounded in.

What happened next came with the quickness of light. There was a deep-throated growl from the dog and in the same breath with eyes gleaming and every hair on his spine bristling, the great brute launched himself through the air like a living catapult to a point just back of Colton's chair!

There came the thud of a sudden impact, the crash of a heavy body striking the floor and then the air was filled with horrible muffled cries mingled with wolfish snarls as the fangs of the big huskie sank into the throat of his victim.

Before either Errel or his companion could spring to their feet, a shower of human blood spattered the rugs and furniture as the dog battled with the unseen opponent. And then—torn and rent asunder in the awful struggle, the mantle of invisibility fell away to reveal to the horrified onlookers the form of a powerful man who, with face distorted with agony and fright, strove furiously but vainly to free himself from the hound's deadly grip.

A sharp command from his master and the angry brute sprang back, fangs bared and dripping blood, and the next moment came the click of handcuffs. But these were not needed. The wretched man's jugular had been slashed by those glistening fangs and even as Errell stood over the prostrate form there came a convulsive shudder, the sound of the death rattle, and all was over.

But there was still another surprise for the two watchers as Colton stooped to peer into the face of the dead man. "Good God, Errell," he cried, "do you know who this is?"

"Klugman, of course," was the prompt response.

"Possibly," retorted the publisher, "but to the world at large he is known as Professor Emil von Werther, one of the greatest chemists the world has ever seen."

"Nevertheless, the man lying there is Klugman," answered Errell, "and here is the proof."

With the words, he pulled from the pocket of the dead man's coat a single sheet of paper, grey like the others, and bearing the ominous word "FIVE!"

Hmm, what breed of dog was it, now? No matter, it's a thrilling story of Klugman's vengeance on the men responsible for his father's being framed and railroaded into prison where he died. The achievement of invisibility remains super-technical, of course, but this is one of the more plausible treatments of it in mystery fiction.

The "scientific actuality" article by former editor Hector Grey continues on the theme of how radio is used to capture criminals. For its time, it may have been revealing; it seems rather quaint today.

As if the cover had not already given the secret of "Horror House" away, the interior illustration offers more hints as to the nature of it. Walter Livingston Martin's story isn't a poor one and might have had some impact had it been possible for the reader to be mystified. The python is kept in the house to protect the gangsters using the premises from intruders, of course, and the clues are presented well without giving too much away.

"Traced by a Scratch" by H. H. Dunn is blurbed "excerpt from the modus operandi of a detective bureau" and is a one-page filler. The final sentence: "The detective of the future will be a scientist," says Chief Volmer, "and the civilization of the future, if it is to control the criminal element, must depend on science, both physical and psychological, for that control." So we can see clearly now where we have gone wrong—can't we?

Martin was not the only victim of the art department this time. "The Mystery of the Phantom Shot" by Amelia Reynolds Long is actually a rather good short puzzle murder mystery. Five people are sitting around a table in one room. Over the fireplace behind the table are a crossed pair of old dueling pistols. Through the doorway into the next room, we see a man sitting at a desk.

> "As I was saying, we were all sitting there at one end of the room," he resumed after a minute. "Barclay was saying something—I don't remember what—when all of a sudden there was an explosion directly above his head! You can imagine how we all jumped. And then Leslie discovered what had happened: One of Grandfather's old pistols fired of its own accord!"
>
> "And John was shot?" I asked involuntarily.
>
> "No," Bob answered. "The bullet never touched him. He called out from his room to ask what had happened, and I told him. We were all staring up at the pistol, which was still hanging on the wall with its mate, a good two feet above our heads.
>
> "Suddenly I realized that John hadn't come out to join us; and I asked him from where I stood whether the shot had struck anything in his room. He didn't answer; so after a minute or two I asked him again. When he didn't answer that time either, I went to the door to see what was the matter. He was lying forward across the desk."

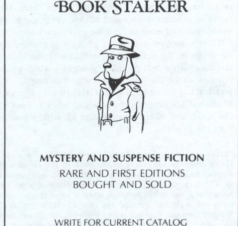
No, John wasn't shot; but we find that the pistol ball shattered a glass paperweight on his desk and that the paperweight had been filled with a lethal gas.

Aha! the sharp reader says to himself, it is of a trustworthy obviousness, Poirot, that the pistol did not go off accidentally. No, it was of the greatest carefulness aligned to bear upon that hollow glass paperweight and to fire at precisely the proper time. It remains only to use the gray cells in order to determine how that was arranged, and which of the parties arranged it.

Alas—there is no need to read the interrogation of those present or to employ the gray cells. The all-too-clearly drawn illustration shows us at a glance how it was done and who did it! One person is sitting there quietly, with an intent expression on her face, while the others all look startled, and we can see that she is holding a small polished compact in her hand, which she is using as a focusing glass to direct the sunlight onto the pistol.

A full-page notice reminds readers that it is not too late to get in to the Prize Story Contest relating to the cover of the June issue. Then we come to "The Private Bank Puzzle" by Edwin Balmer and William B. MacHerg.

We need not spend much time on this one, save to express thanks that Luther Trant doesn't go into a two-page lecture on the workings of some mechanical device to measure emotional responses translated from electrical neural changes in the body this time. We do get a lecture on ciphers and the use of the typewriter for codes and find that an old typewriter with a different keyboard from the typewriters now in



use at the bank gives us the clue to how the aging cashier was jogging his failing memory of what word was being used for the combination of the safe from day to day, and how the word-association test led Trant to who had really robbed the safe and framed the cashier's son. (I must confess that by this time, even back in 1930 when I first read the story in the then-current July ADM, Luther Trant was getting to be rather dull going. But we do need to remember that these things were fresh to mystery-story readers back before 1910, when the stories were first written, and were not over-familiar to many 1930 readers.)

"The Mind Machine" by George Eugene Key is science fiction and is a reasonably early use of mechanically-devised telepathy that goes beyond the matter of exchanging mental information. Professor Caldwell says to Mark Temple, the narrator:

> "Imagine a woman, calmly cooking lunch for herself and her husband, who will soon be coming home, never thinking for a moment a tragedy will occur before the potatoes have come to a boil. Imagine her, in fact, walking toward the stove with those very potatoes in her hand, when suddenly she is attacked by the very cooking gas which is to cook the meal and kills her before she reaches the stove. Imagine all this and insert the revelation that the stove is electric and the nearest cooking gas is in the building next door."

Caldwell adds that there was not a gas pipe in the building, or any way for the gas to be brought in without someone being aware of it. Yet the victim bears distinct marks of gas asphyxiation. "The murderer, therefore, is one who broke from the ranks of modern science and advanced far ahead of us. We must advance as far if we are to reach him."

There's another murder by cooking gas where no gas exists in the building, as well as a report that a certain apartment is completely empty—which turns out not to be the case. We learn that one C. V. Stratton has constructed what Caldwell calls a "mind machine." It's supposed presently to be in a closet in the apartment where Stratton and his wife live with their son Bruce.

> "Bruce opened the closet door and pushed the clothes aside. He reached for something in the back of the closet and stopped suddenly. He pushed aside the clothes and stepped in. The floor was empty! The Mind Machine was gone. He turned and was about to speak when a hand reached out from the wall and gripped his throat. He struggled. I jumped forward, grabbed a nail file from the dresser and plunged it into the arm, but my hand slipped through as though nothing were there. The hand remained and Bruce's face turned black. I pulled him out of the closet and he fell, face downward on the floor of the room and the hand disappeared. He was dead."

As he tells Caldwell, he saw the hand, but it had no mass: "It was more like a cloud of fog. I could see it, but it was more like vapor than something real. Otherwise, I'd have cut it with that file." Caldwell explains:

> "It had its effect, and yet it was not real. I fear we have only begun to see the powers that mysterious murderer of ours can summon against us. . . ."

We learn that a person using the Mind Machine can not only read thoughts but can produce illusions and convince the victim that they are real. (The gas, however, was something else.[1]) Caldwell finds the original blueprints for Stratton's stolen Mind Machine, builds a more powerful one, and manages to get to the criminal.

There are long scientific explanations in the story, which sound plausible enough, and I don't doubt that if *Amazing Detective Tales* had not existed, Gernsback would have run the tale in *Wonder Stories.*

The Craig Kennedy story this month is "The White Slave," which gives much inside information on how the various charlatans posing as occultists and psychic counselors produce what seem to be inexplicable effects. The key to the mystery, however, lies in something all too familiar to us today: *cannabis indicia,* also known as hashish, hang, etc. The suggestions of a sex story in the title are misleading.

Professor Macklin returns in "The Impossible Crime" by Ralph W. Wilkins, and the reader is told plainly in the course of the tale that it is a "Purloined Letter" type of mystery. The well-read reader does have a chance to solve the riddle, and, after wrestling with myself, I've decided to reveal all; no one who cannot obtain a copy of the magazine is likely to get a chance to read the story. However, I'm going to lead up to the riddle and then put the answer in the notes, so you'll have a chance to guess it first.

The object stolen is a fabulous necklace of "gigantic rubies, and great, cube-shaped diamonds." Miss Bain, the owner, is a foolish, wealthy woman who has been poor most of her life and now wants to make her peers feel the way she did when she was their "inferior." So she frequently has expensive dinners in which she displays the necklace for their envious gaze. She isn't wearing it and has on a medium-neck type dress at the time of the robbery. These antics are a great strain on the police, who must arrange for elaborate guards and protection.

We start with the final dinner, during the course of which the necklace disappears. The newspapers call it "the impossible crime," and Professor Macklin is finally called in.

First, here's what happened:

> The necklace was on the table in the center of a small room to which there was but one door, and the windows of which were all barred. The ten guests and their hostess were

grouped about the table when, suddenly, the lights went out. When they flashed on again, the case containing the jewels was empty! All the guests were still present. Indeed, it would have been impossible for one to escape, for all the windows were barred and Inspector Reynolds himself was on duty at the door of the room.

All the guests are searched completely; none of them has the necklace. The room itself is searched completely; the necklace is not there. Nor does it later prove to have been hidden somewhere there. Nor, again, is there any way anyone present could have turned off the lights. Those two possibilities are completely eliminated.

Professor Macklin tackles the lights problem first and discovers that there was a brief failure at the power station; all lights in the area of the house were off for that same period of time. But that doesn't seem to help very much because, as Reynolds explains, in order to circumvent the possibility of someone hiding the necklace somewhere in the room should the lights go out:

"I made the old hen change her plans at the last moment and display the jewels in the room I told you of. No one but myself knew about that until dinner was over, half an hour before the robbery. No one had time to plan in that short time because no one was allowed into the room."

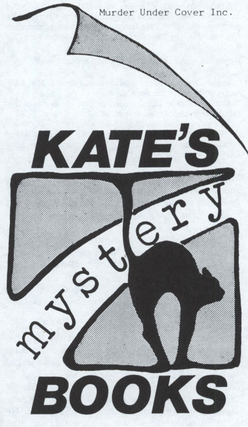
A check of the guest list has shown that none of them is a professional criminal; all are respectable and solid, although several of them are not as far beyond needing money as they appear to be.

The victim, Miss Bain, is now under a doctor's care; and her doctor was, indeed, one of the guests. He appears on the list as "Dr. Alexander Kurm, 50, Physician (Spec. in Nervous Diseases), University of Vienna, etc.." Nor does he prove to be a charlatan, posing as a specialist.

The police call at the power house; the three men on duty all tell the same story: a rat had short-circuited the main power line, and it was necessary to shut off the dynamos for several minutes. Nonetheless, when told that a daring theft has taken place while their rat was electrocuting himself (each of the men are examined separately) and that there is enough evidence to involve them, they come across with the truth.

A young chap who said he was James Huntley, Jr., son of the president of the light and power company, offered them two hundred dollars apiece to turn the lights off for three minutes at a specific time. (He attends the nearby college where Macklin teaches.) The object was to have darkness in the dormitory for that period, in order to put a harmless prank across. If anything came out, he'd make it all right so that they wouldn't be blamed.

Macklin calls young Huntley, tells him about the case, and the two of them go over to the power



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house. No, say the three: this is *not* the person who claimed to be James Huntley, Jr.

Miss Bain continues under Dr. Kurm's care. Kurm himself is searched every time he leaves the house. Now Macklin says to Inspector Reynolds:

"I'll have that necklace for you the day Miss Bain leaves the house, Reynolds. But you must keep a sharp watch and let me know the second she leaves. She must have recovered from her shock by now, and ought to be going out soon."

Reynolds replies that she is up and around now.

"But she is queer. Her personal maid told me that Miss Bain hasn't let her near her since the night of the robbery when she had the shock. Do you suppose that she knows about this robbery, and is making fools of us?"

"She doesn't," answered Macklin with conviction. "But I do, Reynolds, old friend. I know exactly where the stolen necklace is, and I'll get it for you *the minute Miss Bain leaves the house*. How's that?"

Miss Bain is followed; she goes to Dr. Kurm's office, and Kurm and his pretty secretary (who had dressed up in men's clothes and posed as James Huntley, Jr.) are captured trying to get away. Kurm has the necklace.

The riddle still remains of how it happened, and you who read now have all the essential clues. Need I say that I myself was completely baffled? But surely you won't be.[2]

In "How Good A Detective Are You?" this time, we have two sections of questions—one observation-based, the other requiring deduction.

In "The Readers Verdict," N.L. Lederer, Chairman, Tournament Committee of the National Chess Tournament of the U.S.A., states that reader Miloche's proposed solution to the chess game in *The Bishop Murder Case* will make no difference to the conclusion; Lederer himself claims responsibility for the game, and then shows, move by move, just how black would reply to Miloche's move and win. He adds: "It might interest you to know that Mr. Van Dine had the game I worked out checked by Dr. Alexandre Alekhine, the present world champion."

Several readers indicate that they prefer the action-type story to the more slow-moving, straight detection kind, citing "The Electrical Man" in the May issue as a high spot of "scientific" action. The editor notes that, so far, the Neil R. Jones story has received no knocks—only boosts, and that a letter from Jack Darrow (who was well known for his letters to the editors of the science-fiction magazines) which lists the stories in the May issue in his order of preference also lists them in order of action content.

Another reader finds that only two stories in the January issue (the Starzl short story and the serial) did not have something questionable about the "science" in them. Specifically, he doubts the ability of the captive balloon in the Professor Macklin story to handle the load that is put on it and takes exception to Captain Meek's explanation of the duplication machine in the Dr. Bird story.

"Science-Crime Notes" is reduced to filler status, just as "Science News of the Month," originally a major feature in *Science Wonder Stories* (June 1929 issue), began to fade out a year later (June 1930 issue), when the word "science" was dropped from the cover. The book review is of "Death of My Aunt" by C. H. B. Kitchen, published by Harcourt, Brace & Company at $2.00.

Notes

1. There is a discussion of electrons and cathode rays early in the story, when the narrator meets Professor Caldwell, his former science instructor. That conversation does not seem to be connected to the story at first, and we do get side-tracked with the hallucinations, etc., produced by the Mind Machine. Professor Caldwell refers to it at the end of the story: "As I explained to Marcus the day he became my assistant, the magnetic field around the earth formed a screen which caused the cathode rays from the sun to enter only at the poles. That is the theory for the Aurora Borealis and Aurora Australis. Remove the screen, then, and the rays will enter the earth at the point that is free from the field." The Mind Machine has a side effect of doing just that. "These rays passed through the wall of the Lederberger kitchen, releasing a certain gas." It's a gas that is perfectly harmless when in the paint, and gives the paint greater luster and durability; but, released, it has the lethal qualities of cooking gas. The culprit used it for his purposes.
2. Professor Macklin's explanation is lengthy but breaks down to four conclusions he drew from the evidence: (1) The person of Miss Bain was the only place in the room where the jewels might safely have been hidden. (2) Miss Bain is Dr. Kurm's patient for some sort of neurotic trouble. (3) Dr. Kurm uses hypnosis in his cures. (4) Artificial amnesia may easily be produced by hypnotism.

   While we have not been told specifically that Dr. Kurm is a hypnotist, it was well-enough known even in 1930 that specialists such as he used hypnosis in treating neurotic patients. The clue is therefore inferrable from what we have seen.

   Miss Bain was wearing a medium-neck type of dress—meaning neither a high-collar nor a low-cut dress. In preparation for the theft, Dr. Kurm had given her post-hypnotic instructions to wear that type dress on the particular night and then, when the lights went off, (a) to faint and (b) to become totally insensitive to the fact that she was wearing her necklace. What Kurm did when the lights went off was simply to grasp Miss Bain, then pick up the necklace, put it around her, and push it down beneath her dress. She could neither feel it nor know that she was wearing it, and she was the only person in the room who was not searched. She had also been conditioned to take care of her own needs thereafter and not let her maid see her; so no one else had a chance to find out. When Kurm decided she was well enough (her shock at the loss of the jewel was genuine), she left the house, still wearing the necklace, to go to his office.

   The author goes into medical details and analogies to justify Professor Macklin's conclusion and to make the fantastic revelation plausible to the reader. I'd say he succeeded. The victim was not given a single hypnotic suggestion which was upsetting to her or in any possible way morally upsetting. I don't doubt that a number of sharp-minded readers, then and now, figured the solution out. Alas, by the time I re-read this July issue in order to write about it, I had forgotten the solution, so was baffled again. □

Let's call it GUN IN GIRDLE

By Dean M. Dorn and C. E. "Teet" Carle

We hope that none of our great-grandchildren ever become mystery novel buffs. One of them might discover that his old great-grandpappy was part of a team who wrote several published whodunit action novels and novelettes and that one of them was singled out by a young writer named Bill Pronzini as being the worst mystery tome of all time. How that progeny might shudder and mumble, "My God, what an awful legacy."

Currently, our greatest hope is that by the time the Carle and Dorn descendants are old enough to delve into what their ancestors did, in young Willie's opinion, to mystery fiction in the late '40s and early '50s, a 1982 book titled *Gun in Cheek* may be as out-of-print as are our old stories by Michael Morgan.

Of course, we cannot count on that. There will always be libraries and second-hand book stores. And available will be bound copies of *The Armchair Detective,* the Spring 1980 issue of which carried the young man's first denunciation of our paperback novel from Ace, *Decoy,* as "The Worst Mystery Novel of All Time."

In his book, and in the magazine piece which was lifted almost intact for a chapter devoted mostly to our literary sins, Billy Boy devoted pages to proving that *Decoy* embraces the absolute worst in written plotting, narration, description, and dialogue ever recorded on a printed page. He gave examples, all of which, we are frank to say, we enjoyed chuckling over as they came back to us over the span of 29 years. Ah, 1953 was a happy year for us.

The youthful writer headed his book's chapter on our book with one of our prize lines, "Don't tell me you carry a heater in your girdle, Madam!" Had Pronzini taken the time to learn that we are still alive and kicking, we would have offered him free use of that line as the title for his book. Can you picture the appeal of *Gun in Girdle*?

We presume that Willie knew that in 1953 heater was a favorite name for gun among those who doted on hardboiled slanguage. We were almost as proud of that line of dialogue as we were of a descriptive phrase from our hero who was attracted to a "blue evening gown which made a low-bridged criss-cross right above where the meat on a chicken is the whitest."

We liked that sentence. But our agent must have agreed with Bill-the-critic when we urged him to suggest the title *Where Chicken Meat Is Whitest* for the English, French, and Spanish editions of *Decoy* when they came out later.

Before we move on to how *Decoy* and other novels about our movie stuntman hero got written, we pause to assure ourselves that perhaps a future great-grandson's exploration (not future great-grandsons, since there already are five of them) of how a book of his was ridiculed by a writer who wasn't a Sweet William might result in our next generation family relieved that old great-grandpa escaped the brand of being mediocre. If no one person ever can be the best writer ever, why settle for an in-between category?

Decoy was the last Michael Morgan story about a movie stuntman named Bill Ryan, and it was written for a purpose. It was a pull-all-stops-far-out farewell to a character who had proved a point for two guys who were murder mystery buffs themselves.

Reading through innumerable hardboiled detective fiction by some of the best with whom Dorn and Carle had worked personally as studio publicists (Dorn at MGM with Dashiell Hammett on the "Thin Man" movies and Carle with Raymond Chandler at Paramount on *Double Indemnity* and *The Blue Dahlia*), we had often had our belief brain cells strained by some of the physical things the action-thriller heroes got by with luckily or survived incredibly.

The more we pondered the matter of what kind of male could take all that novelists expected of them and not wind up in a hospital, the closer we got to the fact that the only experts of impossible feats we knew were movie stuntmen who had spent years mastering the tricks of their hazardous trade and gotten paid handsomely for it. A movie stuntman, of course.

Both Dorn and Carle had been publicizers of stunt-

men and had been intrigued by their techniques. So they created a stuntman character and named him Bill Ryan and had him do a lot of the astounding feats they had seen stuntmen do or heard them talk about. The novel in which they introduced their new type of hero was *Nine More Lives,* and it was published by Random House in 1947.

The primary model for Ryan was a handsome, muscular daredevil Irishman named Jimmy Dundee. He not only made several times the salary that press agents Dorn and Carle made, but he lived both dangerously and romantically. Two of Paramount's hottest sex symbols of the '30s and '40s were among his bedmates. De Mille sent an entire film crew to Central America to film Dundee rolling a jeep down a mountain side for *The Story of Dr. Wassel.* Preston Sturges made Jimmy a featured player in a couple of films. Ironically, he died of the physically weakening malady of leukemia.

For *Nine More Lives* and a half-dozen novelettes in pulp magazines, the lusty character of a stuntman worked. Book blurbs in America and abroad and magazine covers promised readers a character "too tough to kill," "wholly different but authentic," "user of tricks only a trained stuntman would dare employ," "a super-Houdini stunt merchant," "a tough-as-nails hero."

In having Bill Ryan recount his adventures, the authors clung to the theory that, if their hero executed outlandish action, he would be expected to say almost absurd things and to resort to inelegant, offbeat, and even barbaric description and narration.

Overwhelming phrases were not uncommon among stuntmen we knew. Nor with characters in other books. Willie, the critic, may be too young to remember, but Carle, at 83, and Dorn, somewhat younger, can enjoy even in 1983 many of the lines which insulted Billy's sensitivities in 1980. Such as female muscles that stand up individually and make a speech, cops who descend on a corridor like a blustering winter wind off Nebraska plains, saliva glands that throbbed with desire for retribution, some words being sucked down to a female's short ribs, silence settling like a hen squatting on eggs, a character who laughs in the direction of his right ear, cheeks with a case of the flushes, lips doing a nip-up at one end, someone running his eyes over another's silence, a slow burn ready to boil, a character putting his vocalizing on arrested motion, or reality cutting the hero down six notches.

If, as youthful William writes, we had a positive passion for euphemism, hyperbole, and innovative similes to create dead-pan farce, that's how it was intentionally for us in 1951.

After all, by that year, we had enjoyed our experiments with making the incredulous accepted, even welcomed, through our Bill Ryan character. RKO bought the screen rights to *Nine More Lives* but changes in ownership of that company put the property in the "hold" file, where it remains today, with copyright renewed periodically.

Bennett Cerf, president of Random House, called on us on one of his trips to Hollywood just before the book came out. He had bought the story because he enjoyed reading it. He had used a couple of the stories about stuntmen peculiarities in his *Saturday Review* column and later in his book *Shake Well Before Using.* He did predict that the unusualness of the hero might draw disbelief from critics who disfavored whatever deviated from the traditional forms of mystery writing.

Cerf even cautioned us to be prepared for some scoffing from pure-blooded critics for the nerve displayed by us two movie publicity men for sticking our heads above the tops of the dog houses in which so-called "flacks" were supposed to remain. My God, was he looking forward to 1980?

But we boldly explained on the dust jacket that Michael Morgan was C. E. (Teet) Carle and Dean Dorn, film press agents. Our friend Bill must have read at least the jacket of that book to be able to run us through the scorn mills under our real names when

he turned his howitzers on us in 1980 for writing *Decoy*.

That puts us in one hell of a spot with any great-grandchild who might ask his daddy, "Is it true that one of my ancestors up and wrote the worst mystery novel of all time?"

Let one of us defend his nickname, Teet, which Billy Boy holds in print to be too ludicrous to contemplate without guffawing. That *silly name* was derived from the real name, Cecil, during boyhood. The nickname was a godsend to a lad who disliked the name Cecil. For the record (and with some pride too), we point out that the nickname was not too ridiculous to be used in some pretty good books by some pretty good writers who recorded some of Teet's experiences with stars. Books like Frank MacShane's *Life of Raymond Chandler,* Budd Schulberg's autobiography, and biographies of W. C. Fields, Clara Bow, George M. Cohan, the Marx Brothers, Earl Carroll, and Billy Wilder.

Pronzini writes that Dorn and Carle never wrote a bit of mystery fiction because, after "creating a masterpiece with *Decoy,* there was nothing to do for an encore." That's partly true. We let go of our friend Bill Ryan because other careers so demanded.

Dorn got tired of holding the hands of pouting movie stars and trying to satisfy petulant and demanding members of the press. He had had fifteen years of wooing the fancies of the public while merchandising through publicity more than five hundred MGM films, including some of the greatest box office blockbusters of all time. When you also try to cater to the emotional needs of some 22 major stars, 105 featured players, 50 directors, and 101 writers all under contract to MGM, you need an outlet.

Dorn got his outlet in plotting action mysteries with Carle. That was not enough. He had a chance to move into the field of investment, estate management, and real estate. If he was to get rich at this, he'd have to give it 100%.

Perfect timing for a break-up of co-authorship propelled Carle at this time into the job of Publicity Director at Paramount. Holding such a job in a back-stabbing business also required 100% devotion. So the two wrote *Decoy* and ended the fictional career of Bill Ryan.

Decoy was done to fill a commitment. We decided we might someday want to return to mystery writing and should not risk getting a reputation for non-deliverance. Besides, we had begun that book as a subtle way of spoofing hardboiled private eyes and saying farewell to our stuntman character. So we pulled out all stops and finished the book.

If anyone can find earlier stories of ours under the Michael Morgan name, he will see that *Decoy* was farther out in action, narration, and dialogue than any of its predecessors. We intended it that way. If it came out in hardback, we were sure astute critics would see it as a gentle ribbing and have as much fun reviewing it as we had had writing it. But our hardback outlet said "no, thanks," and our agent sold it as a bit of straight writing. Nobody reviews paperback originals, so we never knew how *Decoy* was received either here or in England with its publication by Trent Book Co.

But someone did review it in detail. Young Billy did, and he scoffed at it elaborately. In the case of *Decoy,* he even deviated from the claim on the book's jacket that his book is "an affectionate post-mortem of those unsung heroes and heroines of crime fiction."

Where we chose to spoof and rib, Bill employed ridicule. And a man named John D. MacDonald wrote a blurb in which he calls all of the Pronzini's examples "hideous stories."

But we hold no resentment, having long ago learned that the painful thing about resenting someone is that long and constant rehearsal of retribution.

We do not pause even to boast about maybe being ahead of the times. For some of the feats which youthful Billy ridicules have already, in 1982–83, been staged effectively in TV series such as *The Fall Guy*—particularly that trick of riding the tail of a moving airplane to prevent it from taking off.

The author of *Gun in Cheek* made only one error. It played well into our hands. He resorted to sarcasm and so gave us a chance to do an old advertising trick of turning a knock into a boost by using only a part of a review.

If Pronzini could take our *Decoy* lines out of context, why could we not reciprocate? So we took an ad in the two movie trade papers that started out thusly:

At Last . . .
RECOGNITION
AFTER 29 YEARS

Somebody finally realized (or did he?) what fun we were having ribbing the crime fiction genre in 1953.

We are happy to find that, at last, there is a student of hard-boiled detective writing who gives us credit for having had a Hollywood studio stuntman as hero in some novels and novelettes in the late '40s and '50s—long before the current emphasis on this breed of hero.

We find that Bill Pronzini writes in his new book, *Gun in Cheek,* "Ace's single greatest achievement was the publication in 1953 of a novel titled *Decoy,* by a writer—actually a collaborative team of two writers known as Michael Morgan. To read one page of this fascinating work is to marvel at the talents of its creators, E. E. 'Teet' Carle and Dean M. Dorn. For they were truly blessed with genius." □

REX STOUT Newsletter

By John McAleer

I receive so many requests for the address of The Wolfe Pack, I think it's time that I repeat it in this newsletter:

The Wolfe Pack
P.O. Box 822
Ansonia Station
New York, N.Y. 10023

The flood of *Gazettes* coming lately from the Pack is raising huzzahs from all quarters.

* * * * * *

The semi-centennial year (marking the advent of Wolfe and Archie) is off to a strong start. Little, Brown published Ken Darby's *The Brownstone House of Nero Wolfe* in March. And Ungar is ready to go to press with David Anderson's noble *Rex Stout,* a splendid addition to its distinguished Recognition series. Archie is identified as Darby's narrator, but I don't think his monopoly of the Wolfe materials will last much longer. Lately, I received in the mail the manuscript of an impressive Nero Wolfe novel written by —Saul Panzer!

* * * * * *

Sleuth Publications, Ltd., San Francisco, which has brought out a magnificent game called "Sherlock Holmes—Consulting Detective," now is negotiating to bring out a similar game based on Nero Wolfe. The Holmes game is flawlessly executed. Sleuth's Suzy Goldberg assures me that the Wolfe game will be comparable. Says Suzy: "We understand that one of the foremost concerns in a situation of this sort is maintaining the integrity of the characters and the quality of any product associated with the Stout or Wolfe names." This is not just so much lip service. I'm willing to bet that Sleuth means it. I'm hoping it comes to pass. If it does, it's going to make my Christmas shopping mighty easy.

* * * * * *

M. F. K. Fisher, the Brillat-Savarin of this age, is solidly in Wolfe's corner. Writes Miss Fisher: "I think I have read everything Mr. Stout has written about Wolfe and Goodwin, and I have a standing order for second-hand copies of *Too Many Cooks:* it is more comfortable to give them to people than to know who has stolen mine, which happened three times before I learned the trick." Of the *Nero Wolfe Cook Book,* Miss Fisher observes: "Some of the recipes are quite beyond my skill or my larder, but they are all a pleasure to read and think about."

* * * * * *

From my Mail Bag:

"I seem to remember Charles being very interested in the character of Nero Wolfe. But there were so many projects over the years, and so many dreams, that I cannot recall anything specific about actual contact with Rex Stout. I wish there had been. I always regretted I did not get to play Dora Chapin.

"Elsa Lanchester"
[Mrs. Charles Laughton]

* * * * * *

"It is always wisest, where there is a choice, to trust to inertia. It is the greatest force in the world."

—Nero Wolfe

* * * * * *

And here is a selection of perceptions from an admired correspondent, Owen Dudley Edwards, Professor of History at the University of Edinburgh:

"Stout was supremely conscious of the revolution in detective fiction commenced by Dashiell Hammett and continued (and proclaimed) by Raymond Chandler. Hence by Mr. Stout's time the Vance–Queen tradition, largely a degeneration of Holmes, was in urgent need of supersession. Wolfe alone could not have achieved this, absurd though it is even to think of Philo Vance in connection with him. (And yet, if absurd, salutary: had it been Wolfe alone it would have been a reminder that if a latter-day Holmes must necessarily be exotic, he need not tumble into the ludicrous as Vance does and Queen does not always avoid doing.) But Goodwin seems to me to do for the post-Hammett world what Watson did for Conan Doyle's day. Goodwin's mock-heroics win the anti-hero generation in a way that Watson's reverential approach did for a more panegyrically-minded world. It must be added that Mr. Stout has made the most of the occasional touches of sardonic humor which Watson exhibits. We can, I believe, observe antecedents to Goodwin in the famous exchange at the commencement of *The Valley of Fear:* "'You have heard me speak of Professor Moriarty?'—'The famous scientific criminal, as famous among crooks as—'—'My blushes, Watson!'—'I was about to say, as he is unknown to the public.'—'A touch! A distinct touch! You are developing a certain unexpected vein of pawky humour against which I must learn to guard myself.'" It seems to me the pawky humor was liberated in Goodwin; again, Holmes's slightly heavy efforts to extricate himself also prefigure Wolfe's reaction when Goodwin is really letting him have it. Another case of Watson's wit you may recall from *The Sign of the Four* as he reads the account of Athelney Jones's activities in the newspaper: "'Isn't it gorgeous? What do you think of it?'—'I think that we have had a close shave ourselves of being arrested for the crime.'—'So do I. I wouldn't answer for our safety now if he should happen to have another of his attacks of energy.'" Here again, I feel, one encounters the *un*-Cramer, or more exactly, the hint which Mr. Stout so ably capitalized on to bring about the relations between Wolfe, Goodwin, and Cramer.

"In stressing the pre-eminence of Goodwin as conduit between Wolfe and the audience, one has to salute Rex Stout as being the only detective story writer who made any satisfactory development of the Watson device. All other writers known to me left Watson where Doyle left him, save that their Watsons were miserable and poorly-contemplated imitations. Leslie Charteris somewhere seeks to acquit one of the Saint's young men of being a Watson; but they are so acquitted only by having very little of Dr. Watson's humanity and little of his respectable intellect."

