

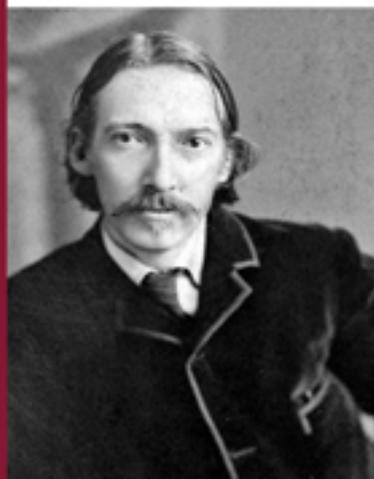


*Literary Movements* 

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
ADVENTURE  
FICTION

THE ESSENTIAL REFERENCE TO THE GREAT WORKS  
AND WRITERS OF ADVENTURE FICTION

DON D'AMMASSA



# Encyclopedia of Adventure Fiction

DON D'AMMASSA

## ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ADVENTURE FICTION

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# INTRODUCTION

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Adventure fiction has been around since the first primitive man or woman began spinning wild tales about the exciting things that happened to them during the day, probably to explain why the hunter returned empty-handed or the gatherer harvested less than the usual volume of berries and roots. Adventure fills a gap in our lives; it interrupts the routine passage of time and suggests that life could be more interesting if we had only taken a different course somewhere along the way. Adventure is a relative and very personal experience. A police officer's daily patrol might be very exciting if you work in an office all day, but a routine flight in a hot-air balloon might seem like a wild adventure to him. In practice, a touch of real adventure is usually more than enough for most of us, and we are much more comfortable enjoying other people's adventures vicariously, on the screen or in the pages of a book.

Modern adventure novels are frequently labeled thrillers. They do not constitute a distinct, separate genre such as detective stories or romances or science fiction, but, rather, intersect and overlap them all. In one sense, almost all fiction involves some sort of adventure, exposure to new experiences or knowledge, changes in the shapes of the characters' lives. Although there is no easily definable line of demarcation, we will assume that an adventure is an event or series of events that happen outside the ordinary course of the protagonist's life, usually accompanied by danger, often by physical action. Adventure stories almost always move quickly, and the pace of the plot is at least as important as characterization, setting, and other

elements of a created work. For purposes of this book, our focus will be confined almost exclusively to those stories where the adventurous element is of primary importance. In *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens, Pip's encounter with the convict is an adventure, but that scene is only a device to advance the main plot, which is not truly an adventure. On the other hand, the characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* are frequently in danger of murder or imprisonment during the turmoil of the French Revolution, and that constitutes an adventure. Classic detective stories often have elements of action and danger, but the primary focus is generally on the solving of a puzzle. Similarly, science fiction and fantasy usually involve thrilling action sequences, but such stories concentrate primarily on scientific developments, strange environments and cultures, or the interplay among the characters. In many of these stories, the characters have adventures, but that does not mean that they are stories about adventure. It should also be noted that a plot that relies on physical action and danger does not mean that a piece of fiction lacks literary merit. Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* and William Faulkner's *The Reivers* are both superior novels, even though they are at heart stories of adventure.

Sometimes the adventure is intellectual rather than physical, exposure to a series of revelations that changes how the protagonist thinks about the world. More often there is sharper conflict, either with a human antagonist or a force of nature, or there may be some other obstacle to be overcome. The protagonist might choose to have

an adventure—join the foreign legion, participate in an expedition into unexplored parts of the world, or just try out a new experience. In other cases, adventure is thrust upon the characters, and they have to survive as best they can, pursued by bloodthirsty pirates, sinister foreign agents, or lava from an erupting volcano. Their adventures might take years to complete, or only a few minutes. Most, but not all, adventure stories require their protagonists to be displaced from their usual environment. These journeys might be conscious choices or involuntary responses to circumstances. In most of the better adventure stories, the physical journey is mirrored by an interior one; the protagonist learns something about the world at large, or about his or her own personality. Usually, but not always, there is a change in the protagonist's environment, typically a journey, possibly into previously unknown territory, of the mind if not of the body.

Given that adventure spans genres, it would be an immense task to even attempt to examine it in all of its manifestations. Although this book includes examples of fantasy, detective stories, and other types of fiction that qualify as adventure, our focus will be on the pure tale of adventure as represented primarily by the classic novels, series, and writers who have come to be associated with that term. Examples will be drawn from tales of pirates and war and the Old West, from sea stories and natural disasters and international espionage. Some stories are set in or near the present, others in the distant past. Some are deadly serious, and others lighthearted. There are also a few unusual examples included to illustrate how adventure can be found in even the most familiar setting, and that it can take place within the mind as well as in the greater world.

I have tried to cover major novels and stories in each genre, as well as authors who worked primarily in the adventure genre for most of their career but who may not have a single work that is particularly outstanding. A few authors of particular note are discussed in reference to

their total output, but with one or more of their separate works given special consideration. All the works covered have literary merit, and many are acknowledged literary classics. Novels covered include Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* and *Heart of Darkness*, Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, several of Jack London's works, Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, John Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, and many more. Short stories covered include "The Most Dangerous Game," "The Lady or the Tiger?" and "To Build a Fire." This emphasis on classic works is not meant to slight contemporary writers, but it is impossible to forecast which of them will prove to have lasting reputations. I have included a handful of newer writers and works that are most likely to remain popular, but predicting the future is a thankless task, and I might be completely mistaken. In addition, a few authors and works have been included because they were notably influential or because they illustrate a kind of adventure that has not been covered elsewhere. Finally, I have also included entries on important related topics, such as Arthurian adventures, espionage, pulp heroes, science fiction adventures, superheroes, and more.

All entries on works contain not only a plot synopsis but also a Critical Analysis, which examines themes and ideas in more detail. Readers, particularly younger readers, should keep in mind that even entertaining works of fiction such as these can explore ideas that are worth thinking about. Similarly, entries on writers not only describe the facts of the writer's life and publications, but also contain a Critical Analysis.

I hope that readers derive a little bit of adventure just by reading about these works, and a great deal more by sampling some of them. Moreover, I hope that readers who have already read and loved some of the works described here will turn to this volume for ideas on how to think more deeply about them.



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***Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*** (1884)  
**Mark Twain**

American writer Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835–1910) wrote under several other pen names prior to settling on Mark Twain. He had worked primarily as a riverboat pilot before becoming one of the best-known authors of his time, noted for his novels, essays, and satire. He was one of the first author celebrities in the United States and was well known in Europe as well. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a loose sequel to *The ADVENTURES OF TOM SAWYER* (1876), but is considerably more serious in tone. It is often cited as the first great American novel and has remained popular and in print almost continuously since it first appeared.

Huck's mother has died and he is living with the elderly Widow Douglas and her sister, Miss Watson, when the book opens. His disreputable father has been missing for more than a year and is believed to have drowned. Having had little proper upbringing, Huck has trouble adjusting to the rules and regulations of his aunt, the necessity to attend school regularly, and the attitudes of adults in general, and is still a close friend of Tom Sawyer. When Huck's abusive father shows up, very much alive, Huck is virtually imprisoned in a shack for several months, then fakes his own death and hides on an uninhabited island, where he runs into Jim, a runaway slave.

The two travel downriver together on a raft, outwit a band of thieves on a shipwreck, and have several other adventures before being separated when a riverboat runs down their raft. Huck is taken

in by the Grangerfords, a local family involved in a feud with their neighbors, the Shepherdsons. Huck discovers that Jim is still alive and has salvaged the raft, so they leave under cover of a major battle. Soon after, they take two confidence men aboard, the Duke and the Dauphin, both of whom claim to be descended from royalty. Having learned somewhat from his experiences, Huck recognizes them both as liars but figures things will be more pleasant if he does not let on. His experiences with Tom Sawyer have already blurred the distinction between reality and make-believe.

Huck is talked into participating in a scam but ultimately decides to trick the two thieves into betraying themselves. Unfortunately, they escape and reach the raft before Huck and Jim can disappear and subsequently one of them sells Jim to a local farmer. Huck is determined to free him again, and Tom Sawyer shows up just in time to lend a hand. They succeed, and then fail, but the true irony is that Jim had already been declared free, although only Tom knew about it.

### **Critical Analysis**

Although Huck is 13 or 14 at the time of the novel and only spottily educated, he does a good deal of growing up during his adventures. In fact, he and Jim are the two most adult characters of the many whom they encounter during their journey. The two feuding families are trapped in a childish, pointless, and tragic contest, while the Duke and the Dauphin survive only by misrepresenting themselves at every opportunity and refusing to take

## 2 *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

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responsibility for their lives. Satire and adventure are intertwined, as the adults create fantastic interpretations of events that betray an imagination less disciplined even than that of a young boy.

Huck reflects the often ambivalent attitude some people felt toward the institution of slavery. Although he is convinced that slaves are property and that runaways should be caught and returned to their owners in accordance with the law, he is unable to bring himself to turn in Jim, whom he recognizes as a friend. Ambivalence and contradiction are recurring themes throughout the novel. Both sides in the feud between the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons respect one another as brave men, but paradoxically they kill one another whenever the chance offers itself, even though no one can remember the cause of the original argument. One of the Grangerfords defines a feud as a series of killings that ends only when one side is extinct and all those involved seemed resigned to the trap they have built for themselves. Twain emphasizes this absurdity by having the two families sit close to one another in a church while the preacher lectures them on brotherly love, never applying what they hear to how they act. Twain clearly had in mind William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, even having the daughter of one family elope with the son from the other. Later, the Dauphin turns a revival meeting into a money-making operation, a direct contradiction of its purpose, after which the two confidence men pose as actors in a performance that includes an amusing version of Hamlet's soliloquy, which the Duke professes to honor but which he cannot remember accurately.

The only one of the four people on the raft who has attempted to plan his future beyond the next few days is Jim, the runaway slave, and in that sense he is the only adult in the group. Huck does begin to show signs of maturity and conscience when he has second thoughts about a confidence game in which he has been enlisted, reflecting upon the ill effects it will have on their victims, but he reverts to childishness when he is reunited with Tom Sawyer. The Duke and the Dauphin are permanently arrested in childhood, unable to distinguish between right and wrong, living only for the next moment's pleasure without considering the consequences on others or their own long-term

well-being. When Tom shows up to help free Jim, he deliberately creates unnecessary complications, indicative of the fact that he has not changed as dramatically as his friend. There is considerable cynicism about the Southern lifestyle of the period, actually more than 20 years past by the time the novel was published. The feud resulted from a disproportionate belief in pride and honor. In another incident a murder is turned into a virtual party, and the murderer himself chastises the crowd for their careless attitude.

The plot is episodic, each adventure flowing logically from the previous one. The one notable literary flaw is that Jim's rescue is more than slightly contrived. He happens to have been bought by relatives of the Sawyers, and Huck finds out where he is and then coincidentally arrives there only hours before Tom is due to arrive on a visit. That cavil aside, the situation does set up the final escapade, the unnecessarily elaborate escape effort that draws upon other adventure classics such as *The MAN IN THE IRON MASK* (1847) by Alexandre Dumas. This final segment is generally considered the weakest part of the novel.

*Huckleberry Finn* was one of the first novels to be written in vernacular, narrated in the first person by the relatively uneducated title character. Some editions include as part of the novel a vignette about an encounter with a group of raftsmen, which Twain removed from an early draft and included in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) instead. Despite its pointed comments about white bigotry and the support for slavery that existed even within organized religion, the novel has frequently been banned or bowdlerized to eliminate perceived racism. It was the fifth most banned novel in schools and libraries during the 1990s. One film version even chose to leave out the character of Jim entirely.

### ***The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876)**

#### **Mark Twain**

Along with its companion volume, *ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN* (1884), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is one of the classics of American literature. Mark Twain was the pen name of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835–1910), a celebrated humorist and

lecturer. His stories of childhood adventures are among the most popular of all time.

The novel establishes Tom's character in the first few pages, a high-spirited, intelligent child who knows just how to get around his Aunt Polly, at least most of the time. Although never stated, it appears that Tom and his friends are no older than their early teens. After getting into a fight with a new boy in town, Tom is sentenced to a Saturday of chores, launching his most famous exploit, the whitewashing of a picket fence. By pretending that it was both a pleasure and an honor to be allowed to complete the job, he convinces several passing boys to trade him some of their possessions for the chance to do part of the job, by which means he is able to remain idle, have some company, and let others do the work for him.

Tom sets about an awkward wooing of Becky Thatcher, is rebuffed, and seeks the company of Huckleberry for a midnight visit to the graveyard. There the two boys secretly watch Injun Joe fatally stab Doctor Robinson and blame it on a third party named Potter after a grave-robbing expedition goes awry. Terrified of Injun Joe, the boys swear to each other to remain silent about what they have seen, but Tom in particular experiences the tugs of a guilty conscience when Potter is thrown in jail. Feeling unappreciated by their families, he and Huck and another boy run off and hide on an island while the rest of the town believes that they have drowned. They return in the midst of their funeral, causing considerable uproar and relatively few recriminations.

The murder sinks further into the background as Tom and Becky quarrel and make up, and several of the students at school engage in a losing war against their stern and occasionally cruel teacher. Then the trial starts, and both Tom and Huck are bothered increasingly by the fate that looms for Potter until finally Tom can stand it no longer, confesses everything to Potter's lawyer, and clears the man's name. Unfortunately, Injun Joe escapes and disappears.

Some time passes, and Tom and Huck decide to search for buried treasure. They are exploring an abandoned, supposedly haunted house when Injun Joe and another man show up. The boys hide and overhear them when they discover a chest filled

with gold coins, but are afraid to follow to find out where they have taken their loot. Eventually they track Injun Joe down, and Huck follows the pair one night when they set out to burglarize Widow Douglas. He raises the alarm, but they escape in the darkness. Elsewhere, Tom and Becky have gotten lost exploring part of an enormous cave system. They eventually find their way out, after which the cave entrance is sealed, trapping Injun Joe inside. By the time Tom discovers what has happened, Injun Joe has starved to death. The boys later locate the missing money, enough to make them both "rich," and Huck finds himself the not entirely happy ward of the Widow Douglas.

### **Critical Analysis**

What might seem like relatively mundane events to an adult can be high adventure to a child. Life reaches them filtered through their limited experience and is manipulated by imagination into something richer and more exciting. Although Twain meant this novel primarily as entertainment for younger readers, he hoped that it would find an audience among adults as well because he also hoped to "pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves." In fact, Twain had originally assumed that the novel would be marketed for adults and was only convinced at a late stage to package it as a children's book. Unlike most children's literature of its time, the novel is filled with genuine danger, realistically portrayed villains, and children who are at times thoughtless, rebellious, brave, and terrified. Episodes are humorous, others emotionally touching, and still others suspenseful or exciting.

Tom has an instinctive grasp of human psychology that enables him to escape retribution and achieve his own goals with relative ease. He observes during the fence-painting episode that in order to make an unpleasant task or object look appealing, "it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain." The author interpolates further from this that work is anything one is "obliged to do" regardless of its actual nature, and play is anything one is not.

There are no strong male role models in the novel. Tom's parents are dead, and he lives with Aunt Polly. Joe Harper's mother appears briefly

but never his father. Huck's father is only alluded to as the town drunk and is not involved in the narrative, and Huck ends up becoming the ward of the Widow Douglas. All three boys are disciplined primarily by women and criticized for acting in a manner traditional for young boys.

Twain's recollections of childhood are amusing and evocative. Tom must show off for his temporary love, Amy, without ever clearly admitting that he is doing so, and must claim the flower she throws to him casually and without being seen. He tries, and fails, at various subterfuges to keep from washing, wearing shoes, or attending church. Along with his friends he indulges in games whose rules are fluid, utters boasts that no one actually believes, and voices unlikely plans for the future like running away to join a circus. The remnants of childhood that remain with adults are reflected in the scene where a respected judge appears at church school just after several of the boys have indulged in various forms of "showing off." The subsequent actions by the teachers and staff are pointedly described in the very same terms as they attempt to impress the visitor. Similarly, when Tom gets bored during a lengthy sermon at church and lets a pinch bug loose, which subsequently torments a dog, the adults all react much as he does, with amusement and a lifting of tension. Twain is clearly suggesting that there is not that much difference between the mind of a child and the mind of an adult, that the same urges and desires manifest themselves in only superficially different ways. This is illustrated again when instead of acting in accordance with the Bible, as do—theoretically at least—most of the adults in the novel, Tom acts out scenes from the adventures of ROBIN HOOD, *TREASURE ISLAND*, and others.

While the book may have been marketed for younger readers, Twain still inserted some sly, adult criticism of the foibles of society. After describing the time wasted on a series of unnecessary announcements, he comments that "the less there is to justify a traditional custom, the harder it is to get rid of it." He is also critical of people who seek pardons for hardened criminals, describing those who wanted the governor to forgive Injun Joe as having "permanently impaired and leaky water-works." In another sequence children are rewarded

for memorizing lines of Scripture, and one boy memorizes so much that his mind breaks down and he is an idiot from then on, an obvious criticism of the rote memorization that was such a large part of the educational system of that time.

The resolution of the Injun Joe story depends in part upon a rather unlikely string of coincidences; the boys happen to be in a position to spy on Injun Joe a second time, just as he discovers the buried chest of coins, so that they are able to expose him and confirm the existence of a real treasure to take the place of the imaginary one they were looking for in the first place. It does, however, bring symmetry to the story, reflecting their earlier observation of him committing the murder. Twain relies on a second, even less credible coincidence during the climax. When Tom and Becky are lost in the caves, they stumble upon Injun Joe's second hiding place, allowing Tom to return later with Huck to secure the prize.

Twain chronicled the further adventures of Tom Sawyer in the less memorable *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1894) and *Tom Sawyer Detective* (1896), as well as having him appear during the final section of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. That novel, generally considered the better of the two, echoes several situations from the earlier book, including the secret camp on an island and the presumption that the protagonist has died. Three other stories involving Tom were started but were incomplete when Twain died, although "Tom Sawyer's Conspiracy" had a nearly complete plot.

### ***The African Queen* (1935) C. S. Forester**

Although he is remembered today primarily for his Horatio Hornblower series, British author C. S. FORESTER (1899–1966) wrote several other novels of high adventure, including this extraordinary account of a determined woman and her quest for vengeance. The setting is German-dominated Central Africa during the early days of World War I. Rose Sayer and her brother were working as missionaries when the war broke out, but that all came to a sudden end when the Germans mobilized the natives. Bitter and depressed, her brother contracts a fever and dies shortly thereafter. Charlie Allnut, a disreputable expatriate Englishman, arrives the

same day and takes her aboard his equally disreputable barge, the *African Queen*, hoping to find someplace for the two of them to hide until conditions are safer and more predictable. Sayer, who blames the Germans for her brother's death, has more ambitious plans. She wants to strike a blow against their colonial government. Since there are explosives aboard the barge, she decides that they should attempt to sink a German gunship that commands an interior lake system, even though Allnutt assures her that it is impossible to reach the lake with the barge, let alone attack the gunship.

Although he balks at risking a passage through the rapids that separate them from their target, Sayer's refusal to speak to him eventually proves so unsettling that he agrees to make the attempt. A perilous journey past a German outpost and down the uncharted river follows, and from the outset it is clearly Sayer who is in command. Almost inevitably, the two become lovers, and her instinctive understanding of how to maneuver the ungainly vessel complements Allnutt's technical expertise. Despite their efforts, severe damage to the propeller results in a long delay, during which they manage to jury-rig a repair, after which they resume their journey, eventually reaching the lake.

Ultimately their attack on the gunship fails because of an untimely spell of heavy weather that sinks the *African Queen*. They both survive, are captured by the Germans and delivered into friendly hands, and are still on the scene when the British navy sinks the gunship. They decide then to get married, but Forester refuses to say that they lived happily ever after.

### Critical Analysis

The major focus of the novel is the trip down the river, but the journey is spiritual as well as physical. Both Sayer and Allnutt will discover that they possess the power to free themselves from those invisible and unwelcome constraints that have governed their past lives. Allnutt, who has always deferred to others, is so conditioned to that mode of behavior that he accedes to Sayer's wishes even when he believes her suggestions unwise or impossible. Sayer is described as a woman typical of a society in which men make all the decisions, and the author even suggests that her personal religious convictions are

not so much choices she has made but attitudes imposed upon her by her prudish brother. Cultural conditioning notwithstanding, she quickly becomes comfortable giving orders to Allnutt and develops the plot to sink a warship within hours of her brother's death, suggesting a far stronger personality than was suggested by her earlier habits. Her break with the inhibitions of her brother's regime is signaled that first day, when she thinks nothing of bathing nude only a few feet from an equally nude man she has known for only a few hours.

Sayer proves as interested in repudiating her former life as she is in striking a blow against the Germans, although she may not understand her own motivations. "Rose was really alive for the first time in her life." Allnutt, on the other hand, has not yet realized that most of the trouble he has experienced in the past "resulted from the attempt to avoid trouble" and that by failing to argue with his companion when she first hatched her scheme, he allowed it to grow into a full-blown obsession by the time he decides that they have gone far enough. It comes as no surprise that his efforts then prove totally inadequate to sway her from the goal she has set.

The tyranny and deprivation that had been imposed on Sayer by her brother is revealed only gradually. He punished her by refusing to speak to her for extended periods of time—the effectiveness of which she turns to her own purposes with Allnutt—and he made all the decisions in their lives. His lifestyle is characterized as "joyless" and "bilious." Although she had long wanted to travel in an automobile, she had never had the opportunity, and not once in her previous life had it ever occurred to her to simply enjoy the scenery. Her new situation quickly loosens the old restraints, and she forgets or ignores her brother's contention that "any desire of the body should be suspect and treated as an instigation of the devil." After living for 30 years subordinating herself to others, she slowly begins to realize that "subjection offers small scope to personality." Only a few days following her emancipation, she has changed irreversibly.

Sayer's determination to strike back at the German authorities is a belated response to those who suppressed her own inclinations in the past, primarily her father and brother. Even when she is

overcome with remorse at her dereliction from the daily prayers that were an inviolable rule in her past life, she refuses to accept that her relationship with Allnut could possibly be sinful. Allnut has also begun to change, though less dramatically. Much to his surprise, his first exposure to danger and excitement did not prove fatal, and their subsequent accomplishments begin to stimulate his dormant manhood and sense of personal pride.