In later observations, Professor Edwards says further: "In the degree to which he is a teacher, Mr. Stout will prompt comparison

with Messrs. Eric Ambler and Graham Greene. . . . The Stout Odyssey had points in common with that of Ambler; if the former is necessarily, by its statutory requirements, less free for experimentation than the latter, both have wise things to say to their readers, and they know it. Greene, of course, is necessarily subtler, but also at times more opaque."

* * * * *

More on the room layout of the brownstone:

"Recently I was reading your column in TAD [14:2] and came across an item on 'mirror images.' In it you mentioned that you thought that you remembered reading in one of the early Nero Wolfe novels that Fritz 'went down' to his kitchen. About the same time I had picked up the new Bantam reprint of *Fer-de-Lance* and started reading it. In the very first paragraph of this novel it says, 'Right after lunch his [Fritz's] bell called him *up* from the kitchen before he could have got the dishes washed.' Possibly this is what you were thinking about when you asked the question in TAD."

—John D. Shawver, Oakland, Calif.

John, I think you've got it. The passage caught my notice originally because I knew that Rex, when he first lived in New York City, lived in a brownstone that had a basement kitchen. Until someone convinces me otherwise, I'll continue to think that Rex, initially, had that floor plan in mind.

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In *Making Crime Pay: A Practical Guide to Mystery Writing,* just off the press (Prentice-Hall, $5.95), Stephanie Kay Bendel offers her readers a selection of twenty-five topnotch detective stories. Rex Stout is there, along with Doyle, Simenon, Christie, Chandler, Hammett, and others. The selection recommended is *A Family Affair*.

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"Innocence is negative and can never be established; you can only establish guilt."

—Nero Wolfe

* * * * *

From the admirable Karl Menninger, a founder and director of Topeka's great Menninger Foundation for psychiatric research and treatment, I have these comments in a letter that delighted me:

"Rex Nero Wolfe Stout has given me many hours of pleasure and psychotherapeutic sedation. . . . I compose letters of rebuttal to Mr. Stout on minor details of food selections and combinations. I get worked up about it at the time, but here again, the sweet sleep thereby induced erases my sense of moral responsibility to improve Mr. Stout. I reflect that he is pretty darn good as he is and shouldn't be helped to get any better.

"I often wonder what gives the Stout books their incredible charm and readability. We know all about Archie, and we know all his tricks, and we know he always wins. We know almost from the very beginning what is going to happen. Common sense just prevails, that's all; and Mr. Wolfe calmly ladles it out and then the cook announced dinner.

"I *think* it had something to do with the detailed account of the daily operations of a strange little family in New York about whom we all know quite well but have never seen, built about a withdrawn, frustrated, fat old bachelor who has a playroom at the top of his apartment and plays with his flowers twice a day, eats magnificently, reads erudite books while he drinks his beer which is brought to him in flowing steins by a ready servitor, and who now and then turns his mind to the solution of a puzzle in human dereliction assisted by his faithful, agile protégé. This was an intriguing setup twenty-five years ago, but how is it we still like to hear about it? Well, we know those people. They haven't changed, and if we have, more's the pity.

"One thing I like about Nero Wolfe is that he never dives into the realm of psychiatry; all of his murderers seem to be quite 'normal people' who are over-tempted by the circumstances of everyday life. Somebody steps on their toes, or threatens to get ahead of them and impulsively they act. He never pretends to believe that murderers are mostly sick."

Oh, you might want to dispute Dr. Menninger and say that Paul Chapin is a candidate for psychotherapy. And so he is. But did Paul murder anybody?

* * * * *

The recent observance of the centennial of the death of Karl Marx reminds me of some correspondence which Rex Stout had with Max Eastman back in December of 1940. That was just a month before Rex flabbergasted the Baker Street Irregulars with his "Watson Was a Woman" address. It's obvious that he was already in rare form.

Rex had just finished Eastman's latest book, *Marxism: Is It Science?* He told Eastman: "It is neat, witty, lucid, effective and scholarly; and reading it is a delightful mental exericise. My slogan:

"Take the R out of MARXISM!"

He also supplied a quatrain as an extra accolade:

"It makes me almost apoplectic
To hear a guy talk dialectic.
But, evoluting from a beast, man
Need go no higher than Max Eastman."

* * * * *

Ten years ago last fall, I got a letter from a school principal in Atlanta, Georgia, a man who identified himself as Judson C. Sapp. "There are a lot of Sapps in the field of education," he informed me, and continued, "and I'm sorry to say, some saps, too." Jud had written to me because a bookseller who was supplying him with Nero Wolfe books told him I was writing Rex's biography. He told me that he had read his first Nero Wolfe book in 1964 and that he was a "solo fan," having never met another Nero Wolfe fan. Re-reading that letter recently, that statement startled me. A lot had happened in ten years to change things.

While the biography was underway, an avalanche of mail poured in on me from Atlanta. Nor did our correspondence end with publication of the book. When the Wolfe Pack was formed, Jud and his beautiful wife Linda came up to New York City every December to attend the annual Black Orchid Dinner. When we met, for the first time, at the first dinner, we had already been corresponding for six years and, sight unseen, were old friends. But we didn't isolate ourselves for cozy chatter. The great mediaeval theologian Thomas Aquinas said once that "Everything good in Nature tends to diffuse it," e.g. sunlight, water. Jud illustrated the soundness of this observation. The solo fan annexed the whole Wolfe Pack. He spoke each year at the Nero Wolfe Assembly, he invited everyone to his suite for a party afterward, he corresponded with dozens of fellow Wolfe Packers. He was everyone's favorite.

Jud was not present at the latest Black Orchid Banquet, held at the New York Sheraton early in December 1982. He was home in Atlanta, bedridden, dying, at forty-one, of bone cancer. The day after Christmas he called me tell me he was leaving his magnificent Rex Stout collection (probably the best to be found anywhere) to Boston College. Rex's papers had come to Boston College, and he knew that scholars who were writing books and articles about Rex would seek out the Boston College collection. Thinking of others, as always, he saw that this was the most helpful thing he could do. Now, when they came there, they would find awaiting their inspection hundreds of different editions of Rex's works, all in mint condition.

Jud played a major role in bringing together the Garland bibliography of Rex's works. That is a lasting monument to his memory. But his wonderful collection is, also. Many of those who read these words will visit the collection in future years. Jud died on 6 February, but his vital spirit, made manifest by his thoughtfulness, certainly endures. A photo of Jud hangs with my own Stout collection. To me he is as much a part of the pleasure these books gave me as Archie himself. And why not? No one, as Jud's love and appreciation of Wolfe, and Archie, and Rex, affirms, ever had a better claim to the privileges of the brownstone.

* * * * *

Royal Decree: Conversations with Rex Stout, my latest book, available in a limited edition, signed and numbered, should be ordered from me at $6.50, postpaid. To join the R. Austin Freeman Society and receive *The Thorndyke File,* send annual subscription fee of $5.00 domestic, $6.50 other (American dollars). And keep those marvelous letters coming to John McAleer, Mount Independence, 121 Follen Road, Lexington, Massachusetts 02173. □

CLASSIC CORNER
Rare Tales from the Archives

IN THE FOG

By Richard Harding Davis

Stretching the point a little, Ellery Queen selected *In the Fog* for *Queen's Quorum,* his famed list of the 106 most important books of mystery and crime short stories published since 1845 (later expanded to 125 titles).

The entire volume is comprised of only three stories, of which the example reprinted here is the first. The final sentence is a *non sequitur* here, since it is merely a lead-in to the second story, which is not reprinted here.

Richard Harding Davis was a popular writer in his day and can still be read with a good deal of pleasure today. This volume was first published in 1901 by the New York publishing house R. H. Russell. It must have been a major publication for this company, as the first print run cannot have been a small one, if the number of copies still available today is any barometer. It was also an uncommonly handsome production, with an excellent and sturdy binding, plenty of bright gold on the spine, extra heavyweight paper through-

out, and numerous illustrations by Thomas Mitchell Peirce and Frederic Dorr Steele, who is best remembered for having been the principal American illustrator of the Sherlock Holmes stories.

—Otto Penzler

The Grill is the club most difficult of access in the world. To be placed on its rolls distinguishes the new member as greatly as though he had received a vacant Garter or had been caricatured in *Vanity Fair.*

Men who belong to the Grill Club never mention that fact. If you were to ask one of them which clubs he frequents, he will name all save that particular one. He is afraid if he told you he belonged to the Grill, that it would sound like boasting.

The Grill Club dates back to the days when Shakespeare's Theatre stood on the present site of the *Times* office. It has a golden Grill which Charles the Second presented to the Club, and the original manuscript of *Tom and Jerry in London*, which was bequeathed to it by Pierce Egan himself. The members, when they write letters at the Club, still use sand to blot the ink.

The Grill enjoys the distinction of having blackballed, without political prejudice, a Prime Minister of each party. At the same sitting at which one of these fell, it elected, on account of his brogue and his bulls, Quiller, Q.C., who was then a penniless barrister.

When Paul Preval, the French artist who came to London by royal command to paint a portrait of the Prince of Wales, was made an honorary member—only foreigners may be honorary members—he said, as he signed his first wine card, "I would rather see my name on that, than on a picture in the Louvre."

At which Quiller remarked, "That is a devil of a compliment, because the only men who can read their names in the Louvre today have been dead fifty years."

On the night after the great fog of 1897 there were five members in the Club, four of them busy with supper and one reading in front of the fireplace. There is only one room to the Club, and one long table. At the far end of the room the fire of the grill glows red, and, when the fat falls, blazes into flame, and at the other there is a broad bow window of diamond panes, which looks down upon the street. The four men at the table were strangers to each other, but as they picked at the grilled bones, and sipped their Scotch and soda, they conversed with such charming animation that a visitor to the Club, which does not tolerate visitors, would have counted them as friends of long acquaintance, certainly not as Englishmen who had met for the first time, and without the form of an introduction. But it is the etiquette and tradition of the Grill, that whoever enters it must speak with whomever he finds there. It is to enforce this rule that there is but one long table, and whether there are twenty men at it or two, the waiters, supporting the rule, will place them side by side.

For this reason the four strangers at supper were seated together, with the candles grouped about them, and the long length of the table cutting a white path through the outer gloom.

"I repeat," said the gentleman with the black pearl stud, "that the days for romantic adventure and deeds of foolish daring have passed, and that the fault lies with ourselves. Voyages to the pole I do not catalogue as adventures. That African explorer, young Chetney, who turned up yesterday after he was supposed to have died in Uganda, did nothing adventurous. He made maps and explored the sources of rivers. He was in constant danger, but the presence of danger does not constitute adventure. Were that so, the chemist who studies high explosives, or who investigates deadly poisons, passes through adventures daily. No, 'adventures are for the adventurous.' But one no longer ventures. The spirit of it has died of inertia. We are grown too practical, too just, above all, too sensible. In this room, for instance, members of this Club have, at the sword's point, disputed the proper scanning of one of Pope's couplets. Over so weighty a matter as spilled Burgundy on a gentleman's cuff, ten men fought across this table, each with his rapier in one hand and a candle in the other. All ten were wounded. The question of the spilled Burgundy concerned but two of them. The eight others engaged because they were men of 'spirit.' They were, indeed, the first gentlemen of the day. Tonight, were you to spill Burgundy on my cuff, were you even to insult me grossly, these gentlemen would not consider it incumbent upon them to kill each other. They would separate us, and tomorrow morning appear as witnesses against us at Bow Street. We have here tonight, in the persons of Sir Andrew and myself, an illustration of how the ways have changed."

The men around the table turned and glanced toward the gentleman in front of the fireplace. He was an elderly and somewhat portly person, with a kindly, wrinkled countenance, which wore continually a smile of almost childish confidence and good-nature. It was a face which the illustrated prints had made intimately familiar. He held a book from him at arm's-length, as if to adjust his eyesight, and his brows were knit with interest.

"Now, were this the eighteenth century," continued the gentleman with the black pearl, "when Sir Andrew left the Club tonight I would have him bound and gagged and thrown into a sedan chair. The watch would not interfere, the passers-by would take to their heels, my hired bullies and ruffians would convey him to some lonely spot where we would guard him until morning. Nothing would come of it, except added reputation to myself as a gentlemen of adventurous spirit, and possibly an essay in the *Tatler*, with stars for names, entitled, let us say, 'The Budget and the Baronet.'"

"But to what end, sir?" inquired the youngest of the members. "And why Sir Andrew, of all persons—why should you select him for this adventure?"

The gentleman with the black pearl shrugged his shoulders.

"It would prevent him speaking in the House tonight. The Navy Increase Bill," he added gloomily. "It is a Government measure, and Sir Andrew speaks for it. And so great is his influence and so large his following that if he does"—the gentleman laughed ruefully—"if he does, it will go through. Now, had I the spirit of our ancestors," he exclaimed, "I would bring chloroform from the nearest chemist's and drug him in that chair. I would tumble his unconscious form into a hansom cab, and hold him prisoner until daylight. If I did, I would save the British taxpayer the cost of five more battleships, many millions of pounds."

The gentlemen again turned, and surveyed the baronet with freshened interest. The honorary member of the Grill, whose accent already had betrayed him as an American, laughed softly.

"To look at him now," he said, "one would not guess he was deeply concerned with the affairs of state."

The others nodded silently.

"He has not lifted his eyes from that book since we first entered," added the youngest member. "He surely cannot mean to speak tonight."

"Oh, yes, he will speak," muttered the one with the black pearl moodily. "During these last hours of the session the House sits late, but when the Navy bill comes up on its third reading he will be in his place—and he will pass it."

The fourth member, a stout and florid gentleman of a somewhat sporting appearance, in a short smoking-jacket and black tie, sighed enviously.

"Fancy one of us being as cool as that, if he knew he had to stand up within an hour and rattle off a speech in Parliament. I'd be in a devil of a funk myself. And yet he is as keen over that book he's reading as though he had nothing before him until bed-time."

"Yes, see how eager he is," whispered the youngest member. "He does not lift his eyes even now when he cuts the pages. It is probably an Admiralty Report, or some other weighty work of statistics which bears upon his speech."

The gentleman with the black pearl laughed morosely.

"The weighty work in which the eminent statesman is so deeply engrossed," he said, "is called *The Great Rand Robbery.* It is a detective novel, for sale at all bookstalls."

The American raised his eyebrows in disbelief.

"*The Great Rand Robbery?*" he repeated incredulously. "What an odd taste!"

"It is not a taste, it is his vice," returned the gentleman with the pearl stud. "It is his one dissipation. He is noted for it. You, as a stranger, could hardly be expected to know of this idiosyncrasy. Mr. Gladstone sought relaxation in the Greek poets, Sir Andrew finds his in Gaboriau. Since I have been a member of Parliament I have never seen him in the library without a shilling shocker in his hands. He brings them even into the sacred precincts of the House, and from the Government benches reads them concealed inside his hat. Once started on a tale of murder, robbery, and sudden death, nothing can tear him from it, not even the call of the division bell, nor of hunger, nor the prayers of the party Whip. He gave up his country house because when he journeyed to it in the train he would become so absorbed in his detective stories that he was invariably carried past his station." The member of Parliament

twisted his pearl stud nervously, and bit at the edge of his mustache. "If it only were the first pages of *The Rand Robbery* that he were reading," he murmured bitterly, "instead of the last! With such another book as that, I swear I could hold him here until morning. There would be no need of chloroform to keep him from the House."

The eyes of all were fastened upon Sir Andrew, and each saw with fascination that with his forefinger he was now separating the last two pages of the book. The member of Parliament struck the table softly with his open palm.

"I would give a hundred pounds," he whispered, "if I could place in his hands at this moment a new story of Sherlock Holmes—a thousand pounds," he added wildly—"five thousand pounds!"

The American observed the speaker sharply, as though the words bore to him some special application, and then at an idea which apparently had but just come to him, smiled in great embarrassment.

Sir Andrew ceased reading, but, as though still under the influence of the book, sat looking blankly into the open fire. For a brief space no one moved until the baronet withdrew his eyes and, with a sudden start of recollection, felt anxiously for his watch. He scanned its face eagerly, and scrambled to his feet.

The voice of the American instantly broke the silence in a high, nervous accent.

"And yet Sherlock Holmes himself," he cried, "could not decipher the mystery which tonight baffles the police of London."

At these unexpected words, which carried in them something of the tone of a challenge, the gentlemen about the table started as suddenly as though the American had fired a pistol in the air, and Sir Andrew halted abruptly and stood observing him with grave surprise.

The gentleman with the black pearl was the first to recover.

"Yes, yes," he said eagerly, throwing himself across the table. "A mystery that baffles the police of London. I have heard nothing of it. Tell us at once, pray do—tell us at once."

The American flushed uncomfortably, and picked uneasily at the tablecloth.

"No one but the police has heard of it," he murmured, "and they only through me. It is a remarkable crime, to which, unfortunately, I am the only person who can bear witness. Because I am the only witness, I am, in spite of my immunity as a diplomat, detained in London by the authorities of Scotland Yard. My name," he said, inclining his head politely, "is Sears, Lieutenant Ripley Sears of the United States Navy, at present Naval Attaché to the Court of Russia. Had I not been detained today by the police I would have started this morning for Petersburg."

The gentleman with the black pearl interrupted with so pronounced an exclamation of excitement and delight that the American stammered and ceased speaking.

"Do you hear, Sir Andrew?" cried the member of Parliament jubilantly. "An American diplomat halted by our police because he is the only witness of a most remarkable crime—*the* most remarkable crime, I believe you said, sir," he added, bending eagerly toward the naval officer, "which has occurred in London in many years."

The American moved his head in assent and glanced at the two other members. They were looking doubtfully at him, and the face of each showed that he was greatly perplexed.

Sir Andrew advanced to within the light of the candles and drew a chair toward him.

"The crime must be exceptional indeed," he said, "to justify the police in interfering with a representative of a friendly power. If I were not forced to leave at once, I should take the liberty of asking you to tell us the details."

The gentleman with the pearl pushed the chair toward Sir Andrew, and motioned him to be seated.

"You cannot leave us now," he exclaimed. "Mr. Sears is just about to tell us of this remarkable crime."

He nodded vigorously at the naval officer and the American, after first glancing doubtfully toward the servants at the far end of the room, leaned forward across the table. The others drew their chairs nearer and bent toward him. The baronet glanced irresolutely at his watch, and with an exclamation of annoyance snapped down the lid. "They can wait," he muttered. He seated himself quickly and nodded at Lieutenant Sears.

"If you will be so kind as to begin, sir," he said impatiently.

"Of course," said the American, "you understand that I understand that I am speaking to gentlemen. The confidences of this Club are inviolate. Until the police give the facts to the public press, I must consider you my confederates. You have heard nothing, you know no one connected with this mystery. Even I must remain anonymous."

The gentlemen seated around him nodded gravely.

"Of course," the baronet assented with eagerness, "of course."

"We will refer to it," said the gentleman with the black pearl, "as 'The Story of the Naval Attaché.' "

"I arrived in London two days ago," said the American, "and I engaged a room at the Bath Hotel. I know very few people in London, and even the members of our Embassy were strangers to me. But in Hong Kong I had become great pals with an officer in your navy, who has since retired, and who is now living in a small house in Rutland Gardens opposite the Knightsbridge Barracks. I telegraphed him that I was in London, and yesterday morning I received a most hearty invitation to dine with him the same evening at his house. He is a bachelor, so we dined alone and talked over all our old days on the Asiatic Station, and of the changes which had come to us since we had last met there. As I was leaving the next morning for my post at Petersburg, and had many letters to write, I told him, about ten o'clock, that I must get back to the hotel, and he sent out his servant to call a hansom.

"For the next quarter of an hour, as we sat talking, we could hear the cab whistle sounding violently from the doorstep, but apparently with no result.

" 'It cannot be that the cabmen are on strike,' my friend said, as he rose and walked to the window.

"He pulled back the curtains and at once called to me.

" 'You have never seen a London fog, have you?' he asked. 'Well, come here. This is one of the best, or, rather, one of the worst, of them.' I joined him at the window, but I could see nothing. Had I not known that the house looked out upon the street I would have believed that I was facing a dead wall. I raised the sash and stretched out my head, but still I could see nothing. Even the light of the street lamps opposite, and in the upper windows of the barracks, had been smothered in the yellow mist. The lights of the room in which I stood penetrated the fog only to the distance of a few inches from my eyes.

"Below me the servant was still sounding his whistle, but I could afford to wait no longer, and told my friend that I would try and find the way to my hotel on foot. He objected, but the letters I had to write were for the Navy Department, and, besides, I had always heard that to be out in a London fog was the most wonderful experience, and I was curious to investigate one for myself.

"My friend went with me to his front door, and laid down a course for me to follow. I was first to walk straight across the street to the brick wall of the Knightsbridge Barracks. I was then to feel my way along the wall until I came to a row of houses set back from the sidewalk. They would bring me to a cross street. On the other side of this street was a row of shops which I was to follow until they joined the iron railings of Hyde Park. I was to keep to the railings until I reached the gates at Hyde Park Corner, where I was to lay a diagonal course across Piccadilly, and tack in toward the railings of Green Park. At the end of these railings, going east, I would find the Walsingham, and my own hotel.

"To sailor the course did not seem difficult, so I bade my friend good-night and walked forward until my feet touched the paving. I continued upon it until I reached the curbing of the sidewalk. A few steps further, and my hands struck the wall of the barracks. I turned in the direction from which I had just come, and saw a square of faint light cut in the yellow fog. I shouted, 'All right,' and the voice of my friend answered, 'Good luck to you.' The light from his open door disappeared with a bang, and I was left alone in a dripping, yellow darkness. I have been in the Navy for ten years, but I have never known such a fog as that of last night, not even among the icebergs of Behring Sea. There one at least could see the light of the binnacle, but last night I could not even distinguish the hand by which I guided myself along the barrack wall. At sea a fog is a natural phenomenon. It is as familiar as the rainbow which follows a storm, it is as proper that a fog should spread upon the waters as that steam shall rise from a kettle. But a fog which springs from the paved streets, that rolls between solid house-fronts, that forces cabs to move at half speed, that drowns policemen and extinguishes the electric

lights of the music hall, that to me is incomprehensible. It is as out of place as a tidal wave on Broadway.

"As I felt my way along the wall, I encountered other men who were coming from the opposite direction, and each time when we hailed each other I stepped away from the wall to make room for them to pass. But the third time I did this, when I reached out my hand, the wall had disappeared, and the further I moved to find it the further I seemed to be sinking into space. I had the unpleasant conviction that at any moment I might step over a precipice. Since I had set out I had heard no traffic in the street, and now, although I listened some minutes, I could only distinguish the occasional footfalls of pedestrians. Several times I called aloud, and once a jocular gentleman answered me, but only to ask me where I thought he was, and then even he was swallowed up in the silence. Just above me I could make out a jet of gas which I guessed came from a street lamp, and I moved over to that, while I tried to recover my bearings, kept my hand on the iron post. Except for this flicker of gas, no larger than the tip of my finger, I could distinguish nothing about me. For the rest, the mist hung between me and the world like a damp and heavy blanket.

"I could hear voices, but I could not tell from whence they came, and the scrape of a foot moving cautiously, or a muffled cry as some one stumbled, were the only sounds that reached me.

"I decided that until someone took me in tow I had best remain where I was, and it must have been for ten minutes that I waited by the lamp, straining my ears and hailing distant footfalls. In a house near me some people were dancing to the music of a Hungarian band. I even fancied I could hear the windows shake to the rhythm of their feet, but I could not make out from which part of the compass the sounds came. And sometimes, as the music rose, it seemed close at my hand, and again, to be floating high in the air above my head. Although I was surrounded by thousands of householders, I was as completely lost as though I had been set down by night in the Sahara Desert. There seemed to be no reason in waiting longer for an escort, so I again set out, and at once bumped against a low iron fence. At first I believed this to be an area railing, but on following it I found that it stretched for a long distance, and that it was pierced at regular intervals with gates. I was standing uncertainly with my hand on one of these when a square of light suddenly opened in the night, and in it I saw, as you see a picture thrown by a biograph in a darkened theatre, a young gentleman in evening dress, and back of him the lights of a hall. I guessed from its elevation and distance from the sidewalk that this light must come from the door of a house set back from the street, and I determined to approach it and ask the young man to tell me where I was. But in fumbling with the lock of the gate I instinctively bent my head, and when I raised it again the door had partly closed, leaving only a narrow shaft of light. Whether the young man had re-entered the house, or had left it I could not tell, but I hastened to open the gate, and as I stepped forward I found myself upon an asphalt walk. At the same instant there was the sound of quick steps upon the path, and someone rushed past me. I called to him, but he made no reply, and I heard the gate click and the footsteps hurrying away upon the sidewalk.

"Under the circumstances the young man's rudeness, and his recklessness in dashing so hurriedly through the mist, would have struck me as peculiar, but everything was so distorted by the fog that at the moment I did not consider it. The door was still as he had left it, partly open. I went up the path, and, after much fumbling, found the knob of the door-bell and gave it a sharp pull. The bell answered me from a great depth and distance, but no movement followed from inside the house, and although I pulled the bell again and again I could hear nothing save the dripping of the mist about me. I was anxious to be on my way, but unless I knew where I was going there was little chance of my making any speed, and I was determined that until I learned my bearings I would not venture back into the fog. So I pushed the door open and stepped into the house.

"I found myself in a long and narrow hall, upon which doors opened from either side. At the end of the hall was a staircase with a balustrade which ended in a sweeping curve. The balustrade was covered with heavy Persian rugs, and the walls of the hall were also hung with them. The door on my left was closed, but the one nearer me on the right was open, and as I stepped opposite to it I saw that it was a sort of reception or waiting-room, and that it was empty. The door below it was also open, and with the idea that I would surely find someone

there, I walked on up the hall. I was in evening dress, and I felt I did not look like a burglar, so I had no great fear that, should I encounter one of the inmates of the house, he would shoot me on sight. The second door in the hall opened into a dining-room. This was also empty. One person had been dining at the table, but the cloth had not been cleared away, and a flickering candle showed half-filled wineglasses and the ashes of cigarettes. The greater part of the room was in complete darkness.

"By this time I had grown conscious of the fact that I was wandering about in a strange house, and that, apparently, I was alone in it. The silence of the place began to try my nerves, and in a suddenly, unexplainable panic I started for the open street. But as I turned, I saw a man sitting on a bench, which the curve of the balustrade had hidden from me. His eyes were shut, and he was sleeping soundly.

"The moment before I had been bewildered because I could see no one, but at sight of this man I was much more bewildered.

"He was a very large man, a giant in height, with long yellow hair which hung below his shoulders. He was dressed in a red silk shirt that was belted at the waist and hung outside black velvet trousers which, in turn, were stuffed into high black boots. I recognized the costume at once as that of a Russian servant, but what a Russian servant in a native livery could be doing in a private house in Knightsbridge was incomprehensible.

"I advanced and touched the man on the shoulder, and after an effort he awoke, and, on seeing me, sprang to his feet and began bowing rapidly and making deprecatory gestures. I had picked up enough Russian in Petersburg to make out that the man was apologizing for having fallen asleep, and I also was able to explain to him that I desired to see his master.

"He nodded vigorously, and said, 'Will the Excellency come this way? The Princess is here.'

"I distinctly made out the word 'princess,' and I was a good deal embarrassed. I had thought it would be easy enough to explain my instrusion to a man, but how a woman would look at it was another matter, and as I followed him down the hall I was somewhat puzzled.

"As we advanced, he noticed that the front door was standing open, and with an exclamation of surprise, hastened toward it and closed it. Then he rapped twice on the door of what was apparently the drawing-room. There was no reply to his knock, and he tapped again, and then timidly, and cringing subserviently, opened the door and stepped inside. He withdrew himself at once and stared stupidly at me, shaking his head.

" 'She is not there,' he said. He stood for a moment gazing blankly through the open door, and then hastened toward the dining-room. The solitary candle which still burned there seemed to assure him that the room also was empty. He came back and bowed me toward the drawing-room. 'She is above,' he said; 'I will inform the Princess of the Excellency's presence.'

"Before I could stop him he had turned and was running up the staircase, leaving me alone at the open door of the drawing-room. I decided that the adventure had gone quite far enough, and if I had been able to explain to the Russian that I had lost my way in the fog, and only wanted to get back into the street again, I would have left the house on the instant.

"Of course, when I first rang the bell of the house I had no other expectation than that it would be answered by a parlor-maid who would direct me on my way. I certainly could not then foresee that I would disturb a Russian princess in her boudoir, or that I might be thrown out by her athletic bodyguard. Still, I thought I ought not now to leave the house without making some apology, and, if the worst should come, I could show my card. They could hardly believe that a member of an Embassy had any designs upon the hat-rack.

"The room in which I stood was dimly lighted, but I could see that, like the hall, it was hung with heavy Persian rugs. The corners were filled with palms, and there was the unmistakable odor in the air of Russian cigarettes, and strange, dry scents that carried me back to the bazaars of Vladivostock. Near the front windows was a grand piano, and at the other end of the room, a heavily carved screen of some black wood, picked out with ivory. The screen was overhung with a canopy of silken draperies, and formed a sort of alcove. In front of the alcove was spread the white skin of a polar bear, and set on that was one of those low Turkish coffee tables. It held a lighted spirit-lamp and two gold coffee cups. I had heard no movement from above stairs, and it must have been fully three minutes that I stood waiting, noting these details of the room and wondering at the delay, and at the strange silence.

"And then, suddenly, as my eye grew more used to the half-light, I saw, projecting from behind the screen as though it were stretched along the back of a divan, the hand of a man and the lower part of his arm. I was as startled as though I had come across a footprint on a deserted island. Evidently the man had been sitting there since I had come into the room, even since I had entered the house, and he had heard the servant knocking upon the door. Why he had not declared himself I could not understand, but I supposed that possibly he was a guest, with no reason to interest himself in the Princess's other visitors, or perhaps, for some reason, he did not wish to be observed. I could see nothing of him except his hand, but I had an unpleasant feeling that he had been peering at me through the carving in the screen, and that he still was doing so. I moved my feet noisily on the floor and said tentatively, 'I beg your pardon.'

"There was no reply, and the hand did not stir. Apparently the man was bent upon ignoring me, but as all I wished was to apologize for my intrusion and to leave the house, I walked up to the alcove and peered around it. Inside the screen was a divan piled with cushions, and on the end of it nearer me the man was sitting. He was a young Englishman with light yellow hair and a deeply bronzed face. He was seated with his arms stretched out along the back of the divan, and with his head resting against a cushion. His attitude was one of complete ease. But his mouth had fallen open, and his eyes were set with an expression of utter horror. At the first glance I saw that he was quite dead.

"For a flash of time I was too startled to act, but in the same flash I was convinced that the man had met his death from no accident, that he had not died through any ordinary failure of the laws of nature. The expression on his face was much too terrible to be misinterpreted. It spoke as eloquently as words. It told me that before the end had come he had watched his death approach and threaten him.

"I was so sure he had been murdered that I instinctively looked on the floor for the weapon, and, at the same moment, out of concern for my own safety, quickly behind me; but the silence of the house continued unbroken.

"I have seen a great number of dead men; I was on the Asiatic Station during the Japanese-Chinese war. I was in Port Arthur after the massacre. So a dead man, for the single reason that he is dead, does not repel me, and, though I knew that there was no hope that this man was alive, still for decency's sake, I felt his pulse, and while I kept my ears alert for any sound from the floors above me, I pulled open his shirt and placed my hand upon his heart. My fingers instantly touched upon the opening of a wound, and as I withdrew them I found them wet with blood. He was in evening dress, and in the wide bosom of his shirt I found a narrow slit, so narrow that in the dim light it was scarcely discernable. The wound was no wider than the smallest blade of a pocket-knife, but when I stipped the shirt away from the chest and left it bare, I found that the weapon, narrow as it was, had been long enough to reach his heart. There is no need to tell you how I felt as I stood by the body of this boy, for he was hardly older than a boy, or of the thoughts that came into my head. I was bitterly sorry for this stranger, bitterly indignant at his murderer, and, at the same time, selfishly concerned for my own safety and for the notoriety which I saw was sure to follow. My instinct was to leave the body where it lay, and to hide myself in the fog, but I also felt that since a succession of accidents had made me the only witness to a crime, my duty was to make myself a good witness and to assist to establish the facts of this murder.

"That it might possibly be a suicide, and not a murder, did not disturb me for a moment. The fact that the weapon had disappeared, and the expression on the boy's face were enough to convince, at least me, that he had had no hand in his own death. I judged it, therefore, of the first importance to discover who was in the house, or, if they had escaped from it, who had been in the house before I entered it. I had seen one man leave it; but all I could tell of him was that he was a young man, that he was in evening dress, and that he had fled in such haste that he had not stopped to close the door behind him.

"The Russian servant I had found apparently asleep, and, unless he acted a part with supreme skill, he was a stupid and ignorant boor, and as innocent of the murder as myself. There was still the Russian princess whom he had expected to find, or had pretended to expect to find, in the same room with the murdered man. I judged that she must now be either upstairs with the servant, or that she had, without his knowledge, already fled from the house. When I recalled his apparently genuine surprise at not finding her in the drawing-room, this

latter supposition seemed the more probable. Nevertheless, I decided that it was my duty to make a search, and after a second hurried look for the weapon among the cushions of the divan, and upon the floor, I cautiously crossed the hall and entered the dining-room.