Forester chooses realism rather than the melodramatic conclusion the reader might expect. Although they fail to sink the German gunship, it would not have altered the situation even if they had, as it is destroyed within a matter of days even without their intervention. Their quest is more successful in the 1951 film version. They have, however, earned a more important and lasting reward. Through their arduous journey, they have each discovered truths about themselves, and they have found nobility and initiative where before there had only been compliance and insecurity. Additionally, they have also learned to love each other. Their epic journey, both physical and spiritual, is among the most memorable in literature.

### ***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) Lewis Carroll**

British author and mathematician Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832–98) published this classic children's adventure story under the name "Lewis Carroll," as well as its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass* (1872). Carroll was also variously a clergyman, a teacher, and a photographer, and his friendship with the Liddell family, particularly their daughter Alice, resulted in two fanciful adventures of Alice's visits to strange worlds. The story was originally created as an entertainment for the real Alice, who requested that it be written down. The earliest version was titled *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, then eventually published as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which was later shortened to its present variation.

The story is one of the most familiar children's adventures of all time. Alice is a young girl who catches sight of an odd-looking rabbit in the garden one day and follows it down a hole. There she finds a bottle labeled "Drink Me," which she unwisely does and promptly shrinks. A series of classic

encounters follows, starting with a satire on British politics expounded by a Dodo and other animals, while the White Rabbit runs about muttering about the Duchess. After receiving enigmatic advice from the Caterpillar, Alice meets the Duchess herself and her strange household, which includes the smiling Cheshire Cat and a pig substituted for a baby. The Mad Hatter's tea party leads to a game of croquet with the Queen of Hearts, using flamingos instead of mallets, an encounter with the Mock Turtle, stolen tarts, a trial, and finally Alice's escape.

The sequel, *Through the Looking Glass* (1872), is structured in the same fashion, but is considerably more somber, perhaps reflecting Carroll's reaction to the death of his father. In her second adventure Alice meets Humpty Dumpty and Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Fascinated with the prospect of a world beyond the mirror, Alice discovers that she can pass into it, where she promptly becomes a pawn opposed to the Red Queen. Eventually she is befriended by the White Knight, becomes a queen herself, and then wakens at home from what may or may not have been a dream.

### **Critical Analysis**

Until comparatively recently, adventure stories were almost always assumed to be the interest of boys, not girls, and a female protagonist was a novelty in itself. Alice's nonsensical escapades in *Wonderland* and later in *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) are rivaled only by those of Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* (1900) in mixing absurdity and adventure to create a story that captivates children and adults alike. Carroll was a much wittier writer than L. Frank Baum, and the chaotic surface of his story is underpinned by cleverly designed puzzles and conceits.

Alice is an episodic narrative that offers readers some of the most famous passages and images in literature. Carroll, who was also a poet, included "You Are Old Father William," "The Lobster Quadrille," and other familiar verses. "Jabberwocky" and "The Walrus and the Carpenter," often believed to be part of the first book, actually appeared in *Through the Looking Glass*, but the two stories have become so closely linked in the general consciousness that they are frequently lumped together as one work. Carroll's facility with language and his gift for amusing wordplay work on multiple levels of

meaning and, as is the case with the best of children's stories, his stories appeal to readers of different ages for different reasons.

Although *Alice* was meant as entertainment for a child, Carroll could not resist satirizing contemporary society. The fact that the character who explains the functions of government is a Dodo is hardly coincidental—it is probably also meant to be a personification of the author—and the Mad Hatter's tea party is certainly a commentary on the formality of Victorian society. Other allusions to people Carroll liked or disliked, are usually veiled and of more interest historically than literarily. There is heavy use of nonsense, but despite a succession of bizarre events and encounters, there is a coherent progression, with characters reappearing to help reinforce the acceleration of the plot in the final pages. The strong emphasis on games and rule reflects Carroll's background as a mathematician. The action of the first book involves a deck of cards, while the second is related to a game of chess.

Although Carroll insisted that he meant the books as nothing more than an entertainment for children, he recognized that “words mean more than we mean to express when we use them,” and that sometimes a work of literature can signify more than was originally, or at least consciously, intended. Since Carroll's death there has been controversy about the possible allusions to the use of drugs—the bottled potions, the Caterpillar's hookah, the magical mushroom, and Alice's almost hallucinatory experiences—but there is no strong evidence that this is the case.

Alice's adventures have been brought to the screen many times, both as live-action and animated films. There have also been a number of parodies and pastiches, including *A New Alice in the Old Wonderland* (1895) by Anna M. Richards and *Alice Through the Needle's Eye* (1984) by Gilbert Adair, but none have been able to capture Carroll's unique ability to make nonsense seem logical. A section dropped from *Through the Looking Glass* was later published as “A Wasp in a Wig.”

**Allan Quatermain** (1897) **H. Rider Haggard**

This classic African adventure story is the direct sequel to *KING SOLOMON'S MINES*. H. Rider Haggard

(1856–1925) was a British author who lived in Africa for several years as a young man and who was captivated by many of the stories he heard from European explorers. His most famous character is Allan Quatermain, a British explorer and big game hunter who penetrated far beyond the incursions of European civilization. Quatermain had moved from Africa to England at the end of his first chronicled adventure, but the death of his son leaves him with no purpose in life, and when he is approached by two friends who propose a fresh expedition, he jumps at the chance to occupy both mind and body. Their destination is an unexplored part of East Africa, supposedly home to a lost race of white people. Shortly after arriving, they encounter Umslopogaas, who had accompanied Quatermain on some of his previous expeditions.

Once all the characters are assembled, the story begins in earnest. The novel actually consists of two separate adventures. During the first leg of their journey, they annoy a local criminal who talks a band of warlike Masai into trailing and attempting to kill the explorers. They catch sight of the war party and are warned of their danger, then survive a sneak attack on their canoes in the middle of the night. Most of the porters have deserted by then, and with fewer than a dozen defenders they have no chance in an open fight, so they make their way hastily to a mission, which is heavily fortified and which usually has a strong contingent of defenders. Unfortunately, most of the latter are away, leaving only another 20 to resist the much more numerous Masai.

At first it appears that they will be left alone, but the daughter of the mission leader is captured, and the three friends are given until dawn to send out one of their number to take her place. Instead, Umslopogaas proposes a detailed plan of attack by which they overcome a very large party of Masai and rescue the prisoner, although with heavy losses of their own. They subsequently leave the mission, concluding the first adventure. A brief bridge section includes an exciting and perilous journey through an underground river, near disaster when they encounter a flaming gas jet, and other dangers, concluding with their emergence in the hidden land of Zu Vendi, which is ruled by two beautiful sisters. The inhabitants of Zu Vendi are predomi-

nantly white, and Quatermain speculates that they may have originated in Phoenicia or Persia.

Considerable time is spent describing the main city and culture, which includes sun worship and human sacrifice, but also some surprisingly sophisticated technology. Rule is shared by the queens and the aristocracy on the one hand, and a powerful priesthood on the other. The newcomers run into immediate trouble when they kill three hippopotami to impress their new hosts, unaware that these are sacred animals. The immediate physical attraction between one of the visitors and Queen Nyleptha also antagonizes her most prominent suitor, and the outsiders narrowly avoid being sacrificed by the priesthood. Compounding their trouble is a streak of rivalry and jealousy between the sisters, which eventually results in a civil war. Quatermain and his friends are instrumental in turning the tide of battle against the priests and restoring order, although Umslopogaas is killed in the process. They decide to remain in Zu Vendi, although Haggard later reconsidered, having Quatermain return for subsequent adventures in other novels.

### Critical Analysis

Lost world novels, once quite popular, have become the victims of progress. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was possible to create entire imaginary kingdoms and set them in remote parts of the world simply because the dominant nations had not yet explored those areas—darkest Africa, the jungles of the Amazon, remote or imaginary islands, and various parts of Asia. It would not be possible today to write a plausible adventure story about the discovery of a lost civilization the size of France simply because there is no place to put it. Writers as disparate as MAX BRAND, EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS, Harold Lamb, Edison Marshall, Rex Stout, DENNIS WHEATLEY, and A. Merritt all dabbled in the lost world adventure. More than 100 such stories were published over the course of several decades. The two most famous were *The Lost World* (1912) and *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), of which *Allan Quatermain* is the sequel. By the time James Hilton wrote *LOST HORIZON* in 1933, it had already become very difficult to find a believable setting for a lost world adventure, although thriller

writer JAMES ROLLINS has adapted the form slightly in some of his novels.

Quatermain, and through him Haggard, is typical of the late Victorian Englishmen who established and maintained the British Empire, patronizing the natives whom they thought should be grateful to be receiving the benefits of British technology and culture. While almost always obvious that the British gentleman was considered an example of the “higher type of humanity,” it is fruitless to lament this racial chauvinism as it would have been more surprising if a man in Haggard’s position had held contrary opinions. Even Umslopogaas, the powerful warrior who follows Quatermain, is clearly his intellectual and spiritual inferior, noble in his way but never the equal of the European despite his brilliant military planning during the battle with the Masai. Haggard’s depiction of the physical locations is far more accurate than his characterizations of their people.

Similarly, Quatermain tends to generalize about women, although there is a suggestion that he believes their relatively limited lifestyles to be more a product of society than of any inherent shortcoming. He laments the fact that women in England “waste” much of their life on trivial matters, and the twin queens of Zu Vendi are clearly far more competent and quick-witted than many of their male companions. Haggard’s discussion of their culture allows him to criticize aspects of European civilization as well, although his depiction is not entirely consistent. For example, why do a people so isolated—they are unaware of the outside world—have a standing army of 20,000 men? Quatermain and his companions spend a considerable time trying to determine whether Zu Vendi is a civilized or barbaric nation, as though there were a clear-cut difference between the two.

The construction of the novel as two separate adventures is unusual, and the major battle that resolves the conflict with the Masai might ordinarily have resulted in a break in the narrative flow, but Haggard solves this by adding the very exciting bridging sequence on the underground river. The traumatic effects that outsiders wreak on the isolated Zu Vendi is typical of lost world novels, a melodramatic device that has since become a cliché. Although *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS* (1726) by Jonathan Swift is

probably the first significant lost world adventure, it was H. Rider Haggard, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and JULES VERNE who made the form popular.

### ***All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929)**

#### **Erich Maria Remarque**

Erich Maria Remarque (1898–1970) was a German author who served in the army during World War I, and his personal experiences are reflected in this novel. The antimilitary and antiestablishment tone in this and the author's other work did not sit well with the Nazis when they came to power, and Remarque's novels were banned in his homeland. Fortunately, he had moved to Switzerland shortly after *All Quiet on the Western Front* was published, and he spent the rest of his life either there or in the United States.

The prospect of an exciting adventure is generally considered to be a positive thing, but that is not always the case, particularly when the odds are that you will not survive the experience. Almost all stories set against the backdrop of war are, by their very nature, stories of adventure, but sometimes those adventures exact a great price. The prospect of facing the enemy in combat is usually seen as a romantic concept or an attempt to prove one's manhood. The young heroes of this novel initially join the army under the impression that they are embarking on a romantic quest, that they will be honored by their country as they risk their lives in its defense, after which they will all return home to live happily ever after. They are disabused of this notion quite early when they find themselves serving under a sadistic noncommissioned officer, and when they reach the front they watch their friends suffer and die under horrible conditions. The living conditions are intolerable, discipline is lax, and no one really seems to care what happens to any of them. The irony of the situation is illustrated by a sequence in which they spend several hours practicing how to salute rather than how to survive.

The battle scenes are particularly vivid. Trench warfare consists of massive bombardments followed by frontal assaults and counterattacks. Remarque's protagonist, Paul Baumer, endures conditions that drive some of his fellow soldiers mad. The artillery fire is so intense at times that it seems as though the

earth itself is the source of the violence. After one French assault fails, Baumer takes part in a counter-attack that drives the French from their trenches, after which the men plunder the French supplies before returning to their own lines.

The second half of the book is set on the eastern front against Russia. In a particularly effective sequence Baumer and his friends guard a deserted village, and he continues to cook pancakes even while artillery rounds are tearing apart the house where he has been hiding. On other occasions, they are engaged in pitched battles against rats rather than human enemies. Unlike traditional heroes, Baumer and his friends can do little to affect their own fate. The decision as to who lives and who dies is left almost entirely to chance.

The novel was made into an award-winning film in 1930 and remade as a television movie in 1979. It continues to be one of the most widely read war novels of all time.

#### **Critical Analysis**

Although there is a great deal of action in the novel, Remarque's purpose was not to glorify war but to demonstrate its stupidity. He portrays it as a pointless game played by self-serving political leaders who feel no connection to the young men whose lives are sacrificed in what is essentially a meaningless endeavor. The soldiers who originally thought of themselves as heroes and patriots are soon interested merely in survival and are alienated from their own culture. They have also lost their perspective about the relative value of human life. When several horses are wounded during an assault, one of them comments, "It is the vilest baseness to use horses in the war." He feels none of that same outrage toward the probable fate he and his fellow soldiers are facing.

The soldiers generally feel that they have been deprived of their humanity, and it is surprising to them when from time to time "in many ways we are treated quite like men." After surviving several assaults, Baumer is rotated to the rear, not for reasons of humanity but simply to be trained as a better soldier, although the training he receives makes little actual difference. He performs various duties during this period, including acting as a camp guard. While overseeing a group of prisoners

of war, Baumer reflects that rather than following a natural or explicable hostility, “a word of command has made these silent figures our enemies.” The implication is that the animosity he is supposed to feel is an artificial emotion originating in an arbitrary act.

Although Baumer has not yet turned 20, a few weeks on the front line ages him emotionally, and he considers the fresh recruits, only a few months younger than himself, to be little more than children. When he is granted leave to visit his family, he feels completely distanced from them, as though years had passed, and he is actually happier when it is time to return to duty. This reversal of ordinary relationships is emphasized when a schoolteacher who had patronized the young men only a year earlier is called up and finds himself subordinate to them.

*All Quiet on the Western Front* was designed to be an indictment not just of the methods by which a war is conducted—the fruitless waste of lives, the poor support in terms of supplies and care—but of the entire concept of armed conflict as a means of imposing national policy. Baumer had never seen a Frenchman in his life, but his leaders contend that he is supposed to hate and kill them. When he does in fact kill an enemy soldier during a minor battle, he acts through instinct—to preserve his own life rather than having made a conscious choice or having accepted the statements of his superiors. There is even a disparity within the army, between the front where discipline is pragmatic, and the rear where Baumer confronts a tediously proper officer who orders him to perform a pointless and demeaning series of acts. By implication, Remarque questions the value of nationalism as well as militarism. It is not surprising that the German government made efforts to discredit him during World War II.

### **Ambler, Eric** (1909–1998)

Spy novels have been around since the days of Joseph Conrad and James Fenimore Cooper, and while many of the more recent ones fall into the implausible hyperbole of JAMES BOND and his many imitators, there have always been a few writers such as Eric Ambler and John le Carré who have attempted a more realistic portrayal of the world

of espionage. Like his friends HAMMOND INNES and VICTOR CANNING, Ambler served in the artillery during World War II. He had already written seven novels, including the classics *A COFFIN FOR DIMITRIOS* and *JOURNEY INTO FEAR*, and he turned to screenwriting as well as novels after the war. His most notable work for the movies was in adapting Nicholas Monsarrat’s adventure novel *The CRUEL SEA* and later *The WRECK OF THE MARY DEARE* by Hammond Innes. He began writing novels again in 1950, both under his own name and in collaboration with Charles Rodda as Eliot Reed. He wrote steadily during the 1950s but began to slow down in the 1960s, producing his last novel almost 20 years before his death. His usual protagonist was an innocent bystander dragged into danger against his will or through force of circumstance.

Ambler’s first novel was *The Dark Frontier* (1936), mostly forgotten now because the premise—atomic hand grenades—is completely implausible, which is a shame because otherwise it is not a bad adventure story. A quiet, respectable Englishman suffers an accident while reading a spy novel and awakens believing that he is the character in the story. He encounters a man who wishes to make use of his expertise in stealing the plans for a new weapon being developed in a mythical Balkan dictatorship. His subsequent success relies entirely on his belief in his delusion, and he outwits a sadistic government official and a mysterious femme fatale before sabotaging their armament program almost single-handedly.

Ambler’s next book, *Background to Danger* (1937, also published as *Uncommon Danger*), is still considered one of the classic spy novels. The hero is an English reporter who unwisely allows the urge to gamble to get him into more serious trouble. Broke, he agrees to run an errand for a stranger and finds himself in the middle of a web of international intrigue involving efforts to sway Turkey’s military allegiance. The novel was brought to the screen in 1943, as was his third title, *Epitaph for a Spy* (1938), in the first of four film incarnations. In very similar fashion, the protagonist of *Epitaph* is arrested when suspicious pictures show up on the film in his camera, which provide leverage by which the authorities force him to work as a spy. *Cause for Alarm* (1938) mixes espionage with a traditional

murder mystery. Nicholas Marlow is nervous about his new job in Italy because his predecessor was mysteriously killed in a suspicious accident. When he discovers that someone has been opening his mail and following him about, he begins to fear for his own life, and with good reason. Coerced into spying for Yugoslavia, he undertakes a desperate journey across the mountains of Italy to flee the country to safety.

Ambler's next two novels were probably the high point of his career. *A Coffin for Dimitrios* (1939, also published as *The Mask of Dimitrios*) is atypical in that the protagonist inserts himself into the investigation of a dead criminal's past intentionally rather than against his will. The 1944 film version starring Peter Lorre is also a classic. *Journey into Fear* (1940) features another amateur agent, returning from negotiations with Turkey and dodging assassins and spies. Filmed in 1943, it is often cited as a major influence on Ian Fleming. The war interrupted Ambler's writing career, and his next book did not appear until the inconsequential collaboration *Skytip* (1950) under the Eliot Reed name.

Ambler was quite prolific during the early 1950s, starting with *Judgment on Deltchev* (1951). The protagonist is a playwright who agrees to cover the trial of a political prisoner in a Communist satellite state, then unwisely agrees to do a favor for the accused man's daughter. His naiveté nearly costs him his life. *Tender to Danger* (1951, also published as *Tender to Moonlight*) appeared under the Reed name. Once again an innocent bystander is drawn into danger when he makes the acquaintance of a fellow traveler who disappears under mysterious circumstances. This was the best of the Reed novels; the remaining ones were *The Maras Affair* (1953), a low-key story about efforts to smuggle dissidents through the iron curtain, *Charter to Danger* (1954), and *Passport to Panic* (1956).

*The Schirmer Inheritance* (1954) involves the search for the heir to a significant estate. An American lawyer backtracks through the historical records and tries to locate a German who left the military and currently appears to be living as a bandit somewhere in Greece. As usual, Ambler uses the setup to insert his unwitting character into an international conspiracy. *State of Siege* (1956, also published as *The Night-Comers*) is one of his

weaker efforts, although it involves more high adventure than usual. A businessman traveling in Malaysia gets caught in the middle of a civil war. An unsuspecting American tourist visiting that same part of the world finds himself in jeopardy in *Passage of Arms* (1959) when an unscrupulous businessman enlists his aid in the disposal of a cache of illegal weapons.

The best of Ambler's later novels is *The Light of Day* (1962), winner of the Edgar Award and basis for the popular movie *Topkapi* (1964). Although the basic plot is the same as in many of his earlier titles, there are no spies this time, and the protagonist is not entirely innocent either. Arthur Simpson is a small-time con man who finds himself in over his head when he becomes involved with a gang of thieves who are plotting to rob a museum of one of its priceless treasures. This is a "heist" story with no hint of espionage, but there is effectively little difference in how the plot develops. A remake of the movie has been announced for release in 2009. Ambler followed with *A Kind of Anger* (1964), which mixes a terrified Iraqi military officer, a neurotic journalist, blackmail, and assassination into an exciting series of deadly traps and hair-raising escapes.

Two more novels appeared during the 1960s. *Dirty Story* (1967) is the second adventure of Arthur Simpson, protagonist if not quite the hero of *The Light of Day*. Simpson has abandoned Greece for Africa, where he hopes to launch a new scam, but this time he has overreached himself again. It is a likable but comparatively minor novel, as is *The Intercom Conspiracy* (1969), which never quite comes to life despite an interesting setup. Two aging professional spies decide to abandon their employers and work together to ensure their own comfortable futures. The considerable humor here is reminiscent of the more successful and somewhat similar *HOPSCOTCH* (1975) by Brian Garfield.

Ambler wrote only three novels during the 1970s, and one shortly afterward. *The Levanter* (1972) features Michael Howell, whose nationality is as subject to question as that of Arthur Simpson. Howell operates a legitimate business in the Middle East and has no interest in politics. When Palestinian terrorists force him to use his resources to support an attack against Israeli

interests, he has to find a way to extricate himself. *Doctor Frigo* (1974) is also comparatively minor. The son of a onetime South American political figure tries to stay out of international politics, then predictably fails to do so. *The Siege of the Villa Lipp* (1977, also published as *Send No More Roses*), is much better, a three-way battle involving a plan by an obsessed academic to expose the crimes of a man he never met.

Ambler's last novel, *The Care of Time* (1981), also deals with international terrorism. A typical Ambler hero, a journalist, encounters the agent of an erratic Arab ruler who may have decided to dispense with the man's services. The book was very well received and is one of the best of his later career, but it was the last novel that Ambler ever wrote.

### Critical Analysis

Although Eric Ambler's novels are meant to be exciting entertainments, they are also intelligent, witty, and skillfully written. He was particularly successful in bringing remote parts of the world, particularly the Balkans, to vivid life. His main characters tend to be rather similar, but Ambler was always careful to provide distinguishing characteristics and a few—Arthur Simpson in particular—are rendered in considerable detail. His primary goal was to write an exciting and engaging story, but his distaste for authoritarian governments is an obvious and recurring motif. His frequently complex plots are revealed in a series of logical steps. Even in the most extreme cases, the sequence of events that has led to the final confrontation is so logical and plausible that the reader has no difficulty in accepting the progression. This marriage of adventure and realism is difficult to achieve, and it is a mark of his unusual skill that Ambler's novels have all the excitement and adventure of James Bond, without the occasionally lurid theatrics.