"The single candle was still flickering in the draught, and showed only the white cloth. The rest of the room was draped in shadows. I picked up the candle, and, lifting it high above my head, moved around the corner of the table. Either my nerves were on such a stretch that no shock could strain them further, or my mind was inoculated to horrors, for I did not cry out at what I saw nor retreat from it. Immediately at my feet was the body of a beautiful woman, lying at full length upon the floor, her arms flung out on either side of her, and her white face and shoulders gleaming dully in the unsteady light of the candle. Around her throat was a great chain of diamonds, and the light played upon these and made them flash and blaze in tiny flames. But the woman who wore them was dead, and I was so certain as to how she had died that without an instant's hesitation I dropped on my knees beside her and placed my hands above her heart. My fingers again touched the thin slit of a wound. I had no doubt in my mind but that this was the Russian princess, and when I lowered the candle to her face I was assured that this was so. Her features showed the finest lines of both the Slav and the Jewess; the eyes were black, the hair blue-black and wonderfully heavy, and her skin, even in death, was rich in color. She was a surpassingly beautiful woman.

"I rose and tried to light another candle with the one I held, but I found that my hand was so unsteady that I could not keep the wicks together. It was my intention to again search for this strange dagger which had been used to kill both the English boy and the beautiful princess, but before I could light the second candle I heard footsteps descending the stairs, and the Russian servant appeared in the doorway.

"My face was in darkness, or I am sure that at the sight of it he would have taken alarm, for at that moment I was not sure but that this man himself was the murderer. His own face was plainly visible to me in the light from the hall, and I could see that it wore an expression of dull bewilderment. I stepped quickly toward him and took a firm hold upon his wrist.

" 'She is not there,' he said. 'The Princess has gone. They have all gone.'

" 'Who have gone?' I demanded. 'Who else has been here?'

" 'The two Englishmen,' he said.

" 'What two Englishmen?' I demanded. 'What are their names?'

"The man now saw by my manner that some question of great moment hung upon his answer, and he began to protest that he did not know the names of the visitors and that until that evening he had never seen them.

"I guessed that it was my tone which frightened him, so I took my hand off his wrist and spoke less eagerly.

" 'How long have they been here?" I asked, "and when did they go?'

"He pointed behind him toward the drawing-room.

" 'One sat there with the Princess,' he said; 'the other came after I had placed the coffee in the drawing-room. The two Englishmen talked together and the Princess returned here to the table. She sat there in that chair, and I brought her cognac and cigarettes. Then I sat outside upon the bench. It was a feast day, and I had been drinking. Pardon, Excellency, but I fell asleep. When I woke, your Excellency was standing by me, but the Princess and the two Englishmen had gone. That is all I know.'

"I believed that the man was telling me the truth. His fright had passed, and he was now apparently puzzled, but not alarmed.

" 'You must remember the names of the Englishmen,' I urged. 'Try to think. When you announced them to the Princess what name did you give?'

"At this question he exclaimed with pleasure, and, beckoning to me, ran hurriedly down the hall and into the drawing-room. In the corner furthest from the screen was the piano, and on it was a silver tray. He picked this up and, smiling with pride at his own intelligence, pointed at two cards that lay upon it. I took them up and read the names engraved upon them."

The American paused abruptly, and glanced at the faces about him. "I read the names," he repeated. He spoke with great reluctance.

"Continue!" cried the baronet, sharply.

"I read the names," said the American with evident distaste, "and the family name of each was the same. They were the names of two brothers. One is well known to you. It is that of the

African explorer of whom this gentleman was just speaking. I mean the Earl of Chetney. The other was the name of his brother, Lord Arthur Chetney."

The men at the table fell back as though a trapdoor had fallen open at their feet.

"Lord Chetney?" they exclaimed in chorus. They glanced at each other and back to the American with every expression of concern and disbelief.

"It is impossible!" cried the baronet. "Why, my dear sir, young Chetney only arrived from Africa yesterday. It was so stated in the evening papers."

The jaw of the American set in a resolute square, and he pressed his lips together.

"You are perfectly right, sir," he said, "Lord Chetney did arrive in London yesterday morning, and yesterday night I found his dead body."

The youngest member present was the first to recover. He seemed much less concerned over the identity of the murdered man than at the interruption of the narrative.

"Oh, please let him go on!" he cried. "What happened then? You say you found two visiting cards. How do you know which card was that of the murdered man?"

The American, before he answered, waited until the chorus of exclamations had ceased. Then he continued as though he had not been interrupted.

"The instant I read the names upon the cards," he said, "I ran to the screen and, kneeling beside the dead man, began a search through his pockets. My hand at once fell upon a card-case, and I found on all the cards it contained the title of the Earl of Chetney. His watch and cigarette-case also bore his name. These evidences, and the fact of his bronzed skin, and that his cheekbones were worn with fever, convinced me that the dead man was the African explorer, and the boy who had fled past me in the night was Arthur, his younger brother.

"I was so intent upon my search that I had forgotten the servant, and I was still on my knees when I heard the cry behind me. I turned, and saw the man gazing down at the body in abject horror.

"Before I could rise, he gave another cry of terror, and, flinging himself into the hall, raced toward the door to the street. I leaped after him, shouting to him to halt, but before I could reach the hall he had torn open the door, and I saw him spring out into the yellow fog. I cleared the steps in a jump and ran down the garden walk but just as the gate clicked in front of me. I had it open on the instant, and, following the sound of the man's footsteps, I raced after him across the open street. He, also, could hear me, and he instantly stopped running, and there was absolute silence. He was so near that I almost fancied I could hear him panting, and I held my own breath to listen. But I could distinguish nothing but the dripping of the mist about us, and from far off the music of the Hungarian band, which I had heard when I first lost myself.

"All I could see was the square of light from the door I had left open behind me, and a lamp in the hall beyond it flickering in the draught. But even as I watched it, the flame of the lamp was blown violently to and fro, and the door, caught in the same current of air, closed slowly. I knew if it shut I could not again enter the house, and I rushed madly toward it. I believe I even shouted out, as though it were something human which I could compel to obey me, and then I caught my foot against the curb and smashed into the sidewalk. When I rose to my feet I was dizzy and half stunned, and though I thought then that I was moving toward the door, I know now that I probably turned directly from it; for, as I groped about in the night, calling frantically for the police, my fingers touched nothing but the dripping fog, and the iron railings for which I sought seemed to have melted away. For many minutes I beat the mist with my arms like one at blind man's buff, turning sharply in circles, cursing aloud at my stupidity and crying continually for help. At last a voice answered me from the fog, and I found myself held in the circle of a policeman's lantern.

"That is the end of my adventure. What I have to tell you now is what I learned from the police.

"At the station-house to which the man guided me I related what you have just heard. I told them that the house they must at once find was one set back from the street within a radius of two hundred yards from the Knightsbridge Barracks, that within fifty yards of it someone was giving a dance to the music of a Hungarian band, and that the railings before it were as high as a man's waist and filed to a point. With that to work upon, twenty men were at once ordered out into the fog to search for the house, and Inspector Lyle himself was despatched to the home of Lord Edam, Chetney's father, with a warrant for Lord Arthur's arrest. I was thanked and dismissed on my own recognizance.

"This morning, Inspector Lyle called on me, and from him I learned the police theory of the scene I have just described.

"Apparently I had wandered very far in the fog, for up to noon today the house had not been found, nor had they been able to arrest Lord Arthur. He did not return to his father's house last night, and there is no trace of him; but from what the police knew of the past lives of the people I found in that lost house, they have evolved a theory, and their theory is that the murders were committed by Lord Arthur.

"The infatuation of his elder brother, Lord Chetney, for a Russian princess, so Inspector Lyle tells me, is well known to everyone. About two years ago the Princess Zichy, as she calls herself, and he were constantly together, and Chetney informed his friends that they were about to be married. The woman was notorious in two continents, and when Lord Edam heard of his son's infatuation he appealed to the police for her record.

"It is through his having applied to them that they know so much concerning her and her relations with the Chetneys. From the police Lord Edam learned that Madame Zichy had once been a spy in the employ of the Russian Third Section, but that lately she had been repudiated by her own government and was living by her wits, by blackmail, and by her beauty. Lord Edam laid this record before his son, but Chetney either knew it already or the woman persuaded him not to believe in it, and the father and son parted in great anger. Two days later the marquis altered his will, leaving all of his money to the younger brother, Arthur.

"The title and some of the landed property he could not keep from Chetney, but he swore if his son saw the woman again that the will should stand as it was, and he would be left without a penny.

"This was about eighteen months ago, when apparently Chetney tired of the Princess, and suddenly went off to shoot and explore in Central Africa. No word came from him, except that twice he was reported as having died of fever in the jungle, and finally two traders reached the coast who said they had seen his body. This was accepted by all as conclusive, and young Arthur was recognized as the heir to the Edam millions. On the strength of this supposition he at once began to borrow enormous sums from the moneylenders. This is of great importance, as the police believe it was these debts which drove him to the murder of his brother. Yesterday, as you know, Lord Chetney suddenly returned from the grave, and it was the fact that for two years he had been considered as dead which lent such importance to his return and which gave rise to those columns of detail concerning him which appeared in all the afternoon papers. But, obviously, during his absence he had not tired of the Princess Zichy, for we know that a few hours after he reached London he sought her out. His brother, who had also learned of his reappearance through the papers, probably suspected which would be the house he would first visit, and followed him there, arriving, so the Russian servant tells us, while the two were at coffee in the drawing-room. The Princess, then, we also learn from the servant, withdrew to the dining-room, leaving the brothers together. What happened one can only guess.

"Lord Arthur knew now that when it was discovered he was no longer the heir, the moneylenders would come down upon him. The police believe that he at once sought out his brother to beg for money to cover the post-obits, but that, considering the sum he needed was several hundreds of thousands of pounds, Chetney refused to give it to him. No one knew that Arthur had gone to seek out his brother. They were alone. It is possible, then, that in a passion of disappointment, and crazed with the disgrace which he saw before him, young Arthur made himself the heir beyond further question. The death of his brother would have availed nothing if the woman remained alive. It is then possible that he crossed the hall, and with the same weapon which made him Lord Edam's heir destroyed the solitary witness to the murder. The only other person who could have seen it was sleeping in a drunken stupor, to which fact undoubtedly he owed his life. And yet," concluded the Naval Attaché, leaning forward and marking each word with his finger, "Lord Arthur blundered fatally. In his haste he left the door of the house open, so giving access to the first passer-by, and he forgot that when he entered it he had handed his card to the servant. That piece of paper may yet send him to the gallows. In the meantime he has disappeared completely, and somewhere, in one of the millions of streets of this great capital, in a locked and empty house, lies the body of his brother, and of the woman his brother loved, undiscovered, unburied, and with their murder unavenged."

In the discussion which followed the conclusion of the story of the Naval Attaché the gentleman with the pearl took no part. Instead, he arose, and, beckoning a servant to a far

corner of the room, whispered earnestly to him until a sudden movement on the part of Sir Andrew caused him to return hurriedly to the table.

"There are several points in Mr. Sears's story I want explained," he cried. "Be seated, Sir Andrew," he begged. "Let us have the opinion of an expert. I do not care what the police think, I want to know what you think."

But Sir Andrew rose reluctantly from his chair.

"I should like nothing better than to discuss this," he said. "But it is most important that I proceed to the House. I should have been there some time ago." He turned toward the servant and directed him to call a hansom.

The gentleman with the pearl stud looked appealingly at the Naval Attaché. "There are surely many details that you have not told us," he urged. "Some you have forgotten."

The baronet interrupted quickly.

"I trust not," he said, "for I could not possibly stop to hear them."

"The story is finished," declared the Naval Attaché; "until Lord Arthur is arrested or the bodies are found there is nothing more to tell of either Chetney or the Princess Zichy."

"Of Lord Chetney perhaps not," interrupted the sporting-looking gentleman with the black tie, "but there'll always be something to tell of the Princess Zichy. I know enough stories about her to fill a book. She was a most remarkable woman." The speaker dropped the end of his cigar into his coffee cup and, taking his case from his pocket, selected a fresh one. As he did so he laughed and held up the case that the others might see it. It was an ordinary cigar-case of well-worn pig-skin, with a silver clasp.

"The only time I ever met her," he said, "she tried to rob me of this."

The baronet regarded him closely.

"She tried to rob you?" he repeated.

"Tried to rob me of this," continued the gentleman in the black tie, "and of the Czarina's diamonds." His tone was one of mingled admiration and injury.

"The Czarina's diamonds!" exclaimed the baronet. He glanced quickly and suspiciously at the speaker, and then at the others about the table. But their faces gave evidence of no other emotion than that of ordinary interest.

"Yes, the Czarina's diamonds," repeated the man with the black tie. "It was a necklace of diamonds. I was told to take them to the Russian Ambassador in Paris who was to deliver them at Moscow. I am a Queen's Messenger," he added.

"Oh, I see," exclaimed Sir Andrew in a tone of relief. "And you say that this same Princess Zichy, one of the victims of this double murder, endeavored to rob you of—of—that cigar-case."

"And the Czarina's diamonds," answered the Queen's Messenger imperturbably. "It's not much of a story, but it gives you an idea of the woman's character. The robbery took place between Paris and Marseilles."

"The baronet interrupted him with an abrupt movement. "No, no," he cried, shaking his head in protest. "Do not tempt me. I really cannot listen. I must be at the House in ten minutes."

"I am sorry," said the Queen's Messenger. He turned to those seated about him. "I wonder if the other gentlemen—" he inquired tentatively. There was a chorus of polite murmurs, and the Queen's Messenger, bowing his head in acknowledgment, took a preparatory sip from his glass. At the same moment the servant to whom the man with the black pearl had spoken, slipped a piece of paper into his hand. He glanced at it, frowned, and threw it under the table.

The servant bowed to the baronet.

"Your hansom is waiting, Sir Andrew," he said.

"The necklace was worth twenty thousand pounds," began the Queen's Messenger. "It was a present from the Queen of England to celebrate—" The baronet gave an exclamation of angry annoyance.

"Upon my word, this is most provoking," he interrupted. "I really ought not to stay. But I certainly mean to hear this." He turned irritably to the servant. "Tell the hansom to wait," he commanded, and, with an air of a boy who is playing truant, slipped guiltily into his chair.

The gentleman with the black pearl smiled blandly, and rapped upon the table.

"Order, gentlemen," he said. "Order for the story of the Queen's Messenger and the Czarina's diamonds." □

DOROTHY L. SAYERS Newsletter

The Acrostic Sonnet Competition has been handsomely won by Marianne Thormahlen (Sweden) with this beautiful piece entitled *To Imke, going to her wars:*

> **D**aughter of mine, whose steps move up the road
> **O**n this momentous day, when you begin
> **R**ed-cheeked, the fight your kind can never win,
> **O** that I could protect you! For the load
> **T**hose narrow shoulders bear will soon erode,
> **H**eart's dearest, what your gifts lie buried in,
> **Y**our Gondal where you rule, child heroine,
> **L**ands all your own. Your kingdom may explode,
> **S**weet region of an unpolluted mind,
> **A**s institutions try to normalise
> **Y**our waking dreams, the visionary's prize.
> **E**njoy your treasures! Maybe we shall find
> **R**ibbons of glory linger in your eyes,
> **S**afe in that steady gaze, so strangely wise.

Our panel of judges, which included the poet Roger Frith, said of this: "A Petrarchan sonnet which obeys the rules of rhyme and metre, but it lacks a clear division between the octet and the sextet; nor is the octet divided into two as it should be by a full stop at the end of the fourth line. These imperfections however are outweighed by the depth of feeling and the fact that the subject is consistently held and well expressed. Transcends the quality of an excercise to that of poetry."

The runner-up was Margarete Rydbeck (Sweden) with a neat description of DLS, and in the third place was Lucille Shores (U.S.A.). Many thanks to all the entrants, and the best of the sonnets will appear soon.

The 1983 Seminar has had a change of programme owing to the inability of Dr. Myles Clowers to come this year, but it will be even more fully packed with sensation. Dr. John Morris will present his thesis entitled *Does She Cheat?* and Philip Scowcroft will do for *The Documents in the Case* what he did so ably for *The Nine Tailors* in 1981 at Bluntisham. The famous author Harry Keating as already planned will wind up the seminar, so it will be one of our best. Remember... *Sunday, 7th August.*

Some More Tough Nuts

Many thanks to members who have sent the answers to some of last month's quotations for the *Sayers Companion,* now in course of preparation. We did not have room for the following:

(gg) "...fix a vacant stare and slay him with your noble birth" (*Gaudy Night,* Ch. 20).

(hh) "...the virgin's gone and I am gone; she's gone, she's gone and what shall I do?" (*Gaudy Night,* Ch. 20).

(ii) "My lady gave me a tiger, A sleek and splendid tiger, A striped and shining tiger, All under the leaves of life" (*Busman's Honeymoon,* Ch. 1, after Prothaln).

(jj) "It was a robber's daughter and her name was Alice Brown. Her father was the terror of a small Italian town" (*Busman's Honeymoon,* Ch. 18).

(kk) "Mr. Urquhart held up a document resembling in bulk that famous one of which it was said that there was not truth enough in the world to fill so long an affidavit" (*Strong Poison,* Ch. 14).

(ll) "I hope your rabbit dies" (*Have His Carcase,* Ch. 12).

(mm) "Horti conclusi, fontes signati" (*Gaudy Night* Intro heading). John Donne—where?

The Five Red Herrings

We have heard from Christopher Somerville, who is planning a walking tour around Gatehouse of Fleet, so we hope to get some useful identifications. It may not be known that the character Gowan, in spite of DLS's disclaimer, was based on the real artist Edward Hornel (1884–1933), for long the doyen of the Kirkcudbright artist colony. She describes exactly in the book his home Broughton House in the High Street with the steps leading up to it, now an art gallery and home of the Hornel Trust, and says of him:

"Mr. Gowan had been a leading inhabitant of Kirkcudbright for over twenty years, well-known and well liked in spite of his small vanities and somewhat overbearing manner. Wealthy, he kept a good house with an English butler and housekeeper and owned two cars with a chauffeur to drive them when required." And: "There are large and stately studios, panelled and high, in strong stone houses filled with gleaming brass and polished oak."

Mr. Ardern, Honorary Curator at Broughton House, tells an amusing story: One year, DLS and Mac on their annual visit to Kirkcudbright rented a cottage in Greengate Close belonging to the artists Jesse M. King and E. A. Taylor. She expressed a wish to meet Edward Hornel, although he was known to be an aloof man. So Jessie M. King arranged the introduction and led DLS the few yards along the High Street, leaving her at the bottom of the Broughton House steps and expecting her back in about an hour. In five minutes, DLS was back, pink and puffing.

"What has gone wrong?"

"He is a very rude, bad-mannered man," said DLS, "and I never want to speak to him again!"

"Well," said Jessie, "you can always write a book and put him in it."

So was conceived *The Five Red Herrings,* and DLS had her revenge at the expense of Gowan's beard.

Imph'm

Mr. H. G. Read asks about the expression "Imph'm" and whether it really is such a frequent expression in the Stewartry. Mr. Tom Collin, Honorary Curator of the Kirkcudbright Museum and a DLS fan, was able to help in great style by transcribing for us a local song of seven verses all about the expression, "The Song of 'Imph'm'," which now graces our archives.

To join the Dorothy L. Sayers Society, send a check for £3.00 ($7.00 U.S. or $8.00 Canadian), which covers entry fee and membership to the end of the current calendar year, to Roslyn House, Witham, Essex, England CM8 2AQ. □

CHARACTERNYMS IN MICKEY SPILLANE'S **MIKE HAMMER** NOVELS

By James L. Traylor

One of Mickey Spillane's literary techniques is his use of humor. Apart from humorous situations, Spillane gives his characters funny names or names which are indicative of character.

I, the Jury (1947) has such characters as Hal Kines, Mary Bellamy, George Kalecki, Bobo Hopper, and Myrna Devlin. Kines and Kalecki are quite a duo: one name means cow and the other when pronounced aloud sounds like cow-lick. Spillane describes their appearance in much detail; they're the first homosexual couple he writes about in his novels. Mary Bellamy is a funny and ironic name—the bitter good friend *(bel ami)*. She doesn't become bitter until Mike makes love to her, allowing Charlotte the time she needs to kill Myrna. Bobo Hopper—the "boob" who delivers dope ("hop") to wealthy junkies—is the first of Spillane's dumb but realistic downtrodden characters, one of life's losers. Devlin is merely descriptive of Myrna's former drug addiction: the devil in her.

My Gun Is Quick (1950) has a similar list of interesting names. Cobbie Bennett is the perfect name for a pimp, with its hint of rough but ineffective sexual performance. Murray Candid, the creep who runs the Zero Zero Club (Mike Hammer says it's double zero because there's no ceiling and no visibility), is certainly not candid—far from it, the name being an example of reversal. Walter Welburg is a minor character whom Mike beats up and for whom he shows remorse when he thinks the guy might be straight and not involved with the caper at all. Regarding minor characters, in this novel Spillane even gives the reader a minor character whose name is Ann Minor. Lola Bergen's name is not funny; it means "sorrows in the city" for both Lola and Mike.

Vengeance Is Mine! (1950) has some odd names. Anton Lipsek, co-director of the modeling agency in which Juno Reeves works, is an example of Spillane's treatment of homosexual characters with names which go with what he considers the limp-wrist crowd. Lightyears away from Lipsek is Spillane's character Connie Wales. She provides an excellent example of Spillane's naughty characternyms: her name is a dirty pun.

And so it goes with the minor characters—and the not so minor—throughout all the Mike Hammer novels. There is Martha Camisole in *One Lonely Night* (1951). Hers is an evocative name which shows considerable restraint in that Spillane never uses her in a sexual context at all. In this same novel, we also find the unnamed guy in the Pork Pie Hat that Mike takes such great pleasure in killing with a machine gun when he's rescuing Velda from the Commies.

The Big Kill (1951) has a trio of bad guys: Ed Teen, Lou Grindle, and Toady Link. Toady is the link between the murdered William Decker and the big-time crooks Teen and Grindle. That fact that Toady looks like a toad is amusing and points out his chief character trait. Ed Teen is an appropriate name for a bad guy who never grew up, and Lou Grindle is the perfect name for a mobster who tries to grind information out of Mike by beating him to a bloody pulp.

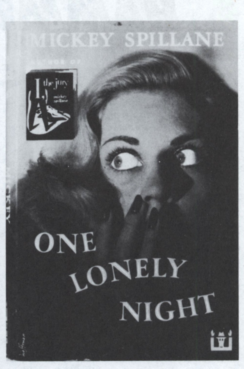
In *Kiss Me, Deadly* (1952), Spillane has such characters as Carl Evello (pronounced surely as *evil-o*), Dr. Martin Soberin (as in the phrase "sobering thought"), Mousie Basso (certainly a contradiction in terms), and my personal all-time favorite name for a mobster, Al Affi. *The Girl Hunters* (1962) is somewhat different in that the names are pretty straightforward except for a few such as Duck-Duck Jones and that of the killer, The

Dragon—Tooth and Nail. In *The Snake* (1964) Spillane uses similar names with quite obvious connotations: Jersey Toby, Sherman Buff, Blackie Conley, and Sonny Motley.

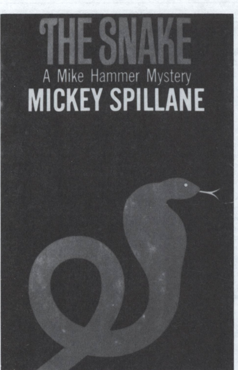
In *The Twisted Thing* (published 1966; written 1948) Spillane portrays character by description rather than by a trick name, as Egghead and The Face, the latter called that by Mike because he has ripped his jaw in a fight. The name of the crooked cop is classic: Dilwick, with all its connotations of sourness and evil. In *The Body Lovers* (1967) we meet Greta Service and Belar Ris. Greta Service is pretty obvious ("great service"), since she's a whore. Belar Ris is somewhat odd, though, because it is roughly equivalent to laughable holocaust. Another name, Naku Em Abor, shows Spillane's jingoistic tendencies: knock 'em about or something violent. *Survival...Zero!* (1970) has such names as Eddie Dandy (a great name for a TV new personality with its nice cutting quality), Coo-Coo Weist (the pick-pocket), Skippy (a hooker), Tom-Tom Schneider (a murdered hood and tip of the hat to Hammett), and the bad guy Beaver.

Spillane also utilizes the same devices with names of the major characters. In *My Gun Is Quick,* the names of the two evil ones are quite revealing. Feeney Last most closely resembles "dead end." The name is a nice touch; it's mysterious and suggests the character's dangerous nature. Berin-Grotin is tougher. It is a fused name, a combination of either (or both) "being rotten" or "buried rotten." As the ending of the novel reveals, both make sense. Although Feeney is the instrument of death, Berin-Grotin is the more cancerous character, for his evil is so long disguised.

The names of the murderers are indicative of their evil or of Mike's reaction to them. For example, Spillane's ironic use of the name Juno Reeves in *Vengeance Is Mine!* Juno is the queen of the gods and also the goddess of marriage. A reeve is a chief officer under a king in a town or district. Juno is only a queen in the homosexual sense which infuriates Mike. The thematic connection with the Hammer saga is that Mike's discovery of Juno's falseness is a confirmation that he loves a true and faithful woman, Velda. In *One Lonely Night,* Oscar Deamer (masquerading as his good-guy brother Lee Deamer) presents an interesting contrast in names. It is Mike's perception that "Lee" Deamer is good; he deems him good, and so do all the other characters that he questions about "Lee."



The false Lily Carver (in *Kiss Me, Deadly*) has a name designed to mislead the reader. A carver makes the reader think of a murderer, while the name Lily is



the essence of purity. Mike never knows what to think of Lily until he discovers that she is the Evil One. The same is true of Ruston York (in *The Twisted Thing*). One part of the name ("York") stands for nobility of purpose and heritage; the other represents decay (rust). Mike even unconsciously recognizes this by calling him Lancelot, the knight who betrayed King Arthur.

Dulcie McInnes (in *The Body Lovers*) and Renee Talmage (in *Survival... Zero!*) have names which Spillane uses ironically. Dulcie is supposed to be sweet, but it's only a sexual description, not one of character. Renee represents one who has been reborn to the false prophet of Communism. Both are strong names, ones which usually indicate good characters.

Of the non-continuing characters, the most famous is Charlotte Manning, Mike's first deadly lover and the murderer of his best friend Jack Williams. As usual in Spillane, her name is a clue to her role in the novel. Mike makes no attempt to hide his contempt for mannish women. He is the embodiment of an era that still believed in separate roles for men and women, although in some situations there are gray areas even for him. The use of the name Manning (which means, aside from the obvious, son of the hero) is one way for Spillane to indicate that her role is not within the normal realm. She is a woman assuming a macho role, the evil persona of all that's wrong with man's dominance of other men and women. Charlotte means little woman (and also rhymes with harlot). Thus, her full name suggests a little woman assuming a mannish role which is unnatural for her and is far removed from the connotation of hero which the name should suggest.

But it is the continuing characters who provide the most insight into Spillane's novels. Of the three major characters, it is Velda which presents the greatest challenge. It is certainly possible that women readers could take offense at, or even be amused by, Spillane's physical description of her, but it is not possible for the reader to miss Mike's concern and love for Velda.

Her name is a combination of velvet and dame. The word dame is not derogatory to Mike. He also uses the word kitten, with its sexual references, for any woman for whom he has affection. As used in the novels, these terms are not degrading, merely typical of the novels' time of composition, the 1940s and 1950s. Velda is in many ways a character analogous to Mike. Emotionally, she is stronger. Often the reader believes Velda is smarter than Mike. She seems to know intuitively the things Mike must learn. At her first appearance, Velda has worked for Mike for three years. Spillane's description makes her the archetypical Hammer woman: beautiful and deadly, but in her case not evil. In *I, the Jury* she is both love object and sounding board for Mike. Later she becomes his entire reason for living.

The names Mike Hammer and Pat Chambers show depth of character. Michael means one who is like God. Michael is also the guardian archangel who drives the Devil out of Heaven (*Revelation* 12:7–9). The name is closely associated with the wrathful, vengeful God of the Old Testament. Hammer is the instrument of death, operating on two levels: the brute force level of an object used to bludgeon and on the next level the part of the gun used to strike the bullet.

Spillane uses Pat Chambers, Mike's friend and captain of homicide, in a similar way. Pat is a noble name invoking an authority figure. Chambers recalls another part of a gun, that which holds the bullets. Pat Chambers is both surrogate hero and instrument of justice. Since the chamber and hammer are both parts of a gun, it should not be surprising that the reader sees Pat and Mike as component parts of a single character.

Thus, we can appreciate a neglected part of the literary craft of Mickey Spillane in his descriptive use of names. Far from being just a storyteller, it would seem that Spillane's easy and accessible style obscures the quite obvious craftsmanship at work. □

PAPER CRIMES

By Raymond Obstfeld

Let's do something completely different.

Let's forget fairness.

Forget objectivity.

Just be selfish and ask, "What's in it for me?"

That's how most readers think, and rightfully so. After all, they're the ones plunking down their hard cash for a book. And they want something in return.

Not so most reviewers. They get their books free. The books arrive in little tan mailing envelopes that somehow always get torn in transit, sprinkling that fluffy grey stuffing all the way from the mailbox to the house, down the hall, and all over the desk. Somehow you always end up plucking bits of it out of your mouth while wondering if it contains any asbestos by-products to give you cancer. Immediately the cat digs the torn envelope from the trash basket and opens the rip further, shaking more fluff across your salami sandwich and into your typewriter. Well, nothing's totally free.

But most readers select books after carefully browsing for an hour, or poring over reviews, or chatting with friends, or reading bestseller lists, or consulting with their psychic. Then they uncrease the dollar bills as tenderly as if each had been printed on skin from their own throats, grab their book that's been stapled into a plastic bag that's probably imprinted with a cancer-causing dye, and run home to read.

All they want from their mystery novel is a little excitement, a little pleasure. And if they get it, the money's been well spent.

But what about writers? What do they read? What do they look for in a book? Not when they know they have to review it, but when they're just trying to get a little excitement, a little pleasure.

I don't know the answer. But I do know that writers read differently than non-writers, and for different reasons. At least this writer does.

When I'm not reviewing, I'm very selective about my reading. My requirements in books become as stringent as my cat's attitude about his kitty litter. Everything must be just so or I won't go near it. The reason is practical. I write five hours a day, every day, and if the book I'm reading somehow interferes with my writing, I dump it. Case in point. A few years ago I was working on a suspense novel during the day and reading *Green Ice* by Gerald Browne at night. Within days my writing started to fall apart. I became lethargic about my own novel. Suddenly I realized why. *Green Ice* was so ponderous and flat, it affected my own writing. The next day I tossed aside the book, with another 75 pages still to go, and picked up *Firestarter* by Stephen King. Having never read anything by Stephen King before, I was thoroughly impressed by the energy and skill of his writing. Somehow I, too, was invigorated by his prose, and found my interest in my own novel recharged.

So what I'm going to present to you is a roundup, almost a diary, of what I have read in the past few weeks while working on my own novel. Why I picked each book, and why, in some cases, I didn't finish the book. I'm not claiming to be totally fair. Just truthful.

Book #1: **The Trade** (Avon) by William H. Hallahan. I picked this book up because I'd read an earlier work of his called *The Dead of Winter* while I was conducting a writers' retreat last year in Palm Springs. I was so impressed with *Dead* that when my students gathered that evening for our workshop, I recommended it to all of them. Crisp writing, yet with a sharp edge to the style. Mounting suspense. Taut, compelling plot. Snappy dialogue. Characters carved from ice, but rich and believable.

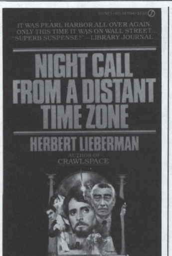
Unfortunately, *The Trade* didn't live up to this promise. It's a thick novel that wanders among various points of view in a very conventional way. There's an arms dealer hero out to avenge a murdered friend, a beautiful adventuress, a sinister plot involving powerful Germans tampering with Soviet-Chinese relations. The basic premise is solid enough, but the book never gets any momentum. The first hundred pages desperately tries to inject suspense while simultaneously building characters, but it fails to do either. The characters are a dreary lot, and the book fizzles quickly. Hallahan's terse writing style is not effective in a novel that would have benefited by being a couple hundred pages shorter. Perhaps it is the fact that publishers tend to seriously promote only fat books that tempted the author to inflate this work.

I bailed out of the book with only a hundred pages to go after I realized I didn't care enough about any of the characters to find out what would happen to them. This book didn't work, but I'm still a fan of Mr. Hallahan and will not be dissuaded from buying his next novel.

Book #2: **Split Images** (Avon) by Elmore Leonard. I read an article about him in *Writer's Digest* a few months ago and went out and bought his *City Primeval: High Noon in Detroit*. I'd seen the book earlier in stores, but I'd avoided it because the title seemed to be trying too hard to be both tough and meaningful. But what a pleasant surprise to find the book was so wonderful. It's practically a textbook in hardboiled cop style, without the self-consciousness that usually goes with such a style. I loved it enough to buy *Çat Chaser,* which I thought was even better. So when *Split Images* arrived in one of those cancerous tan envelopes, I was looking forward to reading it that night.

I wasn't disappointed. Mr. Leonard doesn't strain himself with character details, but somehow the characters are three-dimensional and compelling. The plot isn't complex—cop hunts down playboy killer while courting dynamic woman reporter—but its simplicity is one of its strengths. Leonard's main fault here is that he does not do a believable job in establishing the love interest, a problem in all three of the books of his I've read. The cop and the reporter fall for each other much too quickly and easily, as if the romantic angle were merely a bothersome convention to be dispensed with quickly. Still, I enjoyed the characters so much that I couldn't wait to get back to the book at night to find out what would happen to them.

Book #3: **Night Call from a Distant Time Zone** (Signet) by Herbert Lieberman. The cover said "superb suspense" so I bought it. The book has 315 pages, and I read 224 of them without ever encountering any suspense, so I suspect the cover quote from *Library Journal* was either taken out of context or written by a kind reviewer. Lieberman has a droll style, which I enjoyed tremendously, but not enough to carry me through hundreds of fairly uneventful pages. Oh, things happen. Banks collapse, a ruthless Japanese businessman swindles millions of dollars, people try to kill each other. But it's all told in such a flat, passive tone, not unlike that of the hero, who's intriguing but never comes to life.



Book #4: **Off Duty** (Pocket) by Andrew Coburn. This book is almost all dialogue, and damn good dialogue at that. It's not as self-conscious as George V. Higgins's dialogue-laden novels. The characters reveal themselves through what they say rather than what the author tells us about them. That can be a dangerous technique, often backfiring in the hands of the unskillful. But Coburn's novel of a cop's one corrupt act and his journey of survival and redemption is sophisticated and dynamic. The shifts in point of view are sometimes awkward and confusing, but *Off Duty* left me anxious to read more by him.

Book #5: **The Calling** (Jove) by Bob Randall. A few years ago I read a clever suspense novel called *The Fan.* It was an epistolary novel, made up entirely of letters, notes, telegrams, etc., yet still it managed to generate thumb-gnawing suspense. I was so excited when I bought the same author's *The Calling* that I immediately read the first chapter in the car outside the bookstore.

Well, there's good news and bad news. The good news is that Randall is a fine writer. The character of Susan, tormented endlessly by demonic telephone calls, is a powerful creation. She's witty, educated, tough, talented —a person I cared about. The style of the book was swift, building a tension in the reader until you're lucky if you don't develop a nervous tic.

The bad news is that the last third of the books falls apart so badly that it seems as if someone else had come in and finished it. The resolution, complete with images from Disney's *The Black Hole,* is so trite that I actually felt cheated. Even more infuriating is the pseudo-intellectualism of the ending, as if it were an attempt to justify the shabby dénouement.

Book #6: **Fallback** (Signet) by Peter Niesewand. This is a spy adventure novel about changing codes in a major Soviet tactical computer. David Cane is the hardy DIA agent who joins forces with the civilian computer genius, Dr. Martin Ross, to breach the Soviet computer. I don't know what happens to them, though. I only read seventy pages. I liked Cane's competent yet vulnerable character quite a bit, but Dr. Ross seemed too wimpy for me, too whiny. But what finally made me drop out was the author's annoying habit of erratically switching points of view between the two men, especially within the same chapter. I've seen this technique work before, but it sure doesn't here.

Book #7: **Red Dragon** (Bantam) by Thomas Harris. Normally I don't go much for the maniacal mass murderer novel. The books are usually an obnoxious lot, rubbing our noses in so much blood you get the feeling the author's behaving a little like a ten-year-old trying to impress adults by cursing.

But this book is different. It took me three different starts before I finally made it past fifty pages, but it was well worth it. Unlike the other books I abandoned, I felt somehow compelled to keep coming back to this one. I'm glad I did. The prose style is highly polished, occasionally too much so, calling too much attention to itself. Yet for the most part it is rich, generous with metaphor, and intelligent. Several descriptive passages are still whirling clearly in my mind.

One of the problems is with the cop-hero, Will Graham, charged with the dreadful task of locating the demented mass murderer before he butchers another family. He's a bit too brooding and melancholy, more a concession to fashionable *Weltschmertz* than anything believable. There's the fear that his gift at catching these maniacs may reveal a kinship with them, but that's way too overblown to bear the weight it's given here.

The characterization of the killer is powerful, however, though it is almost overshadowed by a brilliant cameo of a killer Graham had caught earlier in his career. Unfortunately, Harris spends too much time delving into the background of the killer, offering easy psychological motivations that cheapen the book. Also, he uses a predictable plot device at the end for a final twist, the same device used in Bob Randall's *The Fan.*

Despite these disappointments, the book has moments of brilliance.

Book #8: **Powder Burns** (Charter) by William D. Montalbano and Carl Hiaasen. I automatically avoid novels written by two people. This is a prejudice, perhaps, but I just can't understand how two people can write a book that remains true to any single vision. I imagine a couple of guys sitting at a bar saying, "Let's write a novel and make a lot of money." I begin to suspect the book will be nothing more than slick by-the-numbers style, like two men making love to one woman at the same time. It's all technique, no emotional involvement.

This time I was wrong. *Powder Burns,* about the cocaine trade in Miami, is one of the better suspense books I've read lately. It's not as rich in style as *Red Dragon,* nor as deft as *Split Images,* but it is as involving as both those novels. The first few chapters are excellent, managing to develop sympathetic characters and build suspense at the same time. A trick often attempted in novels, rarely successful.

The protagonist, Chris Meadows, an architect who gets involved with dope smugglers and murderers, is a thoroughly convincing character. Toss in a compelling plot, off-beat minor characters, exotic location, and you've got an above-average thriller. The shifts in point of view to one of the cops is a bit annoying at times, and not really necessary, but otherwise this is a smooth and suspenseful novel that's broadened, if not changed, my mind about collaborative writing.

So. I finished the novel I was writing somewhere in the middle of reading *Powder Burns.* I'm packing my manuscript in one of those tan envelopes and sending it to my editor. By the time he gets it, the envelope will be ripped and grey fluffy padding will be floating about his office in a cancerous cloud.

What goes around, comes around. □

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CURRENT REVIEWS

The Shadow of the Moth: A Novel of Espionage with Virginia Woolf by Ellen Hawkes and Peter Manso. New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1983. 279 pp. $12.95.

This is not the first time Virginia Woolf has appeared in detective fiction. She and most of the Bloomsbury circle make amusing cameo appearances in Randall Collins's Sherlockian pastiche *The Case of the Philosophers' Ring* (1978). *The Shadow of the Moth* is also a pastiche, but it is hardly benign. Virginia Woolf has become a commodity to be exploited. Like the Mona Lisa as a jigsaw puzzle, Woolf's feminist ideas and literary style have been appropriated and transformed into shoddy merchandise that impugns the integrity of the genuine article.

The story begins in 1917, when Virginia is recovering from a mental breakdown and trying to finish her second novel, *Night and Day*. She learns of the apparent suicide of a Belgian refugee and is overcome by the poignancy of the note pinned to the drowned woman: "No mother. No father. No work." Virginia sets out to discover the circumstances surrounding the Belgian's life and death. With the help of a young newspaperwoman, she realizes that the suicide was really a murder. The investigation uncovers other bodies while wandering through the bureaucratic labyrinth of Scotland Yard and the demographic maze of a society just beginning to question the crushing distinctions of gender and class. Eventually, Virginia exposes a plot to prolong the Great War, thereby saving what is left of the flower of British manhood from an untimely weeding-out. In the course of events, Woolf's pacifism is tempered by a spasm of patriotism and her passions inflamed by a secret agent's virility.

This meager plot is merely the excuse for vandalizing the biographical and literary archives of Bloomsbury. Virginia is depicted as the victim of Leonard Woolf's possessiveness, Clive Bell's nastiness, and Maynard Keynes's ambition. At best, this is a skewed reading of Bloomsbury intrigues. It has become fashionable in some academic circles to vilify Leonard Woolf, and it is clear that Hawkes and Manso have parked their authorial Winnebago in this camp. Virginia is cast as the rebellious girl-child, and Leonard gets the role of the daddy-ogre. This facile characterization of the Woolfs' marriage moves the story along, but in doing so it denigrates the complex and heroic friendship that grew out of the Woolfs' disastrous attempt to have a conventionally conjugal relationship.

Since Hawkes and Manso have no scruples about tailoring the raw material to fit the fiction, the reader is encouraged to imagine that Virginia's detecting success showed Leonard the folly of his patriarchal ways. Likewise, the excursion into espionage is credited with providing the inspiration for *A Room of One's Own*. The irony is that Woolf's feminism and pacifism are reduced to insubstantial stage-props in the novel. Instead of giving the reader a sense of an emerging literary genius who recognized that the oppression of women and the glorification of militarism are old and familiar bedfellows, the authors substitute a swooning heroine confused by her own sexuality and driven to the brink of madness by her tormentors. (There is more than a little of the odor of the gothic wafting through this mystery.)

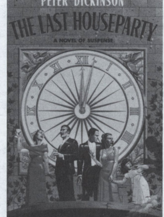
No stone is left unturned in Hawkes and Manso's quest for the sensationally slimy, not even a grave marker. The epilogue insinuates a connection between the Belgian woman's murder and Woolf's own death by drowning. Ultimately, the real crime of *The Shadow of the Moth* is literary cannibalism.

—Patrice K. Loose

* * * * *

The Last Houseparty by Peter Dickinson. Pantheon, 1982.

Dickinson is amazingly versatile and yet reassuringly predictable in that we always know he'll produce an evocative, satisfying work. His ability to produce living characters, for whom we not only care, but whom we understand and often identity with, is tremendous. No less remarkable are his creations of time and place, making Snailwood Manor and the last days of the 1950s as personal to us as our first romance.



All of which brings us to *The Last Houseparty*. The lead characters are young Harry Quintain and Vincent Masham, cousins and heirs of Count Snailwood. Countess Zena has arranged one of her notorious "superduperdos," weekend parties with influential political and social notables. We know from the title that something exceptional happens during the weekend, but just what it is is not easily guessed at. Suspense, atmosphere, and characterization build as Dickinson moves us around in time to see various scenes just before the Second World War, during the war, and in the present.

Eventually, the entire history of Snailwood, its famous clock tower, and the last houseparty are revealed. This may not be Dickinson's masterpiece, but it is one of the best books of 1982. A must for readers of British crime fiction.

—Fred Dueren

* * * * *

The Power of Nothingness by Alexandra David-Neel and Lama Yongden. Translated by Janwillem van de Wetering. Houghton Mifflin, 1982.

Although best known for his police procedural novels set in the Netherlands, Janwillem van de Wetering has also exhibited a deep interest in the Orient. It could be said that he is following in the footsteps of a fellow Dutchman, the late Robert van Gulik, the noted Orientalist who is remembered by mystery fans for his Judge Dee stories.

Wetering has authored two nonfiction books, *The Empty Mirror* (1973) and *A Glimpse of Nothingness* (1975), about his experiences in Zen Buddhist monasteries. He has produced a novel, *The Japanese Corpse* (1977), in which most of the action takes place in Japan. He has written a series of short stories, soon to be collected in book form, featuring Inspector Saito of the Kyoto police. And his translation of a mystery thriller set in Tibet and China, *The Power of Nothingness*, was published in 1982.

This unusual novel was written in French (as *La puissance du néant*) by Buddhist scholar Alexandra David-Neel and her adopted son Albert Arthur Yongden, a Tibetan lama. In a short introductory essay, Wetering gives us a biographical sketch of Madame David-Neel (1868–1969) and relates how he became interested in translating her books into English.

The novel is an inverted mystery with the culprit identified in the first chapter. A Tibetan guru named Gyalwai Odzer is killed by one of his followers, Lobsang, who steals the giant turquoise that hangs from the guru's neck. The body is discovered by Munpa, a devoted disciple. He decides to pursue Lobsang and recover the turquoise, which is said to have magical powers. His quest involves him in a journey of several years, taking him across Tibet and into China. Munpa meets learned monks, survives many hardships, but displays little skill as a detective.

The novel's crime fiction elements are less

important to the authors than its Buddhist content. What Munpa learns from his experiences is their major concern. Writing in a simple style, David-Neel and Yongden attempt to penetrate a mystery that is much more profound than the solution of a crime.

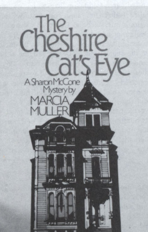
I can recommend *The Power of Nothingness* to those readers who have a taste for things Oriental and to those who care to venture beyond the boundaries, both geographical and thematic, that usually limit our genre.

—John L. Apostolou

* * * * *

The Cheshire Cat's Eye by Marcia Muller. St. Martin's, 1983. $10.95

Former cheerleader, homecoming princess, and part-time security guard during her college days at U.C. Berkeley, Sharon McCone occupies a rather special place in the sisterhood of San Francisco detectives.



With four published cases to her credit (three novels and a single short story, "Merrill-Go-Round") and a fifth (*Games To Keep the Dark Away*) coming up later this year, McCone is that city's only female private eye currently appearing in a continuing series.

While Sharon does have some spirited local competition from the likes of Elizabeth Atwood Taylor's Maggie Elliott (*The Cable Car Murder*) and Julie Smith's Rebecca Schwartz (*Death Turns a Trick*), her heavy caseload is such as to make her the most active and perhaps most prominent member of San Francisco's sleuthing sorority.

Unlike Maggie, Rebecca, and other talented amateurs, moreover, Sharon is the real thing—a licensed and seasoned private eye for whom detection is a full-time profession, not a recreational or therapeutic pastime. She proves that heroines of the private investigation profession have come a long, long way since the days of Lady Molly, Miss Pym, Jane Marple, and other dear old aunties of the "cozies."

McCone's newest case, *The Cheshire Cat's Eye,* shows her to fine advantage as she probes the riddle of murder past and present in one of San Francisco's renovated Victorian houses.

Guided by the tantalizing clue of an old Tiffany nursery lamp which features a Cheshire Cat grinning among its ornamental leaves, McCone plays Alice in the perilous Wonderland of San Francisco's most trendy developers, decorators, and designers. She hits the ground running the moment the story starts and never lets herself get bogged in the Byzantine thickets that impede so many mystery plots.

A brisk storyteller who is always one jump ahead of her reader but who plays eminently fair with the evidence, Muller wastes no time in switching on the atmospheric fog, planting the body (which her sleuth discovers on page two) and arranging the clues as carefully and tidily as placesettings.

And so it is that on a dark and foggy San Francisco night, the detective answers a nervous friend's request to meet in a Steiner Street mansion, only to find that friend lifeless in a pool of red (paint, not blood). The victim is a decorator, the house is deserted, the crime is senseless, and Ms. McCone has got another fine problem on her hands. To be a friend of this remarkable woman is always a risky enterprise; in her last case, for example, her favorite tenant was found throttled with a piece of drapery cord. Ah, well, what are friends for?

Suspects in the current caper include a black attorney hooked on fig newtons, a Chinese craftswoman hooked on the wrong guy, a gay who gobbles Valium, a powerful society matron with a secret in her own closet, and a former rock promoter who is easily the nastiest piece of goods to come down the pike in a Muller novel. Now the question is: whodunit?

If anyone can uncover the answer to this puzzle, it has to be the intelligent, outspoken, persistent, and shrewd McCone. Because of her thoroughness and determination to succeed, she is often accused of being "pushy" and "snoopy" by resentful males from whom she demands facts, facts, facts. Those scornful epithets are actually grudging compliments.

Sharon is a girl to whom you just can't say no. If some of the suspects have a curious habit of confessing rather too readily to her, the reader can at least understand their compulsion to rid themselves of this inquisitorial pest.

McCone's restlessness in grilling suspects is matched by her unflagging energy in tracking down every possible lead that might bear on the case. She maintains a dizzying pace as she zips from one end of the city to the other, filling up her detective's notebook with "Cheshire Cat" clues. She knows her way around the streets of San Francisco and around the resistance of a certain police lieutenant with whom she is having an amorous fling (a somewhat convenient way of obtaining inside information, it is true, but not the only reason why the lovely sleuth has fallen for the lonely cop).

McCone is likeable enough for both men and women readers to wish her well in overcoming obstacles quickly and getting on to the next clue, the next witness, and the next revelation. It all goes by quickly and efficiently enough to be enjoyed at a single sitting, perhaps with the distant sound of foghorns in the Bay as background music. For me, the appeal of the novel lies in its essential duality, for Muller has constructed a well-crafted little puzzle that is a blend of both classical riddle and hardboiled caper.

In a short novel of this kind (fewer than 150 pages), any author would be hard pressed to do equal justice to all the elements of a mystery plot. Wisely, Muller doesn't try. She writes a novel with the clarity and celerity of a short story, sketching (rather than elaborating) characters, dropping loaded hints to armchair detectives who want to play along, and speedily extracting secrets on the spot from balky or cranky suspects.

That technique shouldn't really bother anyone who recognizes how the interest and progress of this kind of detective story must depend on continuous action and movement rather than upon the psychological intricacies of character development. Yet Muller's stereotypical figures are also credible inhabitants of the San Francisco we know, and the entertainment value that invests her plot is more substantial than a fading Cheshire's grin. Even if things come to a nail-biting climax with an old-fashioned, hold-your-breath-now-kids-and-let's-see-who-unlocks-the-door dénouement, that only adds to the fun.

—Howard Lachtman

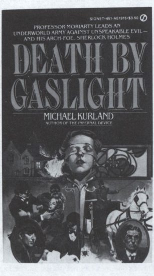
* * * * *

Death by Gaslight by Michael Kurland. Signet/NAL, 1982. 279 pp. $3.50

In his "Author's Note," Michael Kurland states that he is not writing a pastiche of Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories, and perhaps this is wise, for many authors of Holmesian pastiche published during recent years have foundered when attempting a direct imitation of Doyle's style. His Moriarty novels, Kurland says, are historical fantasy laid in the late Victorian world of Sherlock Holmes. This form allows him a wide latitude for variations on the Moriarty-Holmes relationship. As in Kurland's first Moriarty novel, *The Infernal Device* (1978), Moriarty is the protagonist in *Death by Gaslight* while Sherlock Holmes is only a major secondary character. When several members of the aristocracy have their throats cut in their own homes, Holmes is enlisted by the London police to help solve the murders. Benjamin Barnett, an American news reporter, obligated to Moriarty, becomes interested in the murders, as does Moriarty. Barnett's assistant, lady reporter Cecily Perrine, joins the investigation and is abducted, and both Moriarty and Holmes discover that the infamous eighteenth-century Hellfire Club has been resurrected. While Moriarty masterminds a great train robbery,

Cecily is tortured for the sadistic amusement of the members of the Hellfire Club, until at the climax she is rescued by Moriarty, Holmes, and Barnett all working together. Though the pace is somewhat slower than that of *The Infernal Device, Death by Gaslight* builds to a satisfying, suspenseful climax in the last third of the book.

Part of the fun in Kurland's Moriarty novels is his use of characters from the original Holmes stories. In addition to Holmes and Moriarty, Inspector Lestrade appears, along with other familiar Scotland Yard men. Colonel Moran, Moriarty's lieutenant, plays a part too. Kurland delights in including unobtrusive parallels and echoes from Holmes's original adventures. For



example, Holmes once used a dog named Toby to help track down a criminal. In contrast, Moriarty uses Toby's keen sense of smell to complete a master crime. These in-jokes for Holmesians do not impede the action in any way. When Holmes shows himself fallible and makes mistakes, however, especially when attacking Moriarty, it may amuse or displease readers who worship Holmes in all his incarnations. Holmes is obsessed with Moriarty. He insists that Moriarty is the mastermind of *all* crime in London, but Holmes is only partly right. There are crimes and crimes, some more evil than others. Though Moriarty directs a vast network of criminals, he does expose a fanatic murderer, allows the Hellfire Club to be destroyed, and returns millions of pounds of Indian treasure to its rightful owners. Kurland's characterization of Moriarty is ambiguous; he appears as a scintillating intellectual cloaked in equivocal criminality. Another interesting aspect of this novel is that Kurland underplays the description of the two major crimes. Only after the crime is the train robbery described, in a matter-of-fact way, by Moriarty, and, though the sexual torture of women by the Hellfire Club is effectively suggested, specific details are left to each reader's imagination. This is unusual restraint for a novel published in the 1980s but very appropriate for one evoking a Victorian atmosphere. Last of all, *Death by Gaslight* is a minor addition to Ripper fiction. Though Jack the Ripper is not the main villain, the references are specific. The date of action, 1887, is significant. One member of the Hellfire Club manages to escape before the club is destroyed. Afterward, Moriarty describes him: "That's the chap. . . . Colonel Moran calls him the most dangerous man he's ever known. Likes to cut up prostitutes. I would suggest you make an effort to find him, or we'll be hearing from him in a way we won't like." And, of course, in 1888 all England heard from Jack the Ripper. For readers who like Sherlock Holmes, and for those who like Victorian mystery thrillers, *Death by Gaslight* is a fine bouillabaisse to be savored bit by bit.

—Edward Lauterbach

* * * * *

Winter's Crimes edited by Hilary Watson. St. Martin's, 1982. $11.95

If you have not yet become familiar with the *Winter's Crime* series, normally edited by George Hardinge, No. 14 is an excellent place to start. These anthologies are unique in that they contain only new stories, specially written for these volumes. They are also interesting to American readers because they provide stories by British authors who are not as well known or whose stories are not easily available over here.

Simon Brett's "Tickled to Death" features an appropriately amusing death in clown costume. "Butchers" by Peter Lovesey is an ironic tale of a man frozen to death in a meat locker, and Roger Longrigg's "The Serpent Orchid" also carries on the ironic ending tradition. "Mother Elder" by David Fletcher is a modern, not-too-believable horror story. George Miller's "Treasure Trove" is a neat little piece of deduction about hidden treasure. Irony is a recurrent theme and shows up again in Desmond Lownden's "Bank Holiday." One disappointment is Julian Symons's "The Dream Is Better"; its style and execution are okay, but the plot gimmick has been used already in one of the classics of the suspense field. On the whole, *Winter's Crimes* provides fresh, enjoyable reading for several hours' entertainment.

—Fred Dueren

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Perfect Fools by Edith Piñero Green. New York: Dutton, 1982. $11.50

Perfect Fools features Dearborn V. Pinch, a rich New Yorker in his seventies who appeared in two earlier Green mysteries (*Rotten Apples* and *Sneaks*). When Dearborn's son Benjamin disappears in Cuba—he's there playing exhibition basketball—and the State Department doesn't move as quickly as Dearborn would like, the septuagenarian sleuth is off to Havana with a friend of his doorman, named Tomás, and his old friend Raúl Baki, whom Dearborn first has to spring from an insane asylum in Miami. Baki is deemed essential because of all his contacts in pre-Castro Cuba, as neither Dearborn nor Tomás know Havana well. Armed with $30,000 in Swiss francs, they set off, only to be intercepted by patrol boats, from which they escape by abandoning their possessions and swimming to shore, only to learn that all but one of Raúl's contacts are dead. The one still alive, an aging but still beautiful actress, involves them with a cell of terrorists in the group El Cuerpo.

Meanwhile, Benjamin has been hiding from the police, attempting to solve a murder the authorities are telling the press he committed, and falling in love with a woman called Isabel Quintana. The mystery's main action centers around Dearborn's search for Benjamin and Benjamin's search for an assassin that may be a member of El Cuerpo or the secret police. Despite all the racing around and talk of double agents, this is consciously a "cute" novel. The reader is expected to find Dearborn irascible and charming and Benjamin naïve and impetuous. and that, in short, is the problem with the work. It trades on stereotypes, and much of its humor comes at the expense of Hispanic accents, sexist and ageist attitudes, and "terrorists" who act like Keystone Kops.

—Susan L. Clark

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One Dollar Death by Richard Barth. New York: Dial, 1982. $14.95

In *One Dollar Death,* Margaret Binton, Richard Barth's 72-year-old series detective, tackles the matter of a murder-cum-coin theft. Hannah Jansen, one of Margaret's friends from the Florence Bliss Senior Citizen Center, shows Margaret an 1804 silver dollar as they wait their turns at a Sotheby Park Bernet Heirloom Appraisal Day (Margaret is lugging a Russian teapot that had never made "a single decent pot of tea"). The silver dollar turns out to be missing, and Hannah to be quite dead, by the time Margaret returns from her consultation with the Russian expert. Margaret's response is to find out all she can about the field of numismatics, to badger her contacts in the New York City Police Department, and to track down and kidnap the murderer herself with the aid of a motley band of rag ladies, winos, and street-wise teenagers.

Barth sets up a comedy of errors atmosphere not unlike that cultivated in *The Bank Shot,* so that sequences include Margaret masquerading as the wealthy Mrs. Sloan, whose fortune is in "Puerto Rican scrap metal," to infiltrate the shop of coin dealer Frenos Zarchin, and Keystone Kops-style West Side chase scenes with danger lurking in

the hilarity. *One Dollar Death* trades on character and atmosphere more than it does on plot, and it must of necessity, as the plot is so thin as to be almost nonexistent by the end of the work. *One Dollar Death,* in essence, treats the recovery of stolen property, and it is a treatment made palatable only by the presence of its tough-talking, chain-smoking, knitting and crossword-puzzling heroine. For readers who want "more" of crotchety but lovable Margaret Binton, *One Dollar Death* will fit the bill; for those wanting the oblique insights into motive and morality that top-flight mystery fiction provides, *One Dollar Death* will prove readable but lacking.

—Susan L. Clark

* * * * *

The Great British Detective edited by Ron Goulart. NAL/Mentor, 1983. 369 pp. $3.95

At its best, the English detective story is as faultlessly tailored and timelessly stylish as a Savile Row suit. Some readers acquire rows of these impeccable mysteries for use as ready antidotes to ennui or insomnia. Others yearn to discover more about writers and sleuthing heroes who stamp a distinctive identity—a kind of detective designer label—on these well-made tales.

An appreciation class in the grand masters of the English mystery is one solution to the problem new readers frequently face in seeking to acquire some sense of historical perspective and bibliographical familiarity. But not every student of the genre has the time or the funds necessary to indulge his curiosity as far as the classroom. A book might provide a more convenient form of education, assuming it is the right kind of book—one that begins with founding father Sherlock Holmes, offers a number of period contenders for his crown, and marches into the Golden Age of the 1920s and 1930s without undue deference to the sturdy nostalgia of horse-and-carriage detection days.

To obtain this convenient overview of crime and punishment, English style, you need only go to your local bookstore and ask for *The Great British Detective,* a superb new collection of fifteen short stories edited by Connecticut mystery author and historian Ron Goulart.

Here is an easy and economical shortcut for Anglophilic readers eager to meet or renew acquaintance with old English masters and mistresses of mystery. The scenes of these classic crimes extend from crowded, fog-shrouded London to sinister country houses on lonely moors far from the watchful gaze of helmeted constables.

In an attempt to show the evolution and art of this popular storytelling form, Goulart's chronological casebook offers the very cream of British detective nobility. It's a panorama of supersleuths.

From Sherlock Holmes's 1892 investigation into the middle-of-the-night disappearance of a racehorse and clue of a stable dog who would not bark ("Silver Blaze") to Inspector Wexford's 1979 inquiry into a strange romantic triangle and stranger poisoning case ("Means of Evil"), Goulart has gathered a richly representative company of elite crime-solvers.

But this is only part of the offering. The conscientious editor has provided an intelligent introduction and framed each of his fifteen selections with informative headnotes. And he has added a bibliography and suggestions for further reading, so that his more ambitious mystery students may work themselves up from the ranks and become crime connoisseurs. All this for a $3.95 asking price stamps *The Great British Detective* as one of the best paperback bargains of the new fall season.

There is little that Goulart has missed, though space has necessarily dictated the omission of several cornerstone sleuths. I note, with regret, the absence of Ernest Bramah's Max Carrados, that charming and ingenious detective who, though blind, sees more than most of us do with two good eyes. Another regrettable absence from the anthology is that of the Baroness Orczy's nameless armchair detective (known only as the "Old Man") who unravels baffling cases with expert ease and assurance for a lady journalist in a London tea room.

Only Ruth Rendell is present to represent writers of contemporary times, though Goulart could (and should) have paired her with the redoubtable P. D. James. Best known as a novelist, Mrs. James has written a small number of uncollected tales; at least one of these, "Great Aunt Allie's Flypapers," is already a short story classic to rival anything by the old masters.

Fans can have the fun of quibbling over Goulart's editorial priorities. Why, for example, is Loveday Brooke, one of the better Victorian lady detectives, elevated over the likes of Dora Myrl or Lady Molly of Scotland Yard? The roguish Colonel Clay is a splendid gentleman crook who pulls the nose of the law, but why not invite such other slick customers as Raffles or Romney Pringle?

Despite such second-guessing, the presence here of heroes like Dr. Thorndyke, Father Brown, Martin Hewitt, Reggie Fortune, Hercule Poirot, Lord Peter Wimsey, and Albert Campion should help soothe the ruffled feelings of readers who believe that, where the British detective story is concerned, you can never have too much of a good thing.

Goulart's other virtue is that he has mercifully spared us from the preposterous likes of Falcon Swift ("the only detective to play international soccer wearing a monocle") and Dixon Brett ("who specialized in outwitting a sinister Oriental named Fan Chu Fang, the Wizard Mandarin").

In order to show us what a narrow escape we have had from the level of penny dreadfuls and shilling shockers, Goulart teases us with the incredible adventures of Sexton Blake. Aided by a boy assistant named Tinker and a bloodhound named Pedro—all that is missing from this act is a wonder horse who can tap out Morse code with his front hoof—Blake typically combats such villains as "mad scientists, hooded terrors, fraudulent Atlantic flyers, crooked lawyers, rascally rajahs, American racketeers, and human bats."

Devoted as it is to the rise of the detective hero and the detective short story in that part of the world where such things are still taken seriously, *The Great British Detective* is the very model of a modern major survey. "I think your time will not be misspent," as Holmes himself might say of it, "for there are points about the book which promise to make it an absolutely unique one."

Up, Tinker! On, Pedro! Awake and arise, Watson!

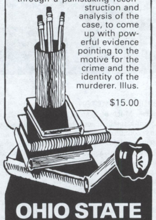
The game's afoot.

—Howard Lachtman

The Stabbing of George Harry Storrs

By Jonathan Goodman. With a Foreword by Jacques Barzun.
An account of the "Gorse Hall mystery" that captured the imagination of the British public from that moment on the morning of November 2, 1909, when, according to one reporter, "the whole country was thrilled with the news of the outrage." Storrs, a wealthy mill-owner, was stabbed many times by an intruder. He died without revealing anything about his attacker, though it was the impression of those who came to his aid that he could have identified his assailant. It has remained for Jonathan Goodman, through a painstaking reconstruction and analysis of the case, to come up with powerful evidence pointing to the motive for the crime and the identity of the murderer. Illus.

$15.00



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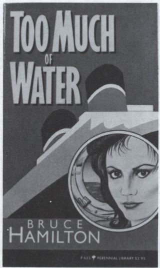
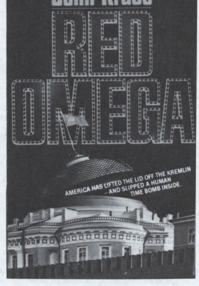
THE PAPERBACK REVOLUTION

By Charles Shibuk

JOHN FERGUSON

Death Comes to Perigord (1931) (Dover) stars series character Francis McNab and concerns the bizarre events surrounding the disappearance of an irascible and wealthy moneylender from his home in the Channel Islands. *Perigord* was published at the zenith of the great Golden Age of the detective story but is, alas, not a major effort. Make no mistake, however: it certainly deserves revival and is still fresh, clever, and interesting enough to give pleasure to any reader today.





BRUCE HAMILTON

Too Much of Water (1958) (Perennial) is set on a small steamer headed for Barbados and contains a serial murderer with four victims to his credit. This is the first American publication of a major work by a hitherto neglected master. It's very well written, and its humor and musical background have been praised by the demanding connoisseurs Barzun and Taylor. It's also an excellent (and much too little known) example of the classic detective novel.

CYRIL HARE

This author's third novel, **Suicide Excepted** (1939), was reviewed in this column in TAD 13:3 and has recently been reprinted by Perennial.

JOHN KRUSE

Red Omega (1981) (Pocket Books) is an American infiltrator into the highest echelons of the Communist Party. Stalin and the KGB discover his existence—but not his identity—and a purge is on. Meanwhile, a CIA agent plots to murder Stalin and have Red Omega assume power in his place. This columnist read many new novels last year, and this gripping and dynamic work was the best of the lot.

ERNEST RAYMOND

We, the Accused (1935) (Penguin) is an overly long (510 densely-packed pages), richly detailed study of a late Victorian murderer who somewhat resembles the famous and notorious Dr. Crippen. It's the familiar story of an eternal triangle that inevitably leads to crime, pursuit, capture, and trial. This impressive novel is another obscure but highly-regarded work and starts very slowly with an accumulation of small details; eventually it gathers momentum and suspense and continues to a powerful and heartbreaking conclusion.