The fact that Ambler's protagonists are almost always driven by events does not mean that they are necessarily passive, and in fact they almost always save the situation by finding the inner strength to rise to the occasion. One would be remiss to leave the struggle against tyranny to those relatively few professionals who act behind

the scenes in a secret, almost silent war of intrigue and assassination. Even Arthur Simpson of *The Light of Day*, who is hardly an admirable character, eventually draws a line beyond which he will not be pushed. The implication is that none of us can afford to be uninvolved, that we have an obligation to act on behalf of others, not just to protect ourselves. The deluded professor of *Dark Frontier* may not be entirely sane, but his sense of duty and his determination to take a stand are perhaps a different, more rarified form of sanity. The journalist in *The Maras Affair*, the tourist in *Passage of Arms*, and the playwright in *Judgment on Deltchev* all have opportunities to withdraw from danger, but in each case their sense of honor or duty, or simple human compassion, dissuades them from taking the easy way out. Ambler's ultimate message is that none of us is innocent, because a decision not to act is an act in itself, and one is just as responsible in allowing an injustice to continue if one were the oppressor.

### *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873)

#### Jules Verne

French author JULES VERNE (1828–1905) specialized in stories of extraordinary journeys—to the center of the Earth, into space aboard a comet, under the sea, in a balloon, or by projectile to the Moon. Perhaps the most famous of all his travel adventures was his chronicle of the exploits of Phileas Fogg, who did not explore uncharted regions of this world or another but simply set out to travel completely around the globe in what was at that time the incredibly short period of 80 days. This is the subject of a substantial bet between Phileas Fogg and other members of the Reform Club who doubt that he can complete such a trip. Obsessed with timeliness and organization, he promptly lays out a schedule that will take him across India, Japan, and the United States before returning to London.

Two complications arise right at the outset. Fogg has recently fired his manservant and hired in his place a Frenchman, Passepartout, who has yet to adjust to his new master's habits. There is also a police detective named Fix, who mistakenly believes that Fogg is a thief and who decides to

accompany him until it is possible to make an arrest. Despite some minor difficulties, they are on schedule as they begin to cross India, until they decide to intervene and save a local woman scheduled to be burned alive at her late husband's funeral. With the woman added to their party, they proceed to Calcutta, where Fix finally arranges for them to be arrested. They promptly escape, get separated in Hong Kong, and are eventually reunited in Japan.

While traveling across North America, their train is attacked by Native Americans, and Passepartout and the Indian woman are taken hostage. Fogg valiantly abandons his travel plans in order to help with their rescue, and by Herculean efforts they almost manage to get back on schedule. Fogg charts a boat traveling to France, bribes the crew to mutiny and head for England, and arrives only to be promptly arrested by Fix. Fogg is convinced that he has lost the wager, but at the last moment realizes that he had crossed the international date line, and he makes it to the Reform Club in time to claim his prize.

There have been numerous film and television adaptations of this, perhaps Verne's most widely read novel. It also provided the inspiration for such movie pastiches as *The Great Race* (1965) and *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* (1965).

### Critical Analysis

For many years Verne's novels were available only to English readers in less than adequate translations. They were frequently heavily abridged, sometimes leaving out significant scenes that made his plots seem disjointed and illogical. As might be expected, his literary reputation suffered accordingly, and although his work was considered suitable entertainment for young boys, it was not generally read by adults. Recently new and more careful translations have established that while Verne was certainly not as painstaking a stylist as such contemporaries is H. G. Wells, he was a literate and skilled storyteller with a gift for well-constructed plots mixed with elements of wry humor and vivid descriptions. His characters were often defined by a single exaggerated personality trait—Nemo's obsession with ending war, Fogg's orderliness—but

relatively superficial character development was and is common in adventure fiction.

Verne had many reservations about the conduct of government, particularly in international affairs. He was often critical of the British Empire, although many of his protagonists, including Phileas Fogg, are portrayed as admirable Englishmen. When Nemo in his submarine in *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1870) or Robur in his airship in *The Master of the World* (1904) expound upon the cruelty and stupidity of warfare and aggression, clearly Verne is speaking through that character. He may not endorse acting independently of government, but he clearly sympathizes with the frustration of his characters. These two men in particular illustrate an unusual aspect of Verne's work. His villains are, at heart, almost always good men, either mistaken in their beliefs or forced by circumstance to commit evil deeds.

Verne wrote *Around the World* during the Franco-Prussian War, a time when technological advances—particularly in transportation—were rapidly making the planet a smaller place than it had been. Fogg is one of Verne's more complex characters, a fussy English bachelor who is obsessed with precision, schedules, organization, and the passage of time. He is an unlikely hero who performs heroic deeds, supposedly from a sense of duty but more likely because of the bonds of personal loyalty. Despite his fascination with orderliness and proper procedure, his personal conservatism does not affect his ability to embrace change. A man who would seem the least likely to upset the accepted wisdom of the world is the one who challenges and eventually refutes it. Passepartout, who has generally been turned into comic relief in the various film versions, is more of a loyal, hard-working, intelligent man.

Together they survive a remarkable series of adventures, with major sequences in India, Asia, North America, and at sea. The primary plot would have been engaging on its own, but Verne interweaves it with subordinate stories—the rescue in India, Passepartout's kidnapping, and the efforts by the relentless if misguided Fix. Most of Verne's other novels were much more linear, with few side issues. His reputation as a writer as well as an entertainer is likely to improve even further as his other work is retranslated and reexamined.

### Arthurian adventures

King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, the love triangle involving Arthur, Guinevere, and Lancelot, and the failed quest to find the Holy Grail are possibly the best known, and certainly the most frequently revisited adventures in English literature. There have been scores, if not hundreds, of novels and stories retelling and reimagining the original legend, sometimes extrapolating the characters into new situations.

Although the details vary from one version to the next, certain recurring characters and situations are common to most, forming the core of the legend. Arthur succeeds to the throne after withdrawing a sword from a stone—which may or may not have been Excalibur—and goes on to form the Round Table in Camelot. Among his most famous followers are Sir Lancelot, Sir Galahad, Sir Perceval, and Sir Gawain. His half sister is Morgan le Fay, a fact of which he is ignorant when he sires Mordred, who joins the Round Table but eventually engineers his father's last battle and fatal wounding. Arthur is then carried away to Avalon by the Lady of the Lake, from whence he will supposedly return at some future date. For most of his life he is advised by Merlin the Magician, and the greatest quest of his knights is their unsuccessful search for the Holy Grail, most commonly described as the cup from which Jesus drank.

There is no proof that Arthur ever existed, although he was probably based on someone who lived in the fifth or sixth century who helped lead the opposition to the Saxon invasion of England. His name is mentioned in poems from that point onward, but the legend did not begin to coalesce until Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote it down during the 12th century. Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* (1485) is the earliest version still commonly read. Prior to the 20th century, the two most significant retellings were Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *The Idylls of the King* (1885) and Mark Twain's iconoclastic *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889).

The legend of Camelot has inspired countless writers to re-create the original story, incorporating their own embellishments, or to use characters or situations—Arthur, Merlin, the Holy Grail, etc.—as key elements in a new interpretation, often in different settings or time periods. Although the majority

of these are intended to be fantasies and are published within that genre, many nongenre writers have been enticed by the almost universal appeal of the story. John Steinbeck, whose work is predominantly realistic fiction, retold the legend in *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* (1976), as did Thomas Berger in *Arthur Rex* (1978). Donald Barthelme transplanted Arthur and Mordred to World War II in *The King* (1990), only one of several novels that used a similar transposition. The two most detailed and successful reappraisals each consist of several books. T. H. White began his sequence with *The Sword in the Stone* (1938) and eventually combined the entire series as *The Once and Future King* (1958). MARY STEWART, who had already established herself as a leading writer of thrillers, opened her interpretation with *The Crystal Cave* (1970), adding four volumes, ending with *The Prince and the Pilgrim* (1995). Stewart's story is largely told from the perspective of Merlin.

One of the most interesting accounts is Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* (1982), a feminist interpretation that concentrates on the female characters and greatly expands the role of the Lady of the Lake, Viviane. She holds the key to the magical island of Avalon, where Arthur is to be taken after he receives his mortal wound. Bradley later expanded the mystical background with two prequels, *The Forest House* (1993) and *The Lady of Avalon* (1997), and collaborated with Diana L. Paxson on another, *Priestess of Avalon* (2001), which was published posthumously. Paxson, who has added two more in that series, has also written her own Arthurian interpretation, *The Hallowed Isle*, originally published in four volumes during 1999–2000.

VICTOR CANNING, most of whose novels are contemporary thrillers, wrote one of the better retellings as a trilogy, published collectively as *The Crimson Chalice* (1978). Canning attempts to provide a very realistic picture of an historical Camelot, similar to what Henry Treece had previously done in *The Great Captains* (1956). Other traditional treatments of note include Helen Hollick's series starting with *The Kingmaking* (1995) and *The Coming of the King* (1989) by Nikolai Tolstoy.

Several Arthurian epics have focused on Guinevere. Persia Wooley's trilogy, starting with

*Child of the Northern King* (1987), is told largely from the queen's viewpoint, and Sharan Newman's *Guinevere* (1981) tells of her life before she met Arthur, followed by two sequels that cover events up through his death. Nancy McKenzie suggests a slightly different career for Arthur's wife in *The Child Queen* (1994) and *The High Queen* (1995). In *Beloved Exile* (1984) by Parke Godwin, a beleaguered Guinevere tries to hold Camelot together in the aftermath of Arthur's death.

Stephen Lawhead's Pendragon series, five volumes from *Taliesin* (1987) to *Grail* (1991) tells the story from a distinctly Christian perspective. A. A. Attanasio's *The Dragon and the Unicorn* (1994) and three sequels suggest that Arthur was only one player in a struggle that stretches from the beginning to the end of time. Jane Yolen has adapted portions of the legend of Arthur for younger readers, most significantly in *Sword of the Rightful King* (2003), and several books about Merlin including the Young Merlin trilogy (2004). Jack Whyte wrote a multivolume epic that starts before Arthur's birth with *The Skystone* (1996) and concluded, at least to date, with the ninth volume, *The Eagle* (2006), which focuses on the founding of Camelot. Robert Nye presents a bawdy, sometimes farcical variation in *Merlin* (1978), and Mark Twain contends that Camelot was primitive and plagued by conservative attitudes and superstition in the classic adventure *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889).

Some of the most interesting expansions on the original story can be found in the work of Vera Chapman. In *The Green Knight* (1975), Morgan le Fay plots Arthur's defeat through magical means. The story continues in *The King's Damosel* (1976) and reveals the aftermath of Arthur's death in *King Arthur's Daughter* (1976), with the title character battling Mordred for the throne. The posthumously published *The Enchantresses* (1998) concerns three of Arthur's half sisters, who are raised by Merlin. J. Robert King strayed from the strict canon in his series of three novels, *Mad Merlin* (2000), in which the magician decides he is the son of Jove, *Lancelot Du Lethe* (1981), and *Le Morte D'Avalon* (1983), the last two of which deal primarily with Morgan le Fay. Mordred is the central character in *Mordred's Curse* (1996) and

*Mordred's Gift* (1997), both by Ian McDowell, and in *I Am Mordred* (1998) by Nancy Springer.

As mentioned above, several writers have transported Arthur or other familiar characters through time. Stephen Lawhead's *Avalon* (1999) provides a typical plot; Arthur is reborn in the 20th century to battle against reincarnations of his old enemies, who have returned to seize control of modern England. Irene Radford suggests that a secret organization of Merlin's descendants may have survived through the ages in her *Merlin's Descendants* series (1999–2005). In *Knight Life* (1987), Peter David transports Arthur to the present, where he runs for mayor of New York City, and in the two sequels, for president of the United States. Arthur's ghost returns to the contemporary world in *The Quest for Excalibur* (1959) by Leonard Wibberley. The Holy Grail is still secretly held by descendants of Camelot in *The Forever King* (1992) by Molly Cochrane and Warren Murphy, which also has two sequels. Patricia Keneally-Morrison theorized that the Celts achieved space travel during the time of Arthur in *The Copper Crown* (1984), first in the eight-volume *Keltiad*. Merlin teams up with Jason and the Argonauts in *Celtika* (2002) and two sequels by Robert Holdstock. Morgan le Fay and Mordred travel to the future in Fred Saberhagen's *Merlin's Bones* (1995). Anne Eliot Crompton has created new adventures for Sir Percival and Merlin in *Merlin's Harp* (1996) and *Percival's Angel* (1999).

Lesser known characters have been featured in their own novel-length adventures. Gillian Bradshaw's *Gwalchmai* trilogy, beginning with *Hawk of May* (1980), has a relatively obscure knight from the Round Table as its protagonist. Nancy McKenzie's *Grail Prince* (2003) follows Sir Galahad as he seeks the Holy Grail on his own. Richard Monaco's *Parsifal* (1977) provides an account of Sir Perceval (aka Parsifal) on a similar quest, although the two sequels are more concerned with Arthur. *Winter King* (1996) and two sequels by Bernard Cornwell examine the story from the point of view of another relatively minor character. Phyllis Ann Karr embellishes Camelot with *The Follies of Sir Harald* (2001) and constructs an interesting murder mystery with Guinevere as

chief suspect in *Idylls of the Queen* (1982). Robert Nathan's *The Fair* (1964) is also set in Arthur's Britain, and his later novel, *The Elixir* (1971), includes a brief appearance by Merlin. Merlin's son has a series of adventures in *Merlin's Ring* (1974).

The ongoing appeal of Arthurian adventures is obvious, and even the romance field has seen series of related novels from Sarah Zettel, Laura Ann

Gilman, Quinn Taylor Evans, and others. There is no sign that the reading public has reached a saturation point, and there will undoubtedly be many more treatments to come. The characters and their interactions have become archetypes for many forms of human conflict, and the quest for the Holy Grail has become symbolic of humanity's supposed effort to strive for perfection.

# B

## ***Beau Geste* (1924) P. C. Wren**

Percival Christopher Wren (1875–1941) was a British writer who served in India and traveled elsewhere for several years before returning to England and embarking on a career as a novelist. There is no clear record of his whereabouts after he left India in 1917 until he wrote *Beau Geste*, but his detailed, accurate descriptions of the French Foreign Legion led some to speculate that he had been in North Africa for at least a portion of that time. There is no evidence, however, that he was anything other than very careful in his research. Wren was very close-mouthed about his private life and never confirmed or denied the story, which led to considerable speculation about his possible enlistment.

The novel opens with a French officer describing a strange encounter to one of his friends. He had led a relief column to the fort at Zinderneuf after receiving reports of an attack by Tuareg tribesmen. There he found the fort intact, but all of its complement was dead and propped into place, except the acting commandant, who had been stabbed to death and lay inside, clutching a bloodstained note. The first member of the relief column to enter the fort disappeared as well, deepening the mystery.

The note leads to an estate in England where the Geste brothers—Michael, Digby, and John—were more or less raised by their Aunt Patricia, as we see through a series of flashbacks. Aunt Patricia's fortunes rely in large part upon her possession of a fabulous sapphire, but her personal future is uncertain because she has married a some-

what abusive man. During a family gathering, the sapphire disappears, and suspicion falls upon the brothers. A short time later, Michael, known as Beau, disappears, and readers discover that he has joined the French Foreign Legion. His farewell note implies that he was the thief. Digby and John follow in his footsteps.

Although there is a long section about their early training and acclimatization to North Africa, Wren never lets the story slow down. Beau eventually ends up at Fort Zinderneuf, where the death of the original commandant leaves the villainous Lejaune in his place. The troops stationed there are the dregs of society—fugitives, wastrels, and thieves—and Lejaune seems to encompass all their sins at once. He eventually learns the story of the missing jewel and assumes that Beau has it. Then some of the troops rise in mutiny, and Beau and Lejaune are briefly on the same side, an uneasy alliance that continues when a far superior force of Arabs attacks.

The siege of Zinderneuf is one of the great sequences in adventure fiction. As each legionnaire falls, Lejaune orders the body lashed into place, and details some of the defenders to fire from each embrasure to delude the enemy into believing that there are still many defenders. Eventually only Beau and Lejaune remain, and the final confrontation takes place, after which readers discover the truth—that the real sapphire was sold years before it was “stolen,” and Beau stole the fake so that Patricia would not have to tell the truth to her potentially violent husband. That

basic situation is very similar to the premise of *The Moonstone* (1868) by Wilkie Collins and was probably influenced by it.

### Critical Analysis

*Beau Geste* is without question the most famous novel ever written specifically about the French Foreign Legion. Wren, who produced a handful of undistinguished novels prior to starting the Geste series, was clearly influenced by Wilkie Collins, H. Rider Haggard, and other adventure story writers and, like Haggard in particular, he took great pains to set down his background facts as accurately as possible. Details about the physical arrangement of legionnaire barracks and their uniforms are all correct, as is the geography and general description of North Africa, although the events described are imaginary. Although Wren would write novels with other settings later in his career, it was the legionnaire stories that made him famous, and he always returned to them.

The early chapters betray a fault common among some Victorian novelists. The officer who relates the strange mystery at Fort Zinderneuf is extremely long-winded; he strays from the point and provides a great deal of incidental detail that not only feels artificial but dilutes the initial effect of the puzzle. This tendency fades during the recounting of the night the sapphire disappeared, and after that Wren settles down into straightforward, crisp prose that continues through the final chapters. The Geste brothers might also be criticized as being characters too good to be true. They are all self-sacrificing, affectionate, capable, and honorable men, providing a sharp contrast to most of the others they meet among the legionnaires.

Beau Geste faces three levels of conflict in his career—against nature, against his fellow man, and within himself. The desert of North Africa is an implacable and uncaring enemy, relentlessly dangerous to the unwary, unpleasant under even the best of circumstances. At Fort Zinderneuf he finds himself in opposition to the mutineers, to his superior officer, and to the Arab tribesmen who lay siege to the fort. Finally, he wrestles with his own conscience because in order to protect his aunt he has told a lie, which is dishonorable, and allowed his brothers and others to think ill of him, which

is deceitful. He survives the desert but not the avaricious officer and insists in his dying moment that brother John not reveal the truth and render his sacrifice purposeless. To modern readers, it might appear that Beau—and for that matter Wren himself—has embraced romanticism and rejected realism, but in fiction of this period exaggerated gestures of this sort were common.

Wren wrote two sequels, both of which are quite readable though not as moving as the first—*Beau Sabreur* (1926) and *Beau Ideal* (1928), though Beau appears in neither, obviously, having died. The first involves the suppression of another mutiny and the second the rescue of John Geste, who is taken captive by tribesmen. Wren wrote other novels and short stories about the French Foreign Legion, and some of the characters from the Beau trilogy appear in them.

### *Billy Budd* (1924) Herman Melville

Although this short novel was never published during his lifetime, it is generally believed that Herman Melville (1819–91) wrote it between the years 1885 and 1891, and while it is complete he may have intended further editing if he had not died. The novella was published only after a renewal of interest in the author during the 1920s. There have been variant versions under the titles *Billy Budd*, *Foretopman* and *Billy Budd, Sailor*. It has subsequently become his second best known piece of fiction, after *MOBY-DICK*.

Billy Budd is a common sailor who has been forced into service on a British warship, called *Indomitable* in some drafts and *Bellipotent* in others. Billy is a quiet young man who does what he is told but who is willing to stand up for himself when necessary, and always does so with a pleasant disposition. He accepts his new position cheerfully and appears to be a model sailor. Captain Vere is a fair-minded, basically decent man but a rigid disciplinarian who was certainly horrified by news of two recent mutinies, which have had repercussions throughout the navy. His master-at-arms is John Claggart, an enigmatic man who for some reason takes an immediate, intense dislike to the newcomer, apparently provoked by his innocence and his handsome appearance. Through his crony

Squeak and others, Claggart begins to manipulate events aboard ship to put Billy in a bad light.

Claggart's initial attempts to sully Billy's character are of little consequence, and his subsequent accusation, that Billy is fomenting mutiny among the crew, is met with skepticism even by Captain Vere, who has a mild distaste for the master-at-arms. Claggart then accuses him directly when Billy is summoned to answer the charges. The shock of the unjust indictment aggravates Billy's speech impediment so severely that his only physical recourse is to strike out blindly. The force of the blow apparently breaks Claggart's neck, and by striking and killing a superior officer Billy has earned a death sentence. Vere organizes an immediate military court to consider the case and, while all concerned sympathize with Billy, Vere points out that their duty is to the king and the articles of their military service, and these leave no room for mercy. Billy is subsequently hanged in front of the ship's company, after which Melville provides brief glimpses of the aftermath.

### Critical Analysis

Billy is clearly symbolic of everything that is good in humanity, while Claggart is very nearly his opposite. Billy spreads peace and contentment wherever he goes, yet, when accosted by an incorrigible bully aboard his original ship, he stands up for himself and overcomes the other physically. He resorts to violence only when it is necessary and after excessive provocation, and even the man who was beaten becomes one of his admirers. The darker nature of Billy's new situation is foreshadowed very early, for as he transfers he bids goodbye to the *Rights-of-Man*, his original ship, named after the book by Thomas Paine. In his new home he will soon find the rights of men are severely abridged by the articles of war. While Melville tells us that "to deal in double meaning and insinuation" was not a part of Billy's nature, it most assuredly is part of the author's, who suggests that Billy is as untouched by sin as the early Adam before he encountered the serpent. The only evident flaw in his appearance and nature is his tendency to stutter, which is also his single weakness and will prove his undoing.

One of Melville's targets in this novella is the British policy of impressment, which eventu-

ally led to war with the United States. The normal injustices of the system are exacerbated in this case because the recent failed mutiny in the British navy and the excesses of the French Revolution had also clearly rattled the aristocracy and the officer class. Melville is also critical of the way justice is compromised during war, when even an obviously loyal man can be condemned because of the necessarily narrow interpretation of violations of discipline. But the novella is really aimed at a more basic conflict, one that transcends contemporary events and policies.