[Note: The above paragraph was written before *We, the Accused* was telecast on *Mystery!*]

ROY VICKERS

The first novelette in *The Sole Survivor and The Kynsard Affair* (1951) (Dover) is set in a courtroom and deals with a long series of murders. The latter tale is concerned with establishing the true identity of a disfigured female murder victim. Vickers was a very minor novelist but a major short-story writer whose work augmented the great golden age of EQMM. Many echoes reminiscent of his Department of Dead Ends series reverberate in "The Kynsard Affair."

CAROL-LYNN RÖSSEL WAUGH, MARTIN HARRY GREENBERG, and ISAAC ASIMOV

The prospect of an anthology with the theme **Show Business Is Murder** (Avon, 1983) should please. However, readers might note that the compilers, for all their good taste, have not been too adventurous in their selections. Eleven of the eighteen stories have appeared in EQMM, four are from AHMM, and ten were published as recently as the '80s. Authors include Asimov, Robert Bloch, Jon L. Breen, Ed Hoch, Mike Nevins, Julian Symons, and Michael Underwood. □

RETRO REVIEWS

Rebecca's Pride by Donald McNutt Douglass. Harper, 1956; Avon, 1970

This mystery was an Edgar winner as Best First Mystery of the Year and was reprinted in the Avon Classic Crime Collection. Often it's possible to be skeptical of some of the titles that appear in such publishers' series. As might be expected, they are sometimes safe bets like a Haycraft-Queen selection, but many times they seem to have been titles that just happened to be available for reprint at the time. In this case, though the book obviously doesn't lack a pedigree, the editors cast back successfully to find a relatively obscure book that deserved inclusion in this collection.

Set in the Virgin Islands, redolent with heat, passion, calypso songs, and exotic, evocative placenames—Lower Love, Upper Love, Jealousy, Betsy's Jewel, Prosperity, Mount Parasol—*Rebecca's Pride* concerns the often violent interplay between native and outsider, blacks and whites, and the haves and the have-nots. This ambience, a quality important to any mystery, thoroughly permeates the plot and the action. That integration and interdependence of elements pushes the novel into the prize-winning category.

Narrated by the massive, native police captain, Manchenil Bolivar, the story revolves around the proud Von Schook family, former owners of the titular mansion, and Dice Wales, a wealthy, politically powerful American investor. It was he who has wrested Rebecca's Pride from the Van Schooks and who has continuously used the islands as an economic playground. Potent jealousies and sexual tensions between the Von Schook brothers—ladies' man Peter, cripple Johan, solid Willem, who is married to the promiscuous Estralita—are exacerbated by Wales's infatuation with their sister Hannah. Soon Wales is missing, and some subtle signals lead to the discovery of a poisoned corpse hidden in a lime pit beneath the floor at Rebecca's Pride. Bolivar quickly uncovers evidence of various mysterious arrivals and departures around the time of the murder, as well as shady financial dealings in Wales's shaky empire, including the fact that much of his wealth has been placed in a trust for Hannah. Though she professes neither to have sought the money nor to want it now that it is hers, the goings-on have already aroused considerable interest in the States. Federal agents, a private investigator, and Wales's secretary, Devement, all flock to the Islands to sort matters out, each in his own way. Through all this, Captain Bolivar, an old and close friend of the Von Schooks, manages to avoid losing the trust of either the islanders or the outsiders. Finally, while listening to calypso songs with thinly veiled clues and warnings in the lyrics, he realizes what has happened. Matters are not resolved before a fatal duel and a dramatic land and sea chase during a terrific storm drive the players to the end of the affair. All that remains is a curious dénouement that mixes happy-ever-after and an example of vicious brutality which truly jars the reader. However, the strong sense of the milieu—the music, the personalities, the offhand comments about race relations, the captain's struggle with his romantic point of view and the "high tragedy"—make this a classic rendition of a "peculiarly 'island' murder."

—Steve Thompson

* * * * *

Hearses Don't Hurry by Stephen Ransome. Doubleday, 1941

The loan of *Hearses Don't Hurry* from Marvin Lachman turns out to be serendipitous. After all, it is Dell Mapback #11, and Dell did reprint some lesser-known but meritorious items in those early days.

State's Attorney Christopher Chance is appointed Special Prosecutor because District Attorney Anthony Pierce has illegally abused the power of his office for financial gain, and it's now Chance's task to prove Pierce's guilt in a court of law.

A jury has been selected, and the actual trial will begin on Monday. Chance, acting on a tip, details his friend and helper Skeets Nally to obtain some possibly incriminating documents from one of Pierce's lawyers before they can be destroyed.

Nally commits a near-fatal assault but fails to secure the evidence. As he flees, he is recognized by a very unfriendly newspaperman who informs the police.

Chance, who is the adopted son of Nally's father, finds himself forced to suborn an old friend to give Nally an alibi because the latter is a three-time loser.

The ethical question of whether the end justifies the means arises but is soon lost in Chance's almost desperate attempts to secure absolutely damning evidence against Pierce, solve two murders in which he is a prominent suspect, protect the daughter of a retired judge (who was instrumental in obtaining his appointment) from evidence pointing to her guilt in one of the murders, and fight the efforts of an antagonistic newspaper owner who knows Chance's every move, to have him removed from his position and ultimately disbarred.

There's also Chance's stunningly beautiful secretary, whom he's crazy about and wants to marry, but who doesn't want to marry him, and two serious attempts to kill Chance before he can solve all his problems.

"Ransome" is, of course, Frederick C. Davis, whose *Thursday's Blade* (1947) I read over thirty years ago and dimly remember as being rather good—which isn't true of the more recently examined *The Deadly Miss Ashley* (1950).

This novel, narrated in dynamic, straightforward prose, is an excellent example of the hardboiled novel. Its legal aspects should be of interest to Erle Stanley Gardner readers in general and law professor Francis M. Nevins in particular.

Hearses Don't Hurry suffers only from a poor title. Its plot is complicated but not overly complex. It is a bit baffling and, except for the climax, completely unpredictable.

It hurtles like a rocket. There isn't a wasted adjective or description in its 237 pages. Most of the characters are human and believable even though their motivations might be a trifle obscure. The situations they find themselves faced with are often compelling. Clichés and excessive violence are avoided. There's even a chance to exercise some degree of ratiocination.

This novel should incite the reader to make an active effort to get to the ending, and then determine to seek out further efforts by this author.

—Charles Shibuk

* * * * *

Victor Whitechurch. **The Canon in Residence.** Unwin, 1904; Baker & Taylor, 1911.

No one seems to know that this novel is Whitechurch's first essay into crime fiction. Hubin's *Bibliography* mistakenly lists this author's first novel *The Course of Justice* (1903), but an examination does not betray any crime fiction elements whatsoever.

TCC&MW does not list *The Canon in Residence* as a crime publication, and ACOC cites this work as being among Whitechurch's "fiction other than detective."

Of my own Whitechurch essay in EMD, the less said the better!

Would that any of us had read this novel before dashing into premature judgment and publication!

Curiously, it is surprising to note that, with all its errors, Ordean Hagen's *Who Done It?* does correctly list this novel.

Long cited as a clerical romance (and a charming one it is), *The Canon in Residence* is essentially a comedy of manners and a love story that is dramatically interrupted by crime fiction elements in the latter third of its narrative.

Exposition tells us that a startling and successful bank robbery has occurred. We first meet its perpetrator, who is a rather appealing rogue, as he commits the almost equally heinous crime of stealing a clergyman's clothing—and later impersonating him.

There is also a stolen banknote that accidentally turns up in the possession of a respectable (and innocuous) citizen, who must have his innocence proven in the courtroom as a Scotland Yard inspector, who

seeks the aforementioned bank robber, looks on with great interest.

Finally, there is the (brief) tracking down and arrest of the actual miscreant whose confession brings luminescence to a cloudy situation.

Now, our hero the Reverend John Smith (where have I heard that name before?), newly promoted to Canon of Frattenbury Cathedral, is able to prove his absolute innocence of any unclerical conduct while vacationing on the Continent, and effectually silence all gossip (some of which could be considered as actionable), and, of course, win his fair lady.

—Charles Shibuk

* * * * *

Photocrimes by Mileson Horton and Thomas Pembroke. Arthur Barker, 1936.

Photocrimes is a collection of twenty-six crime stories in pictures to which brief captions are appended. These mysteries are almost purely visual; the text serves only to furnish background information and could be omitted. Some solutions are poorly conceived ("Robbery in the Monster Store" demands that one deduce from a "No Smoking" sign in a staff cafeteria that smoking is prohibited throughout the entire store); others are difficult to arrive at because of the photography (in "Jones Earns Promotion," the pictures simply do not show that one of the stamps is serrated on three sides and the other on four).

Noteworthy is the large number of solutions that comes from mystery fiction. Some depend on widely accepted conventions: "Who Killed the Diamond King?" on the type of knife wound inflicted by a left-handed murderer; "Death in a Bathroom" on substituting one identical twin for another; and "Who Fired the Shot?" on the absence of powder discoloration around the bullet wound of an apparent suicide. Others rely on specialized knowledge of forensic medicine (a dead body cannot bruise—"Hanging in the Attic") or applied criminology (a door can be locked from outside with a piece of string and a broken knitting needle—"Behind Locked Doors") or on the presence/absence of a seemingly inconsequential piece of evidence that fits only the correct theory (the corkscrew missing from the room of a man supposed to have consumed enough port that his fall from a window can be attributed to drunkenness—"Accidental Death?").

—William Reynolds

Minor Offenses

By Edward D. Hoch

The recent news that John Ball and others are reviving *The Saint Mystery Magazine* is a source of special pleasure to me. I fondly remember the old *Saint,* which first appeared with a Spring 1953 issue and lasted, with a minor interruption, until October 1967. Edited first by Leo Margulies and from 1956 to 1967 by Hans Stefan Santesson, *The Saint* managed the neat trick of maintaining a remarkably high quality of new stories and reprints on a limited budget.

This was due in large measure to Hans Santesson's warm personal relationships with scores of mystery and science-fiction writers. And although payment was small, it was perhaps the fastest in the magazine industry. I still remember sitting in Hans's cluttered Fifth Avenue office about 5:30 one evening early in 1963 when a well-known writer hurried in with a just-completed manuscript and a need for immediate payment. Hans quickly skimmed the manuscript and wrote out a check on the spot.

Looking over back issues of *The Saint,* or the index that John Nieminski compiled in 1980, one is struck with the number of important writers who were regular contributors. Isaac Asimov, Robert Bloch, Lawrence G. Blochman, Ray Bradbury, Fredric Brown, Leslie Charteris (of course), John Creasey, August Derleth, Harlan Ellison, Robert L. Fish, Patricia Highsmith, Dorothy B. Hughes, Michael Innes, John Jakes, Baynard Kendrick, Oliver LaFarge, Wade Miller, Stuart Palmer, Barry Perowne, Craig Rice, Vincent Starrett, T. S. Stribling, Julian Symons, Lawrence Treat, and Cornell Woolrich all contributed new stories, many of which have never been reprinted. The single anthology drawn from *The Saint* (*The Saint Magazine Reader,* Doubleday, 1966) barely scratched the surface.

Isaac Asimov's "Death of a Honey-Blonde" (June '56) was, for example, his first mystery which did not involve science fiction. Frederic Brown's "The Missing Actor" (Nov. '63) is the only short story he ever wrote about Ed & Am Hunter. And Thomas B. Dewey's "The Big Job" (Dec. '65) seems to be his only short story about private eye Mac.

I wish the revived *Saint* every success, and I hope to be reporting on it here soon.

The first quarter of 1983 was not a particularly good one for mystery anthologies, and I found only two worth noting in addition to *Show Business in Murder* (Avon), mentioned in my last column. Bruce Cassiday's *Roots of Detection: The Art of Deduction Before Sherlock Holmes* (Frederick Unger, $6.95 paper, $12.95 cloth) reprints fourteen stories and excerpts from books, beginning with Herodotus and concluding with Gaboriau. Many of them were unknown to me, and they amply demonstrate the editor's thesis that there was indeed detection in fiction before Doyle—and even before Poe!

The other recent anthology, Elana Lore's *Alfred Hitchcock's Fatal Attractions* (Davis Publications, $2.95 paper; Dial Press, $12.95 cloth) is a mixed bag of twenty-one stories of suspense and the supernatural, ten of them reprinted from *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine.* This is the first of the Hitchcock series to be edited by Elana Lore, and she's combined some bizarre and intuitive detectives like Max Carrados, Lord Darcy, Father Brown, The Thinking Machine, and Simon Ark with more traditional horror tales such as "August Heat" and "The Monkey's Paw." The result is a feast of good reading, even though the stories never quite cohere into a unifying theme.

Turning to the magazines, AHMM has a fine lead story in its April issue—"The Spring That Ellie Died" by Stephen Wasylyk. It's an unusual tale of a child murder, and I hope it brings wider recognition to a solid professional writer who's been turning out excellent short stories for more than fifteen years.

It's good to see Ernest Savage back in the June issue of EQMM with a new story about private eye Sam Train, "One Man's Opinion." Savage took time out from short stories to write his first novel, *Two If By Sea* (Scribner's, 1982), which earned him an Edgar nomination.

Speaking of private eyes, don't overlook Bill Pronzini's *Case File* (St. Martin's, $13.95), the first collection of stories about his "Nameless Detective." Two of the ten stories are published in America for the first time, having appeared originally in a Japanese magazine. One of these, "Booktaker," is an especially good tale about seemingly impossible thefts from a rare book store. □

Little Known Author Previews "WORLD OF TOMORROW"

By Rafael Tilton

Few clues point to Phoebe Atwood Taylor (1909–1976) as the author of *Murder at the New York World's Fair* (Random House, 1938), published under her second pseudonym, Freeman Dana. These clues follow patterns Taylor used in her other mystery novels—one a gravestone, another a cramped, handwritten calendar.

The hardcover blue-and-orange book contains no Library of Congress number, is copyrighted by the publisher, and even in the copy owned by Joseph G. Harrison, former publisher of the *Christian Science Monitor,* bears no inscription or signature.

"She wrote it all right," Harrison says, and a reading of the "first killing of Mr. Whalen's 1939 exhibition," as it is called by New York *Herald Tribune* reviewer Will Cuppy, presents some fairly obvious parallels in style and approach. But there is no official record.

The tombstone of Freeman Dana Atwood, located in Oakdale cemetery near Wellfleet, Massachusetts, would have put Taylor's sleuth Asey Mayo on the track. It tells that the pseudonym Freeman Dana, like Alice Tilton, is derived from the name of a relative. He was born April 29, 1879 and died March 15, 1885, "the only son of E.T. & C.M. Atwood," Taylor's maternal grandparents. In the same plot are the headstone of her aunt, Alice Tilton Atwood, Freeman's sister, with whom Taylor lived during her most prolific years, and the unmarked burial place of Taylor's own ashes.

Taylor's calendar, another tangible link between the author of the Asey Mayo and Leonidas Witherall mysteries and *Murder at the New York World's Fair,* is a handwritten account of the author's daily activities and the events and persons in her life. Among the entries for November 1937, she lists "3—T—N.Y.?—Hayward, Norton, Random House, Lunts, Dot & Guy," and "9—S—Bk Fair—Dull—Kay—Jim lunch—Home." This shorthand, translated, means that she was in New York on Tuesday November 3, 1937, had appointments with Hayward Literary Agency, Norton and Random House publishers, went shopping at Lunts and visited with Dot and Guy. She stayed in New York two and a half days, was home on the 9th, a dull day with Kay, lunch with Jim, and an evening at home. The enigmatic "Fair" notation may or may not refer to the book she worked on after this.

November 26, 29, 30, December 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 all have entries "work." On Saturday, December 12, she writes "Mss off—work—work," and on December 13 "Work—Work—MSS off." These entries indicate that she followed her normal habits of completing a manuscript three weeks before deadline. Almost immediately she started another book, which she finished January 3, 1938.

When Taylor donated her shelf to the Mugar Special Collections Library in 1972, she claimed *Murder at the New York World's Fair* with a card reading "Compliments of the Publisher" (Random House), a ticket to the Fair Motorcade and Preview, April 30, 1939, and a clipping of Isaac Anderson's review from the *New York Times Book Section.* Her calendar, however, shows that she did not attend the event. It reads:

27—W—To NY? NY Pindyck—Commodore—Back—Leave—Cx28—Th—NY—Commodore—Megan—WWN—Collins—Arl Taylor McA

29—F—NY—Commodore—Home—M.—Home—Cx30—S—Home—CTR—shpg—Home.

Her premature return from New York seems to be explained by the "Cx," her abbreviation for her monthly "curse."

Pindyck was Hayward's contact, Collins her English publisher, WWN Norton Publishing Company. She often stayed at the Commodore when she was in New York and kept appointments with McArthur at frequent intervals. At home on Saturday the 30th, she went to the Center and shopping.

The Isaac Anderson review is brief and favorable:

> Here we have a preview of the World's Fair with a couple of murders thrown in for good measure. The story starts out as a slapstick farce comedy and continues in that vein, with a few tragic interludes, almost to the end. It is also a genuine puzzler which grows more and more involved with each succeeding page. The central character is a delightful elderly lady, who can be a fluent and convincing liar when the occasion calls for that type of strategy and who fears nothing on earth but snakes. She attends the opening-day exercises of the World's Fair, becomes involved in a murder mystery, and solves it just in time to save the Fair. As the late Dexter Fellows might have said, it is a merry melange of mirth, murder and mystification.

Murder sold for $2. Its jacket features a classic line drawing of the Fair's spike and ball and a stunt plane flying through a beam of light. On the hard cover, next to the ball and spike, is the Random House logo, an Early American building.

Phoebe Atwood Taylor's only story with a heroine opens on a note of whimsy:

> Mrs. Tower simply did not choose to go home, and extrasensory perception played no part in her choice. If she had not missed the six-thirty-two, there would have been no World's Fair opening in New York the next day. There is even a remote possibility that there would have been no World's Fair at all.

The omniscient point of view is adroitly managed throughout, though only two characters' minds are entered: Mrs. Boylston (Daisy) Tower's and Sam Minot's. Daisy is the Louisburg Square matron, mother of Boylston (Boy) Tower, the correspondent. She has smuggled herself out of her nephew Eggleston (Eggy) Tower's "hideous Imitation Early American house" in a laundry truck, convinced that her broken hip no longer needs babying.

Sam Minot is a newspaper reporter, who crashes into Daisy's phone booth and enlists her aid in "shaking Comrade Glue."

The plot develops rapidly. Sam and Daisy are handed tickets to the Fair and a free train ride by Daisy's former maid, Cherry Chipman, who is doing a "market survey." They join two other ticket holders and Cherry herself aboard *The Golden Dart,* Conrad Cassell's de luxe (*sic*) private train, running from Boston to New York. They are suspicious from the start that something is wrong, but, along with their companions, poker sharp Madame Gert Duplain and George Edward Whitty of Whitty and Glum, Meats and Vegetables, they are loath to give up their free tickets.

Farcical situations follow, more like the Alice Tilton series, of which Taylor has already published *Beginning with a Bash* and *Cut Direct,* than like the Asey Mayo stories. The five newfound friends bumble and push their way into the World's Fair opening in a preview published several months before opening day, May 1, 1939.

Fair local color, drawn from newspapers, magazines, and brochures, is liberally and self-consciously applied: "That was right out of the book, what I told you," says Sam Minot, doubling as a Fair guide. "I think I do grand local color," says Cherry during her stint as an usher at the Old English Village.

Reviews of the Fair testify that Taylor's details are authentic—the 700-foot-high trylon, the 4,2000,000-pound steel and stucco perisphere with its ramp (helicline), the five-acre Town of Tomorrow, and the central plaza with a 65-foot statue of George Washington, dedicated by Mayor La Guardia to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the first president's inauguration on that spot.

One of Taylor's descriptions is also partially quoted by Elmer Davis in a biographical sketch of New York Mayor Robert Moses:

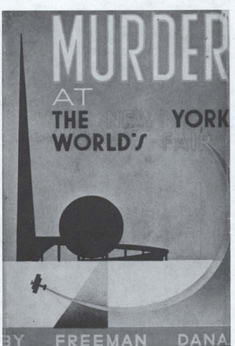
> You go up in a glass-enclosed escalator. Stepping within, you will find yourself seemingly suspended in space on a

moving platform, gazing down at a vast panorama dramatizing the role of cooperation in modern civilization and showing all the elements of society coordinated . . . in a better World of Tomorrow.

The glibness suggests that *Time* of December 5, 1936 was justified in declaring the Fair's publicity department "lyricism . . . more than adequate to its task." Sam's quip, "the helicline with it" is in somewhat the sme vein as *Business Week*'s December 5, 1936 commentary:

In a paroxysm of far-sightedness, the New York World's Fair this week launched a drive to raise $27,829,500 from public-spirited citizens whose solicitude for the fair name of the city will be whetted and abetted by the anticipation of a rolicsome business which is bound to come when hordes of free-spenders descend on the metropolis.

Details from Fair booklets and the media follow in abandon: Fair Cars for Visiting Firemen, Senators, and Captains of Industry; trapeze artists, the Flying Cordovas; the four freedoms statues; the Panto-



mime-teatret from Tivoli in Copenhagen; the "lop-sided ladyfinger roof" of the textile building; the time display in the Elgin Building, "Beginning with the prehistoric smoldering rope and the Egyptian slave gong, continuing down through water clocks and hourglasses to antique and modern watches"; the Eastman Kodak building "on the Blue Plaza"; the guides' uniforms as pictured in the *New York Times,* March 24, 1937; the color scheme:

"You know what?" Whitty said. "I bet orange and blue are the Fair colors, huh?"

Madame Duplain looked at him and sighed.

"Either that, Porterhouse," she said, "or someone's good and colorblind."

Whitty's question, "What about Sally Rand, huh?" is reminiscent of a *Business Week* commentary on the "wrigglings of Little Egypt and the disclosures of Sally Rand." The expensive cigars on Cassell's train are Coronas, named for the Corona dumps, the site chosen by Fair planners to be transformed into a park after the Fair. When Whitty tries them, he finds them tasteless, slips one of the Corona bands on his own stogie, and comments, "you know you're smoking something."

An October 20, 1937 *New York Times* article describes Benjamin Albrecht's new adhesive, used to affix copper to the office walls of the Fair's administration building—a possible source of Comrade Glue's qualities: "more persistent . . . More dogged and rugged. Like granite . . . an amorphous quality about his face. Gluey."

Given Taylor's work schedule, even the *New York Times* artists' drawings of December 6, 1937 could have inspired one guides' airy, "The Amusement Zone is looped around the lake."

Immersion in allusions is a trademark of Taylor's writing. Still, the real point of her books is the murder plot, relying strongly on fast action, racy dialogue, and psychological motivations.

Conrad Cassell, "the most eccentric tycoon in North America," has been interviewed by Sam Minot, who explains,

"Cassell almost *was* the Fair! One wave of an eyelash and Cassell would have been the director . . .

"And when he didn't get to be director," Sam continued, "he was so sore that everybody thought he'd never come near the place. But he had a change of heart, and stuck up a building that looks like Venus de Milo having nightmares . . .

"And Cassell's even going to be there for the opening pageant to keep an eye on the Old Masters he's lent and the ones he's wangled for the exhibition."

The ousting of a director was a real item in the actual preparations for the Fair. Joseph G. Shadgen, "a tall, shy, greying, civil engineer," had started the Fair off on the suggestion of his twelve-year-old daughter. In 1937, Grover Aloysius (Gardenia) Whalen took over the supersell of the city's promotion, first "supplanting" George McAneney, who had headed the

businessman's spearheading group, and then in June "dismissing" Shadgen. Whalen's "bubbly personality," a contrast to the engineer's, put him well in front in 1937–38 publicity.

The fictitious murder occurs in Cassell's private office on *The Golden Dart*. It is discovered by Sam, whose clumsy detecting only makes him more suspect. Daisy, who solves the mystery, doesn't find out about the murder until page 110, when Whitty reveals the prime suspects:

"Say, didn't they grill you? For the murder?... the one on the train? I heard about it from a radio... They were sending out a general alarm for us.... They think we did it."

Daisy has already seen headlines regarding her disappearance from her nephew's house. She doesn't want to be recognized and taken home in disgrace before she has seen the Fair. So she undertakes the solution of the crime for her own purposes. She and Sam steal guides' uniforms and programs, and the five fugitives are soon touring oil magnates from the Arab countries. She gives a quick summary of suspects and motivations:

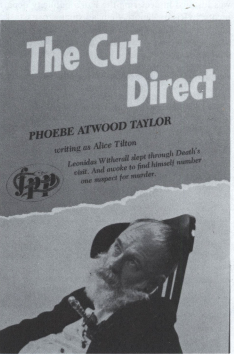
"The murder or the death of some important personage might dim it, but there's really nothing that could stop the Fair. Fire is out because the thing's been too well planned. Things are fireproofed, and all. And epidemics, like a big flu epidemic, might cripple it. Labor trouble might cripple it. But nothing could really stop it. It represents too much of an investment . . . They insured themselves and their buildings against there being a Fair. See?"

The insurance motivation slowly brings the murder victim's identity to light. He is the insurance agent, Daisy's nephew, Eggy Tower, alias "Comrade Glue," Sam's dogged pursuer. The realization of these coincidences, and the series of disguises that follow, are again characteristic of Taylor's plots.

Realizing that Mrs. Lizzie Trimmingham and Elfrida (Eggy's wife) are both at the Fair and will recognize her on sight, Daisy discards the guide's uniform and joins Cherry in Old English period costume—French slops, actually. Shortly afterward, she dons a "shapeless dirndl," forges a letter on filched *Golden Dart* stationery, and re-enters the train as an interior decorator. While there, she overhears a conversation that explains why Brand is unrolling window shades with paintings in them. She knocks him out with a cut-glass vase and ties him up with his suspenders and necktie, is caught by Stragg the chauffeur, but outwits him, knocks him out, and leaves him tied up under the protection of a duped guard.

Then she changes into a reporter, borrows a car and drives for the first time since having broken her hip, finds a cape, and transforms herself once more into *the* Mrs. Boylston Tower of Louisburg Square.

She arrives in the lobby of the hourglass building just in time to hear of the second murder, Elfrida. Wanting to make a "Garrison finish," she confronts Cassell in the lobby of his own building, having already disconnected the elaborate wiring job by



which he would have blown up the entire Fair when its lights were first turned on at the opening ceremony.

Murder at the New York World's Fair is Taylor's only book in which the identity of the victims belongs as much to the subplot motivation as to the ferreting out of the criminal. Daisy's razor-sharp intuition tells her that her nephew was murdered because he was after a lot of money. He had stumbled into something he wasn't expecting and probably didn't recognize. His murder was a "gesture of panic," an effort to keep concealed something too big to let anything threaten its success. Since neither murder nor fire would stop the Fair, something big enough to dwarf even the investments had to explain the killing.

Eggy's identity as the victim, and as Sam's pursuer "Comrade Glue," makes sense also in the story of Daisy's personal needs and desires. He is the insurance agent, needy and greedy for a large account, able to give the reporter damaging information,

afraid of publicity. He is also the overbearing nephew who has imprisoned Daisy's free spirit. Her response to the news of his death suggests the undercurrent of violence harbored in Taylor's only heroine. Daisy's

> face was set and immobile. But she wasn't going to faint. Boy Tower's mother wasn't the fainting kind.
>
> When she spoke, she spoke in that calm, icy voice that had frightened Sam a little, the few times he'd heard it. A lesser woman would be having hysterics, Sam thought. And perhaps hysterics might be easier to take than that silent calm.

Daisy has done violence to her longings and put down her suspicions of Eggy for over a year. No wonder she knows how to trip Sam with the tip of her cane, how to elude the police and downgrade their intelligence, how to knock out Brand and Stragg with a cut-glass vase, how to lie thoroughly and creatively, and how, in a final triumph of restraint, to lead Cassell on to his gloating confession.

In fact, the only restrained violence in the whole novel turns out to be the two murders—which are behind the scenes and undescribed. Cassell's careful planning of the ruin of the Fair, on the other hand, required ingenious alibis, outstanding foresight, and immense patience with detail. His timing in the plot to make his hourglass building the source of final revenge for his ousting is the ultimate in restraint.

And Daisy's restraint is as total as it is unwitting and nurtured by her role-loving personality, a personality so strong the whole Boston world knows it at a glance, yet so much in control that at a moment's imagination it can become a Mrs. Days, a floozy interior decorator, or a frowzy reporter.

This quality of restrained violence makes *Murder at the New York World's Fair* a book of its time as documented in the media of 1936–37 and the months of the Fair. Coverage of the arms race pairs up with Fair director Whalen's assurance that "the uncle of the King of Egypt told me today that there positively will be no war." The media picture projects an image commensurate with the businessmen's announcement of the expected end of a depression as a good time to have the fair—knowing at the same time that the War Orders are coming in.

The book contains a few overt expressions of this violence, beyond the news of the murder itself. Cherry Chipman says, "I've killed Eggy Tower in my mind every night for months." Daisy, chafing at the pretensions and surveillance she has expreienced in Eggy and Elfrida's house, represses her real feelings. But once away from her nephew's, she knows

> she simply could not endure, now, to go back to a place where her food was censored, where they choked beef tea down her throat, tried her door knob when she refused to answer a knock, and tampered with the private papers on her desk. And with her check book, too.

The distancing of violence by the newspapers that were Taylor's sources appear in the book as Daisy's familiarity with the editing process. She suspects Whitty of the murder after seeing a clipping of his picture under a picture thief headline. But when she sees the whole page, she exclaims:

> "It's the composing room again. That head goes with the next column, over the lead about the Mona Lisa. Whitty's picture got its own column. He's just been inducted as Grand Leader of the Barambeba Lodge. . . . He's a butcher after all.

And Sam, the reporter, declares,

> "I haven't taken much interest in this fair since the preview they had just a year ago. I ducked it, and wrote a swell story from a publicity layout, and then it went and rained and half the program was cancelled. You'll never hope to read anything more glowing than my description of those preview fireworks."

Murder at the New York World's Fair, then, is consistent not only with the facts of the Fair and the inner life of its heroine, but with the composite portrayal of the world in the day's newspapers. And it might be as appropriate today as a preview of "the world of tomorrow." In the 1937–38 of the book, nickels were still working in the public telephones, but unrest in Poland, the build-up of armies, and the mobilization of arms and munitions are documented today as they were then.

Taylor, portraying denial of inner violence in Daisy, even reveals it in herself. She makes three allusions to world events. Boy Tower was "writing up the war in China." The people at the Fair reminded Daisy of "mobs massed in Red Square." Sam in his guide uniform looks "like a poster for Fascist youth."

After her debut as a detective, Daisy wants only to relax, listen to music ("The Pink Lady"), and read a book. Her first choice is *Lady Audeley's Secret,* a famous novel by Mary E. Braddon, written under a male pseudonym in 1862. It made Braddon's fortune and that of her publisher, John Maxwell, to whom she was married.

Intimidated by Cherry's "What?" Daisy demurs and says *Little Women* will be an acceptable substitute for *Lady Audeley.*

Unfortunately, it appears no one ever picked up that clue to her authorship. It may even be that the book was never sold. Big promotions like World's Fairs don't always appreciate other uses of their names. Random House has kept no record, and Phoebe Atwood Taylor never wrote another Freeman Dana novel. From then on, she kept her heroine inside. □

THE ODDLY COLORED THREAD: LOGIC IN DETECTIVE FICTION

By Louis Phillips

I confess. I do not devour mystery stories like chocolates. I remain, in fact, somewhat puzzled and frightened by the men and women who wander into my local library and cart away, week after blood-stained week, shopping bags and carts filled to overflowing with mayhem—ax murders, poisonings, blackmail, kidnapping, and sundry other forms of diabolical connivings. Since I am not of that crew, I often wonder what philosophy comforts them late at night, when mystery story fanatics devour man's inhumanity to man? The philosophy must be that *Crime Does Not Pay*. Though I doubt that, if it did not pay, so many people would partake of it.

Granted my lack of fanaticism (or lack of expertise, as the case may be), I should like to explore a few minor points concerning logic, reasoning, and the analytical processes as evidenced in the short detective story, for it seems to me that the kind of reasoning used by a writer to create a memorable work of mystery fiction is not the same kind of reasoning used to solve crimes. Is this not what Edgar Allan Poe hints at in his introduction to "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"? In that story, the narrator states:

> The analytical power must not be confounded with simple ingenuity; for while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often incapable of analysis. The constructive or combining power, by which ingenuity is usually manifested, and to which the phrenologists (I believe erroneously) have assigned a separate organ, supposing it is a primitive faculty, has been so frequently seen in those whose intellect bordered otherwise upon idiocy, as to have attracted general observation among writers on morals. Between ingenuity and the analytic ability there exists a difference far greater, indeed, than that between the fancy and the imagination, but of a character very strictly analogous. It will be found, in fact, that the ingenious are always fanciful, and the truly imaginative never otherwise than analytic.

Mystery writers stand in the great gulf that separates ingenuity from analytical ability, and, in that gulf, many a furious and curious swim takes place.

Mystery writers, I believe, often work backward. Before a mystery writer starts his book, he probably already knows the murderer, the motive, and the events leading to the crime. Then the writer works backward to provide a coherent and suspense-filled entertainment. From sentence one, the end is in view. I do not insist that all detective story writers follow this method, but, if I were going to write a mystery, I should like to have a notion of the ending. I certainly do not want the wrong person to swing in the noose of my detections. Along the way, I would also provide the reader with a number of clues so that my readers could take part in the pleasures of ratiocination. I would remain mindful of the advice given by S. S. Van Dine in his essay "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories," especially the rule that tells us that:

> The culprit must be determined by logical deductions—not by accident or coincidence or unmotivated confession. To solve a criminal problem in this latter fashion is like sending the reader on a deliberate wild-goose chase, and then telling him, after he has failed, that you had the object up your sleeve all the time. Such an author is no better than a practical joker.

Of course, the problem is that mystery writers always have the object of their search up their sleeves, and that is why so many stories are merely variations on practical jokes. When all is said and done (though it

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never happens that all is said and done), the process of reasoning backward is not the same process used in reasoning forward. There lies the chief charm and the major problem of creating detective fiction.

The most famous example of the perils involved in reasoning backward can be seen in the well-known paradox concerning the condemned prisoner. A prisoner is sentenced to death and the judge tells the condemned man, "You will die within the week, but *you will not know the day on which your execution is to be carried out.*" The prisoner smiles mysteriously and glances up at the judge. "Your honor," he says, "if what you say is true, then you will have to let me go free. You say I shall not know the day of my execution. Therefore, since today is Saturday, if I am alive next Saturday, you will have to let me go, because that day would have to be the day of my execution and you state I will not know the day my execution is to take place. Therefore, if I am alive on Friday, I know that Friday would have to be my day of execution. It follows then that if I am alive on Friday, you will have to let me go. Thus, Thursday will have to be my final day, but if I am alive on Thursday you will have to let me go, etc., etc. You will have to execute me today, and since I know my day of execution, you will have to let me go."

Such is the paradox. The judge probably had the prisoner executed anyway because he knew that reasoning backward is not the same as reasoning forward. Any charlatan can reason after the fact (the world is populated with Monday morning quarter-backs and back-seat drivers). The trick is to reason before the fact. Sherlock Holmes himself must have been aware of the problem faced by writers of detective fiction when he gently joshed Dr. Watson in "The Problem of the Thor Bridge": "I am getting into your involved habit, Watson, of telling a story backwards." The relationship between Holmes and Watson significantly improved after Holmes attempted to narrate a few of his own adventures. Writers tell their stories backward (that is what the art of rewriting allows); life goes inexorably forward.

The cathedral of analytical thinking in detective fiction has many a sturdy support and many a flying buttress. The most frequently cited theories are to be found in the aforementioned "Murders in the Rue Morgue," wherein Poe warns us that "the mental features discoursed of as analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis. We appreciate them only in their effects," and it is impossible to venture far into detective fiction without bumping one's head smack against Sherlock Holmes's dictum (as proclaimed in "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier") that his method of deduction "starts with the supposition that when you have eliminated all which is impossible, then whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth. It may well be that several explanations remain, in which case one tries test after test until one or other of them has a convincing amount of support." All this sounds good in theory, but, when life strolls in, theory is the first to go flying out the window. Henry the waiter in Isaac Asimov's delightful series of tales about sessions held by a club called The Black Widowers points out an obvious objection to Holmes's theory:

> Well, sir, to say that when the impossible has been eliminated, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth is to make the assumption, usually unjustified, that everything that can be considered has indeed been considered. Let us suppose we have considered ten factors. Nine are clearly impossible. Is the tenth, however improbable, therefore true? What if there were an eleventh factor, a twelfth?

To repeat, when all is said and done, not all is said and done.

A third buttress might be Martin Hewitt's matter of accumulative probabilities. In "The Case of Mr. Foggatt," a journalist named Brett plays Watson to Arthur Morrison's Hewitt and sets forth Hewitt's method:

> Often when I have remarked upon the apparently trivial nature of the clues by which he allowed himself to be guided,—sometimes, to all seeming, in the very face of all likelihood,—he has replied that two trivialities, pointing in the same direction, became at once, by their mere agreement, no trivialities at all, but enormously important considerations. "If I were in search of a man," he would say, "of whom I knew nothing but that he squinted, bore a birthmark on his right hand, and limped, and I observed a man who answered to the first peculiarity, so far the clue would be trivial, because thousands of men squint. Now, if that man presently moved and exhibited a birthmark on his right hand, the value of that squint and that mark would increase at once a hundred or a thousand fold. Apart they are little; together much...two trivialities, pointing in the same direction, become very strong evidence."

Both Sherlock Holmes and Martin Hewitt pride themselves upon their abilities to make keen observations and then to make deductions from the trivialities observed. In "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier," a stranger appears at Holmes's lodgings and the Master indulges in a bit of showing off (this adventure, by the way, is narrated by the detective himself):

> "From South Africa, sir, I perceive."
> "Yes, sir," he answered, with some surprise.
> "Imperial Yeomanry, I fancy."
> "That is so. Mr. Holmes, you are a wizard."
> I smiled at his bewildered expression.
> "When a gentleman of virile appearance enters my room with such tan upon his face as an English sun could never give, and with his handkerchief in his sleeve instead of in his pocket, it is not difficult to place him. You wear a short beard, which shows that you were not a regular. You have the cut of a riding-man. As to Middlesex, your card has

already shown me that you are a stockbroker from Throgmorton Street. What other regiment would you join?"

Since the story takes place right after the Boer War, there is a good chance that any young virile man with a tan has been a soldier in South Africa. Still, there might be other places where an Englishman could acquire a good tan. As for having an office in Middlesex, many a man works and has worked in places far from where he has grown up or far from where he might have joined the army. But these, of course, are quibbles. They have little to do with the premises upon which detective fiction is daily built. A few of the premises that underlie the creation of detective fiction may be stated as follows:

1. There is such a thing as cause and effect in the universe.
2. The human mind and computers can solve problems provided they are fed enough correct information.
3. Much of the correct information is collected through hard work, careful observation (see the above excerpt from "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier"), and luck.
4. Good detective stories attempt to minimize luck and coincidence as much as possible, though luck and coincidence do play large roles in our lives.
5. The human mind is fascinated by its own ability to think or its illusion that it thinks that it is thinking. We think, therefore we are detectives.

There are more ground rules than I have time to list, but these five premises are among the most important. In addition, as Alfred Hitchcock (or his ghostwriter) informs us in the introduction to *The Pocket Book of Great Detectives,* detective fiction

is distinguished from all other types of crime fiction by its insistence upon the normal. The abnormal event—theft, arson, murder—is explained in terms of the material, the natural, the logical. Crime is the stone thrown into a quiet pool. It is the oddly colored thread woven into a colorless pattern.

I like that. Reason itself creates colorless patterns.

In creating detective fiction, the writer creates a world of conclusions, but as readers and critics we are all well aware of the great difference that exists between arriving at conclusions and leaping at them. Leaps are more exciting and more dramatic than calm analytical reasoning, but he who leaps often does not land upon his feet. In Anthony Berkeley's story "The Avenging Chance," for example, Chief-Inspector Moresby contemplates the notion of murdering a man by sending the victim a box of poisoned chocolates. He says:

"If anything does stand out about this business it is that it's a woman's crime. Nobody but a woman would send poisoned chocolates to a man. Another man would send a poisoned sample of whiskey, or something like that."

"That's a very sound point, Moresby," Roger mediated. "Very sound indeed."

Well, I believe that the above is not a sound example of reasoning or, to rephrase my statement, is not an example of sound reasoning. I also believe the author knows Moresby's deduction is not logical, for the murderer (and it pains me to give away the ending) turns out to be a man. Inspector Moresby's conclusion was planted early to throw the reader off the track, and the reader was called upon to spot the faulty logic. Not all mystery stories, however, work that way.

In Anthony Wynne's classic short story "The Cyprian Bees," the widow of an artist is killed by a

bee sting. Dr. Hailey, the detective, visits the dead woman's flat and finds an unsigned receipt for a book titled *The Love-Songs of Robert Browning*. Dr. Hailey questions why the receipt should be in the victim's apartment:

"Then, why should the receipt for it be lying in this room?"

"My dear doctor, how should I know? I suppose, because the man who possessed it chose to throw it away here."

The doctor shook his head.

"Men do not buy collections of love-songs for themselves, nor for that matter, do women. They buy them—almost invariably—to give to people they are interested in. Everybody, I think, recognizes that."

He broke off. A look of impatience came into Biles's face.

"Well?"

"Therefore, a man does not, as a rule, reveal to one woman the fact that he has made such a purchase on behalf of another. I mean, it is difficult to believe that any man on intimate terms with Mrs. Bardwell would have invited her jealousy by leaving such plain evidence of his interest in another woman lying about in her rooms. I assume, you see, that no man would give that poor lady this particular book."

It is easy to see that the above passage is rife with bad assumptions. There is no name signed to the receipt, yet the assumption is that it was a man who bought the book. Persons also have been known to buy books of love-songs for themselves, especially if they love lyric poetry. Also, why shouldn't someone give a book of poems by Robert Browning to the "poor lady"? Now "The Cyprian Bees" is a very imaginative story, and it deserves its rightful place in the collections of great detective stories. But it is great because it is imaginative, not because it is analytical. The above passage from the story disturbs me. Detectives must form hypotheses. Yes. Detectives must play the odds. Yes. But there are good hypotheses and bad ones, and one of the major problems with the short detective story is that the short form does not allow enough time to follow false leads. When time is compressed, reason becomes distorted.

Undoubtedly, the worse violations of deductive reasoning can be seen in the Sunday comic strip "Encyclopedia Brown" by Donald J. Sobol. Donald Sobol's youthful detective is very popular, and, hence, I find his violations of reason and manners particularly annoying. I hate to see young readers misled into thinking that they are thinking when they are merely leaping to unearned conclusions. The comic strip is, of course, a much more constricting form than the short story, but children should not be so beguilingly misled. In one strip, for example, Encyclopedia Brown warns the owner of an antique store not to accept a woman's check because the initials on the woman's hand-bag do not match the name on the check. Ingenious, yes. But I would prefer for young readers to pause a moment before issuing verdicts. Perhaps the woman has borrowed the handbag. In another strip, Encyclopedia Brown tells his mother that a woman named Jenny Schmidt is a phony. Ms. Schmidt is a phony (I use the term uttered by the detective) because her résumé states that she attended Robert F. Kennedy Junior High School, 1960–63. Donald Sobel's solution informs the reader that "Robert Kennedy wasn't appointed Attorney General until 1961. He was assassinated in 1968. Therefore, it is unlikely a school would have been named for him in 1960." I'll buy that, though there might be a Robert F. Kennedy High School built before 1960, or it might happen that, if a person attends a junior high school that later changes its name, that person might well list the new name on a résumé. "Highly unlikely" is not the same as "beyond a reasonable doubt," and I don't believe that children, brainy or otherwise, should shout out "She's a phony!" on such tissue-thin evidence.

In Issac Asimov's story "The Obvious Factor" (wherein the waiter Henry expresses his criticism of Holmes's dictum about improbability), Henry calls a guest at the Black Widowers' club a liar because the guest, who is trying to convince the skeptical members that extrasensory perception and precognition exist, adds a significant detail to his story at the last minute. The guest has told the Black Widowers that a building had caught on fire because it was struck by lightning. Henry believes that the guest is a liar because "each time you eliminated a solution by inventing more information. I was positive when you mentioned the lightning. That was so dramatic that you surely would have brought it in at the very beginning. To be mentioned only at the very end made it clear that you created it, improvised it, on the spot to block a final hope." I am fond of this deduction, but I am not certain that a person should be called a liar because he leaves out a significant detail, only to reveal it at the last minute. I think it only proves that Mr. Asimov is a better storyteller than the guest at the club. Unprofessional storytellers often leave out sigificant information when telling stories. If everyone could tell a story simply, clearly, and honestly, we wouldn't need lawyers to cross-examine witnesses in the courtroom.

Of course, we should not expect our detectives to be super-heroes. Many are victims of their own prejudices and their own stations in life. Martin Hewitt, who prides himself on his intelligence, comes up with this odd conclusion in "The Affair of the Tortoise":

"You notice," Hewitt proceeded, turning to Nettings, "the only ink in this place is scented and violet, and the only paper is tinted and scented, too, with a monogram—characteristic of a negro with money."

No, no, no. That is prejudice, not a logical deduction. That is phony-baloney reasoning, and I believe it takes the edge off Arthur Morrison's characterization of Hewitt as an intelligent gent.

In fiction, as in life, a little reasoning goes a long way, but, far too often, what detective story writers call "logical deductions" are mere stuffings for the wild goose. Detective stories are entertainments, and, therefore, we must be careful not to confuse the reasoning presented therein with the reasoning that brings us to truth and justice. We must heed Poe's warning that "The analytical power must not be confounded with simple ingenuity." The wild goose is caught and dressed, its legs trussed together with an oddly colored thread. □

A CATALOGUE OF CRIME

By Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor

S198 Courtier, S. H.
Gently Dust the Corpse
Hammond 1960

No doubt the Australian outback develops weird characters, and a three-day dust storm in broiling heat presumably makes them even weirder. But the collection of people marooned without a phone in a small inn at Tyson's Bend act in ways that stretch credulity to the breaking point. The young and bright Melbourne lawyer, Alan Birchip ("Birch") goes there to help settle the matter of a lottery ticket which has disappeared after the group at the Bend who bought it together has learned that it has won £100,000. After sundry verbal and physical rows, murder takes place—and repeats—inside the beleaguered inn. Besides Birch, who acts as investigator, the only other rational being is the schoolteacher Helen, but she has a secret that keeps her mute. Over all of them hangs the menace of one James Cullerman, wanted for half a dozen murders: is he one of the group and responsible for the new killings? Detection is intermittent but quite good considering the zany behavior that prevails. The outcome, a bit accidental, permits Birch and Helen to come together as the stifling storm turns to welcome rain. Far from the best performance by this capable author.

S199 Gaute, J. H. H. and Odell, Robin
The Murderer's Who's Who
Foreword by Colin Wilson
Pan Books 1980 (orig. Harrap 1979)

The authors offer a choice of murder cases and biographies from 1828 (Burke and Hare) to the present. The accounts, which average 300 words in length, supply in workmanlike manner the background, motive, modus operandi, defense plea, and verdict when available. At the end, one or more numbered references direct the reader to the list of over 700 books among which to find longer treatments of the murder. The paperback edition of this *Who's Who* adds nine new titles, bringing the total bibliography to 720. But the merits of these works is not assessed, and some, of course, are but rewrite jobs based on the original studies. As for the selection of cases, it includes some that are interesting but little known, and it tends to omit certain notable ones, perhaps because they are foreign or remain unsolved. Even so, a useful repertory.

S200 Jackson, Robert
The Crime Doctors
Muller 1966

Under that ungainly title-phrase, which he repeats ad nauseum, the author reports some of the achievements of English forensic pathologists, principally Spillsbury, John Glaister, Jr., Sydney Smith, Roche Lynch, Francis Camps, and Denis and Kathleen Hocking. In the twenty-two cases chosen, he is able from time to time to quote these experts' informal remarks to him apropos of some of their coups. Considering that most of these murders are unfamiliar ones and that the medical evidence is often unusual and ingenious, it is a pity that the book as a whole did not turn out more interesting. The reason seems to be that the author is a journalist and not a storyteller. He tends to summarize at the beginning and kill suspense; only two or three of the longer narratives can be said to have form and to do justice to the parties involved. But the first sentence of the book is a gem: "Dead men have been telling tales for a long time to those with the gift of listening."

S201 Jesse, F. Tennyson
Comments on Cain
Hein 1948

The three murder trials here reported at first hand by Miss Jesse are acceptably done, with help from the local color of Pasadena (Harold Wolcott), Bath (Reginald Ivor Hinks), and Paris (Eugen Weidmann). But the comments on Cain are of no special freshness or profundity. The author is really not at home among general truths, as is painfully clear in her long Preface, which rambles on like an impromptu in free association. Besides incoherence, it contains too many miswritten ideas, such as: "It is particularly the duty of the Law to make it as difficult as possible for crimes to take place, and so it is not surprising that the United States, where a large proportion of the crimes consist of shooting, should allow its citizens to possess pistols and revolvers." Or again: "Even the most excellent citizen cannot be trusted always to take the law into his own hands."

S202 Jesse, F. Tennyson
The Trial of Ley and Smith (illus.)
Hodge (NBT) 1947

What actually happened at 5 Beaufort Gardens in London on the 28th of November 1946 will never be exactly known. But the events and motives that led to the murder of the innocent—indeed irrelevant—John Mudie in the basement of that house form a plot equal to that of the finest psychological novel. It is a case that has rarely been discussed, but owing to the self-revelation of the persons involved, the trial is a sort of continual commentary on character and action. The climax, not directly reported to spare the susceptible, is a description of heterosexual sodomy — imaginary, most likely. An atmosphere of insane rationality pervades the entire six months of Ley's obsession and Smith's machinations. The irony is that their purpose in conspiracy was a shifting delusion, as in a tragicomedy by Pirandello.

One has to add, with regret, that Miss Jesse's introduction is incoherent and inaccurate to the point of absurdity, as when she writes that "anyone who is prepared to commit a felony in which there is at least danger of death to the victim should be executed." Fortunately, the superb opening for the Crown by E. A. Hawke is a masterly and dispassionate exposition that makes all the succeeding testimony beautifully intelligible.

S203 Hastings, Macdonald
The Other Mr. Churchill (illus.)
Harrap 1963

Robert Churchill (1886–1958) had something of the cherubic look of Winston and was often confused with him, but the man he should be paired with is Bernard Spillsbury, the forensic medico. For thirty years, at the Assizes or the Old Bailey, after the latter's testimony on the fatal wound would come that by Robert on the fatal bullet. "Mac" Hastings, the creator of Mr. Cork, was a close friend of Churchill the gunsmith's and tells his life with zest and insight. It brings up many cases, of which relatively few are hackneyed. This biography thus yields a mass of fresh information about guns, detection, and trials. The only mystery left is how one follows the recommended way of shooting with "two pistols pressed hard against the pit of the stomach." The gentle reader wants to know which end is pressed hard.

S204 Jones, Louis C.
Murder at Cherry Hill (illus.)
Introduction by Theodore Corbett
Historic Cherry Hill, Albany, N.Y.
1982

The Strang-Whipple case of 1827 is one that comes fresh to the reader of true crime, who has surely had enough of Lizzie Borden and Professor Webster. In a house that still stands as a museum, a poor devil of a handyman was goaded by a bored, well-to-do young wife into killing her husband. The pattern is that of Bywaters and Thompson in England and Snyder and Gray in Brooklyn—especially pitiful in this its early form, because Strang got hanged and Mrs. Whipple was acquitted.

The story is told with a sobriety approaching the lusterless: maps, floor plans, elevations, and other line drawings make it easy to

follow. The Introduction supplies the economic and social setting, which one could wish had been interwoven with the narrative.

S205 Marshall, Marguerite Mooers
Murder Without Morals
Clifford, Lewis, and Stone, n.d.

Written in clichés and saturated with conventional "womanly" feelings, this tale can appeal only to readers who prefer the unreal because it will not waken them from their habitual reverie. The exploits of a pathological strangler of young women inspires a "lovely girl" to put herself in the way of his restless hands so that she can surprise a confession out of him. Standard maiden-in-peril is high art compared to this twaddle, which tempts every adult reader to see the strangler as a public benefactor if he can pull off this one additional coup.

S206 Meynell, Laurence W.
The House on the Cliff
Lippincott 1932

Meynell is uneven, as his assiduous readers know, but the excuse for this story is not the author's lapse of power so much as his intention to do the kind of work in vogue at the time. An early-retired English captain buys an old inn in Salisbury (a good place to choose) and hopes to settle down to an easy life, running the pub, riding and hunting, drinking and smoking, and letting the world wag. So far, so good. But there ensue complications with a neighboring magnate who is the guardian of a beautiful girl. It is the events as well as the emotions and the language of these complications that are altogether absurd. At times they sound like parody, but they are "meant serious" and so boring as to make one weep rather than laugh. □

A NERO WOLFE QUIZ

Compiled by Dave Lewis, Bruce Taylor & Others

1. What hours does Nero Wolfe spend with his orchids?
2. What does Wolfe do in the basement?
3. What Stout novel is a spin-off from the Wolfe series?
4. What two things does Wolfe drink for breakfast?
5. Name the group of cooks that meets in *Too Many Cooks?*
6. Which dictionary did Wolfe once burn?
7. Which famous historical figure is thought (perhaps) to be the father of Nero Wolfe?
8. What is Archie's most prized possession?
9. What sport is involved in the story *Over My Dead Body*?
10. What is Fritz Brenner's home country?
11. In one story Wolfe goes to a party in costume. What is his costume?
12. Name the man *The League of Frightened Men* is frightened of?
13. Wht pleasure does Wolfe get from television?
14. The story *Instead of Evidence* involves a novelty company. What is the murder weapon?
15. Beside the red leather chair in Wolfe's office is a small table. What is the primary purpose for this table?
16. What are Wolfe's first words in *Fer-de-Lance*?
17. Fritz's pet?
18. Theodore's pet?

In *Black Orchids* a lady compares Archie to a certain movie star.

19. Which star?

Archie feels if he must be compared to a star it should be a different one.

20. Which star?

In which novels does Zeck appear?

21.
22.
23.
24. Name either of Wolfe's favorite bookmarks?

Nero Wolfe appeared in print in America in 1933. Did the following famous fictional detectives appear *before or after*?

25. Perry Mason
26. The Saint
27. Miss Marple
28. Dr. Gideon Fell
29. Dick Tracy
30. Sam Spade
31. Ellery Queen
32. Nick Charles

(Answers appear on p. 322)

Real Life Cases

CRIME HUNT

By T. M. McDade

THE LEYRA CASE

About noon on Tuesday, January 10, 1950, Camilo Weston Leyra, Jr. left his wife at their home in New Jersey and arrived at his father's business at 22 Warren Street, New York, where he found his father's business partner, William Herrschaft, worried because the seventy-five-year-old senior Leyra had not appeared for work. The son then made a number of telephone calls: to a box factory where his father was expected to pick up some material (he had not been there); to a neighbor in his parents' apartment house as his folks had no phone (no one answered the neighbor's knock on his parents' door); to his father's doctor as he had a heart condition (the doctor had heard nothing); and finally to a cousin who lived near them (she was baby sitting and could not leave her house.)

By 2:30 P.M., Leyra Jr., accompanied by Herrschaft and joined also by a cousin, Manuel Valdes, whom they met as they left the building, took the subway to 105 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, where in the first floor flat Valdes opened the door on a scene reminiscent of Mme. Tussaud's waxworks. Old Mr. Leyra lay just inside the door, his head shattered by some heavy weapon, and on the kitchen floor eighty-year-old Mrs. Leyra also lay dead, her skull likewise smashed by heavy blows. At first robbers were suspected; the neighborhood had deteriorated into what is now the Bedford-Stuyvesant slum, and the old couple had had trouble with neighbors about whom they had complained to police. Despite the obvious likelihood that the crime was the work of intruders, it was not long before the attention of the investigating detectives focused on the fifty-year-old son.

Leyra Jr., a chunky, unimpressive-looking man who despite his Latin name was an Irish Catholic, worked for his father as a salesman in the carbon and typewriter business; he was also a partner in another business with Herrschaft, supplying textiles. He had, at one time, been a musician with some of the bands of the big-name era—Ben Bernie's, Vincent Lopez's, and Paul Whiteman's—as a clarinetist. Now, however, his role in life was less exalted; his principal occupation was as night bartender at the Open Door Bar and Grill, a Greenwich Village pub. While his official domicile was a house in North Bergen, New Jersey, where his wife and three children resided, most nights found him in a village apartment on West 10th Street which he shared with a woman whom the court later characterized as his "paramour."

Leyra was subjected to routine questioning on the evening of the homicides, and, on the following day, when a written statement was taken from him, he was not detained. In it, he denied all knowledge of the crimes and told the police of his movements, including his leaving the Village apartment about 10:00 A.M. on Tuesday to visit his wife in New Jersey, it being her birthday; his visit thereafter to the office in the afternoon; and then going to Brooklyn with Herrschaft. It did provide a rough alibi. Two pieces of evidence turned the attention of the police to the son: (1) a third cup of tea on the kitchen table, a storybook clue indicating the presence of someone known to the victims, and (2) during questioning, his girlfriend, Lee Adamski, mentioned his wearing a new raincoat which she had never seen before.

Miss Adamski told the police that when Leyra had returned to the apartment about 9:00 P.M., after the discovery of the murders, he had been wearing a tan raincoat she had never seen before. When she asked about his blue overcoat, he avoided replying for some time and finally said that he had left it in the subway. She also noticed he was wearing a new suit she had not previously seen, but did not question him about that as he appeared distressed and abstracted. Leyra had then left the flat to go to New Jersey to be with his wife and family.

The next morning, Wednesday, he went to the Warren Street establishment, where he met the detectives and spent the day with them, the questioning culminating in a formal statement taken at the 88th Precinct in the early afternoon. While this interview and later questioning was going on, pairs of detectives were checking each of the explanations which Leyra had given. At 11:00 P.M. he was finally allowed to go home to New Jersey. Thursday was not unlike the day before, but now, instead of asking questions, two detectives took Leyra about the city to locate the stores where he claimed to have bought the suit and shoes and to try to account for the missing overcoat. He had told the police he had bought the suit the week before in Klein's on Union Square, but when detectives went to that store with him they were unable to find the salesman whom he claimed had sold him the suit, and, as Klein sold merchandise with the labels of many manufacturers, it could not be identified as coming from that store. Moreover, Klein's had a standing policy of making no alterations in suits it sold, so that the fitting of the trouser cuffs could not have been done in their store. At an Army and Navy store where Leyra claimed to have bought the new shoes he was wearing, the salesman said that the shoes which bore the trademark "Sun Dial" were not a product they had ever sold. The loss of the overcoat was equally clouded. Leyra claimed he had worn it under his raincoat to his parents' apartment on the day of the murders, but at least three witnesses recalled his taking off the raincoat and having only a suit jacket underneath. Finally, he claimed to have bought the raincoat, at about 4:30 P.M. after leaving the bar on the morning of the murders, from a street peddler, paying two dollars for it. From this time on, Leyra remained in the custody of the police for all practical purposes for the next two days. There is no evidence that the police offered him any violence during that time, but he was subjected to much questioning by detectives. Among them was Captain Meenahan, in charge of the homicide squad, who questioned him intermittently from 2:00 Thursday afternoon until about 9:00 Friday morning.

During this questioning, Leyra made a number of very damaging admissions, contrary to his previous statements, to the effect that, although his memory was not entirely clear, he thought he must have been at his parents' home on the preceding Tuesday morning, at about the time of the commission of the homicides. He told of arguments with his father over the preceding weekend, and said, "Let me think this thing out." After numerous other admissions, he finally said, "I must have been there; I remember; definitely I was there... I am certain I was there. ...Captain, I was there...it was me. Who else could it be?"

At about 9:00 A.M. on Friday, he was taken by detectives to attend the funeral of his parents, and upon his return he signed a consent to remain in police custody. Thereafter he was taken by detectives to a hotel, where he went to a barbershop, had lunch, and was allowed to go to bed for an hour and a half, after which the detectives awakened him and returned him to the police station at about 5:00 P.M. Not content with the admissions already made, Captain Meenahan at about 7:00 P.M. introduced a Dr. Max Helfand, a physician, a specialist in neurol-

ogy and psychiatry. This doctor, unconnected with the police, had been called to the police station by the district attorney, who outlined the case to him. The doctor had also been "briefed" by Captain Meenahan. He agreed to talk to Leyra upon condition that no one else be in the room; he knew, however, that the room was wired and that the interview would be recorded.

A transcript of the interview shows that he said at the outset: "I'll tell you what the purpose of my talk to you is. I want to see if I can help you." The doctor asked Leyra about his sinus condition and the treatment he had had and said, "I'm your doctor." In at least forty ways, Helfand in one way or another promised to help Leyra, and on one occasion said: "I know you are in a little trouble. We do sometimes things that are not right, but in a fit of temper or anger we sometimes do things that we aren't really responsible for." Leyra then told the doctor he was very tired. "I had two hours sleep. Just now they woke me up. That's since Tuesday. Well, there were questions after questions by the thousands. . . . The only thing is, I am very tired." Then, after more conversation, the following:

Helfand: "I want you to recollect and tell me everything. I am going to make you remember and bring back thoughts. Thoughts which you think you might have forgotten. . . . You got irritable and you might have got in a fit of temper. Tell me, I am here to help you."

Leyra: "I wish I could, doctor."

Helfand: "I am going to put my hand on your forehead . . . and you are going to bring back all these thoughts that are coming to your mind."

The doctor promised help: "We'll help. Everybody will help you. We're with you one hundred percent." He minimized the homicides by suggesting they were done in a fit of temper. "Morally you are not to be condemned, right?" Helfand was making some progress and getting some admissions. Despite Leyra's frequent "I can't remember," the doctor kept on. "See, I can make you talk very truly." Then:

"You have a better chance to play ball than if you say you don't remember. If you tell me you were in a fit of anger, that you just swung the hammer, but if you tell me that you don't remember, then you will be working against yourself. Where will it get you?"

"At that point I was so mad," replied Leyra. "I was like white hot metal, was so mad. I was never so mad at anyone in my life."

After some coffee, Leyra asked to speak alone to Captain Meenahan, to whom he made a full and detailed confession to both murders, in the course of which he said that he lost his temper and was overcome by a fit of rage and anger, mainly due to his father's refusal to leave the running of the business to him. Shortly after his confession, his partner Herrschaft was shown into the room, knowing nothing of the disclosures Leyra had already made. After making some remark about the office, Leyra said to Herrschaft that "he did it." Confused, Herrschaft asked him, "What are you talking about?" "I did it," Leyra replied again. Herrschaft could only ask, "You did what?" To this he got the reply, "Well, you know what it is all about." "Do you mean that you killed your own mother and father?" asked Herrschaft. "I did it," Leyra said again.

Thereafter, and later that same evening, Leyra again confessed the crimes to two assistant district attorneys who took a written statement. It is sufficient to say that Leyra said that he had arrived at his parents' home at 8:30 A.M. and immediately his father had renewed the dispute they had had on Sunday regarding the running of the business. The argument was quite heated, and the elder Leyra made it plain that he intended to remain the boss. When the older man went out for his newspaper, Leyra Jr., boiling with rage, seized a hammer from a kitchen drawer and, first striking his mother who was trying to calm him down, advanced to the door, where he met his father entering and smashed him to the ground. He said that he wrapped the hammer in a towel and after leaving the flat tossed it into a passing truck a few blocks from the house. Returning to the West 10th Street flat about 10:00 A.M., he bathed, changed his clothes because there was blood on his trousers, and, making a bundle of the old suit, he gave the clothes to a passing ragpicker.

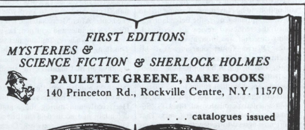
While resolving many questions, the confession does contain at least two statements which, if true, confused more than enlightened the picture of what had happened. According to Leyra, he was wearing the raincoat when he visited his parents before the murders, as well as having on the "Sun Dial" shoes, both of which items were presumed to have been purchased to replace those bloodied in the killings and thrown or given away. This discrepancy was never resolved.

In May 1950, Leyra went on trial for the two murders. Having pleaded that he was a pauper, counsel was appointed to defend him at the expense of the state. In the choice of those named to defend him he was lucky; his counsel was experienced, able, and learned. The principal evidence against him naturally was his confession to Captain Meenahan, the transcripts of his talks with the doctor, his admission to Herrschaft that he "did it," and his later confession to the two district attorneys. Leyra chose to take the stand and testify in his own defense, denying that he had killed his parents and explaining his confessions by the claim that he fell asleep during Dr. Helfand's ministrations (hypnotized, according to his attorneys) and did not regain consciousness until Sunday, about two days later.

It took a jury but an hour and a half to bring in a verdict of guilty, and Leyra was subsequently sentenced to die in the electric chair. If we seem to have passed too quickly over the trial, it is because we have already gone over much of the evidence, but also because the real battle for Leyra's life was not before the jury but with the Court of Appeals, to which he now turned. Every person convicted in New York State of a crime may appeal to a higher court to review his trial and conviction. Normally, that court would be the Appellate Division, a five-judge court, but in the case of those sentenced to death the appeal proceeds directly to the highest court in the state, the Court of Appeals, consisting of seven judges. His faith in his counsel and in the court was not in vain, for in April 1951 that court reversed the conviction because of the admission of improper evidence and sent the case back to be retried before a new jury.