The religious symbolism is obvious if not entirely clear, similar to the situation in Melville's most famous novel, *Moby-Dick* (1851), in which the whale is a symbol of God. Billy is good and Claggart is evil, but is the former meant to represent Adam—innocent, trusting, easily manipulated—or is he a Christ figure free of corruption and destined for martyrdom? Claggart is clearly the serpent, which suggests the former, but the inevitable conclusion to their struggle is more reminiscent of the latter. It is entirely possible that Melville had both in mind. In the latter interpretation, Vere is often compared to Pontius Pilate, the judge more governed by law than by justice.

Claggart is also described as a man of considerable intelligence, but his antecedents, like those of foundling Billy Budd, are unknown. There is even reason to suspect that he was not originally an Englishman. Both protagonist and antagonist are, therefore, ciphers, representing only themselves and their own morality and not that of a particular nationality or creed. It is also ironic that Claggart, as master-of-arms, is commonly known as the "peacemaker" aboard a ship because it is his duty to oversee discipline among the crew. Melville leaves no mystery about Claggart's essential nature. He is "the direct reverse of a saint," has "an evil nature," and conceals within himself "an elemental evil." Billy, on the other hand, is intelligent but "ignorant," the ignorance of inexperience. He represents good, even though he has no religious convictions.

Billy's inevitable fall is foreshadowed when, after first being confronted with Claggart's charges that he is disloyal, his speech impediment so bedevils him that his face is "as a crucifixion to behold." He strikes Claggart more as a reflex than a conscious

act, killing him instantly. When Claggart's dead body is lifted from the floor, it is like handling "a dead snake." Vere characterizes the act as a "divine judgment" and refers to Billy as an "angel," but his duty is clear to him. The members of the drumhead court-martial are similarly conflicted, believing Billy morally innocent but, in terms of military law, subject to immediate execution. While Vere makes a good case for the compulsion that overrides their personal feelings, at the same time he admits that they are effectively abdicating responsibility, substituting superior authority and tradition for their own judgment and sense of fairness.

Billy is condemned, but accepts the sentence with equanimity. He was far more upset by the revelation of Claggart's evil nature than by the announcement that he, too, must die. He neither fears death, nor requires the comfort of the ship's chaplain, who recognizes that the condemned man's innocence is an even greater shield against fear than would be the solace of religion. At the moment of execution, the clouds—"the fleece of the Lamb of God"—open so that he "ascended; and ascending, took the full rose of dawn." Later, the ship engages a French warship, aptly named the *Atheiste*, and Vere is mortally wounded. The spar from which Billy was hanged becomes almost a sacred object to the other sailors and "a chip of it was as a piece of the Cross."

*Billy Budd* is a well-constructed novella that focuses on the relationship among its three principal characters. Some of Melville's digressions contribute significantly to the story; for example, those related to the previous mutinies. Others serve no immediately obvious purpose, such as the lengthy praise heaped on Lord Nelson's military victories. They do, however, relate a sense of the spirit of the times and the sympathies of the author. The brief closing chapters following Billy's death are similarly interesting, even though they contribute nothing to understanding the events that preceded them.

### ***The Black Arrow* (1888)**

#### **Robert Louis Stevenson**

Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94) set this historical adventure story during the War

of the Roses, the battle between the York and Lancaster factions for control of the English throne. The novel had previously been serialized in 1883 but was not well received and did not see prompt publication in book form. The protagonist is Dick Shelton, a young man and ward to Sir Daniel Blackley, an opportunist who switches sides with regularity whenever it is to his advantage. Shelton is present when one of Blackley's retainers is killed by a black arrow, after which a note is found predicting similar deaths for Blackley and two other members of his retinue in revenge for their past deeds. The note is signed "John Amend-all," a fiction created by Ellis Duckworth and the Black Arrow Fellowship, a band of outlawed men living in the nearby forest. The legend of ROBIN HOOD obviously contributed to the plot and background. Although the retainers seem like honorable men, Blackley is portrayed as a mean-spirited, avaricious opportunist and villain. The parson, Sir Oliver, is charged with having killed Shelton's father, which he staunchly denies.

Sir Daniel briefly holds prisoner Joanna Sedley, who is disguised as a boy, but she escapes, only to lose her horse in a quagmire and be discovered by Shelton, who is initially still fooled by the way she is dressed. Shelton agrees to help her reach sanctuary at Holywood, despite his allegiance to Sir Daniel, and en route she tells him that she had heard that he was to be married to Joanna Sedley. This is news to Shelton, who grows increasingly curious, but who still does not suspect his companion's true identity. A series of encounters and escapes follows, at the end of which they are reunited with Sir Daniel, who has fled the battlefield in a disguise of his own after a major defeat. With considerable misgivings, they accompany him back to the Moat House, his forest stronghold.

There Shelton discovers the truth about Sir Daniel's evil past as well as Joanna's true identity, and the two declare their love for each other just as it appears that they are about to be killed. He escapes, forced for the moment to leave her behind, and eventually he forges an alliance with her former protector, Lord Foxham, although their joint effort to rescue Joanna is a dismal failure. Later, the Black Arrows kill Joanna's new husband-to-

be, but Shelton is captured, winning his freedom by producing the two treacherous letters in his possession. Chases and escapes ensue, after which Shelton joins the forces of Richard of Gloucester and plays a key part in his victory on the battlefield. Shelton is rewarded with knighthood and the hand of Joanna, although he has grown heartily sick of both factions by then.

### Critical Analysis

Stevenson's fiction was generally held in low regard during the 20th century, and he was dismissed as little more than a children's author. It is only in recent years that fresh interest in his work, including his nonfiction, has stimulated a reconsideration; as a result his reputation has steadily improved. Stevenson was never entirely pleased with *The Black Arrow*, in part faulting the archaic form of English he used for most of the dialogue, which does indeed cause the contemporary reader occasional difficulty.

The characters are not particularly complex. Sir Daniel's villainy is somewhat overdone, and one wonders why either side would have trusted him after so many perfidious changes of allegiance. Shelton is so narrowly focused that he apparently is unaware or uninterested in his guardian's perfidy and avarice. At one point he even accepts Sir Daniel's word that he was not responsible for the elder Shelton's death, even though it should have been more than obvious that the man had violated his oaths of allegiance on numerous occasions and has no sense of personal honor. Joanna Sedley, however, seems a remarkably versatile woman for the time, capable of riding and swimming, with a strongly independent spirit and a willingness to take direct action rather than sit and await rescue. The only other significant female character, Alicia, is similarly assertive.

Several key plot points turn on coincidences. Shelton just happens to find a dead messenger during his flight from the Moat House, and his killers just happened to miss taking from the body the incriminating letter from Sir Daniel that he was carrying. A false alarm distracts those participating in an assault on Shelton's chambers at the right moment and for just long enough to enable the two

fugitives to escape by means of a secret passage. Some time later, while hiding in the house of Sir Daniel's ally, Lord Shoresby, Shelton stumbles upon another letter, this time incriminating Shoresby in duplicity, after it is unaccountably concealed in the wallet of one of Shoresby's servants. Finally, after escaping yet again, Shelton happens by chance to find Richard of Gloucester, later Richard III, fighting a single-handed battle against several men and intervenes on his behalf, for which service he is eventually knighted, although he instinctively dislikes Richard's egotism and cruelty.

The conflict of honor and duty is a recurring theme. Sir Daniel may feel the tug of neither, but Shelton finds himself making a difficult choice on more than one occasion. When he decides to befriend the disguised Joanna, he knows that he is ignoring his duty to Sir Daniel in order to escort her to safety. When their pursuers are set upon by outlaws, he is torn between his sworn oath to Joanna and his duty to warn the men of the coming attack. While making their escape from the bandits, Shelton fatally wounds one of them even though the latter had spared their own lives, because his duty to help Joanna escape trumps his sense of honor. As Shelton learns more about the death of his father, he is caught between loyalty to his friends and his duty to seek vengeance. Even Sir Oliver, the parson, is torn between his fear of making a perjured oath and the need to mislead Shelton, for if he fails to dissemble, Sir Daniel will put his ward to death.

Despite its sometimes contrived plot and awkward dialogue, *The Black Arrow* is an exciting adventure story with strong male and female lead characters and a thoughtful consideration of the conflicting tugs of honor and duty. Shelton realizes in the waning chapters that even though he believes that he has acted honorably, his accomplishments have helped caused ruination and misery for countless others, reflecting Stevenson's distaste for violent conflict. When, ultimately, Shelton has Sir Daniel in his power, he lets him go, not wanting any further death on his conscience.

The novel has not fared as well with modern readers as have other adventure stories by Stevenson such as *TREASURE ISLAND* and *KIDNAPPED*, and it is

perhaps symptomatic that there has not been a film version since 1948.

### ***The Black Swan* (1932) Rafael Sabatini**

Pirate stories have enjoyed continuous popularity over the years even though the fictional versions have little in common with the real thing. Genuine pirates rarely engaged in large-scale sea battles, preferring to cow their prey by a show of force, nor were they generally chivalrous or forthright. Writers ranging from Daniel Defoe to Jeffrey Farnol wrote romanticized versions that were popular in their time, but only those of British/Italian writer Rafael Sabatini (1875–1950) have continued to be widely read. Of Sabatini's three major pirates novels, the others being *CAPTAIN BLOOD* and *The SEA HAWK*, this is probably the least well known, having come comparatively late in his career. All three became successful movies of swashbuckling adventure.

Priscilla Harradine is returning to England following the death of her father, who had been governor of the Leeward Islands in the New World. She is accompanied by Bartholomew Sands, an older, unimaginative man who hopes to win her hand as well as her fortune during the long voyage home. His plans are disrupted by the arrival of Charles De Bernis, a younger, somewhat mysterious passenger, who turns out to be a reformed buccaneer. When their ship is captured by Captain Teach, a notorious and treacherous pirate, De Bernis conceives of a brilliant but dangerous ploy. He insists that he has decided to return to piracy for one last bit of pillaging, his object a fictional treasure ship from a Spanish colony, and convinces Teach to treat him as an ally instead of a prisoner. Priscilla poses as his wife and Sands, rather ungraciously, as her brother, in order to preserve their own lives and relative freedom.

De Bernis stalls for time by various means since there is no actual treasure ship, using the interval to ingratiate himself with some members of the pirate band since he has no illusions about Teach's intentions once he no longer needs his quasi-prisoners. The pirate captain's infatuation with Priscilla further complicates matters, such that even his own men feel called upon to intervene before trouble flares. The situation reaches its climax on a remote

island when De Bernis provokes a fight with Teach and kills him, leaving the question of his succession up in the air. Morgan's flotilla arrives for the climax, but only after De Bernis has found a clever way out of their difficulties.

### **Critical Analysis**

While Sabatini wrote his novels in English, it was in fact only one of six languages he learned to speak during the course of his life. He made the decision to write in English consciously, believing that the best novels had all been written in that language. Sabatini interspersed his adventure stories with a number of more sedate novels in historical settings, often dealing with courtly manners, which are surprisingly slow-paced when contrasted to the crisp action and smooth flow of his pirate stories.

*The Black Swan* is notable for how quickly the story is launched. Within a very few pages we have met and learned a great deal about three of the four main characters, the conflicts among them, and the nature of their situation. Sabatini is habitually economical in his descriptions, evoking surprisingly detailed landscapes and settings in a comparatively brief space. His extensive research resulted in accurate descriptions not only of historical events but also of the details of how pirates actually lived and dealt with one another. The battle of wits between De Bernis and Teach emphasizes the differences between buccaneers—who were supported by one or more governments and who tried to act in accordance with a strict code of behavior—and simple pirates who had no loyalties except to themselves. The famous articles by which true buccaneers were governed were rarely abrogated, but pirates were less inclined to live up to their word.

The plot appears deceptively simple but actually relies on a succession of maneuvers by De Bernis to avoid exposure either through mischance or the bungling of Sands. The sequence in which the pirate captain is cautioned, even reprimanded, by his own crew is a reflection of the democratic nature of pirate ships and quite different from the usual depiction of crews dominated by powerful leaders. Like most of Sabatini's female characters, Priscilla Harradine is strong-willed, intelligent, and perceptive, and indeed all of the characters, even the hapless Sands, are unusually well drawn

and complex for what appears on the surface to be simply a story of adventure. Even Teach is fascinating—a dishonorable and violent man described as a “serpent” but in many ways oddly childlike, undisciplined, prone to outbursts of anger, and unable to act with restraint even when it is clearly in his best interests to do so.

One of the striking things about *The Black Swan* is that, despite the brutal nature of Teach and some of his followers and the desperate situation in which the protagonists find themselves, there is very little actual violence except by suggestion, the major exception being the final duel between De Bernis and Teach. Sabatini’s heroes are usually physically powerful and skilled with their weapons, but most of the time it is their wits that carry the day and not the strength of their arms. De Bernis plays Teach and his men against one another, fends off the verbal attacks from Sands, and turns a desperate recourse into a major triumph. Sabatini’s depiction of pirates as being as varied in character and personal honor as are men in general rings true, and his historical detail is virtually unrivaled. It is no accident that his sea adventures have remained popular even when those of similar writers have passed into obscurity.

### **Brand, Max** (1882–1944)

Max Brand is the best-known and most commonly used pseudonym of Frederick Schiller Faust, one of the most prolific writers of all time. Faust worked as a rancher in California as a young man, but despite his avowed dislike of the Old West and conditions he experienced during those years, the majority of his fiction was to consist of western adventure stories. He began writing for the pulps shortly after 1910 and continued for most of his life, publishing the equivalent of at least 500 books. In addition to his western fiction, he dabbled in virtually every other field, including science fiction, detective, and historical. He was the creator of Doctor Kildare, and his varied work has been the basis of three different television series and more than 80 movies, not counting his screenplays. Faust wanted to be a poet and published four books of verse, but although these achieved neither commercial nor critical success, his prose made him one of the

most highly paid writers of his era. When his health began to fail, Brand moved to Italy, where, surprisingly, he rallied and became a correspondent during World War II until he was killed during a German attack in 1944.

As Max Brand, Faust wrote an enormous volume of western fiction, mostly between 1920 and 1934, publishing the equivalent of a book almost every month. He used several pseudonyms besides Brand, the best known of which is Evan Evans, although most book editions have reverted to listing Max Brand as the author. Many of his characters were featured in multiple stories, which would subsequently be gathered together as “novels,” but his first actual book-length western was *The Untamed* (1919), the debut adventure of Whistling Dan Barry. Barry’s career would be further chronicled in *The Night Horseman* (1920) and *The Seventh Man* (1921), and finally the less satisfactory *Dan Barry’s Daughter* (1924). Brand was very interested in mythology and he adapted elements from classic legends into his own work. Although never explicitly stated, there is a clear implication that Barry is actually an incarnation of the god Pan. He is invariably accompanied by a wolf and rides an apparently magical stallion. Barry and the various villains he overcomes—and they often have suggestive names like Jim Silent—are all drawn larger than life. Their battles are small-scale epics, and while his enemies might be bad men, they have a noble kind of badness about them.

There is a very similar character in *Riders of the Silences* (1919), a man who is forced into a life of crime. He has an unusual relationship with a pack of wolves and becomes embroiled in a rivalry with another man who is said to be unbeatable in a fight. Bonding with wolves became a recurring theme, most obvious in *Mighty Lobo* (1932), in which a rancher tracks down the animal that has been attacking his stock, but spares its life in order to seek its friendship. In *The Garden of Eden* (1922) the protagonist stumbles into a hidden land in the mountains, a story that resembles the later and more famous *LOST HORIZON* (1933) by James Hilton, where the inhabitants breed a kind of super horse.

Most of Brand’s other western fiction is much more traditional, although almost always surprising-

ly literate in its prose and with backgrounds richer in detail than was true of most of his fellow writers. The best known of Brand's westerns is *DESTROY RIDES AGAIN* (1930), the basis for a classic movie. It is a variation of the familiar revenge story. The unjustly convicted Destry returns after serving his jail term, apparently cowed by the experience, but actually just biding his time. Many of Brand's heroes were not model citizens, although each of them acted honorably after his fashion. The Montana Kid, from *Montana Rides!* (1933) and *Montana Rides Again* (1935), is initially the leader of a gang of outlaws who makes enemies not just among the law abiding, but also among rival gangs, furious Indians, and corrupt lawmen. His first book-length adventure was a series of chases and escapes leading to a final confrontation with his rival, while the second is a quest story, the search for a valuable artifact stolen from a church, which Montana plans to return to its rightful owner.

Another unusual hero was Thunder Moon, a white man adopted and raised by Indians, and for a long time ignorant of his origins. He made his debut in *Thunder Moon* (1927), a western version of the first Tarzan book by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS. Despite his efforts to fit in, he is virtually an outcast within the tribe until a critical event changes his destiny. He returned in several short stories during the late 1920s, which were eventually collected as *Thunder Moon Strikes* and *Thunder Moon's Challenge*. Brand would occasionally use other Native American protagonists, usually portrayed favorably, but he was much more comfortable with outsiders, loners, people who did not quite fit in either by choice or because they were unfairly excluded.

Destry was not the only falsely accused protagonist in a Brand western. A young man traveling across country in *The Revenge of Broken Arrow* (1929) is branded as a thief and left to fend for himself by a wagon train crossing dangerous Indian territory. Similarly, a reformed criminal is framed for a new crime by a duplicitous gambler in *The Outlaw* (1933) and has to prove his innocence to save his life. The charge is murder in *Larramee's Ranch* (1924), and the falsely accused victim has to identify the real culprit to clear his name. The hero of *Tenderfoot* (1924) is found guilty by association.

Having been seen in the company of outlaws, he is assumed to be one of their number.

Some of Brand's novels are essentially mystery stories. *The Big Trail* (1929), for example, involves false identities and family secrets. Others portray the coming of age of their main characters, as in *Outlaw Breed* (1926), wherein a young man who has vowed not to carry a gun is stalked by his father's killer. The worm turns again in *Storm on the Range* (1931), when a cowardly sheepherder steals a fortune and then has to defend it. One of Brand's best is *The Dude* (1934). A young man is cheated out of his money and nearly killed, but is befriended by a gunslinger. Together the two plan revenge by robbery, but the heist gets more complicated than they expected.

While Brand may not have cared for his life as a rancher, he seems to have had a fondness for horses. There are numerous scenes scattered through many of the novels that reflect this affection and a few that stand out in particular. *The Garden of Eden* is almost entirely about the special relationship between humans and horses, and *Devil Horse* (1922) and *Mistral* (1929) both concentrate on the bond between one specific man and one specific horse. Many of Brand's horses are almost as strongly characterized as the human characters.

Another common theme was the search for some missing item or location. In *Silvertip's Chase* (1933) clues about the location of a gold mine lead to a competition among several characters, with predictably violent results when they converge. Sometimes the missing item is a person, as in *Blood on the Trail* (1933), in which the problem is to deliver a sum of money to a man believed to be living with a band of outlaws. Some of Brand's best remaining titles are *Song of the Whip* and *King of the Range* (1929).

### Critical Analysis

With few exceptions, western fiction has always been looked upon as a minor form of literature, even when it was at its most popular. Faust did not think highly of his western fiction or indeed any of his stories for the pulp magazines, which he considered simply as work necessary to pay the bills while he sought to write the poetry that was his first love. He almost never revised anything after the

original draft, and this crudeness is sometimes evident. Fortunately, western plots are almost always linear and straightforward. At the same time he had the poet's consciousness of prose styling and a background in classical storytelling, both of which contributed to his plotting and his writing. Even the least of his westerns is much more literate and sophisticated than was the work of most of his competitors in the pulps, and that quality has ensured that his work would constantly be reprinted. Only Zane Grey and LOUIS L'AMOUR are as well known in the genre today, and neither of them was nearly as prolific.

### ***The Bridge over the River Kwai* (1952)**

#### **Pierre Boulle**

French writer Pierre Boulle (1912–94) is remembered both for his satiric novel *Planet of the Apes* (1963) and this earlier adventure story set during World War II. Boulle, who had served as a secret agent in Malaysia during the war, wrote this fictionalized account, which is based in part on actual events. He also wrote a nonfiction book dealing with the same subject, *My Own River Kwai* (1967).

Sometimes protagonists actively seek or at least embrace adventure, but sometimes it is thrust upon them, and in the latter case it is likely to be more unpleasant than otherwise. That is the case with Colonel Nicholson, the British officer commanding a contingent of prisoners of the Japanese who are assigned the task of building a bridge across the Kwai River to facilitate a railroad line designed to connect Rangoon with Bangkok. Nicholson had already undermined the resistance of his own troops when he strictly forbade any of them to attempt escape when their superiors ordered their surrender. Boulle suggests that saving face was as important to Nicholson as it was to the Japanese, although the need expressed itself in a different fashion.

Nicholson's nemesis is Colonel Saito, a brutal, overbearing, sadistic man who is frequently drunk and who initiates hostilities by ordering the British officers to work beside their men. Nicholson forbids them from doing so, for which action they are all kept in solitary confinement under intolerable

living conditions. Captain Clijton, the medical officer through whose perspective much of the story is revealed, is able to intercede from time to time, although he is torn between admiration and frustration with Nicholson's intransigence.

The contest of wills eventually begins to tilt in Nicholson's favor. Inspired by his example, the enlisted men systematically sabotage every effort to advance the project. Frustrated, Saito eventually puts the best possible face on his defeat and concedes Nicholson's point, expecting in return the future cooperation of the officers in supervising the other prisoners. To the surprise of his subordinates, Nicholson then orders the men to be more cooperative and to stop their petty sabotage. Before long, the superior organizational and engineering skills of the British prisoners has effectively put them in charge of the operation.

Meanwhile, a group of three British saboteurs has moved into the area, looking for a target whose destruction will sever the railroad line. The Kwai River bridge is the most tempting and amenable to clandestine attack, and ironically they consider enlisting the help of the prisoners, who by this point are emotionally committed to the bridge's completion. Eventually the agents proceed on their own, placing explosives around the lower supports and setting booby traps along the rail lines. As the critical moment approaches, however, the river suddenly drops dramatically, exposing some of the wires and threatening to reveal the existence of the explosives themselves. It is Colonel Nicholson who notices it, and when one of the saboteurs kills Saito to prevent the alarm from being raised, Nicholson attacks him in turn and saves the bridge.