According to the Court of Appeals, the vice in the trial was the admission of the testimony of Dr. Helfand, whose coaxing of Leyra to confess amounted to coercion. Said the court:

"Bearing in mind the undisputed setting in which this interview was arranged and recorded, while defendant was in custody of the police; defendant's physical and mental condition at the time, the psychiatrist calling himself defendant's doctor, playing upon the latter's natural fears and hopes, pressing his hands on the latter's head and suggesting details to an unwilling mind by persistent and unceasing questioning; informing defendant he was not morally responsible; making deceptive offers of friendship and numerous promises, giving assurances in a pseudo-confidential atmosphere of physician and patient. This interview was a subtle intrusion upon the rights of the defendant and tantamount to a form of mental coercion which we may not countenance here. No such intrusion may be sanctioned in a system of law which is based on the presumption of innocence sur-



rounded by the constitutional safeguards afforded to every individual. The doctor here did not tell the defendant that he had been called into the case by the District Attorney; that the latter and the police were listening to the conversation; and he conspicuously omitted to tell the defendant that he was under no duty to speak or that anything he might say could be used against him."

As to whether the later confessions to Herrschaft and to the district attorneys were properly admissible, the court did not decide, choosing to leave that question to be answered in the retrial to follow. It need not be said that the defense counsel were greatly elated with this triumph and the defendant even more so, for not only was he freed from the depressing weight of the death sentence but he was released from the confines of the Sing Sing death house where, beltless and slippered, he had awaited the outcome of his appeal.

In December 1951, the second trial opened before the same judge as the first and was not very different from the previous one. This time Leyra did not testify; in fact, the only witness called by the defense was a doctor who testified that Dr. Helfand's actions had induced the subsequent confessions to Captain Meenahan, Herrschaft, and the district attorneys. This time the jury took five hours to reach a judgment, but the verdict was the same as in the first—guilty of murder in the first degree—and again the death sentence was passed on him.

Back in the depressing atmosphere of death row at Sing Sing, Leyra once more awaited the result of his second appeal to the Court of Appeals. Now the main contention of the defense was that Dr. Helfand had made a promise that the defendant would not be prosecuted for murder in the first degree. Objection was also made to the admission of the confessions made to Herrschaft and the district attorneys.

In October 1952, the defense was shocked when the court upheld the conviction by a vote of four to two, one judge not sitting. The majority of the court found no trouble with the admission of the confessions, but the two dissenting judges would have excluded these from evidence. Now Leyra had to remain on death row, where periodically he was reminded by the fate of others that his position was indeed precarious. But his attorneys were not yet defeated. Appellate practice is a war of maneuver, and there were still options to be played out. Turning first to the U.S. Supreme Court, the defendant was denied the requested review of certiorari. Failing this, suit was brought in the United States District Court charging that his constitutional rights had been violated by the improper admission of his confessions. When the District Court rejected his claim, his attorneys appealed that ruling to the Circuit Court of Appeals, and, once more denied, he now requested permission of the U.S. Supreme Court to appeal to that Court. That Court now agreed to review the case. It was March 1954 before a decision was announced, and once more Leyra's luck held. By a vote of five to three, the Court ruled that all the confessions subsequent to Dr. Helfand's interview were improperly admitted, being simply "parts of one continuous process"—exemplifying the famous "fruit of the poison tree" doctrine. This doctrine holds that any evidence adduced as a result of previous improper conduct or procedure if not admissible though there was no direct irregularity in obtaining that evidence. By the vote of that fifth judge, Leyra's life was again saved, for had the vote been tied at four to four the decision of the Circuit Court would have stood—a tie vote in a higher court affirms the ruling of the court it is reviewing. Once more Leyra's death sentence was vacated and he was back in a cell in the Tombs jail.

The district attorney, reluctant to give up his quarry, prepared for yet a third trial. Now bereft of all he confessions Leyra had made from the time Dr, Helfand appeared in the case, he would now have to reply on the contradictions in Leyra's story when first interviewed. In these statements, Leyra claimed to have accepted a telephone book from a distributor who had called at the Greenwich Village apartment of his girlfriend about 9:30 A.M. on the fateful morning. From witnesses who testified at the third trial, it appeared that the girlfriend had left the apartment before 7 A.M., and the man who delivered the phone book claimed he left it at the door after getting no answer to his knock, where it still remained at 9:30 A.M. when he left the building. One witness whose testimony was severely tested on cross-examination claimed to have seen Leyra enter his parents' apartment about 7:00 A.M. In addition, there was the suspicious disappearance of his overcoat and the appearance of a new raincoat, a new suit, and new shoes. He had given discrepant stories about what had happened to his old coat and offered explanations less than satisfactory concerning the purchase of the new clothing.

Perhaps most damaging was his interview with Capt. Meenahan before Dr. Helfand had been called in. At 10:00 on Thursday evening, Meenahan had summoned the defendant to his office and told him that the police had investigated his alibi and his stories about he purchase of the new clothing and found them to be false. "Listen, Mr. Leyra," he had said, "what is this? What is going on here? Every time I seem to straighten you out using a process of elimination, I just can't seem to keep you straightened out." After Meenahan had left the room for a few minutes and returned, Leyra said to him, "Sit down here, Captain, just you and I. This thing will work itself out tonight."

This initiated a discussion which was to continue all that night. Leyra remarked that he had had a "bitter argument" with his father on Sunday over the latter's refusal to retire and turn his business over to him and to Heerschaft, and during the argument the defendant had accused his father of having killed his brother by overwork. Occasionally, Leyra would say, "I can remember about Pop but I can't figure out Mom" and "If I could only clear the sinus condition everything would come back to me." About 2:00 in the morning, Meenahan told Leyra that "a lot of men" were outside "waiting to go to work or waiting to go home." Leyra then said, "You tell them to go home; this thing will work itself out, and when you do get it, it is going to be the truth."

At 4:00 A.M., Meenahan showed Leyra some photographs of the scene of the crime, hoping that they would "refresh" his memory. After Leyra had looked at the pictures of the kitchen for about fifteen minutes, there was a flicker of recognition. He commented on the absence of his father's chair and the presence of one in which he himself usually sat. "That chair," he stated, "it indicates that I was there." This, according to Meenahan, is the balance of what he said: "Definitely, I was there. I remember. My mother asked me about the raincoat. She opened the door for me and I kidded her and called her Teddy. I kidded her about getting so slim and she said 'Come in and I will make you a cup of tea,' and she called me in and called me 'Omadaum,' which is Gaelic for big lug."

Leyra said he did not remember how he got there. "I remember her opening the door. I am certain I was there, Captain. You know what that means, Captain. It means me. Who else could it be?"

As in the second trial, Leyra did not take the stand in the third, and the jury were cautioned not to take this fact into consideration. In fact, there were few witnesses for the defense and they only referred to peripheral matters. The major effort in his behalf was in the strong cross examination of the State's witnesses and in the closing address. The State's case was still strong despite the absence of the confessions, and, while it took the jury longer to reach a verdict than in the two previous trials, the result was still the same: Leyra was found guilty, and for a third time he was sentenced to die in the electric chair.

So once more Leyra's counsel took his appeal to the Court of Appeals, asking that his conviction be set aside as not warranted by the evidence presented. Reading the opinions of that court, one can see how delicately the scales of justice are balanced. By a vote of four to three, the court decided there was insufficient evidence to sustain his conviction, and the court not only reversed but dismissed the charges against him as well. There would be no fourth trial.

Those who think of judges as having an acumen beyond that of ordinary men may ponder the conflicting interpretations of Leyra's statements. It was the climax of his interview with Captain Meenahan, which was the rock on which the court divided. Leyra's talk with Captain Meenahan culminated in his remarks: "Definitely I was there" and "You know what that means, Captain. It means me. Who else could it be?" Of this statement, the majority opinion says, "It is not an assertion of guilt, but rather a cry of one distracted and troubled, of one floundering and confused, probing and seeking the

answer to something not known...He was merely giving voice to the train of reasoning that must have flashed through his mind at this point...The extreme artlessness of the language, with its obviously damaging overtones, suggests one probing the outposts of memory, rather than a man evasively revealing part and concealing the remainder of the story." This is how the four members voting for a reversal of the conviction read Leyra's interview with the Captain.

The three justices who voted to affirm the conviction and who would have left Leyra to his fate also addressed themselves to these same lines. Their opinion read: "Captain Meenahan suggested to the defendant that they get some rest, whereupon the defendant responded, 'I feel relaxed.'" They returned to the events of the morning of the homicide, when the defendant made these *devastating* admissions: "Definitely, I was there...I remember....I don't remember how I got there. I remember her [his mother] opening the door. I am certain I was there. You know what that means, Captain. It means me. Who else could it be?" Of these, the judges can only say that whether, as the majority concluded, it was "the cry of one distracted and troubled" or damaging admissions of guilt was for the jury to decide.

Leyra's attorneys had won out, and their client was a free man. On May 2, 1956, Leyra walked out of the death house where he had spent four years and nine months—the longest such stay on record in New York State. Of stout heart he must have been. In that time, he had shaken hands with thirty-four fellow prisoners who had walked to the little green room at the end of the corridor, not to return.

There was a minor technicality before he could be released. Leyra had two prior convictions, one for larceny, the other for bigamy, and he had been on probation for the latter when arrested for the murders. The warrant for violation of that probaton being dismissed, he was free to go. Asked as he left the prison what his plans were, Leyra did not hesitate. He intended, he said, to devote the rest of his life to solving the case. □

LETTERS

From Mike Nevins:

Thanks for another fine issue of TAD. Dean Richardson is right: the movie *Union City* was indeed based on Woolrich's story "The Corpse Next Door" from *Nightwebs*. I was one of five or six people who attended the St. Louis premiere of this film at Webster College last fall—on the night of a World Series game. The director, Mark Reichert, keeps to the bare bones of Woolrich's story but loses all the Woolrich mood and replaces it with an El Cheapo-El Sleazo ambience. It's a short film, well under 90 minutes, but I felt as if I'd been sitting for three or four hours before it ended.

Since you put together TAD 15:4, Ballantine has gone into high gear with its publicity campaign for Woolrich. Six of the major Woolrich novels are now back in print—each with a new introduction by me and a magnificent *noir* cover illustration by an uncredited genius from Weehawken, N.J. named Larry Schwinger—and, as media spokesman for the project, I've been deluged with requests for interviews from newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV. I'll be in New York early next month to tape a Woolrich segment of a new cable TV series, *Now in Paperback*. At least four more Woolrich novels will be reprinted by Ballantine this year in the same format.

* * * * *

From Hayford Peirce:

In the early 1950s, the old Brooklyn Dodgers played for a time under a manager named Charlie Dressen, a man so endowed with self-esteem that when one Dodger spoke to another about him, it was common practice to merely point to one's eye, a jibe, of course, at Dressen's lavish use of the first-person pronoun.

I am reminded of this anecdote as I contemplate, appalled, yet another "Rex Stout Newsletter" by John McAleer. I yield to no man in my admiration for Rex Stout and his writing: I own and have several times re-read the complete Nero Wolfe saga.

And Stout's life and times and *bons mots* are, I suppose, of a certain interest, insofar as they relate to his works. But most of the items printed in the "Newsletter" are either of no interest whatsoever or are pretentious tosh. For example: for what seems like eternities now, Mr. McAleer has been tracking down references to Wolfe in other fields. For what it's worth, he's missed one: in an *Analog* story in the middle '70s, I had a character mention Wolfe and quote something or other of his concerning the income tax.

I ask you: who cares?

This is scholarship?

I am amazed by the blatant use of the "Newsletter" to nourish the ego of John McAleer, a person whose sole claim to distinction, to the best of my knowledge, is a biography of Rex Stout. In a recent two-page "Newsletter," that of TAD 15:3, you will find the following:

24 references to Stout by name, plus 3 uses of the word *I* in direct quotation from Stout.

22 references to Wolfe and/or Archie.

...a total of 47 references to the supposed object of the "Newsletter."

There are also 54 uses of the words *I, me,* and *my,* referring, of course, to Mr. McAleer himself, not to mention several references to his book.

This, I submit, is a gross perversion of the use of TAD's space. If you want to waste a couple of pages every issue with something called the "John McAleer Newsletter," fine. I simply won't bother to read it, any more than I do the "Dorothy Sayers Newsletter," which, incidentally, surely attains a new low in sustained tedium, even by the elevated standards of a journal that once published a 12-part series on Albert Campion. All I ask is that you stop calling this nonsense the "Rex Stout Newsletter."

Eventually, of course, there'll be nothing left to read in TAD, and I won't bother to renew my subscription.

✓ *Of course, a letter like this doesn't thrill me. We do try to keep a balance, and the newsletters do have their supporters. I hope though that the balance of the magazine serves to entertain you, and that you find enough in TAD to keep subscribing. Incidentally, is there anything you'd care to see?*
—Michael

* * * * *

From Mrs. Richard Bleier:

I've been with you from Vol. 1, No. 1 and always look forward to your next issue. I have been enjoying the "Rex Stout Newsletter" through the years and now the same goes for the "Dorothy L. Sayers Newsletter." Receiving TAD is as much fun as a letter from an old friend.

* * * * *

From Bill Blackbeard:

With regard to Dean Richardson's query in TAD 15:4, p. 377, anent Woolrich film credits for the movie *Union City*, consultation with the Academy tape of this production shows that the closing credits do indeed tag the story "The Corpse Next Door" as the source of the film. They read, in full: "Based on The Corpse Next Door in Detective Fiction Weekly, Copyright Popular Publications, Chase Manhattan Bank and Cornell Woolrich." Very perceptive of Mr. Richardson, indeed.

Vis-à-vis Otto Penzler's "Collecting Mystery Fiction" column on S. S. Van Dreary this time, and its discussion of the odd *Powwow Murder Case* mockup promo package, the following remarks made by Walter Hart

Blumenthal in his 1959 *Bookmen's Bedlam* (p. 216) might be of interest to Penzler and your readers in general:

"A curious instance, in the nature of a bibliographical sport, is presented by Theodore Dreiser's partially published novel issued in the form of an advertising dummy in 1916 with several pages of text set up. Thirty years ago a want-ad in *The Saturday Review* sought a copy of *The Bulwark,* stating that 'Several copies are known to exist in good state.' One copy only, however, was known to Vrest Orton, who states in his *Dreiserana* (1929) that its possessor was of the opinion this single copy had been made up simply to show to Dreiser."

Possibly the *Powwow* curiosity was much the same thing—but it gives one to wonder: were any of the titles so often promised as forthcoming at the close of earlier Van Dine novels, but never (presumably) written, similarly set up just for Van Dine's eyes? Are there book jackets and text pages for *The Autumn Murder Case* or *The Mother Goose Murder Case,* etc., out there somewhere? Will they also sell to some idiot for umpteen thousand dollars each? Stay tuned...

With regard to Penzler's engaging details of first edition points, *et al,* on Van Dine's and Biggers's novels, it is curious that he fails to note that, in many cases, the relatively common and inexpensive Grosset & Dunlap editions possess exactly the same binding, jacket, and page quality as the original editions, and often add other material of interest in their movie-tie-in editions. The G&D film editions of *The Canary Murder Case* (with its fine rear dust jacket portrait of William Powell in full color added to the retained jacket spine and cover of the original edition) and *The Benson Murder Case* (the G&D edition retaining the same foldout maps as the first edition) are identical to the firsts, aside from the change of publishing-house indicia, but have added a number of scenes from the films starring Powell and Basil Rathbone to the text. Such copies seem to me to be preferable to the actual firsts, but since I have never understood the peculiar cachet of fascination "firsts" are supposed to have (aside from their proven value as investments), I may be speaking out of turn.

Generally speaking—to continue in this vein for a moment—I never bother with a first edition copy for the Academy crime fiction collection if a later printing with all the textual and illustration/dust jacket elements present in the first is available at a lower price. Reference is the name of the game here, not the monied aura of pristine first printings *per se.* If, of course, a book with certain attractive or basic elements of binding, text, or art can be found *only* in a first edition—and, needless to add, a great many works of crime fiction never got beyond a single, first edition—then I add it to the collection in that format without cavil.

The Academy's crime fiction collection, by the way, has just passed the 7,500-volume mark, with some two hundred boxes of the Robert De Frantz donation still en route from Indianapolis. We have all but a few of the titles in Ellery Queen's *Detective Short Story* bibliography (plus a number of vintage short story collections overlooked by the Elleries), virtually all *Queen's Quorum* titles (with the Haycraft additions in EQMM, etc.), and most classic authors from Rohmer through Woolrich fully represented. TAD readers may feel free, of course, to make use of the Academy collection for their research: but do send SASEs with all text inquiries, and 25¢ per page (or open two-page spread) needed.

✓ *The San Francisco Academy of Comic Art is located at 2850 Ulloa Street, San Francisco, California 94116. —Michael*

* * * * *

From R. F. Fleissner:

With regard to Arthur Cox's response to me (TAD 15:3), he is quite right: I *did not* suggest that Dickens was influenced by Collins's "The Policeman and the Cook," which appeared after his death. In my review in the newsletter to which he refers (8:1), I spoke of the relation between book and short story only as "curious" and one that "may not be impertinent." Cox's original letter to me was indeed right on target; however, as he now says, I *seemed* to suggest to him that I had in mind an influence, and my reply to him (TAD 14:4) "acknowledged" that I had had that effect (on him at least). In a word, my later statement, although not literally wrong, was misleading, and I was unfair not only to Cox but to myself. So I apologize. I do not want anyone to despair.

At the time I wrote my letter, I was unaware of Cox's earlier article in *Dickens Studies,* but it seems to me that a term like animal magnetism is open to critical interpretation regardless of anyone's personal understanding of it. Magnetic attraction of opposites is, after all, an objective phenomenon; its applicability to human behavior should not be so subjective that it loses all relation with its physical basis. Consequently, considering the term objectively as it has been understood by Christian Scientists, by scholars of the Holocaust, etc., is not quite irrelevant. For what it is worth, Dickens had a great influence on the Germans (e.g., Raabe).

With regard to "Who would want to argue with Edmund Wilson?" I grant that Cox is making a rhetorical question, which, to me, is not *really* a question but a blasé assertion. Yet he may call it a question too, for he "concedes" I answered it. Incidentally, I agree with his remarks on Carr.

It was Davidson (now deceased), not I, who formally applied the label *littérateur* to Edmund Wilson. An excellent and sincere teacher at Bread Loaf, he was hardly a sneering critic, but admittedly he was very conservative.

* * * * *

From Katharine Pease Beardsley:

What a beautiful piece on Robert van Gulik and Judge Dee in TAD 15:4. Thank you for it.

One question: is the omitted bibliography item (16) *Murder in Canton* (New York: Scribners, 1966)? The reference on p. 296 would make it seem so.

* * * * *

From Professor W. A. S. Sarjeant:

Your correspondent Stephen P. Clarke is, it seems, engaged in a paper chase to track down Dorothy Sayers's quotations. I can identify two for him, as follows:

26. It is in Vachel Lindsay's humorous mock-spiritual *Daniel* that these lines occur:

King Darius said to the lions:—
"Bite Daniel. Bite Daniel.
Bite him, Bite him, Bite him!"

(but, of course, the lions sedulously refused to comply with the King's wishes).

30. "Ye'll no fickle Tammas Yownie." Thomas Yownie was the steadfast and reliable lieutenant of the formidable Drugal Crombie, leader of the Gorbals Die-Hards in John Buchan's excellent adventure story *Huntingtower* (1922), and thus praised by his leader.

More tentatively—

37 probably comes from a variant of the old Victorian song/recitation about the unadmirable Ben Bolt, but I can't locate a text for this.

* * * * *

From Newton Baird:

Two parts to this letter that have little relationship to each other:

(1) I'd like to disagree with Richard Meyers's assessment ("TAD on TV" 16:1) of the current TV mystery series *Remington Steele.* Except for a couple of excellent TV movie mysteries on CBS, starring Karen Valentine (especially the first one broadcast, about a sinister international assassin), this series is just about the only example of style and good writing I have seen this season. It has an "antic" style, as Mr. Meyers reports, but it is also a very consistent style of pleasurable romance rarely done well in the context of a mystery. If one analyzes the *Remington Steele* scripts with any objectivity, it can be seen that whomever controls the scripts and the production has kept it on a very clever and uniquely innovative level. Romantic mysteries are my favorite kind, so I admit a bias, but I find this program a relief after the comic-hero antics of the Magnum-types that proliferated, as Mr. Meyers also correctly reports, without any good results at all. I'd like to see *Remington Steele* improved, but that may be too much to expect from today's network television.

(2) I'm collecting additions and corrections to the bibliographical portion of my publication *A Key to Fredric Brown's Wonderland,* which I hope to publish as an addenda to that (now out-of-print) work in the magazine which published the original work I did on F.B. I have received some great help along these lines already from Jiro Kimira of Tokyo, another TAD correspondent. When and if I get the time to work up what I have, and any that people send me for the next six months or so, I will submit it to TAD so that the F.B. fans will have that addenda. Send additions and corrections (to the bibliography only) to: P.O. Box 455, Georgetown, CA 95634. Thank you.

THE ARMCHAIR DETECTIVE

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Compiled by Steven A. Stilwell

(Volumes 1-10)

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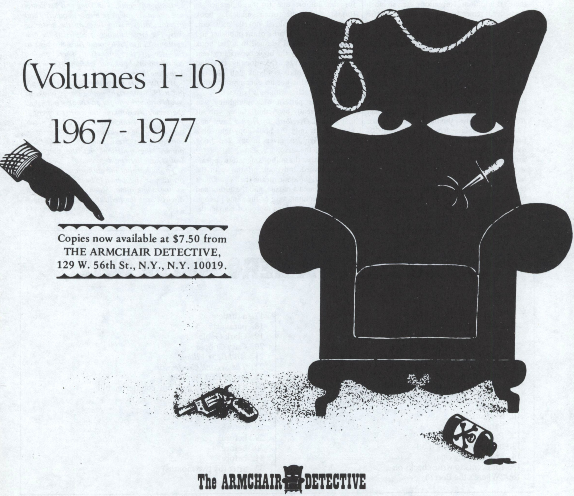

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From Greg Goode:

I would like to correct a blooper and clarify something that was poorly stated in my "The Orient" in TAD 15:4, p. 310. Towards the bottom of the first full paragraph, it should be *Erle*, not Earl Stanley Gardner. That's the blooper.

In the same paragraph, I state that *The Ugly American* is set in Vietnam. In a way that is false, and in a way it is true. It was actually set in a fictional Asian country (unfortunately, as I am in Germany for the time being, I cannot find a copy of the book to produce the name of the fictional land), but from the timeliness, the events, and other internal evidence, there is little doubt that the country is supposed to be Vietnam.

I am really enjoying Otto's "Collecting Mystery Fiction" column. As well as being informative, it is written with the spirit of adventure and can make for exciting reading—sort of like a *lost treasure* novel. And when there are additions, corrections, etc., so much the better. I remember reading a copy of *Also Sprach Zarathustra (Thus Spake Zarathustra)* translated by Willard Huntington Wright.

My hat goes off to Will Murray for his outstanding Nick article, and to J. Randolph Cox and James E. Malone for the groundwork. I have heard that Mr. Cox is working on another Nick bibliography.

While I'm at it, I'd like to correct an error, this time in my bibliography of secondary sources, TAD 15:3, p. 207. Under *Rohmer Review*, the dates should run as follows: 1968–70, Douglass Rossman; and 1970–present, Robert E. Briney. I got the erroneous dates (Rossman, 1968–72; Briney, 1972–present) from a periodical index. Later I wrote to Mr. Briney just to double check, and he gave me the correct dates. The same day I received his letter I rushed off a note to you, hoping the corrected date would appear in TAD. Perhaps my letter arrived late.

From R. Mitchell:

As a librarian, bookseller, and member of MWA, I found Otto Penzler's article "Collecting Mystery Fiction" (TAD 15:4) interesting, especially as I have several S. S. Van Dines in the 1st editions with jackets. What surprised me is Mr. Penzler's reason for assuming that signature alone, as against given copyright, was proof of 1st edition for *The Green Murder Case*.

The work is known to have been serialized in *Scribner's* magazine, as Mr. Penzler points out, starting in January 1928. Some authors find it necessary to take copyright before the original publication of material anywhere; hence 1927. The serialization copyright sometimes is taken even earlier, considering the advance scheduling of publication in magazines.

The fact that the serialization drew comment and brought out the book with both copyrights is a matter of proper protection for the author, due to the difference in format. When the, often small, 1st book printing of a serialized novella sells out, frequently to the surprise of the publisher and author, the book is reissued in a 2nd book printing with only the book copyright given; in this case, 1928. Occasionally this 2nd printing of the book is a book club sale. The above was and is not an uncommon author publishing practice with early books.

This same pattern of copyrighting was followed recently by Arthur Hailey with his first books: *Overlord, In High Places,* and *Hotel*. And, only the book copyright, or a new copyright, is given in the 2nd book printing, on the verso.

The fact that the author's signature appears in the reissued 2nd book printing with the book copyright alone means that Van Dine's work warranted a reissue, and the author and a reissued volume were at the same place at the same time; nothing more. Of course, the signature does increase the value of that copy of the 2nd printing over other copies of the same printing.

✔ *This theory is erroneous. We are not talking about a signature; my article clearly referred to the* dedication *copy—the copy inscribed by Van Dine to the person to whom he dedicated his book. It is incomprehensible to consider a series of circumstances that would have compelled the author to wait until the book had gone into a second printing before presenting a copy to the dedicatee.*

The Greene Murder Case *did not require comment based on its magazine serialization to be brought out in book form, as the book was acquired at Scribner's for that purpose, with its magazine serialization being a by-product of that function, even if it preceded its volume form. The first printing was certainly not small, Van Dine and his detective already enjoying immense popularity and previous titles having been on the bestseller lists. The large number of copies of the first edition still available today further attests to the size of the print run. There are no contemporary book club editions of any S. S. Van Dine titles.*

It is far more likely that Scribner's simply put a 1928 copyright notice on its book, as would ordinarily do for any book it published that year, overlooking the earlier copyright year of 1927 (which would have been necessary due to the magazine serial). After copies came off the press, someone would have noticed the omission and the correction would have been made.

To suggest that the author and the second printing just happened to be in the same place at the same time, when the copy under discussion is the dedication copy, is absurd.

—Otto Penzler □

ANSWERS TO A NERO WOLFE QUIZ

1. 9-11 a.m. and 4-6 p.m.
2. plays pool
3. *Red Threads*
4. orange juice and hot chocolate
5. the Fifteen Masters (Le Quinze Maitres)
6. Websters New International dictionary, 3rd ed.
7. Sherlock Holmes!
8. a brown ostrich skin case in which he keeps his detective license
9. fencing
10. Switzerland
11. Santa Claus
12. Paul Chapin
13. he enjoys turning it off
14. an exploding cigar
15. for clients to write checks on
16. "Where's the Beer?"
17. a turtle
18. parakeets
19. Clark Gable
20. Gary Cooper
21. *And Be A Villian*
22. *The Second Confession*
23. *In the Best Families*
24. a thin strip of gold or a counterfeit bill
25. before
26. before
27. before
28. before
29. before
30. before
31. before
32. after (by two months)

The First Five Capers of Ross H. Spencer

By Earl F. Bargainnier

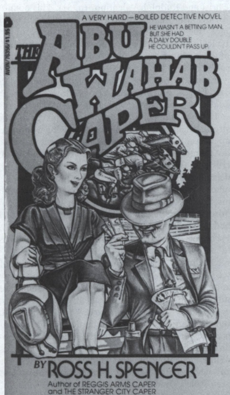
Since 1978, Ross H. Spencer has provided many laughs to readers of detective fiction with five novels: *The Dada Caper* (1978), *The Reggis Arms Caper* (1979), *The Stranger City Caper* (1980), *The Abu Wahab Caper* (1980), and *The Radish River Caper* (1981), all published by Avon as paperbacks. By the time this essay appears, there will probably be others, for the recent entry on Spencer in *Contemporary Authors* lists as novels in progress: *The Franklin Park Caper, The Blotters Club Caper,* and *The Jacob's Paw Caper,* as well as *The Missing Bishop* and *The Dragon of Foo Foo Forest.* If the list is not a put-on—always a possibility with Spencer—the cases of his detective, Chance Purdue, will be doubled in a few years. The output is surprising for an author who began publishing when fifty-seven, after a life of working in steel mills, on aircraft and railroads, as a truck driver, and operating a landscape and fencing business. Though thus far these varied jobs have not appeared in the novels, Spencer's military experience—the artillery in World War II and the Air Force in the Korean War—is a significant feature of Purdue's character. Also, Spencer's statement of his politics—"staunch conservative (formerly staunch liberal)"—is repeatedly reflected in various ways throughout the novels.

Those who casually pick up the novels from a store shelf on the basis of the cover blurb—"A Very Hard-Boiled Detective Novel"—may on reading the first pages be puzzled, if not utterly dumbfounded; in either case, the reaction is justified. The novels are burlesques of the hardboiled school, written in a parodic clipped style which goes well beyond Hammet and Hemingway to the Dick-and-Jane primers of early elementary school. Omitting all internal punctuation, making each sentence a separate paragraph, and employing parallelism and repetition to an outrageous level, Spencer's style is a composition teacher's nightmare, but it is effective both as parody and as a vehicle for the comic action, characters, and commentary. Indeed, Spencer is the Groucho Marx of detective fiction, or perhaps more accurately the S. J. Perelman (he wrote the best Marx Brothers dialogue). To analyze Spencer's novels is to analyze an extended joke—but their uniqueness among detective novels deserves examination. To give some semblance of order to these most unorderly works, three elements will be considered: Chance Purdue and the women who play major roles in his cases, the plots—if such a prosaic term can be used for the zany action—and, most importantly, the humor, which is so pervasive that is can never be totally separated from the others.

In *The Reggis Arms Caper,* Chance Purdue is described by his wife as "a blend of Tarzan and Jesus Christ and Rudolph Valentino" (p. 51). This opinion is obviously biased; the truth is that Chance is the most inept of private eyes. He has many of the typical features of the hard-boiled detective, but little of the intelligence required to solve a case. In fact, he solves none in the five novels. Like the style, Chance is essentially parodic, a character *at* whom readers can laugh, but Spencer also endows him with qualities so that readers will laugh *with* him as well.

The parodic features range from his being the strong, silent type, again and again giving a shrug as an answer or comment, to the ever-present Camel in his mouth—but never just a Camel; it is frazzled, crushed, swaybacked, S-shaped, busted, fishhook, delapidated, and on and on. He is always broke: his office is a booth at Wallace's Tavern. He is good with his fists, though he usually hits the wrong person. Fortunately perhaps, he refuses to carry a gun: "If I had a gun I might shoot somebody" (*Dada,* p. 82). He has his own code of honor, but it is so personal as to defy description. All one can say is that it is symbolized by that repeated shrug. The cynicism of the private eye, who is in daily contact with the seamy and corrupt, is another element that is present, best summed up in Chance's statement that "life is just a great big bowl of raspberries" (*Dada,* p. 178). But he can also be as romantic as his serious predecessors—at times even sentimental, rhapsodizing about small towns, nature, and women, as well as lamenting his own inadequacies: "I was the guy who went to lock the barn after the horse had been stolen. And found the barn missing" (*Radish,* P. 64). Like Bulldog Drummond or Dick Tracy,

though not as violent, Chance is ultra-patriotic—especially when drunk (his favorite music is *Alte Kameraden* by The Royal Netherlands Guardsmen: "Music to enlist by," as he says in the first novel). An artillery veteran, like his creator, Chance suffers from what his wife calls *alcoholus patrioticus*: "an incurable malady which causes the patriotism of the afflicted to accelerate commensurately with his consumption of alcoholic beverages" (*Reggis,* p. 33). The effect is his desire to conduct close order drill, to the disaster of several bars, and to sing patriotic songs, but with such garbling as "spacious skies" coming out "skacious pies." Of a gangster murdered and placed in the trunk of a Pontiac for forgetting the words of "America the Beautiful," Chance says "you should have stuffed the sonofabitch into a Toyota glove compartment" (*Stranger,* p. 19). His patriotism is fed by his continual reading of World War I aviation stories by Arch Blockhouse, featuring Biff Brimstone, in *Eagles* magazine: among others, "The Bloody Clouds of Ardennes," "Skull Squadron Flies Again," and (my favorite) "Where Did All These Fokkers Come From?"



As with most private eyes, little is given of Chance's background. It has already been noted that he is a veteran. He has also been married; he says that his first wife had a split personality: "one-half nympho and one-half maniac" (*Dada,* p. 107). He introduces himself in the first novel this way:

> Chance Purdue
> That is my name.
> Private Detective.
> That was my occupation.
> I handle anything.
> That was my slogan.
> Room 506 Braddock Building.
> That was my address.
> One-year lease.
> Three hundred a month.
> That was my mistake. (p. 13)

In the second, he explains the reason for his first name:

> My mother was forty-two when I showed up.
> My father was pushing fifty.
> They told me they'd have named me Catastrophe if they'd known how to spell it. (p. 17)

Other than these few facts, his past is a blank; even his introduction to detection is unknown. On the other hand, his principal role in the novels allows the reader to realize that he is a likeable Dagwood Bumstead among detectives. Like Dagwood, Chance is always in over his head. When he gets simple adultery cases, he follows the insurance man rather than the erring husband or the mistress rather than the wife. Though no age or description is given, Chance is certainly attractive to women; his future wife accuses him of being a "cheating philandering casanova romeo gigolo any old port in a storm man about town" (*Dada,* p. 52). He may be a flop as a detective, but he is a great success as a sexual athlete. Male readers can only envy the ease with which he finds sex, or rather its finding him, for he is never the aggressor. Like everything else in his life, sex just happens, while he accepts and shrugs his way along. All in all, Chance is engaging, and, though readers may not identify with him, they can enjoy his sexual and detectival misadventures, which Spencer's style makes so hilarious.