#### **Critical Analysis**

War stories, almost by their nature, suggest adventure. Some writers present it in terms of glorious deeds in the face of adversity, while others, like Boulle and Erich Maria Remarque's *ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT* (1929) portray it as an almost inhuman ordeal. The duel between Colonel Nicholson and Colonel Saito is a classic conflict, and although leaders are meant to be more sympathetic to the former, neither man is completely admirable or completely without redeeming qualities. Nicholson insists on protocol even when that

puts his men in harm's way unnecessarily, and Saito's prejudice against the British is at least in part due to his unhappy experiences with them before the war.

Nicholson, as seen through the eyes of Clifton, is a fascinating character, apparently guileless and absolutely determined to do things the proper way, regardless of the circumstances. Boule indicated elsewhere that the colonel was based on a combination of traits from British officers whom he had actually known. Saito is something more of a caricature, his motivations simple, one-dimensional. The complexity of the emotions and loyalties involved is reflected in the ironically conflicted attitudes of the prisoners, who have committed themselves completely to creating a magnificent functioning structure even though that is clearly in aid of the enemy's plans to invade India. As the project succeeds, it appears that Nicholson and his men are taking such pride in their accomplishment that they are indifferent to the fact that they are in effect materially aiding the enemy. Boule underlines this odd state of affairs by means of several conversations among the saboteurs, who interpret what they see from a distance in very different terms than the prisoners themselves might have used.

There is additional irony in Boule's description of the plans of the saboteurs, which are described in very much the same manner as those of Nicholson and his officers to build the bridge. The conflict has essentially become one between two factions of British soldiers, with the Japanese reduced effectively to spectators. This is reflected on a smaller scale in the person of Joyce, one of the saboteurs, who spent the previous two years working as a draftsman and concentrating on the redesign of a single component of bridge construction, and who is now destined to be the primary agent of the destruction of an entire structure. The final irony comes when Joyce acts to prevent Saito from raising the alarm, only to discover that it is Nicholson whom he should have killed.

It would be easy to dismiss Colonel Nicholson as having succumbed to the shock of his situation, but Boule suggests that it is more complicated than that. Nicholson wished to build but was in a job whose purpose was to destroy. That basic conflict was more central to his character—and

to a degree to the characters of the men he commanded—than simple national loyalty, which was not a decision made consciously or necessarily through conviction. His sense of pride in his accomplishment was so important that he lost his sense of proportion. Ultimately that leads to his death as well as dishonor.

## ***The Bronze God of Rhodes*** (1960)

### **L. Sprague de Camp**

Although L. Sprague de Camp is probably best known for his fantasy and science fiction, he was a very prolific writer whose work includes biographies, history, scientific topics, and historical novels. De Camp was a trained engineer and an authority on the history of technology, which expertise is evident in many of his novels. He was particularly interested in exploring the effect of new scientific discoveries within a culture, both in terms of how they were implemented and the societal changes that eventually resulted.

The protagonist in this particular novel is young Chares Nikonos, a proud though second-class citizen of the city state of Rhodes in the years following the death of Alexander the Great and the division of his empire among various successors. Chares has recently trained under an innovative sculptor in a distant city and has returned, hoping to introduce those methods. His initial forays are rebuffed rather abruptly, partly because the senior members of his profession are resistant to anything new and partly because Chares is so full of himself that he makes boasts he cannot keep and disparages anyone who disagrees with him. He is also in conflict with his family, who want him to pursue a more traditional lifestyle, and he is openly critical of the prevailing religion.

Chares has to alter his plans dramatically when the political situation abruptly shifts. Antigonos of Macedonia has decided to make war on Egypt and demands that Rhodes join the attack, but Rhodes is on good terms with Ptolemaios and does not want to become involved. Several efforts to propitiate Antigonos and his son, Demetrios, fail, and the middle section of the novel is largely concerned with the siege of the city, including naval and land battles described in lush detail and with close atten-

tion to the military technology involved. Chares commands a catapult team and later accompanies a mission to Egypt designed to encourage intervention on Rhodes's behalf. That leads to a fascinating journey to the interior city of Memphis in search of a pair of thieves.

Chares eventually meets King Ptolemaios of Egypt, through whom the nature of international politics is revealed to be much as it is now. He suggests the creation of the Library of Alexandria, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Through it all, Chares has a vision of creating the tallest statue ever created, to stand at the edge of his city and to look out over the harbor. He eventually achieves his goal—and the Colossus of Rhodes also became one of the Seven Wonders—but he has one final fling at adventure before retiring into relative obscurity. De Camp appends a short summary of the historical basis for the story, most of whose characters are based, at least loosely, on real people.

### **Critical Analysis**

Many historical writers feel constrained to use archaic or artificial language to instill a sense that the story is taking place in another time. Sometimes they are historically accurate and sometimes not. Robert Louis Stevenson was convinced that his use of historically accurate vernacular was part of the reason that his novel *The BLACK ARROW* (1993) was unsuccessful. De Camp adopted a different approach, reasoning that the unfamiliarity of the words and phrasing would create another barrier between the reader and the characters, making it more difficult for the former to accept the latter as realistic human beings. His solution was to use contemporary jargon and phrasing, even including a few amusing minor anachronisms. As a result, the interactions among the characters—even in unusual situations—seem familiar, drawing the reader into the story. When Chares and his friends argue about whether there is one god, many gods, or none at all, they do so in much the same way that might be debated today. During the portion of the novel that takes place in Egypt, there are several comparisons of various religious systems among the differing cultures, and even between different social strata.

This methodology spills over into virtually every scene. The resistance to change by established arti-

sans, the reluctance by government officials to act until an emergency forces the decision upon them, the habit of certain prominent businessmen of using a catastrophe to improve their own finances, and every other aspect of life in the besieged Rhodes parallels contemporary events. Sometimes De Camp is openly satiric. After hearing of a new design of ram for the navy, one character remarks, "If machines of war become any more frightful, people will insist upon doing away with war altogether." Later, another character gives voice to De Camp's central thesis. "He who ascertains a new law of nature or invents a new device is greater than all your conquerors, and in the long run has more influence." This sentiment is reflected in the fact that the dominant cultures like those of Antigonos and Rhodes remain free and proactive, while the subjugated ones like Egypt are trapped by customs unchanged for centuries. De Camp uses King Ptolemaios to suggest that the names of prominent artists will be remembered even after those of political figures such as himself are largely forgotten.

The narrative is sprinkled with interludes that are often amusing stories in themselves, always kept short enough that they do not disrupt the main plot. These include tall tales told by Chares's slave, Kavaros, and reminiscences by the characters he meets during his travels. The relationship between Chares and Kavaros is worth particular mention because the type of slavery practiced in the ancient Mediterranean was not the same as that which took root in North America 2,000 years later. Slaves had certain rights, were often employed in their spare time, and could buy back their freedom over a period of years. It was not uncommon for them to be treated as equals in many respects by free men, and in fact Chares and Kavaros become good friends after the latter achieves his freedom. On the other hand, Chares expects women to be submissive and retiring because in his culture that is their accepted role, and he finds it very difficult to deal with the assertive Egyptian woman Amenardis, whom he steals from her treacherous husband. De Camp thereby provides an historically accurate depiction of the gender prejudices of the period, while also demonstrating their arbitrary nature.

During the course of the story, De Camp provides substantial information about this era, in

far more detail than is usually found in historical novels, but manages to do so without lengthy and tension-killing digressions and explanations. The particulars about the operation of the various forms of catapult are integral to the story; the conflicts between various philosophies and religions provide insight into a time when the Mediterranean was in intellectual ferment; and the interface between political and personal ambitions is artfully presented. He also describes the ancient world as much more cosmopolitan than insular, with representatives of countless nationalities mingling on a daily basis in the major trading centers. An interesting alternative view of this same period can be found in *Funeral Games* (1961) by Mary Renault.

De Camp's four other historical novels follow much the same pattern. In *An Elephant for Aristotle* (1958), a soldier serving under Alexander the Great is sent on a mission to retrieve an elephant from Africa and bring it to Macedonia. *The Arrows of Hercules* (1965) focuses on the invention of the catapult and dramatic ways in which this changed not only warfare but the whole concept of military technology. *The Dragon of the Ishtar Gate* (1961) is a grand tour of third-century Persia, an historically accurate adventure in the world of *The Arabian Nights*. In *The Golden Wind* (1969), an Egyptian leads an expedition to the east, exploring Asia 15 centuries before Marco Polo. All five of these novels blend exciting adventure with meticulously researched settings. Many of De Camp's fantasy adventures are similarly designed to make the unfamiliar seem familiar, and his ability to incorporate discussions of technological change into his narratives has rarely been equaled.

### ***The Bull from the Sea* (1962) Mary Renault**

*The Bull from the Sea* is Mary Renault's second novel chronicling the life of Theseus, the famous mythological figure who slew the minotaur and ended the domination of Crete over the Mediterranean. It follows *The King Must Die* (1958), which ends with the fall of Crete and the hero's return to his home city. Renault was born in England but eventually immigrated to South Africa, where she produced a number of historical adventures and a handful of contemporary novels.

The story opens with the return of Theseus from ravaged Crete, his assumption of the throne of Athens, and his summary disposition of some local opposition to his rule. The title refers to an early incident when the Cretans, who wish him no good, send a dangerous bull to Athens, supposedly as a gift, and Theseus sets out to capture it single-handed to prove his merit. This he accomplishes, considering it a good augur for the future of his rule. And indeed, that seems to be the case, because in short order he conquers Crete, then unites all of Attica, the Greek peninsula, under his rule. But for all his military victories, he remains unsatisfied.

His life changes course when he confronts a band of pirates and becomes close friends with their leader, Pirithoos. Together they travel around the Mediterranean, having various adventures, and their friendship becomes more intimate with the passage of time. Theseus intervenes on behalf of Oedipus, who is scorned wherever he travels despite having once been King of Thebes. Unlike contemporary politicians, Theseus frequently risked his own life in pursuit of political goals, and a series of dangerous adventures follow as he visits distant lands, still hoping to expand the breadth of his rule. Much of his traveling is conducted with Pirithoos and his pirates, but piracy was viewed somewhat differently at the time, more like privateers whose depredations were designed to advance the political interests of their homeland.

On one of his journeys, Theseus meets Queen Hippolyta of the Amazons, whom he brings home to Athens where she bears his child before being killed in another battle. He encounters Centaurs—a primitive but entirely human tribe—and other peoples while wandering, although his journeys are frequently punctuated by wars. As he grows older, he spends less time in his home city and his popularity wanes. Instead, he alternates between conducting wars with rivals and accompanying Pirithoos on pirating expeditions. At the beginning of his last battle, Theseus suffers a stroke that leaves him partially paralyzed, and the death of Pirithoos that same day is almost equally stunning.

### **Critical Analysis**

*The King Must Die* retells that portion of the life of Theseus that is reflected in mythology, although

Renault has rationalized the story to omit any supernatural content or active participation by the gods. Although that novel is also an excellent adventure, the sequel is more interesting because it required the author to be more inventive in order to speculate about the latter part of his career. Renault's Theseus is a larger-than-life character, but a believable one with recognizable human emotions and failings. He is torn by inner doubts about the decisions he makes, is subject to weaknesses of the flesh, and is always aware that a single misjudgment could have disastrous effects for himself and his people. This sense of immediacy and urgency is reinforced by presenting the narrative in the first person, providing the reader with intimate glimpses inside the protagonist's mind.

Renault employs a mildly artificial, formal tone in much of the dialogue and some of the narration, an artifice that can help evoke the sense of another era, but which can also create a barrier between the reader and the story, making it more difficult to identify with the characters. She threads this maze quite well, however, and there are only a few occasions when it seems awkwardly artificial. The novel's pacing is sometimes uneven, particularly in the early chapters, where entire sequences of action are condensed into a few pages and others are described in great detail. The conquest of Crete takes less than a page, but the capture of the bull requires almost a full chapter. Although this is designed to minimize the time spent on portions of Theseus's history that are peripheral to the story Renault wants to tell, the result is still somewhat jerky.

Renault was one of the few historical novelists to deal forthrightly with the ancient Greek tolerance of homosexuality, undoubtedly because it reflected her own publicly acknowledged inclinations. She also attempts to portray the age as it really was, barbaric and cruel at times, but prone to philosophy and calm at others. Theseus is a man of principle, but also of ambition, and on several occasions he chooses to advance his personal desires despite the contrary wishes of his companions. Like many heroes of mythology, he did not live happily ever after. His wives have all predeceased him; he is aware that he was indirectly responsible for the death of his only son; and his

native Athens has begun to slide back toward chaos even before his death. Although Renault does not minimize the tragedies in his life, she concentrates on the moments in which he was great, his rousing adventures and his unusual sympathy for the less advantaged of his people. She is one of the few writers who have managed to present a realistic account of ancient legends without sacrificing the sense of greatness and heroism that is their most memorable characteristic.

### **Burroughs, Edgar Rice** (1875–1950)

As a young man, American writer Edgar Rice Burroughs was employed in a succession of low-paying jobs, and it was not until 1912, with the serialization of *Under the Moons of Mars* (in book form as *A Princess of Mars*), that he finally found a career that paid well. The first Tarzan novel, *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912) quickly followed, and he is best remembered for the creation of the jungle lord, who has been appearing in movies, television shows, comic strips, and elsewhere ever since. Tarzan is certainly one of the most famous fictional characters of all time, and his success spawned several imitators, including the Jan series by Otis Adelbert Kline and the Bantan series by Maurice Gardner, none of which even began to approach the popularity of the original.

Tarzan—whose real name is John Greystoke—was orphaned after his family became marooned in Africa and was raised among the apes following the death of his parents. The opening volume is a coming-of-age story in which Tarzan grows to manhood, kills, and replaces the ruler of the local ape tribe, encounters another lost expedition, falls in love, and is thwarted in his romantic efforts. He returns to the jungle in *The Return of Tarzan* (1913), in which he first visits the lost city of Opar and meets Jane, who will be his future wife. They have a child in *The Beasts of Tarzan* (1914), who is named Korak and who has his own series of jungle adventures in *The Son of Tarzan* (1914). *Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar* (1916) chronicles his return to that city for one of his most exciting adventures, clearly influenced by the lost world novels of H. Rider Haggard, while *Jungle Tales of Tarzan* (1916) is a collection of short stories set during Tarzan's youth.

*Tarzan the Untamed* (1919), despite having one of the more chaotic plots in the series, is significant because it and the three immediate sequels form an internal subseries which were the last in which Tarzan himself completely dominates the action. These four books describe the disappearance of Jane, Tarzan's initial conviction that she is dead, his subsequent search for her, and the eventual rescue and reunion. After *Tarzan and the Ant Men* (1924), lost cities continued to pop up in almost every book, and while Tarzan's visits might be the central story line, much of the action involved the subsidiary characters, who would eventually be rescued and led to safety. Jane and Korak were virtually dropped, and a new cast was introduced for each book, usually consisting of lost or misguided people who needed to be rescued from a conniving villain.

Of the remaining novels, only a few stand out from the usual pattern. *Tarzan at the Earth's Core* (1929) was a crossover novel in which he ventured into Pellucidar, the underground world. An interesting lost city founded by Romans is discovered in *Tarzan and the Lost Empire* (1929). *Tarzan and the Lion Man* (1933) includes a film crew among the characters, a mildly satiric commentary on Burroughs's own experiences in Hollywood. During World War I many of the villains Tarzan fought were German agents, but they were replaced by Russians or communists after 1919.

There were also five jungle adventure stories that did not involve Tarzan and are not set in a series. These include *The Cave Girl* (1925), *The Eternal Savage* (1925, also published as *The Eternal Lover*), *The Land of Hidden Men* (1932, also published as *Jungle Girl*), *The Man Eater* (1935), and *The Lad and the Lion* (1938). The last of these is a Tarzan clone. The young heir to the throne of a mythical European country is sent to safety, but instead is shipwrecked in Africa, grows to maturity with a lion as his companion, and has a series of adventures when he finally encounters outsiders. *The Eternal Savage* sends its hero back through time to the Stone Age.

The first of Burroughs's western novels was *The Bandit of Hell's Bend* (1926), a routine story of battles with natives and outlaws on the frontier. *The War Chief* (1927) and *Apache Devil* (1933)

reflect a more nuanced attitude toward Native Americans. Together they chronicle the life of a young white boy who is raised as the son of Geronimo and who becomes a leading warrior in their battles against the white invaders. Burroughs, who had spent some time in the Southwest, was surprisingly even-handed in his treatment and shows considerable respect for the Apache culture. The two novels are interesting when compared to the somewhat similar Thunder Moon series by MAX BRAND. Burroughs's last western was *The Deputy Sheriff of Comanche County* (1940), which mixes western action with the detective story. An unjustly accused man must discover the real murderer in order to clear his name. *The Girl from Hollywood* (1922) is also technically a western, but is not really an adventure story.

The first and best of the three historical novels is *The Mad King* (1926), a Graustarkian romance in which an American adventurer travels to the mythical European country Lutha, where his sword helps him to rescue an imperiled princess and prevent the usurpation of the throne. *The Outlaw of Torn* (1927) is set in medieval England and follows the exploits of the mysterious leader of a band of mercenary outlaws who discovers that the people he was taught to hate are no different from those he loves and admires. His third historical novel, *I Am a Barbarian*, was not published until 1967. A British warrior is carried off to Rome, where he survives the arena and has various other adventures. All of the historical novels, like the westerns, are fast-paced and exciting, but only occasionally manage the same degree of suspense as his major series novels. *The Rider* (1918) is a minor novella about a mysterious figure caught between two warring nations.

The remaining adventure stories are relatively inconsequential. *The Mucker* (1921, sometimes published with the sequel, *Return of the Mucker*) follows the exploits of a young thug with a good heart who is framed for murder, forced to flee from the United States, and who has a series of violent encounters in foreign lands before proving his innocence. *The Oakdale Affair* (1917) is an awkward mystery story whose protagonist has several adventures while seeking a missing girl and some stolen jewels.

Burroughs also wrote a large body of science fiction. The best known of these are the John Carter of Mars series, David Innes in Pellucidar, which lies at the center of the Earth, and shorter sequences set on the Moon, the planet Venus, and the lost island of Caspak. *The Monster Men* (1929, also published as *A Man Without a Soul*) is virtually a retelling of *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896) by H. G. Wells. A very few new adventures of Tarzan have appeared by other writers, including Fritz Leiber, Joe Lansdale, R. A. Salvatore, Douglas Niles, Philip Jose Farmer, and an unauthorized series of five by Barton Werper.

### Critical Analysis

Not even Burroughs himself thought that his writing was particularly skillful. He did, however, correctly judge that he could tell a far better story than could most of the other writers appearing in the pulp magazines of the time, and he shrewdly exploited his successes.

It is fairly easy to point out his major flaws. His characters are one-dimensional, heroes and villains alike. His plots are simple and repetitive and frequently involve the separation of a group through happenstance or misunderstanding, their

separate adventures finally converging for the climax. Coincidences abound, sometimes amusingly implausible. The prose is often flowery, sometimes awkward, and rarely rises above the barely adequate. There are also lapses into mild racism from time to time. Although some of the African characters are described as noble, the tone is usually condescending, and the major players in the stories are almost always Europeans.

Despite all of the above, Burroughs had an obvious gift for storytelling and an almost instinctive understanding of how to hold the interest of his readers. He created exotic settings and situations prolifically and colorfully, and if his heroes succeed only because the author stacked the deck in their favor, the recounting of the pathway to that success is nevertheless an exciting journey from opening to climax. The Tarzan books in particular became rather formulaic, but it was a popular formula, and his work has been reprinted constantly since its first appearance. Burroughs's occasional excursions into other genres—westerns and historical novels—are often technically better written, though these novels remain relatively obscure, probably because they were less imaginative.



### ***The Call of the Wild* (1903) Jack London**

This is the best-known novel—actually only a novella—by Jack London (1876–1916), though it was claimed at the time of publication that London had plagiarized portions of the story from a similar book by Egerton Young. London made a habit of drawing on other writers in his work, often without attribution, and similar charges would also rise relative to several of his other works of fiction. Nevertheless, it is his versions that have survived to become classics, and *The Call of the Wild* is probably the best-known dog story of all time.

There is, of course, no reason why an adventure story has to have a human protagonist. In this instance the central character is a mongrel dog named Buck, rudely wrenched from his home in California and sold on the black market to dog peddlers wishing to satisfy the demand for rugged animals to pull sleds in the Pacific Northwest, where gold has recently been discovered. Although Buck encounters several human characters, most of his interaction is with the other dogs who, like himself, have complex personalities onto which London has grafted human motives and sensibilities. Buck adjusts to his new environment, learns to steal food when the chance arises, and kills one of the other dogs in order to become the leader of a sled team.

Buck changes owners several times during the course of the story, most of whom are not overtly cruel, before finally being acquired by John Thornton, a kindly man who nurses him back to health after a savage beating. Thornton is the last link between Buck and civilization, however, and

when the man is killed by hostile Indians, that final bond is severed. Buck gets his revenge, killing several members of the war party and preying on their hunters afterward, but he is no longer connected to man and considers them just another animal to contend with in the wild. He has essentially reverted to being a wolf.

#### **Critical Analysis**

London's classic novella anthropomorphizes Buck's character so much that his personality is as much that of a human being as of a dog. He is perceptive, understands the use of money, grasps motives as well as actions, and makes plans in advance. Although this might not convince an animal behaviorist, it does make the story and its main character more accessible, enabling the reader to identify with Buck even though he is not a human being. It also provides a means whereby the author could present comments on the human condition from an unusual angle. Since Buck is presented as having much in common with people, then people in turn have much in common with Buck.