In the first novel, Chance lives with Betsy Kelvin, a charming whore who demands that she be known as a call girl, and in the succeeding ones they are married, after she has used a complicated trick—which anyone but Chance would see through—to entrap him. Betsy is a compendium of mythic types: the earth-mother, the princess in distress, and the priestess of love. As the first, she feeds Chance delicious meals, supplies booze and then nurses him through his hangovers, scolds him for his unfaithfulness, and yets waits loyally for his return, all the

while exuding a voluptuous wholesomeness. It turns out that she is actually Princess Sonia of Kaleski, in hiding from the Communists, who has become a call girl to provide money for her cancer-stricken old governess. Needless to say, she is good at her work, having made two hundred thousand dollars at it. In spite of his mind boggling at the number of men those dollars represent, and though he resents her leaving him to service her customers, Chance rightly finds her "a beautiful sweet kind patient understanding what she was" (*Reggis*, p. 79), and with their marriage her career ends. Her competence in all things, except keeping him faithful and driving a car, is in marked contrast to his ineptitude; as he says, if she joined the Salvation Army, she would be a field marshal overnight. After the first two novels, she remains in Chicago while Chance is away on cases and therefore plays a relatively minor role in the plots, but she is never for long out of his thoughts and is always anxiously awaiting his return.

Among the other women who add sex to Chance's cases are Candi Yakozi, a colleague of Betsy who gives away what she could charge for; Spice Dugan (a.k.a. Gregoria Rippoff), whose favorite expression is "my ass"; and Myrtle Culpepper, a great-grandmother rapist who leaves her victims money commensurate with her pleasure: Chance receives fifty dollars, but an elderly friend of his receives five hundred. None of these or other women, however, play as major a role as Brandy Alexander, undoubtedly "the most beautiful brunette on the face of Planet Earth" (*Stranger*, p. 48), as Betsy is the most beautiful blonde. She appears in all but the first novel and is Betsy's chief rival for Chance. Brandy is formidable in bed and frequently leaves Chance too weak to stand. She is also a dangerous opponent, having graduated *magna cum laude* in the "cross between kung fu and karate" course of the CIA. In fact, she describes herself as "the head bitch" of the CIA hounds. Even more patriotic than Chance, she receives as much pleasure from tracking down Communist conspirators as from her bedroom exploits. If Betsy has mythic origins, Brandy is strictly popular art—a combination of Wonder Woman and the heroine of a porn film. Her one weakness is her worship of Chance for his sexual powers while knowing a permanent relationship is impossible, for no matter how unfaithful he may be during his cases, even with the tantalizing and insatiable Brandy, he always returns to the care, cooking, and caresses of Betsy.

Chance's cases are not in themselves complex, being burlesques of Communist-conspiracy thrillers, but the many essentially extraneous comic elements—whose absence would deprive them of their zany distinctiveness—complicate them. In one form or another, Chance's opponent is always DADA, an acronym for the Kremlin's subversive organization Destroy America Destroy America, which is responsible for all of America's problems. Chance comments that they must really mean to destroy America: "They said it twice." DADA attempts to capture Princess Sonia of Kaleski in *The Reggis Arms Caper,* uses an evangelistic crusade as dispatching headquarters for its spies in *The Stranger City Caper,* tries to gain a new engine which does not require oil—it uses horse urine—in *The Abu Wahab Caper,* and finally presumes to invade America by an underground tunnel from Siberia to Radish River, Illinois, in that town's caper. In each instance, DADA is foiled by Brandy Alexander with occasional bumbling help from Chance. In the first novel, however, DADA seems to be Betsy's invention, or at least is used by her, to bring Chance to the altar.

Besides the contest with DADA in each novel, there are other repeated plot features. Only *The Reggis Arms Caper* does not have a sub-plot. Myrtle Culpepper's exploits as an elderly female rapist and her resulting notoriety run through *The Dada Caper,* and, in the last three novels, sports—baseball, horse-racing, and football—play almost as important a part as DADA. The sports "plots" run parallel with and are loosely linked to DADA's conspiracies. Nevertheless, they provide some of the funniest scenes in the novels. The practice session of the Stranger City Strangers and their baseball game with the Creepy Hollow Vampires and the football game between the Radish River Possumcats and the Sycamore Center Ridgelings, as well as the surprising halftime ceremonies at that game, are grotesquely comic travesties of their sports. They deserve to be included in every anthology of sports literature. More typical of thriller plots is some form of chase sequence, and the novels contain many, involving cars, chariots, a bear and a horse, and even a ferris wheel, but, whatever the vehicle or creature, the effect is farce, not danger or terror. Also common are identity reversals. As already noted, Betsy the call girl is a princess. Grogan the CIA slob and evangelist Bobby Crackers, leader of the Blitzkreig for Christ, are actually the KGB's Leonid K. Grogaovitch and Boboi Krakezoff. With a facetious bow to Sax Rohmer, Spencer transforms Sir Lenox Nilgood Fiddleduck of Scotland Yard into the ageless Chinese Doctor Ho Ho Ho, "the most savage and merciless creature in all of history," the man who tricked an enemy into "visiting a WCTU meeting shortly after the Super-Kola had been spiked with Spanish fly" (*Radish,* pp. 59, 54). The number of such parodies of the covers and secret identities so prevalent in spy fiction is much larger than these few examples, but they are enough to indicate what poor Chance is up against. The novels end with some final twist which, rather than putting a cap on the plot, picks up some

earlier item and plays with it for a final laugh. These twists can vary from the multiple meanings given by Chance to the Winnebago word *nikapauca,* to his report to Cool Lips Chericola, Mafia boss of Chicago, being accidentally exchanged with another written à la *Hiawatha* and thus earning him a bonus of $6,000, to a gorilla's playing in the Super Bowl against "the whole damn National Football league" with the gorilla receiving a thirteen-point betting advantage. Parody and burlesque, outrageous lack of cause and effect, and farcical action: these are the ingredients of Spencer's plots.

Since Spencer plays so many tricks with language, he obviously did not choose DADA as the name for his villains without thinking of the other meaning of those four letters. The Dadaists, forerunners of the Surrealists, wished to suppress logic and replace it with conscious madness in a state of absolute freedom. It seems doubtful that Spencer would approve of Dada's utter lawlessness, but, on the other hand, the manic quality of their literary productions might appeal to him. Certainly he employs nearly every device, technique, and form of comedy and humor in his novels. A list of some of these, by no means complete and in no particular order, includes epigrams, satire, puns, *reductio ad absurdem,* bathos, hyperbole, zeugma, names, comic similes, farce, the outrageous, the comic pause and added comment, invective, ethnic humor, the comic cliché, nonsense, comic misunderstanding, understatement, vaudeville routines, comic reversal, comic repetition, malapropisms and other distortions of language, parody, wit, jokes, comic characters, comic definition, and comic description. It is neither possible nor necessary to consider all of these, but seven are so prevalent that they deserve some comment, with the understanding that overlapping is inevitable: names, wordplay, repetition, misunderstanding, the outrageous, satire, and epigrams.

Names are an old device of comic writers, for they immediately set the tone of a work: it cannot be "serious" with a Mr. and Mrs. Zizzenfras. At times, Spencer's use of names is simply comic and nothing more, but more often there is some significance to the name produced by pronunciation, translation, or satiric reference. The world of Spencer's novels is one in which is found the Shakespeare police station, the 000th Field Artillery, Old Wachensachs Beer and Comrade Terrorist Vodka, a mare named Ecstatic Climax, a crazy German shepherd named Count Frazzlewitz, a football-playing gorilla named Zanzibar McStrangle, the Wisconsin Beanie (as opposed to the Kentucky Derby), and Schweinschwanz's Super-Discount Drugs. Into this world Spencer places characters whose names are just as suggestive and bizarre. Some have already been mentioned. There are dozens of others from Lucifer Larcenik and Tillie Zilch to Admiral Yogo Takashita, who writes poetry for the *Kamikaze Veterans' Digest.* Spencer follows Damon Runyon when naming his gamblers: Bet-a-Bunch Dugan, Oratory Rory McGrory (who poses as Detective Sergeant Holmes with his partners Ellery and Queen), Opportunity O'Flynn, Catastrophe O'Cassidy, and so on. He is at his most inventive with athletes. The football players of *The Radish River Caper* include Slippery Sleighballs, Barracuda Barinelli, and Half-Yard Blunderfoot, and their coach is Suicide Lewisite. The coach of The Stranger City Strangers is Rube Mountainstill, and his all left-handed team consists of, among others, Gaylor Messerschmitt (a catcher with a wooden leg), Barnaby Klutz, Opus Ganderneck, and Atilla Honeywell, who fights a battle against the 96,000,000 black ants who have a commune under his first base position—and loses. It should be obvious that Spencer enjoys playing with names and has the imagination, however skewed one may think it, to create some unforgettable ones.

Names, like the to-be-considered repetition and misunderstanding, are forms of wordplay in a broad sense, but the novels also contain specific kinds of linguistic wordplay. These vary from the comic-strip euphemism for cursing—&@#$%¢*!—and Chance's drunken spoonerisms—"fumsuckingarmy"—through such reversed expressions as "unbrimming-over with affection" to examples of comic zeugma such as "somewhere between a cold sweat and Randolph Street." Spencer plays with the Japanese "r" for "l" in a series of hymn titles: "Grory Grory Harrerujah," "This Ritter Right of Mine," and "Ruv Rifted Me," while the Indian words in *The Abu Wahab Caper* are given fantastically long definitions. Clichés and platitudes are sprinkled throughout the novels for comic purposes. Some are variations on the originals—"you are cutting down the goddam trees so you can see the goddam forest" (*Dada,* p. 83)—while others depend on the context for their humor, as when Wallace offers to help Betsy carry the drunken Chance home and she replies, "Surely goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life" (*Dada,* p. 89). The pause and added comment, a staple of oral humor, appears often, as in: "It was a very nice giggle. / As giggles go. / Which isn't very far" (*Abu Wahab,* p. 11). Also present are a number of grotesque similes which function as comic description—for example: "His eyes looked like urine holes in the snow" (*Reggis,* p. 45), "Her nipples jutted like pink-tipped Saturn rockets" (*Abu Wahab,* p. 21), and "He twitched. / Like an atheist at a southern Baptist camp meeting" (*Reggis,* p. 14). Spencer is fascinated by the possibilities of linguistic humor, and he exploits as many of those possibilities as he can.

The most obvious technique of humor in the

novels is repetition. He uses it to such an extent that many would say it is overdone, but, as Henri Begson pointed out nearly one hundred years ago, it is a major way of creating laughter through a sense of the mechanical, of the unreal. Spencer repeats single words, phrases, and sentences. Wallance the tavern owner continually says, "I am going to sell this place and go to..." the only variation being the place he names. There is repetition as answer:

From the grandstand area came a hair-raising lingering scream.
Bet-a-Bunch stopped short.
He said my God what was that?
I said well from here it sounded like a hair-raising lingering scream. (*Abu Wahab,* p. 103)

Similar is immediate repetition by the same person:

Wallace said I got the whole Stranger City story out of some book.
Old Dad Underwood said what was the name of it? . . .
He said the name of it was *The Whole Stranger City Story.* (p. 22)

Most pervasive is the running joke, which at times Spencer can milk to the point of diminishing returns. One example is the repetition in incongruous places—nine times in thirty-six pages—of Adam Smith's *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations,* a title which Spencer apparently finds hilarious. Among many other instances are the repeated whore-call girl distinction, the songs about Myrtle Culpepper ("The Myrtle Culpepper Tango," etc.), as well as her rapes and the varying amounts of money she leaves, and the unknown barrel organ music of *The Stranger City Caper,* which leads to vaudeville-routine guesses as to its title. Added to these is Chance's repetitive style as narrator of the novels, a style best described as heightened primer.

Comic misunderstandings in conversation are as routine in the *Capers* as in the routines of show business comedians. Spencer even copies them in the exchanges of Old Dad Underwood and Wallace and in those of Moose Edwards and Eddie Gee in *The Stranger City Caper,* the latter sounding like classic Abbott and Costello. Sometimes ignorance is the cause of the misunderstanding, as when one character says that the gorilla McStrangle is from Barnum and Bailey, and another says, "probably one of those small southern schools" (*Radish,* p. 30). Other instances are the result of another old comic standby, the mistaking of a figurative statement for a literal one:

He said there's a pitcher down there what is wilder than a tiger with a knot in its tail.
Moose said who would tie a knot in a tiger's tail?
Rube said at the moment his name eludes me.
Moose said well if he keeps it up he gonna get reported to the SPCA. (*Stranger,* p. 71)

On the other hand is the assumption by one character that he understands the meaning of some word or phrase and is responding to that supposed meaning when actually he does not. Chance is frequently such a character:

She said if we're successful the Desert Sands might junk their *cause célèbre* and stop trying to start their *coup d'état.*
I said yeah well those foreign cars have always been a big pain in the ass. (*Abu Wahab,* p. 32)

Still another type results from one character's reading an unintended sexual meaning into someone else's remarks—what might be called "the dirty mind syndrome":

Mrs. Jonesberry said Chance who?
I said Purdue.
I said like the university.
I said Purdue with the Big Ten.
Mrs. Jonesberry said young man I think you're bragging. (*Radish,* p. 10)

The final form is the intersecting conversation, that in which two persons are talking at cross purposes.

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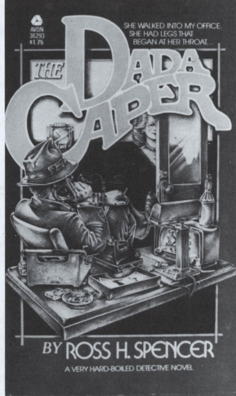
By far the greatest number of such conversations occur between Chance and Brandy Alexander, as in the following:

She said if Ishaq's oil is cut off we won't have enough gasoline to operate a chain saw.
I said well maybe that's a blessing.
Brandy said it could happen almost overnight.
I said I can't stand those noisy little bastards.
Brandy said it's imperative that we remain on good terms with Ishaq.
I said they set my teeth on edge.
Brandy said our economy depends on it.
I said like fingernails on a blackboard.
Brandy said Purdue will you please forget about chain saws? (*Abu Wahab*, p. 31)

The effect of these misunderstandings is not only comic disjunction in the immediate conversation but also an absurdist quality generally.

The outrageous, which incorporates farce and at times even the nonsensical, is more the result of action, character, or objects than language and provides a great part of the novels' zaniness. What is one to make of a six-piece combo with three bass fiddles, an "angry" rabbit chasing two "terrified" Great Danes down the street, a football score of 359–0, a lawnmower that peels oranges and skins alligators, or discussion of ABC's televising the Battle of Armageddon and of the possible point spread? What is Suicide Lewisite's ancestry since the only member of his family not to commit suicide was his grandfather who was hit by a truck when he was five? Is even an all left-handed baseball team enough to explain why a prospective manager would take sleeping pills, cut his wrists, shoot himself, and fall into a bathtub of acid, while the gas burners were on, gasoline was burning in the basement, and dynamite was ready in the parlor? Such hyperbolic incidents contribute to the sense of a world of alternate possibilities—always of a comic nature. As a result, readers come to accept any improbability that Spencer chooses to introduce, for it these things can happen, so can anything else.

Satire of contemporary America is pervasive in the novels, ranging from songs, e.g. "When the Golden Beer is Foaming in Wyoming," to overly rhapsodic attitudes toward nature. Almost every aspect of sports is satirized, from incompetent players and team chaplains (the Radish River team has a witch doctor, Mulugu Ugununu) to rabid fans and Howard Cosell and Don Meredith (as Blohard Blowell and Sundown Sanders). There is also much ethnic humor—some offensive—satirizing Italians, Arabs, blacks, and other racial and national groups. One instance occurs in *The Abu Wahab Caper* when Chance says, "I'm not qualified for jury duty... I don't understand



Spanish" (p. 14). The two areas of contemporary life most often satirized, however, are Fundamentalist religion and the communications media. Though Spencer may call himself a "staunch conservative," he is obviously not a member of the so-called Moral Majority. Besides a number of passing comments, *The Reggis Arms Caper, The Stranger City Caper,* and *The Radish River Caper* contain extended mockery of Fundamentalism. By far the most occurs in *The Stranger City Caper;* there Chance attends the Bobby Crackers' Blitzkreig for Christ, and for nine pages (119–27) the commercialism, pretention, hypocritical self-righteousness, and sheer tackiness of an evangelistic "crusade" are skewered in what, in my opinion, is the funniest and the most biting episode of any of the novels. Spencer's attacks on the media are nearly as amusing. He presents fantastic newspaper and television reports, such as the three successive half-hour specials on how the mayor of Chicago, the governor of Illinois, and the President of the United States are "screwing up" their constitu-

encies, causing Chance to leave home: "I got a hunch God comes next" (*Dada,* p. 168). The following requires no comment:

> I turned the television on.
> Channel 7's newscasters were giggling.
> An oil tanker had broken in two off the Carolinas.
> Two hundred thousand gallons of oil had fouled the coastline.
> They giggled.
> A nuclear device was missing from the San Diablo arsenal.
> It was no larger than a box of popcorn but it packed enough wallop to level three states.
> They giggled.
> I turned the television off. (*Reggis,* p. 43)

Essentially, the media is presented as unpatriotic; in these novels they have been subverted by DADA, and the result is "wild-eyed eggheads and bewildered college babies skillfully manipulated by cold blooded professionals" (*Reggis,* p. 82). Whether or not one agrees with this pessimistic view—does Spencer really believe it?—his shafts strike in the consciousness of readers and are evidence that his humor is not totally frivolous.

Finally, there are the more than two hundred quotations of Monroe D. Underwood (a.k.a. Old Dad) which preface each chapter. They vary from epigrams through distorted clichés, poems, and nonsense to sexist wife and mother-in-law jokes. Old Dad Underwood is one of a long line of American cracker barrel philosophers—though perhaps he should be called a beer barrel philosopher for the time he spends in Wallace's tavern. He is a cynic and a misogynist whose views resemble those of his great predecessor Mark Twain; in fact, some of his sayings seem variations on Twain's, e.g. "dogs is man's best friend...man ain't nobody's" (*Dada,* p. 25). Whether giving advice, commenting on the action, making nonsensical jokes, or being a male chauvinist, Underwood's ungrammatical observations provide both a second tone and perspective, complementing Chance's, for the novels. Occasionally they are pragmatically optimistic, as "you got to look for the sunny side...getting your toe stepped on ain't no bargain but it beats hell out of getting kicked in the groin" (*Radish,* p. 22), but more often they are jaundicedly cynical: "a juror is a person what usually gets fifteen dollars a day for listening to a lawyer what usually gets fifteen dollars a minute for defending a sex-murderer what usually gets fifteen days probation"..."forever was invented by Bank Americard" (*Abu Wahab,* pp. 14, 80), "a small town is where the man what don't drink is a sissy and the man what does is a drunkard" (*Stranger,* p. 75). By far the largest number of the epigrams concern sex, usually extra-marital: "the faithful man allus gets bored...the unfaithful man allus gets caught...ain't hardly worth it neither way (*Dada,* p. 51), "seduction is merely a matter of somebody convincing you to convince them of what they been trying to convince you to convince them of all along"..."a gigolo is a man who gets paid for doing what any idiot would be perfeckly willing to do for nothing" (*Stranger,* pp. 60, 91). Other than these two largest groups, the variety is wide, as is the quality of the humor. Feminists will certainly object to the many sexist, even anti-female, comments, but some of them *are* funny, such as the following pun-based example: "my great-grandmother should of been canonized ...by God she would of been if my great-grandfather could of got hold of a cannon" (*Dada,* p. 65). Finally, there are the nonsense jokes, which are as wacky as anything in the novels: "just ain't no telling where purple jelly beans come from...my guess is a red jelly bean got together with a blue jelly bean" (*Reggis,* p. 45). Whether one agrees with the views expressed by Underwood is really immaterial. His sayings are integral to the comic tone of the novels. It is difficult to imagine their not being there, and, without question, they would be sorely missed.

If the past few pages read like a catalog of comic devices and techniques, with illustrations, that is because Spencer's *Capers* are essentially that. He has employed most of the traditional methods of creating laughter, but, as a successful comic writer must, he has combined them in his own way. In *Contemporary Authors,* he states, "I am most influenced by Ring Lardner, Damon Runyon, Stephen Leacock, and Robert Service." No writer of detection fiction is on the list, and that is perhaps appropriate. Spencer's *Capers* ignore some of the most basic conventions of the detective genre—for example, there are no murders and virtually no detection—while mocking many others. These are comic novels, which use parody and burlesque of the hardboiled detective and the spy-thriller plot as their scaffolding. To that Spencer adds whatever he wishes whenever he wishes. The novels are therefore "loose," as most comic novels are. What holds them together is their author's style; it may be idiosyncratic, but the unifying force is its very idiosyncrasy. A favorite current term in literary criticism is "post-modernist," often used to describe a fractured, absurdist, or multi-level view of the contemporary world, a view that anything can happen and that answers are meaningless, if there are any. (Chance's continual shrug is the epitome of such an attitude.) If the term is accepted in that sense, then Spencer's *Capers* are comic post-modernist novels, turning the detective genre topsy-turvy and, through their style, creating an alternative world which is an undogmatic comment on the world around us. But above all else, the *Capers* of Ross H. Spencer are hilariously funny. □

CHILDREN OF DARKNESS

A NEWGATE PRISON TRAGICOMEDY

By Albert Borowitz

LAETITIA: Wise children soon learn to stand away from the fire.

CARTWRIGHT: Is it a part of wisdom—to become one of the children of darkness?

—*Children of Darkness,* Act II

It is a tribute to the strong bond between the crime histories and literatures of Britain and the United States that one of America's greatest prison dramas, *Children of Darkness* by Edwin Justus Mayer (1897–1960), is set in London's Newgate Prison. Mayer was born and raised in New York City. Though he worked successively as newspaperman, press agent, and film caption writer, his true love was always the theatre; he began writing plays from the time he left public school. He first appeared on the Broadway scene in 1924, when his comedy about Benvenuto Cellini, *The Firebrand,* was a big hit. *Children of Darkness* was tried out by producer Jed Harris in 1929 with a cast headed by Ina Claire, but the production was abandoned. The following year, the play was remounted by new producers and opened at the Biltmore Theatre with Basil Sydney as La Ruse and Mary Ellis as Laetitia. Although *Children of Darkness* ran for only 79 performances, it won great critical acclaim and has come to be recognized by drama critics and anthologists as one of America's most original stage works. In 1958, it was successfully revived at the Circle in the Square under the direction of José Quintero, with a cast including Colleen Dewhurst and George C. Scott (as Lord Wainwright). Among Mayer's other plays are the book for the musical comedy version of *The Firebrand* (called *The Firebrand of Florence*), with music by Kurt Weill and lyrics by Ira Gershwin (1945), and *The Last Love of Don Juan* (1955). Mayer also worked as a screenwriter in Hollywood and is best remembered by movie buffs as author of the screenplay for *To Be or Not To Be* with Jack Benny and Carole Lombard.

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Brooding over the action of *Children of Darkness* is the gloomy presence of London's ancient Newgate Prison. In its first modest incarnation as a jail in the twelfth century, "Newgate" was nothing more than a gatehouse in the city wall. A succession of more imposing structures rose on the same site until the prison was permanently demolished in 1902. Mayer set his tragicomedy in 1725, when Newgate was still in its corrupt and pestilential heyday. At that time, very few crimes were punished by imprisonment. A prison served, in crime historian Patrick Pringle's words, as a "waiting-room." Persons under arrest were incarcerated pending trial, and Newgate's convicts awaited their punishment, which for an enormous variety of crimes was hanging or, if prisoners were reprieved or guilty of lesser offenses, might be transportation to a penal colony. Even imprisoned debtors were not in theory being punished for debt; they were held under constraint while waiting, often hopelessly, for a means to pay their creditors. In 1725, prison administration was still not directly under official control but was farmed out to individuals hoping to earn a profit from their appointment; a few decades earlier, the keepership of Newgate had been sold for £3,500. Like the jailer Mr. Snap in *Children of Darkness,* the keeper and warders lived on what they could make out of the prisoners by the sale of provisions, the grant of special privileges, or the rental of comfortable living quarters.

The period flavor of *Children of Darkness* is sharpened by the appearance among Mayer's characters of the archcriminal of early eighteenth-century London, Jonathan Wild, whose career inspired the novel of Henry Fielding, *The Life of Mr. Jonathan Wild the Great,* which Mayer took as his principal source.*

Born in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire around

*Fielding's novel also originated the fictitious figures of Mr. Snap, Laetitia, and Count La Ruse, all of whom appear in Mayer's play.

1683 and apprenticed to a bucklemaker, Wild moved to London at age 21. After four years' imprisonment for debt, the young Jonathan learned the awful lesson that buckles do not pay and turned to the more remunerative career of crime; he soon became the prototype of the modern urban racketeer, exhibiting an organizational skill, brazenness, and scope of operation that would have caused Al Capone and even Professor Moriarty (whom Sherlock Holmes explicitly compared to Wild) to gape in disbelief. The cornerstone of his criminal career was the development of a complex "system" for profiting from the traffic in stolen goods. Since a recent series of laws had been passed punishing receivers of stolen goods with hanging or transportation, regular pawnbrokers were reluctant to act as fences. Wild therefore elaborated a more secure procedure that had been known to London's underworld since Elizabethan times: thieves would put stolen property under his control, and he, as their intermediary, would restore the goods to their owners at a higher price than the thieves could have obtained from a pawnbroker (even after the deduction of the considerable sum Wild skimmed off the top). Jonathan did not sit idly by, however, counting on a continuing boom in thievery. To make sure that an orderly flow of stolen goods would keep coming into his monopolizing hands, he divided London into exclusive criminal districts and recruited and directed gangs of thieves throughout the country.

Because of his ability, through the advertised services of his "lost property office," to return stolen goods to their owners at a fraction of their value, Wild achieved a remarkable reputation as a public benefactor. In order to enhance this reputation and at the same time increase his profits at the expense of rival gangs and rebels against his authority in the underworld, he diversified his criminal enterprise by engaging in "thief-taking," the capture of criminals for State rewards. Jonathan's dossier of criminals is credited with the origin of the "double-cross," a term derived from the first cross set down opposite a criminal's name when Wild learned of a crime that marked him for extortion or future destruction; the second cross Wild added when he had sent him to the gallows for a reward. Often Wild fed his purse by turning in men whom he had incited to crime or knew to be innocent, and he secretly protected valuable gang members while publicly sacrificing the small fry. As a symbol of his dignity as a "public servant," Wild carried a silver staff, and he dubbed himself "Thief-taker General of Great Britain and Ireland." But a dangerous foe was bent on his destruction: Sir William Thomson, City Recorder and Solicitor-General, in 1719 introduced a bill (deliberately directed against Wild) that outlawed the receipt of rewards from owners for the return of stolen goods. It was under a strained interpretation of this statute that Wild was ultimately imprisoned in Newgate and convinced of the paltry offense of receiving a reward of ten guineas for procuring the return of fifty yards of stolen lace, shortly before the action of *Children of Darkness* begins. Wild is immortalized by Fielding's novel (which likens the gangleader's "greatness" in villainy to the reputed unscrupulousness of Prime Minister Sir Robert Walpole); in the character of Peachum in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera;* in a pamphlet by Defoe based on a prison interview with Wild; and in poems of Swift. If for some reason you take a liking to Wild after encountering him in a reading of *Children of Darkness,* you may visit his skeleton, which is on display at the Hunterian Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons in London.

Another semi-authentic figure from crime history appearing in the play is Lord Wainwright. This icy aristocrat, who indifferently explains that he is held for poisoning his wife "and a few of her intimate friends," is apparently an anachronistic rendering of the Victorian mass-murderer, Thomas Griffiths Wainewright. The real-life Wainewright poisoned his grandfather for an inheritance but then became a habitual poisoner, often hard pressed to find a reason for his murders; he explained his poisoning of his twenty-year-old sister-in-law, Helen Abercrombie, by the fact that she had "thick ankles." An artist and art critic, Wainewright became the subject of a famous essay by Oscar Wilde, who wrote admiringly of him as an author: "That a man's a poisoner is nothing against his prose."

Although Mayer draws upon criminal annals in assembling his *dramatis personae* and constructs a convincing Newgate setting, the main focus of the play is nevertheless outside the realms of crime and history. As in Dickens's *Little Dorrit,* the prison in Mayer's hands becomes a symbol of all the means by which people are cut off from affirmative, participatory living. The denizens of Mr. Snap's lodging are not "children of darkness" because they are convicted criminals or inured to amorality in personal relationships but because they have chosen to "stand away from the fire" of youthful enthusiasm and to renounce an openness, a susceptibility to joy. The passion that the "children of darkness" have lost still blazes fiercely in Mr. Snap's youngest tenant, Cartwright, but among the other lodgers only La Ruse feels regret for his consignment to the outer darkness, from which he hopes to escape by the "white wings" of a return to life or the "black wings" of death. To provide glimpses into the souls of his benighted children, Mayer arranges them in ever-shifting pairs engaging in verbal fencing matches that reveal as much of their kinship as of their hostility. They are mirrors of each other who, as Laetitia says of herself and La Ruse, "can no more escape from

each other than from the reflection we must see if we walk in the sun." Count La Ruse, perhaps the pivotal figure of the play, is brought into close juxtaposition and conflict with many mirror images among the other characters. With Jonathan Wild and Mr. Snap, he is tied by a common penchant for thievery and deception. The Count engages Laetitia in a duel of wit and cold sensuality that would be worthy of a post-sexual revolution Beatrice and Benedick. But he finds his most revealing mirror in the poet Cartwright, the portrait of Mayer as a young man. The union of the destinies of the Count and the poet is first hinted at by the coincidence that they have both been imprisoned for a debt of precisely the same amount; subsequently, La Ruse is to see in the young man the "shadow" of his "former self" that impels him to regard Cartwright not as a rival but a surrogate for a lost son.

A special glory of *Children of Darkness,* and one of its principal challenges to the reader or theatregoer, is its language. Many of the characters speak in an artificial literary style that is heightened by lyricism and often runs to epigram. The mannered dialogue does not appear to reflect an attempt at historical authenticity because, apart from the use of a few underworld "cant" terms borrowed from Fielding, Mayer does not imitate eighteenth-century speech. Instead, the language of the play represents a consciously anti-realist device intended to set at contrast the amorality of the characters' behavior and the elegance of what they have to say for themselves. At the same time, the fiery eloquence of the poet Cartwright is a testament to the aspiration, daring, and enthusiasm that the "children of darkness" have forsworn. In the original published version of the play, Cartwright, who mixes his own lyrical outbursts with Shakespearean phrases, delivered a *riposte* that may still serve as a defense not only of the young poet's own style but of the voice of the entire play:

LAETITIA: Damn you Sir! All your talk is like a quotation!

CARTWRIGHT: But like a good quotation, from a full heart! Is't not better so, than to speak as you do, from your own great emptiness! □

A NOTE TO OUR READERS

The Armchair Detective has expanded! We have added sixteen pages to our magazine beginning with issue – Vol. 16, No. 1.

Unfortunately, we must raise the cover price of TAD not only to pay for these extra pages but also to keep up with inflation.

Beginning July 1, 1983, the cost of TAD will increase by *one dollar.* Any new or renewal subscription received after July 1 will be billed at the higher price.

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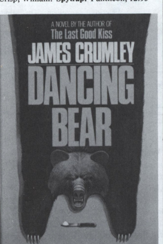

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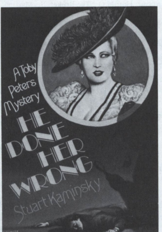

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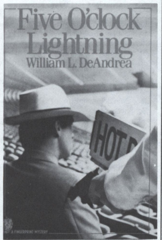

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TWO POEMS

By Mel D. Ames

Perry Mason, it's whispered,
(And I'm not surprised)
Was involved in the Cock Robin killing.
He'd solved the affair
With typical flair,
Then disclaimed it for lack of top billing.

'Twas a courtroom confession
(You may have surmised)
That compelled a discomfited sparrow
To blurt out in court
That famous retort:
"I did it (sob) with my bow and arrow!"

Could there yet be a reason
(Still *un*-Perry-ized)
To defend this paralogical plot?
Or must we concede
To be lost in the screed
Of an early E.S.G. "mis-begot"?

The Mystery Writer's dilemma
As he buried his victim was not
Remorse, or the pangs of rejection—
He was simply fulfilling the plot.

(He'd murdered the lady with *pathos.*
Done her in with *style* and *suspense.*
The *red herrings* he'd used to obfuscate
Clues, left little or no *evidence.*)

Still, he fretted, shoveling at graveside,
Lest some slip might her murder portend,
And he hastened to end with the filling
Before someone else filled in
THE END.

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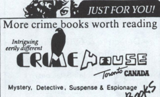

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