London suggests that beneath the veneer of civilization, there is a savage lurking inside each of us, that we are capable of theft and murder if that is what is required in order to survive, and that the morality of ordinary circumstances is easily dispensed with in the face of necessity. We are told that Buck's "moral nature" has been undermined by his new circumstances, and that fair play is "a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence." Buck steals food and commits other

outrages “because it was easier to do them than not to do them.” London clearly endorsed the Darwinist principle of survival of the fittest. He refers frequently to the law of “club and fang,” and asserts that “kill or be killed, eat or be eaten, was the law,” and that rising in the pecking order of the pack is the most important imperative in Buck’s life. By implication, humans are motivated by similar desires and internal imperatives, no matter how much we may attempt to disguise them.

There are interesting parallels between *The Call of the Wild* and Herman Melville’s posthumously published *BILLY BUDD* (1924). Both protagonists are innocents who are forcibly removed from their comfortable and familiar lives and inserted into a hostile environment. Both are then compelled by circumstances to act in a violent manner previously alien to their personality. Budd dies, but his true nature is revealed by the manner of his death. Buck lives, but the mask of civilized behavior is torn away, and his true nature is revealed by the subsequent manner of his life.

London foreshadows Buck’s eventual complete return to the wild by his visions of primitive men sitting by a fire, a kind of racial memory more explicit than simple instinct. Buck has an advantage because he can call up the past, in particular one set of owners, a man and wife, who are so incapable of leaving the trappings of civilization behind that they cannot even comprehend the danger that faces them in the wilderness. Predictably, they perish uselessly. Even when he is living with Thornton, Buck is still “a thing of the wild” and no longer a domesticated animal. Although *The Call of the Wild* is frequently marketed as a children’s classic, it is in fact a rather brutal story of survival and primitive violence and was intended for an adult audience. London later wrote a longer novel, *White Fang* (1906), which reversed the central plot, with a wild wolf eventually becoming domesticated.

### **Canning, Victor** (1911–1986)

British thriller writer Victor Canning was a friend of ERIC AMBLER and HAMMOND INNES, with both of whom he served during World War II. Prior to the war he had written several novels that were generally well received but which are now almost

entirely forgotten. He turned to the thriller in earnest in 1947, with *The Chasm*, which would prove to be the first of his many novels that appeared from that point forward at intervals of about one year until his death, four decades later. *The Chasm* involves a man’s return following World War II to a remote part of Italy, where he discovers that a Nazi war criminal is in hiding. It set the tone for most of Canning’s future novels—foreign locations usually in the countryside, competent but not always entirely willing heroes, attractive but practical women, and devious villains.

His next novel, *Panthers’ Moon* (1948), builds upon a clever premise. The hero has placed vital government secrets inside the collar of a panther. Unfortunately, the panther escapes, and foreign spies know what it carries, so there is a race to track the animal down as it lurks in the Alps. Canning continued to use exotic settings in *The Golden Salamander* (1949), another cat-and-mouse chase adventure, this time in North Africa. *A Forest of Eyes* (1950) reads very much like Eric Ambler. An engineer working in Yugoslavia is caught in a web of espionage following the murder of a friend, initially finds the excitement exhilarating, but eventually realizes that it could cost him his life. *The House of the Seven Flies* (1952) involves a search for a sunken treasure and a life-and-death struggle to be the first to reach it.

The hero of *The Man from the “Turkish Slave”* (1953) takes a job as a crewman on a ship suspected of being involved in a smuggling operation. His secret agenda is to discover the details of the operation and expose the men responsible, but he blunders and is nearly killed, forcing him to devise a new plan. *A Handful of Silver* (1954) is a political thriller, once again drawing an innocent man into danger. The plot of *Burden of Proof* (1955) is an old standby, the man unjustly accused of a crime he did not commit pursued by both the police and the real guilty party. There is another sunken treasure in *Twist of the Knife* (1955), but this time the protagonist is a drug smuggler and not nearly as admirable as most of Canning’s other heroes, although ultimately he redeems himself.

*The Dragon Tree* (1958) is a relatively uninteresting thriller involving international politics, but it was followed by *The Burning Eye* (1959), one of

his better efforts. A small group of westerners are marooned on the coast of Somalia when a native uprising threatens all their lives. *Black Flamingo* (1962) is even more rewarding, the story of a man who assumes another's identity in order to avoid trouble with the Congolese government, only to discover that he is now the target of a deadly group of conspirators who believe him to be the other man. In *The Limbo Line* (1963), a professional spy comes out of retirement because of his romantic interest in a Russian ballerina, but then discovers that his new role is forcing him to make an impossible choice. An investigator patiently tracks down an international criminal in *The Scorpio Letters* (1964).

Canning began an experiment with *The Whip Hand* (1965), introducing his first and only series character. Rex Carver is a private investigator who is hired by British Intelligence to follow a beautiful woman across Europe and who finds himself caught up in a very unusual and dangerous situation. Carver returned in *Doubled in Diamonds* (1966), this time searching for the primary heir to a fortune, a trail that leads him into the midst of a ring of smugglers. He is hired to locate a stolen bracelet in *The Python Project* (1967), in a plot somewhat reminiscent of his earlier *Panthers' Moon*, and made his final appearance in *The Melting Man* (1969), the least interesting of the Carver books. This time he is searching for a missing automobile that contains a package of vital concern to his employer. This series is Canning's solitary venture into the world of HARD-BOILED DETECTIVES, a format with which he may not have felt comfortable because he abandoned it very quickly.

*Queen's Pawn* (1969) switched to the world of high finance, throwing a femme fatale into the mix along with a scheming monomaniac. There is some suspense in the early chapters, but the pace is almost too sedate in the latter half of the book. Canning's best novel followed soon after. *The Rainbird Pattern* (1972) deals with a professional kidnapper who has repeatedly eluded capture and who decides to end his career with one of the most daring abductions of all time. His prospective victim is the archbishop of Canterbury. The novel, nominated for an Edgar Award, was filmed as *The Family Plot* (1976) by Alfred Hitchcock, although the movie predictably bears little resemblance to

the original story. Nearly as good is *The Finger of Saturn* (1973). The protagonist's wife turns up after having disappeared for two years, but she has near total amnesia and has no memory of their life together. His efforts to find out what happened to her lead him into danger as agents of British Intelligence, a multinational cartel, and a mysterious third party all take steps to prevent him from discovering the truth. *The Kingsford Mark* (1975) is somewhat similar but not quite as well done, the story of a recently widowed politician whose efforts to unravel secrets surrounding his wife's past reveal more than he expected.

*The Mask of Memory* (1974) is a more restrained political thriller with few moments of actual adventure, but *The Doomsday Carrier* (1976) is Canning at the top of his form. An ape that has been injected with an incipient, virulent disease escapes from a British research laboratory. If it is not recaptured within three weeks, the disease will become contagious and England could be swept by a new plague. The authorities are unwilling to reveal the truth, which hampers their efforts to conduct a thorough search. The novel is very reminiscent of *The Satan Bug* (1962) by ALISTAIR MacLEAN. A few of Canning's protagonists are less than admirable, as is the case with John Corbin of *Fall from Grace* (1980), who stumbles upon some revealing correspondence that could embarrass a number of people in high places. His efforts to reap personal benefit provide some lightweight adventures, but Canning had begun to slide toward quieter suspense and away from overt adventure in his last few novels. *Birds of a Feather* (1985) involves similarly low-key intrigue in the art world. Canning's final novel, *Table Number Seven* (1987), is somewhat more adventurous. A meek young woman must take a Mediterranean cruise as a precondition for an inheritance, and her subsequent experiences are much more lively than she anticipated, centering on the activities of a mysterious passenger.

### Critical Analysis

Victor Canning's novels are very reminiscent of the work of Hammond Innes, Eric Ambler, and Alistair MacLean. During the 1950s and 1960s in particular, his work was very popular. *The Rainbird Pattern* (1972) was nominated for an Edgar Award

and is often cited as his best novel. Although he wrote mostly thrillers, he strayed from that genre for a three-volume ARTHURIAN ADVENTURE story, published collectively as *The Crimson Chalice* (1978). His protagonists tend to be more assertive than those of Innes or Eric Ambler, and are more likely to voluntarily insert themselves into dangerous situations rather than being trapped or tricked by other parties. He shares with those writers a fondness for international locations and an ability to draw dramatic and colorful portraits of different parts of the world.

There is a similarity among many of the novels that is perhaps more obvious when the books are read in close proximity than over a longer period of time. Canning had clearly found a formula that worked, and he spent most of his career developing different ways to tweak that basic story. His female characters are usually not as well drawn as the males, although they are generally more proactive than those of most other thriller writers.

Unlike Ambler, MacLean, and Innes, Canning did much of his best work late in his career. The first two Rex Carver books and *The Rainbird Pattern* are particularly well done. It is an unfortunate fact that even some of the most popular writers drift toward obscurity once they are no longer producing new work, and Canning's reputation faded slowly but steadily following his death, even though at least a dozen of his novels have been brought to the screen. Although a few of his novels have become dated by changes in international politics, many of them remain as fresh and exciting today as when they were first published.

### ***Captain Blood* (1922) Rafael Sabatini**

Although he wrote a fairly wide range of historical novels, Rafael Sabatini (1875–1950) is remembered primarily for his stories set during the days of the buccaneers such as *The Black Swan* (1932) and *The Sea Hawk* (1915). Each had a pirate as hero although Sabatini was well aware that most such men were considerably less honorable and benevolent than were his protagonists. His villains are usually much more representative of historical truth. In order to make his leading characters appealing, they either had to be reformed or justified in their

lives of crime by some greater evil. The latter is the case in this story of Doctor Peter Blood, an Irish physician who had previously served as a soldier but switched to the practice of medicine. When he treats a seriously wounded man during the Monmouth Rebellion, he is tried and unjustly convicted of treason. The death sentence is commuted to servitude in Barbados as the slave of a prominent landowner, Colonel Bishop.

Blood trades on his medical skills to bolster his standing and to enable him to intervene for his fellow prisoners, while becoming somewhat touchily involved in a romance with Bishop's niece. He also begins organizing his fellow slaves to escape to sea, but their plans seem destined to go awry when a confrontation between Blood and Bishop threatens to disrupt the scheme. Fortunately for the conspirators, a band of Spanish pirates choose that moment to attack the island, and in the subsequent confusion the slaves escape and capture the Spaniards' ship. Blood's education in treachery is not yet complete, however, because he promises to cooperate with the Spanish captain, which almost results in disaster.

In due course, they find a full crew and become successful pirates, at Blood's insistence preying solely upon Spanish shipping. He meets another pirate, Levasseur, whom he personally despises but who has an interesting proposal for a joint raid on Maracaibo. Levasseur, like Captain Teach in *The Black Swan*, has no respect for the agreement he has signed with Blood, and he violates it by attacking a Dutch ship. Blood's patience wears thin, and he kills Levasseur, then undertakes the raid with the assistance of Levasseur's unfortunately unreliable crew. They are trapped in the harbor by a Spanish fleet, which Blood outwits in a cleverly conceived and exciting naval battle.

The various characters and subplots begin to converge. The Spanish admiral, Don Miguel, is obsessed with capturing Blood, but instead seizes a British ship and takes Arabella Bishop prisoner. Blood subsequently rescues her and her companion, an agent of the crown, and decides to take them to Jamaica, even though this will bring him within range of Bishop's fleet. King James is driven from the throne by William, and a pardon and commission is sent to Blood, but a series of twists and turns

interferes and delays his eventual rehabilitation and installation as the new governor of Jamaica.

### Critical Analysis

Captain Blood is certainly the best known of Sabatini's pirate adventures, and Blood's history was embellished by two collections of short stories, *Captain Blood Returns* (1930, also published as *The Chronicles of Captain Blood*), and *The Fortunes of Captain Blood* (1936), although both books are very difficult to find. Most of the characters in the novel are fictional, but some are real, and the events described are very close to the actual historical record. Peter Blood is almost certainly based at least in part on Henry Morgan. Sabatini was a meticulous researcher who was careful to avoid anachronisms in everything from political figures to articles of clothing. He is careful to point out that "even a pirate has his honor" and that there are rules in that society just as binding as among the law-abiding. Those who break the rules, like Levasseur, can no longer command the loyalty of their followers.

One underlying theme in the novel is corruption. Blood is condemned to slavery not because he rebelled against the king, but because he performed a humanitarian act. He sided with the throne in the underlying dispute, even though he had reservations about the present incumbent, and his concerns about the justice system become even more pronounced after his own arrest. Blood is one of the rare few who value their personal honor above their loyalty to the throne, although he is intensely loyal to England. Even when he turns to piracy, he restricts himself to Spanish shipping despite his clear grievance against his homeland. Similarly, the established doctor on Barbados, Thwacker, is willing to actively help the slaves escape simply to eliminate the competition provided by Blood, which has reduced his own stature because of Blood's superior performance. The relationship between Bishop and the governor is similarly tainted by preferential treatment and self-interest, and Bishop later allows his personal enmity to trump his duty as governor of Jamaica. The Spanish captain, who is actually an authorized privateer rather than a pirate, treacherously reneges on his promise of good behavior. Paradoxically, it is the outlaws—the

pirates and condemned criminals—who have the strongest sense of honor, even if they sometimes fail to live up to it.

Another recurring element is reversals, usually ironic, occasionally cynical. Blood goes from doctor to soldier to doctor to soldier again within the first third of the novel. The oppressive, domineering Bishop becomes a supplicant when he finds himself aboard the captured pirate ship, at the mercy of his former slaves, and ultimately is replaced as governor by the very man he sought to apprehend and hang. Arabella Bishop's opinion of Blood switches back and forth several times. Blood is punished for performing his duty—attempting to save a life—and rewarded for committing murder—slaughtering the Spanish pirates. Although loyal to the throne, he is convicted of treason. The pirates besieging Barbados are defeated after the town has surrendered. Blood later reflects that "it is not human to be wise . . . it is much more human to err." When he rescues Arabella from the Spanish, she feels gratitude but expresses her emotions as contempt for his chosen profession. Blood eventually accepts a commission from King James, but because of Bishop's animosity, he is trapped in a situation in which he is forced to renounce it and return to piracy.

There is also a reversal in the political situation. With war declared between France and Spain, alliances shift and Blood accepts a commission from the French, legitimizing his position once again, followed by irony when the local French authorities advocate what amounts to self-serving piracy; Blood, the pirate, is alone in demanding they strike a military target. King James is replaced by King William, under whose rule Bishop is declared a criminal, perhaps even guilty of treason. The ending is a rapid succession of ironic realignments, with England joining the war against France, Blood abandoning the perfidious French commander and finding himself pardoned and commissioned once again, followed by his rescue of Jamaica after it was left unguarded by Colonel Bishop, now governor, defeating his erstwhile comrades in the process. The final irony is that Blood is appointed governor in Bishop's place.

Sabatini's dialogue, always crisp, is particularly effective in giving depth to Peter Blood, who

maintains his sense of humor even in the most dire circumstances. Much of the novel's conflict has its roots in personal pride. The Spanish admiral who pursues Blood obsessively does so because of his humiliation during their first two encounters. Levasseur duels with Blood because he is confident that he will win and unwilling to give way in front of his crew. Colonel Bishop, appointed deputy governor of Jamaica, is driven by the injury to his pride to pursue Blood above all others. Late in the book a French captain conducts a doomed assault on Cartagena even though he was warned that it is suicidal because his pride will not allow him to admit that he has made a miscalculation. Blood himself compels those who serve under him to conform to his somewhat arbitrary code of ethics because he believes himself to be morally superior. When offered a pardon and a commission, he refuses to even consider taking it, although his motives are very confused and have much to do with Arabella's characterization of him as a "thief and pirate." The king's agent, aware of Blood's contradictory feelings, observes that "life can be infernally complex." Like many of Sabatini's heroes, Blood displays both stubborn honesty and an awkwardness when dealing with romance, however assertive he might be under other circumstances.

### ***Captains Courageous* (1897)**

#### **Rudyard Kipling**

This short novel of a young boy's adventure at sea may well be Kipling's most memorable work of fiction. Young Harvey Cheyne is traveling across the Atlantic on a liner with his parents when mischance causes him to fall overboard. He is rescued in the nick of time by a sailor from a passing Gloucester fishing boat far off the shores of New England. His immediate reaction is to insist that the ship turn about and take him back to the mainland, but Captain Disko Troop believes that Harvey is lying when he claims to be able to pay them for their time and tells the boy he will have to work with the others for the four-month-long fishing season.

Harvey predictably reacts poorly, even accusing Troop of having stolen the money that was in his pocket when he fell overboard. Eventually and

with regret Troop strikes the boy, and the blow communicates the reality of the situation more effectively than words. Harvey apologizes and is soon put to work with the captain's son, Dan, which service he performs without complaint, even taking pride when he catches his first fish. In fact "it was wonderful beyond words to Harvey," whose former snobbishness has disappeared within hours of his misadventure. In fact, he actively pursues his new interest in the operation of a fishing vessel.

Parts of his education are sobering. Shortly after a lengthy discussion of Jonahs, they encounter another ship, a disreputable hulk believed to be unlucky as well as ill managed, which sinks with all hands lost within days of their encounter. Harvey and Dan become close friends, although not without occasional brushups, and it is another indication of his growing maturity that he learns not to hold a grudge. Their adventures include witnessing the destruction of another fishing boat when it is run down by a liner, and some dangerous teasing of a shark. When they join the main fishing fleet, Harvey feels shy for the first time in his life.

Eventually they return to shore, and Harvey's parents are notified. They are quite surprised at the change in their son and pleased by his maturation. The boy takes a mild satisfaction in proving that he was not crazy, but it is clear that he respects and feels affection for his former shipmates. His father then outlines a plan by which Harvey can learn the family business rather than just live off a healthy allowance. He also makes arrangements for Dan to have a chance at a more rewarding career at sea.

#### **Critical Analysis**

Kipling was a journalist as a young man, and his economy with words is particularly noticeable in this classic sea adventure. Within a very few pages he demonstrates the less than admirable qualities of the spoiled young Harvey Cheyne, has him thrown overboard, then rescued. Although this is a novel-length work, it has much of the structure and feel of a short story. A large proportion of the text is devoted to providing details about life aboard a New England fishing boat, the *We're Here*, which Kipling had researched in advance, and introduction of the other crew members and their backgrounds. The fairly simple plot is at times secondary.

Harvey's reformation is perhaps a bit too sudden. Immediately following the blow from Captain Troop, he apologizes, realizes that he should feel gratitude rather than hostility, meekly participates in the uncomfortable and messy cleanup at the end of the day, and readily agrees to go fishing the following morning. Kipling suggests that the boy's parents, particularly the mother, had been so protective that he had rarely been allowed to do anything physical or dangerous, and this is the manifestation of a deep seated wish to rebel.

Kipling took great pains to make the speech patterns and vocabulary as accurate as possible. This tends to make the dialogue slightly opaque at times, but the context always provides an explanation. The narrator shares Stephen Crane's view in "The OPEN BOAT" that the ocean is not hostile but simply indifferent. Harvey realizes that the "sea was horribly big and unexcited" by his situation. The characters are also well defined and differentiated, although they are crowded together somewhat in such a relatively short novel. Of particular interest is Penn, who lost his family in the Johnstown Flood, and who has apparently suppressed all memories of them until he witnesses another disaster that restores his sanity. Captain Disko is a slightly larger-than-life figure who looms in the background most of the time, and whose instinctive sense of where the fish will be seems almost supernatural.

One of the important lessons Harvey learns is that the value of things is relative. While swapping stories with the other men, he creates an imaginary character in place of himself, because the fishermen would never believe that he is telling them about his own life. Their perspective on the things he had always considered important is humbling and enlightening at the same time. A particularly ironic lesson is that the boy who once thought it would be exciting if the liner ran down a fishing boat is witness to that very thing and the misery and pain that follows, and the sight nearly makes him sick.

The conclusion is evident well beforehand. As is the case in most coming-of-age stories, Harvey learns a great deal about himself and life in general. The final chapters, in which he and his father come to an agreement about his future, is unnecessarily protracted, having been implied by what went

before. Kipling's story is archetypal, and its general theme has been repeated numerous times in fiction, but rarely as effectively.

### Charteris, Leslie (1907–1993)

Leslie Charles Bowyer-Yin was born half English and half Chinese and moved with his family while still a child from Singapore to England. Although he wrote some general adventure novels, most of his fiction involved the character of Simon Templar, known as the Saint, introduced in his third published book, *Meet—the Tiger!* (1928). He eventually changed his name to Charteris and became a naturalized citizen of the United States, although he spent the last several years of his life living in England. The Saint series straddles the line between adventure story and crime fiction because most of his opponents are criminals, except during World War II when the chief enemy was foreign spies. One non-Saint novel, *Daredevil* (1929), is also of interest because it involves Mr. Teal, a regular in the Saint stories. There were nine Saint movies produced during the 1940s, most of them starring George Sanders, and a 1997 film with Val Kilmer in the title role, which bore little resemblance to the books, plus two television series.

In the Saint's debut, *Meet—the Tiger!*, Templar is pitted against a brutal archcriminal known as the Tiger. We are also introduced to some of the recurring characters who appear regularly during the Saint's career. Despite its success, Charteris expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the novel and often referred to the second book, *Enter the Saint* (1930), as the real opening of the series. Like many of the subsequent volumes, this consists of shorter adventures in which the author reestablished the character of Templar and his associates, including Roger Conway. He foils another crime lord, then exposes a crooked cop and outwits the opposition to get the girl, although he would run through a steady supply of ladies during the course of his career. *The Last Hero* (1930), a full-length novel, was probably an influence on Ian Fleming's JAMES BOND. Templar foils a wealthy financier who is actually planning to use a revolutionary scientific discovery to conduct a series of crimes. *Knight Templar* (1930) is somewhat similar, set on a wider

international stage. Both of these novels seem somewhat anachronistic today largely because technology has bypassed Charteris's speculations, but given allowances for the time in which they were written, they are still first-class adventures.

The next several books were more collections of short stories. The Saint had no further novel-length adventures until *The Saint Meets His Match* (1932), which pitted him against another cruel and malevolent crime lord, from whom he must rescue a kidnapped woman. *The Saint's Getaway* (1932) was a minor adventure, but *The Saint and Mr. Teal* (1933) is one of the best in the series. Once again Templar must walk a narrow path between a variety of vicious criminals and the persistent if somewhat ineffective Inspector Teal of Scotland Yard. After a number of short adventures in which Templar travels around the world outsmarting villains and police alike, he returned to London for *The Saint in England* (1934), also one of his best-executed exploits. This time he decides to blackmail a prominent but dishonest politician and avoids a series of clever tricks designed to capture him.

Charteris returned to an international setting for *The Saint in New York* (1935), in which Scotland Yard's warnings to the New York City police are to no avail as Templar tangles with a local racketeer and rescues yet another beautiful woman from the villain's clutches. This was one of the few prose adventures of the Saint to be adapted directly to film. Charteris seemed more at ease at novelette and short-story length, and collections continued to be interspersed with the novels published from this point onward. Two more novels appeared late in the 1930s. A ship full of gold bullion and a lady in peril lure Templar into action again in *The Saint Overboard* (1936), and he decides to battle more hoodlums for possession of a winning lottery ticket in *The Saint Bids Diamonds* (1937).

His opposition is a sinister group of spies in *The Saint in Miami* (1940), understandable given the outbreak of war in Europe. Templar remained in the United States for the next three stories collected as *The Saint Goes West* (1942), then returns to the international scene to prevent another group of spies from stealing a secret formula in *The Saint Steps In* (1942). Once the war was concluded, Charteris returned to drawing his villains

from the underworld, but shorter works became increasingly predominant. Templar turned his attention to a gang of drug dealers in *The Saint Sees It Through* (1946), but that would be the last full-length novel Charteris would write about the Saint. The next 10 books in the series were all collections of shorter adventures.

*Vendetta for the Saint* (1964) may have been partially written by Charteris, but the bulk of the text was by Harry Harrison, who is a well-respected science fiction writer. The novel takes Templar to Italy, where he crosses swords with the Mafia. With the advent of the television program starring Roger Moore, there was renewed interest in the series, and several novels and collections appeared during the late 1960s and early 1970s, with various degrees of involvement by Charteris, but generally written by other writers, often adapted from television scripts. The 1997 movie resulted in a novelization and an original novel, both by Burl Barer, but neither was noticeably successful. There have been no new books since then, even though Charteris, unlike most writers, actively encouraged people to add to Templar's adventures.

### Critical Analysis

The Saint is one of the best-known characters in crime adventure, and his exploits dominated Charteris's writing career. The books written from 1964 onward were largely ghost written by other authors, often drawn from television scripts, although Charteris contributed to some of them. The Saint was a sophisticated thief who frequently preyed on other criminals and who was in constant trouble with the law. Other fictional characters in the same mold include John Creasey's Toff, Maurice Leblanc's Arsene Lupin, and Louis Joseph Vance's LONE WOLF. The Saint's antecedents can be found even further back, however, in the tales of ROBIN HOOD and *The MARK OF ZORRO* by Johnston McCulley. Templar was a likeable rogue with a distinct sense of honor, a flair for attracting beautiful women, and an amused contempt for authority. Despite his criminal activities, he represents good rather than evil. Similar characters can be found in many other adventures stories, ranging from *CAPTAIN BLOOD* (1922) by Rafael Sabatini to *The Killer Mine* (1947) by HAMMOND INNES.

Obviously the series is based on somewhat shaky moral grounds since the Saint is an acknowledged thief. Like Robin Hood, he steals only from those who can afford, or deserve, the loss. In compensation, he brings about the ruin of the truly evil criminals, and his relationship with the police, while generally testy, is at times almost cordial. The band of associates he gathers around him are mirrored in many of the other adventure series popular at the time like *The SHADOW* and *DOC SAVAGE*. While never an impressive stylist, Charteris was a far more gifted and careful writer than most contemporary crime writers, who wrote primarily for the pulp magazines. The Saint remains the best known of the gentleman thieves, and given the changes in society that have taken place in recent decades, it seems unlikely that he will ever have a serious rival.

### **Clavell, James** (1924–1994)

British novelist James Clavell, who also wrote successfully for the screen, made his debut with *King Rat* (1962), based in part on his own experiences as a prisoner of war in Southeast Asia. The story describes the struggle between two prisoners, a British officer who tries to maintain strict military discipline, and an American enlisted man who prefers a more independent response to imprisonment. This struggle between individualism and collectivism is a recurring theme in Clavell's work, and this novel in particular is an interesting contrast to *The BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER KWAI* (1952) by Pierre Boulle, which also suggests that an inflexible code of behavior is not appropriate under those circumstances.

Clavell continued to use Asian settings for the bulk of his subsequent fiction. His next novel was *Tai-Pan* (1966), which takes place against the backdrop of the British seizure of Hong Kong in the 1840s. It was the first of the loosely related series of books that are collectively known as the Asian Saga, although *King Rat* was eventually retroactively added. Two businessmen conduct a not very subtle battle for dominance as the new British colonial acquisition proves to be a very profitable trading center. The novel continued Clavell's theme that individualism, free trade, and entrepreneurship are

ultimately more beneficial than any sort of managed economy. The protagonists are torn between two visions of China—a land of fascinating possibilities but also one filled with danger. The mixing of cultures and the friction that results is another theme common to all of Clavell's novels. The story also includes a great deal of historical background about how the British colony was founded and developed, and how the minority European populations dealt with an alien majority culture.

Clavell achieved even greater prominence with his next novel, *Shogun* (1975), which takes place in Japan at the beginning of the 17th century. The protagonist is a British sailor named Blackthorne through whose eyes the reader witnesses a critical period in the development of Japanese culture. Blackthorne and his crewmates are taken prisoner by a group of men led by a samurai, after which he is passed along to the custody of a local aristocrat. While being questioned, the prisoner reveals that there are divisions among the Europeans that might be exploited, and that there is a good chance that Japan will be viewed as a potentially valuable colony. Blackthorne then becomes a pawn in a struggle between two prominent men, Toranada and Ishido, but over the course of time he gains the respect of the Japanese both for his knowledge and his sense of honor, while he in turn learns to appreciate the strange civilization in which he has been stranded. The rivalry between Toranada and Ishido and the various intrigues associated with it provide most of the conflict in the novel. Blackthorne also has some subsidiary adventures when reunited with the survivors of his crew, who are plotting to seize a Portuguese merchant ship. Many of the characters in the novel are based on actual historical figures, and most of his background detail is also accurate.

His next book, *Noble House* (1981), is set in Hong Kong during the 1960s and builds upon some of the background established in *Tai-Pan*, as well as including some of the characters from *King Rat*. The trading company has survived but is under new management and faces challenges not only commercially but from Chinese and Soviet spies and a well-organized criminal underworld. The loss of a major shipment is the first of several financial strains which put the company's future in jeopardy.

Arms smuggling, kidnapping, treachery, espionage, and political sabotage all become intertwined with the future prospects of the various characters.

*Whirlwind* (1986) is set primarily in Iran during 1979 but is still considered part of the Asian Saga because of its references to the peoples and events from the other novels. It describes the fall of the shah and the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini and the adventures of several westerners caught in the turmoil, primarily the employees of a helicopter company that is a subsidiary of the Noble House. It was the least successful of Clavell's novels. A shorter version appeared as *Escape: The Love Story from Whirlwind* in 1994. Clavell's last novel was *Gai-Jin* (1993), which takes place in Japan during the 1860s. Like the other installments in the saga, it is based in part on actual historical events. Much of the friction this time is once again the clash between cultures, the indigenous Japanese and the aggressive, ambitious, and divided outsiders. The Japanese are not unified either, and one faction plans to restore the emperor to the throne while others remain opposed.

*King Rat*, *Tai-Pan*, *Shogun*, and *Noble House* have all been filmed, the latter two as major television miniseries. Clavell also wrote screenplays for several films including *The Great Escape* (1963), *The Satan Bug* (1965) from the novel by ALISTAIR MacLEAN, and *To Sir With Love* (1974). He became an American citizen in 1963.

### Critical Analysis

Clavell's epic novels began to appear at a time when the long historical novel had declined in popularity and the popularity of his work did much to give the form a new lease on life. He also stimulated considerable interest in the historical development of Asia and by extension other, less familiar parts of the world. This made it easier for similar books like *Aztec* (1980) by Gary Jennings to find an audience.

Clavell clearly had strong feelings about politics and economics, and his emphasis on the value of enterprising individuals over government bureaucracy is evident in all of his novels. His descriptions of the tensions caused when two very different civilizations with diverse cultures and philosophies come into contact with each other are exceptional.

Clavell's prose style is fairly transparent, more concerned with making a complex plot accessible than with drawing attention to itself, but despite his lack of literary pretensions he has received overwhelmingly favorable attention from most critics.

### A Coffin for Dimitrios (1939) Eric Ambler

Although almost all of the novels by ERIC AMBLER (1909–98) involve international espionage, this early classic is one of the exceptions. Charles Latimer is an academic turned mystery novelist who is spending part of a working vacation in Istanbul when he impulsively attends a party and meets Colonel Haki, apparently head of the Turkish secret police. Haki is a detective story enthusiast, and during the course of a conversation he introduces Latimer to the history of Dimitrios Makropoulos.

Dimitrios was of uncertain parentage but raised as a Greek. He is an elusive figure, and there is no photograph in the files of any police authority, but he was wanted in several Mediterranean nations for crimes ranging from murder and theft to espionage and assassination. His most successful venture was a lucrative drug smuggling operation that ended when he disappeared, apparently after providing the police with details about all of his associates, who were arrested and imprisoned, an effective way of covering his tracks. Haki was relieved when a dead body fished out of the sea was identified as Dimitrios, and allows Latimer—who has become very curious by now—to accompany him when he examines the body. Latimer then succumbs to the temptation to trace the man's travels and reconstruct his past.

During the early stages of his investigation Latimer learns of and minimizes the apparent interest of another party in the same information. While in the Balkans, he meets Mr. Peters on a train, an innocuous-seeming man who mysteriously knows his name without being told. Latimer later finds Peters ransacking his hotel room, and the two engage in a bizarre, sparring conversation, each trying to determine what the other knows and why each is interested in Dimitrios. They also ascertain that there is a third party also following the man's trail. Their courses diverge but eventually bring them together again in Paris, where Peters reveals

that Dimitrios is not dead, and that the body was of another man. Peters wants Latimer to help him blackmail Dimitrios, to which the latter agrees, though he refuses to accept any of the money. He has decided that he must see the story of Dimitrios to its end, even if that means taking some risks. The final, bloody confrontation results in the death of both Peters and Dimitrios.

The 1944 film version used the British title of the novel, *The Mask of Dimitrios*, a surprisingly loyal rendition with Peter Lorre as the writer and Sydney Greenstreet as Mr. Peters. An interesting sidebar is that the book contains a short discussion of the growing importance of surprise in warfare: "It was possible that the people who got in with the surprise attack first might win the war." This was written two years before Pearl Harbor.

### Critical Analysis

On the very first page of the novel Ambler presents a rationale for the plot that would recur constantly during the course of his career. He insists upon the capacity of random events to cause major changes in the lives of his protagonists and asserts that "chance plays an important, if not predominant, part in human affairs." If there was an intelligence directing events, then "the choice of Latimer as its instrument could have been made only by an idiot." At the same time he states that the very absurdity of Latimer's obsession with Dimitrios makes it easy to become "lost in superstitious awe." Several of Ambler's protagonists are manipulated by outside forces while "imagining fondly that he is in charge of his own destiny." Fate, according to Ambler, may be inescapable but it is not intentional; there is no mind directing the events that alter lives.

One of the more memorable scenes in the novel is the visit to the morgue. While examining the corpse, Latimer reflects on the transience of strife and success and generalizes from the life of the single man before him to nations and the entire world. Latimer's interview with Madame Preveza, one of Dimitrios's former associates, is also vividly described. There is an extensive flashback retelling Dimitrios's part in subverting a government official that is in itself one of the great stories of espionage. Other portions of the novel resemble police procedures; that is, they are focused on the procedures

necessary to conduct an investigation. But Ambler intersperses these with hints of menace, the shadowy figure who is also searching for the secrets of Dimitrios and who does not reveal himself until the story is well under way. Ambler is particularly adept at creating a character of considerable depth with only a few sentences, emphasizing those attributes that make them stand out rather than those that do not.

The most vividly realized character in the novel is Dimitrios, even though he does not actually appear until the last few pages. Readers learn everything about him through the reminiscences of his former associates, and through police reports and newspaper articles. It is almost anticlimactic when he finally appears, because he has always proved to be resourceful, organized, and completely in control of every situation. His ability to manipulate others has been illustrated deftly and colorfully, and his final failure almost seems a contradiction.

During the course of Latimer's investigations Ambler evokes numerous images of the chaos and tragedy that followed the capture of Smyrna, now Izmir, by the Turks and the ejection of what survived of the Greek population. It is this chaos that allowed Dimitrios to disappear from the public record. The collapse of the established governments and social standards in southern Europe and the Balkans figures frequently in the background of Ambler's novels. When Latimer tries to explain to a Greek reporter that this is all just an exercise in detection, research for his next book, his companion responds that Latimer is fooling himself, that he is trying to comprehend the collapse into decadence of a single man as a way of understanding the collapse into decadence of entire nations. The omniscient narrator is presumably echoing Ambler's own sense of disillusionment with the idealism of his youth. "Men have learned to distrust their imaginations." Latimer later decides that it would be inappropriate to call Dimitrios an evil man because for all his misdeeds he had not caused nearly as much pain and unpleasantness as the politicians who were responsible for wars and civil negligence. The logic of Michelangelo, Beethoven, and Einstein had been replaced by Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

**The Count of Monte Cristo** (1846)**Alexandre Dumas**

Alexandre Dumas Davy de la Pailleterie (1802–70) is better known to the world as Alexandre Dumas, author of some of the most enduring tales of sword-play and adventure of all time. Dumas frequently employed collaborators in his work, and one of these—Auguste Maquet—is credited with the plotting and much of the writing of *The Count of Monte Cristo*, which is partly based on a true story. The setting is the early part of the 19th century, and the hero is Edmund Dantès, first mate of a commercial vessel.

Arrayed against Edmund are three schemers—a jealous shipmate, an avaricious neighbor, and a rival for the hand of Mercedes Catalan, with whom he is in love. The three men arrange to frame Edmund, who is suspected incorrectly of secretly working on behalf of the Bonapartists. Although the official in charge of the case is inclined to believe Edmund innocent, the political situation is such that he feels compelled to act otherwise to protect his own reputation, and the accused man is carried off to an unjust imprisonment in the Château d'If. Outraged, Edmund refuses to behave meekly and ends up in the dungeons generally assigned to madmen, alongside another man who claims to have knowledge of an immense treasure.

The years begin to pass, and Edmund becomes simply prisoner 37, his name forgotten. He and the neighboring prisoner dig a tunnel between their cells, but escape eludes them until the older man dies, leaving Edmund as sole custodian of the secret of a vast treasure. He finally escapes after 14 years of captivity and is picked up by a passing ship, becomes a member of the crew, and eventually retrieves the treasure from the island of Monte Cristo. Only then does he learn that his father has died during his absence and that the woman he loved has disappeared. Disguised, he begins to track down his old enemies, one of whom is now a poor priest; another has become a millionaire elevated to the nobility; and the third has gained considerable wealth and has married Edmund's former fiancé. He also seeks his old employer, who remained loyal to him, and rescues him from bankruptcy.

For his enemies, however, he has very different plans. The neighbor turned priest commits a

murder and is revealed as a compulsive criminal, and ironically he is killed by the illegitimate son of Villefort while the two are engaged in an attempted burglary. The sailor has become a wealthy banker, but Edmund manipulates the stock market to bankrupt and disgrace him. The remaining plotter is exposed for some underhanded dealings he conducted during the war, and he is ruined. A duel with the man's son is averted when Edmund's old lover recognizes him and pleads for the young man's life. They learn the truth of Edmund's incarceration, and both break with their father and husband respectively, who finally takes his own life.

Last on the list is Villefort himself, whose family is now torn by battles over inheritances, murder, and vengeance. The plot gets very complicated at this point, with elaborate links emerging between the Villeforts and other characters, a trial, suicide, and finally Villefort's descent into madness. Edmund goes through a personal crisis, questioning his own motives, but eventually finds a way to reward those who deserve it and prevent any further tragedies.

**Critical Analysis**

Dumas, like Charles Dickens, generally published his novels in serial form over an extended period of time. *The Count of Monte Cristo* followed on the heels of *The THREE MUSKETEERS* (1844), which had been wildly successful. By contemporary standards, the prose sometimes seems to pile on detail simply to add length to the story, but at the same time it provides the modern reader with information about that historical period, which adds another level of realism. At the same time, several of the conversations are redundant and protracted unnecessarily, and the bankrupt merchant's preparations for suicide are laboriously drawn out. The novel changes character dramatically from beginning to end. The first half consists of a relatively straightforward plot with a limited number of characters, and most of what takes place is seen through the eyes of Edmund. The second half becomes very complicated, with conflicting loyalties and motivations and a very large cast of characters, several of whom assume the role of narrative focus.

As is the case with the hero of *CAPTAIN BLOOD* (1922) by Rafael Sabatini, Edmund's problems arise

despite his political ignorance or indifference. His agreement to convey a sealed letter from the exiled Bonaparte to one of his supporters is meant as an innocent act of courtesy, and in fact it is Bonaparte who should be censured for taking advantage of the young man. Throughout the early chapters, Edmund seems to attract dishonorable people. Villefort, who condemns him to imprisonment, does so to further his own career and to protect himself from association with the Bonapartists, among whose number is his own father. Even though he feels passing remorse, he does not act to save Edmund. Even the woman who insisted she would die rather than live without him proves unfaithful, marrying within a year of his conviction.

Dumas evidently did not have much respect for government officials or the court system. When an inspector is told that Edmund is nearly mad, he responds that this is a good thing, that he will not suffer as severely once he is insane. The author is openly sarcastic. "He was, as this remark shows, a man full of philanthropy, and in every way fit for his office." Edmund never actually comes to trial and is incarcerated because of Villefort's subversion of the system, but when Edmund sets about seeking vengeance, he discovers that his careful planning does not always bring the results he intended, and while he does succeed in ruining all four of his enemies, there is collateral damage as well. Dumas implies that it is futile to expect the work of a single person to right great wrongs, and presumably Edmund should have left it to God to balance the scales at some future date. This is emphasized in the closing chapters when Edmund insists that there is no absolute happiness or misery in the world, that both states are relative and that the key to the former is to be happy for the positive things in life rather than bemoan the things one lacks. His own frequent name changes are designed to reflect alterations in his emotional life and the degrees of content and discontent he feels.

Dumas reveals other values during the course of the novel. Suicide is a positive act, a way of redeeming one's honor, joining loved ones, or sparing the feelings of others. It is also apparent that his sympathies lie with the Bonapartists, on whose side are numbered all of the honorable characters. Edmund's alienation, his sense that he belongs to

no country, no land, even to the point where he feels more at ease while on the ocean, suggests a further distaste for the political nature of European society. Despite his years of hardship Edmund provides the means by which each man must destroy himself rather than confronting them directly.

Countless stories and movies have used the same basic plot—the unjustly imprisoned hero seeking vengeance after escaping or being released, usually more sanguine than this. Among the best known is *Ben-Hur* (1888) by Lew Wallace. *DESTINY RIDES AGAIN* (1930) by MAX BRAND is a much more compact version of the same story in a very different setting. The replacement of Edmund's name by a number was echoed in the television series *The Prisoner* (1967). There were several sequels during the late 19th century, none of them by Dumas, and none of which have remained popular.

### ***The Cruel Sea* (1951) Nicholas Monsarrat**

Although British writer Nicholas Monsarrat was a confirmed pacifist, he volunteered to serve in the military during World War II. In much the same capacity as that of the primary characters depicted in this novel, he eventually commanded his own ship. Most of his best-known fiction dealt with similar situations, sometimes fictionalizing actual wartime events, and he also wrote nonfiction about the wartime navy.

*The Cruel Sea* opens with the arrival of several officers aboard the newly constructed *Compass Rose*, a corvette whose function is to escort convoys across the North Atlantic; armed with minimal weaponry, primarily depth charges, it serves as a defense against German submarines. Captain Erickson is an experienced sailor, but most of the crewmen are not, including two of the new officers, one of whom, Lieutenant Lockhart, is the main viewpoint character. He and Lieutenant Ferraby have just been commissioned, have no experience at sea, and are viewed by First Lieutenant Bennett as fair game for persecution. Erickson has an additional worry in that the ship is a prototype, and its seaworthiness in heavy weather is suspect. After a short period of training, with the personnel frictions still unresolved, the *Compass Rose* is ordered to active duty.

Even in good weather and with no German activity, the task of escorting a convoy proves frustrating and tiring. Bad weather and cramped conditions make things worse, and Bennett's laziness and unprofessional attitude are no help. He is clearly unhappy with his posting and eventually fakes an illness in order to be reassigned. Lockhart is promoted in his place, and an informal but nevertheless close relationship evolves between him and Erickson. More time passes, and finally they see hostile action, although they can do nothing but look on helplessly as the ships they are supposed to protect are sunk, denied even the satisfaction of firing on the elusive enemy. Instead, they are reduced to rescuing as many survivors as possible from the sinking ships.

As the war progresses, the number of encounters increases in frequency. Much of the middle portion of the novel consists of a sequence of separate episodes—their first successful sinking of a German submarine, rescuing some survivors and losing others, the plight of a particularly badly injured man taken aboard their ship, and problems with the weather and the engines. Eventually their comparatively good luck runs out. They are torpedoed, the ship sinking so quickly that only a handful survive, including the two main characters, Erickson and Lockhart.

Eventually Erickson gets another command, a frigate, and Lockhart passes over the chance of another promotion to continue serving with him. In the space of a few months, the nature of the war has changed, at least in Erickson's eyes. It is no longer as informal, jury-rigged, and chaotic. It has all become like a great machine, more efficient, and more deadly. Lockhart becomes romantically involved with a young woman who is then tragically killed during a storm while traveling by boat, the novel's final irony. The end of the war is almost an anticlimax.

### **Critical Analysis**

The early chapters of the novel are particularly effective in evoking the early days of World War II, with the navy forced to employ unproven, untrained, and often unreliable men to run its almost equally untested ships. Although Captain Erickson is a competent, effective leader, Lieutenant Bennett

is lazy and sadistic, and Lockhart and Ferraby, although eager to learn, are almost completely inexperienced. The fact that the ship becomes a reasonably effective weapon of war in a relatively short period almost seems to be happenstance. That is consistent with a recurring theme—war is random, useless, and mutually destructive. Monsarrat concentrates on the realistic aspects of warfare, the endless hours of tedious duties performed under unpleasant and uncomfortable circumstances, sporadically interrupted by brief periods of terrifying violence and appalling cruelty. Despite the title, it is not the sea that is cruel. The sea is indifferent; it is the acts of men that transform it into a place of intolerable cruelty. Nor does he ignore the nonphysical stresses, the prolonged absences from families and friends that occasionally have destructive consequences, both on the service member and the civilian.

Monsarrat compares serving in the war to being a cog in a machine, "a machine which someone else is working and controlling." At the same time, speaking through Lockhart, he notes that while the labels and slogans of war might seem melodramatic and artificial, they are in fact a reflection of reality. He feels that his sense of patriotism is "the only thing that keeps me going." The dehumanizing effect of war comes up again and again. After accepting his new command, Erickson tells Lockhart that "there's no margin for humanity left—humanity takes up too much room." He recognizes the change in himself. "We've got to win, before we can pick or choose about moral issues."

However, when one of the crew discovers that his sister was killed by a bomb on shore, he insists that it "doesn't make sense," meaning not just this particular death but the war in general. Lockhart also notices that many civilians are offended by the sight of wounded or uniformed men, and that others think nothing of taking advantage of them. He also muses that "there is nothing to choose between" the average Briton and the average German. Later, a British and German casualty lay side by side, wrapped in their respective flags, and "there's not much to choose between the two flags either," at least as far as they are currently employed.

In one ironic scene Erickson must order depth charges dropped among friendly survivors drifting

in the water, killing them all in order to disable the submarine beneath them. In another, Lockhart provides a palliative treatment for a fatally burned man, while subvocalizing a wish for the man to die and spare himself further pain. The relationship that evolves between Bennett and Ferraby in the early chapters parallels that which arises between Claggart and Billy in Herman Melville's *BILLY BUDD* (1924). In both cases an overbearing officer takes a spontaneous dislike to a relatively naïve crew member, which escalates into a confrontation with the ship's captain, fortunately in this case without murder being done. Melville's characters both died as a result of their confrontation, but the results in Monsarrat's novel are more random. Ferraby loses his self-respect and ends up a broken man, unable to return to duty. Bennett survives by pretending illness and is later caught lying about his exploits at sea. Neither man returns to the theater of war, and in a sense they also have died.

Although *The Cruel Sea* was Monsarrat's most successful and enduring work, he wrote three similar books. Two were collections of shorter pieces—*H.M.S. Marlborough Will Enter Harbor* (1949) and *The Ship That Died of Shame* (1959), while the third was a set of three TRUE-LIFE ADVENTURE stories, *Three Corvettes* (1945).

### ***Cup of Gold* (1929) John Steinbeck**

Winner of the Nobel and Pulitzer Prize, American author John Steinbeck is most famous for his stories of ordinary Americans, sometimes caught in the midst of extraordinary circumstances. His very first novel was an adventure story, however, a sometimes historically accurate account of the life of Henry Morgan, one of the most famous pirates of all time, who was eventually pardoned and became governor of Jamaica.

Still a teenager, Morgan leaves his home and travels to Cardiff, where he is duped by a sailor and illegally placed under indenture for service in Barbados. There he is sold to a local planter who, fortunately for Morgan, is looking for a companion rather than a worker and undertakes to further the young man's education. Even at this age, Morgan dreams of organizing a force to seize and sack a Spanish town, but he bides his time, learning how

to manage other men and a business, eventually assuming all of his master's former responsibilities, even purchasing a ship. But through it all, he retains his dream of pillage and conquest, and as soon as his indenture ends, he sets off again.

With the money he hoarded on the plantation, Morgan buys a half interest in a pirate ship, then uses his gift for surprise tactics to score several easy victories. This attracts the attention of the more seasoned buccaneers, and Morgan rapidly becomes one of their leaders. Eventually he feels the lure of Panama City, known as the Cup of Gold, partly for its riches, partly because of rumors that it is home to the most desirable woman in the world. The city falls, but Morgan is ultimately disappointed because the event fails to live up to his expectations. He double-crosses his own men and absconds with the treasure, only to discover that England and Spain have signed a treaty. He returns to England, where he is nearly hanged, eventually knighted instead, and finally declared governor of Jamaica.

### **Critical Analysis**

Steinbeck's portrayal of Morgan combines historical fact with a mythic overlay that is apparent in the early chapters. Before leaving home, Morgan consults a reclusive man named Merlin who invokes the legend of King Arthur and appeals to Morgan not to forsake his homeland. Morgan's father has earlier stated that Morgan will be a great man "because he is not very intelligent," that is, he focuses on a single goal and devotes all of his efforts toward it, disregarding everything else. Merlin reinforces this by telling Morgan that he will achieve great things, but only if he retains the mind of a child. "All the world's great have been little boys who wanted the moon . . ." Where an adult would analyze a situation and decide the odds were prohibitively high, the child simply presses forward and often overcomes the odds through sheer tenacity of purpose.

Steinbeck starts by showing us 15-year-old Henry, chafing at the dullness of his home in the British Isles, declaring his intention to travel to the West Indies to seek his fortune. Not much is known about Morgan's early life, so Steinbeck was free to be inventive. Although Morgan denied it, there were rumors that he came to Barbados

as an indentured worker, and that is the premise here, although he was actually a freeman illegally impressed. The portrayal of Morgan's youth is oddly constructed. In the early stages it is an almost poetic coming-of-age story, but after his arrival in Barbados, Steinbeck interjects a strong element of humor, primarily with regard to the personality of the planter who buys his contract, James Flower.

Steinbeck portrays Morgan as a complex, pragmatic man. As he grows toward manhood, Morgan becomes merciless rather than cruel, punishing the slaves in order that the plantation will run efficiently rather than because he derives any pleasure from it. He adopts a conscious strategy of honesty, but only so that his occasional dishonesties will not be suspected. He makes love to a slave girl and insists that he is devoted to her, but at the same time acknowledges to himself that he still longs for the girl he left behind in Wales. Truth and lies are simply expedients, and he employs whichever is necessary to achieve the desired results. While he feels affection for his mistress and a kind of love for Flower, he nevertheless leaves immediately once he has regained his freedom because nothing must be allowed to interfere with what he thinks of as his destiny. Eventually Morgan has trouble distinguishing his own lies from truth and may now believe that he was forcefully taken away from his childhood sweetheart, elaborating the story with each retelling.

Morgan's eventual obsession with the capture of Panama City becomes not so much a tangible objective as a symbol of his quest for his destiny, however concealed that may be from his conscious mind. There is also a related interlude in which Morgan's father talks to Merlin, who declares that

if Henry has grown up to be the man he wanted to be as a child, then he has not grown up at all, and that he must be very unhappy. "Those who say children are happy, forget their childhood." This point is echoed later when Morgan confronts the woman he went to Panama to capture, and she accuses him of being without manhood. He subsequently characterizes his own actions as those of a "thick legged little boy." When he later kills the young man he considers his only friend, it is a symbolic destruction of the child within himself. It is not even clear that he ever learns to put aside his childhood because he continues to embellish the truth, even in the presence of King Charles. The king himself remarks that Morgan is a fool. "Folly and distorted vision are the foundations of greatness."

Steinbeck's fictional biography concentrates on the events in Morgan's life when he changed direction or overcame some hurdle or reached a decision. There is considerable historical detail in the description of his invasion of Panama, which is the climactic scene in the novel, but scant attention is paid to his previous career attacking ships on the high seas. During the march to Panama Morgan realizes that what has lured him there is not the gold but the story of the most beautiful woman in the world and what she symbolizes for him—peace and rest after almost two decades of turmoil. Steinbeck chooses to rush through the final years of Morgan's life, during which he lost the desire and capacity for greatness. His life was one great adventure, but ultimately the greatest mystery he faced was himself.

Steinbeck's references to King Arthur suggest an interest in that subject, which would later result in his ARTHURIAN ADVENTURE, *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* (1976).

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## **The Da Vinci Code** (2003) **Dan Brown**

This very controversial thriller by Dan Brown (1964– ) has been extremely popular since its first appearance, in part because of the contentious nature of the material, which suggests that Jesus of Nazareth married and had a child, and that the early Christians deliberately suppressed this information and the role of women in the early church, a tradition that it has not relinquished since. The hero is Robert Langdon, who first appeared in *Angels and Demons* (2000), a scholar whose casual plan to meet with a curator at the Louvre results in his becoming the prime suspect when the man is found murdered, his nude body arranged in a bizarre position mimicking a famous drawing by Leonardo da Vinci.

Langdon's efforts to clear his name require him to solve a series of cryptic puzzles, each of which provides a clue to the next challenge. He is aided in his endeavors by Sophie Neveu, granddaughter of the murdered man, a low-ranking police employee who helps him escape custody. The two become fugitives not only from the authorities, but from the murderer, an albino monk named Silas, whose actions are directed by a mysterious voice on the telephone, the Teacher. They eventually seek the assistance of a British scholar, Lee Teabing, who accompanies them on some of their adventures, but who is eventually revealed to be the mysterious Teacher. Teabing has been double-crossing his own allies in order to secure the prize at the end of the trail—the Holy Grail. In this case, the Grail is not a cup but the body of Mary Magdalene, who

fled the Mideast and died in France after giving birth to Christ's child. Ultimately it is revealed that Sophie is his direct descendant, a fact of which she was unaware.

The story is complicated by the presence of members of the Priory of Sion—a secret society sworn to protect the Grail, the interference of a Roman Catholic cardinal determined to conceal the truth, and the ambitions of an intelligent but unimaginative French police officer who is convinced that Langdon is guilty. Langdon and Neveu defy the usual tradition in thrillers and do not become romantically involved. The resolution includes some surprising revelations despite the transparency of Teabing's involvement. The 2006 film version retained the major plot points but downplayed the more controversial elements.

### **Critical Analysis**

Most of the criticism that has been directed toward this novel has been aimed at its historical accuracy and its characterization of events in the early Christian church, as well as its portrayal of the conservative Roman Catholic organization Opus Dei as a repressive, misogynistic organization. There have been several books published refuting the position taken in Brown's novel, and efforts were made to organize a boycott of the film version.

Leaving aside the theological implications, the novel can be examined just as an adventure story and analyzed in strictly literary terms. Its greatest asset is the number of puzzles that the protagonists are forced to solve in order to advance their quest

to discover the truth. Some of these are particularly ingenious, and the constant references to actual historical events imbues them with a feeling of reality. Brown also does an excellent job of differentiating and individualizing his characters, each of whom has one or more personality quirks that are sufficiently underscored to make them stand out. Only the protagonist, Langdon, seems fairly drab, an innocent forced into a perilous situation despite his reluctance to involve himself, similar to the heroes of various books by ERIC AMBLER. Sophie Neveu, on the other hand, is a feisty young police officer who quite cheerfully disregards the orders of her superiors when she disagrees with them. Silas is not only an albino but a religious fanatic engaged in self-flagellation when he is not killing people. Lee Teabing, the antiquities expert and chief villain, is a colorful, eccentric character whose activities are limited by severe physical frailties. The policeman in charge of the investigation, Bezu Fache, is presented as a larger-than-life character in the early chapters, but whose stature diminishes as Brown begins to reveal his limitations.

Structurally the novel is fast-paced and intricate, designed to rush the reader past any minor inconsistencies. In practice, however, the revelation that Teabing is the mysterious Teacher comes as no surprise, simply because Brown has suggested no other viable candidates. Sophie Neveu's alienation from her grandfather, which originated when she spied on him participating in some sort of pagan ritual, is not consistent with her personality, which is otherwise quick to challenge authority and open to various viewpoints. Some of the puzzle solutions, while ingenious, are so convoluted that it is difficult to believe that they could have been solved so quickly, particularly under conditions of such severe stress.

Considerable criticism of the authenticity of the novel's historical "facts" has been made, some of it disproportionate. It is, after all, a work of fiction, and authors often distort historical fact to advance their stories. However, there are some glaring discrepancies. The creation of the anagram of "Mona Lisa," for example, seems to predate the time when that name was actually applied to the painting, which occurred only after da Vinci's death. The account of the Council of Nicaea also

appears to be at odds with the historical record. Brown's description of practices within Opus Dei have also been challenged, and the Priory of Sion is known to have been a hoax perpetrated in the 20th century.

Brown's first three novels also included puzzles and cryptograms. In *Angels and Demons* (2000), Langdon becomes involved with a plot by the Illuminati, another ancient secret society, to destroy the Vatican. *Digital Fortress* (1998) reflects the author's interest in cryptography, dealing with the potential release of an unbreakable encryption formula. *Deception Point* (2001) is a convoluted thriller involving the creation of an elaborate hoax, an apparent life-bearing meteorite frozen in the Arctic ice. Brown has announced that his next novel, *The Solomon Key*, will feature Langdon again, this time investigating the Freemasons.

### ***Destry Rides Again* (1930) Max Brand**

Frederick Faust (1882–1944) wrote most of his fiction as MAX BRAND, and most of the work under that name was set in the Old West. *Destry Rides Again* is his best-known novel, the basis for three motion pictures and a short-lived television series. Harry Destry lives in the small western town of Wham, where he has never felt any necessity to grow up. His outlook on life is fairly simple. He enjoys fighting with other men and has never been beaten, so he has no idea that his fallen opponents—of which there are many—might hold a grudge.

Destry's problems start when Chester Bent, his rival for the hand of Charlotte Dangerfield, plants evidence on him that suggests he was responsible for a recent robbery. Destry goes on one of his periodic drunken sprees, jokingly confesses when he is arrested and charged with robbery, and then is tried for the crime before a jury that consists of 12 men and a judge, all of whom dislike him. The guilty verdict is a forgone conclusion, but Destry vows to return when his 10-year sentence is complete and have a reckoning with each of them. He does return, released after only six years, but he is a very changed man, meek and soft-spoken. Bent, who is now influential thanks to his use of the stolen money, offers Destry a room in his own house, while still plotting his destruction.

Eventually two of the jurors decide to provoke a fight and kill Destry, who discards the false persona he has constructed and shoots them both. A third juror is so frightened that he accedes to Destry's suggestion that he leave town permanently. Destry tells the sheriff that he is more interested in ruining the other men's lives than in killing them and that he plans to do so without breaking the law. A fourth man is ruined when an incriminating letter is leaked to the newspapers, and a fifth dies while leading a group who try to ambush and kill Destry. His firm belief that Bent is his friend is almost his undoing, because Bent is secretly trying to arrange his death.

The sheriff of Wham shrewdly appoints Destry as a deputy, after which he promptly captures a sixth juror who had robbed a store and attempted to flee. The remaining six regroup, and for the first time Destry suspects the presence of a single directing force, although he still does not realize that it is his supposed friend. Bent then murders one of the remaining men in an effort to implicate Destry, but unfortunately for Bent, there is a witness, a young boy who considers Destry a hero. Bent's final plan, to use Charlotte as bait to lure Destry into a trap, goes awry and the truth is finally revealed.

### Critical Analysis

Even by 1930, the limited range of plots employed in western fiction had been nearly exhausted, and there was little that stood out among the works of most of the writers working in that genre, at least in terms of the stories they told. Brand's familiarity with classical literature stood him in good stead, however, and *Destry* is a simplified retelling of *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1846) by Alexandre Dumas. Harry Destry is framed and sent to prison by a crooked jury then emerges years later seeking revenge. Dumas's hero, who was similarly falsely imprisoned, was physically disguised by the passage of time, while Destry wears a psychological mask, the pretense that he has lost his nerve while imprisoned. Both protagonists are unsophisticated as well as innocent of the charges leading to their imprisonment. In each case, one of the accusers was jealous of the woman who seemed destined to marry the hero, although in this case Charlotte's

disloyalty is short-lived and comes only after his release from prison.

Brand does an eloquent job of capturing the aura of the Old West, a time when "the ability to fight, after all, is perhaps the most prized of all talents in a man." When Charlotte learns that Destry will no longer stand up for himself, she terminates their engagement because "he's *not* a man!" Similarly, several characters exhibit an ambivalent attitude toward Destry, who is both an outsider who shows contempt for society and a courageous figure who struggles against superior numbers and views the law as a challenge to be bested rather than obeyed. "Any crime's better if it takes courage to do it." Even the sheriff recognizes his strengths, which leads to his appointment as a deputy.

The story is told with a deceptively transparent prose, but Brand was always economical with words and often provides a surprisingly large amount of character development and background description in only a few sentences, not unusual in the prose of a writer who was also a poet. Destry in particular has some remarkably sophisticated dialogue for an uneducated ranch hand. "Time has a taste to it . . . like the ozone the pine trees make." There is also considerable subtlety. The sheriff's decision to deputize Destry following a local robbery is revealed as a clever method of trapping Destry into capturing rather than killing the guilty party, another of the jurors. Destry sees through the ruse but only after he has been trapped by his sense of duty.

Many of the characters are simultaneously realistic and larger than life. Destry is the avenging hero, but his interactions with Charlotte and with the young boy who befriends and eventually saves him are subtly rendered. Bent is the devious villain, but he seems to feel genuine affection for Charlotte and is on good terms with his servants as well as his peers. Charlotte is the beautiful siren who beckons to both hero and villain, but she has her own flaw, her abandonment of Destry at the first hint that he might have lost his courage. Destry's ultimate transformation to maturity is the product of two unlikely stimuli. The first is the boy who almost dies while attempting to warn Destry, a sacrifice that kindles his sense of humanity and compassion. The second is the confrontation with Bent, during which Destry is beaten by another man for the first

time in his life: “[H]e was no longer the man he had been!” Destry has learned humility. The novel is one of the enduring classics of western adventure.

### ***Don Quixote*** (1605)

#### **Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra**

The Spanish author whose name is generally shortened to Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616) led an exciting life during which he served as a soldier, was captured by pirates, and served a prison sentence after discrepancies were found in his accounting while serving as a tax collector. Although he wrote other books and plays, it is this one very long novel—originally published in two parts separated by an interval of several years—for which he is remembered.

The protagonist is Alonso Quixano, a man who has become so obsessed with tales of high adventure that he has built a new personality for himself in which he is a knight errant in search of adventure. He names himself Don Quixote de la Mancha, enlists the aid of his neighbor, Sancho Panza, and sets out to perform noble deeds in order to impress his imaginary lady, Dulcinea. His fascination with chivalry is the result of having read too many stories of the exploits of noble knights, which he believes to be true accounts. Quixote sets out on a broken-down horse, wearing an ancient suit of armor that he has patched up into some resemblance of its former glory.

His initial adventures are effectively farcical. He interprets elements of his environment to suit his fantasy. An inn becomes a castle; a casual remark is interpreted as a challenge to his honor; and an insignificant fight becomes a major battle. Eventually he is forcibly returned to his home, where his family, servants, and several others contrive to keep him from wandering. They also remove his books, believing these to be the cause of his problem. Quixote manages to find one sympathetic if not particularly bright neighbor, Sancho Panza, and recruits him as his squire, promising great honors in return for his service. Together they engineer his escape and experience a subsequent series of adventures as they travel across Spain. The mental transformations continue. A simple herdsman is changed by imagination into a dwarf, and bar maidens become

lovely princesses, at least through the filter of Don Quixote’s distorted senses.

Although Quixote is generally unsuccessful in his mock adventures, he does not lose heart until very late in the story, and the very intensity of his belief carries Sancho Panza along. During the second half of the novel, Quixote slowly begins to accept the world the way it is, perhaps because he has learned from his experiences, or perhaps because during the 10 years that passed between the publication of the two original volumes, Cervantes had become less playful. Quixote eventually dies, weary and disillusioned.

#### **Critical Analysis**

The novel—probably the most important single work of fiction produced in Spain—is presented as a story told to the narrator, a device which is still used in contemporary fiction. The manuscript was supposedly found in an old trunk and has only recently been translated. The plot consists of a series of discrete episodes, many of which can be read independently. Although the first half is clearly meant to be humorous, there are serious themes as well, particularly those dealing with the lies people tell themselves in order to make life more bearable, and the consequences of deceiving others. These become much more apparent in the second half, ending with Quixote’s complete disillusionment.

Quixote is clearly out of touch with reality, while Sancho Panza may suffer from the opposite malady, so burdened with the trials and tribulations of life that he can no longer appreciate the more pleasant side. He is not an imaginative or well-educated man and is largely incapable of appreciating the intellectual interests that engage his master. Quixote’s eccentric view of reality has a hint of greatness in it, however, and that is what attracts Sancho Panza, who perhaps wishes that he could believe in such a simple, sensible world. Although he joins Quixote initially in hopes of receiving a substantial reward, he develops a positive affection for his companion by the end of the novel.

Many of the proper names support the pervasive humor, some of them puns that are not obvious to English-speaking readers. Dulcinea, for example, refers to an illusion. Quixote’s early adventures are quickly eclipsed by those he experiences with

Sancho Panza, and the dialogue between the two is intricate and amusing. The second half of the novel, particularly the final chapters, has a very different tone. Quixote has been deceived by even his closest friend. His illusions are replaced by sadness, and eventually he dies, depressed and frustrated. In large part his problems arise from attempts to impose a simple interpretation on a complex problem, construing convoluted real-life situations in terms of the simplistic situations found in chivalric fiction, which is itself shown to be shallow and unrealistic.

The novel has given the world at least two familiar terms. *Quixotic* quests are romantic but unrealistic. The phrase *tilting at windmills* refers to Don Quixote's attack against a group of windmills, which he sees as enemies, and the phrase indicates an attempt to confront an imaginary opponent. *Don Quixote* anticipated many aspects of the modern novel, and Cervantes was one of the first writers to actually consider the psychology of his characters.

Although Quixote is clearly deluded, the reader is likely to be sympathetic to his aspirations, and the book suggests that an individual may be in touch with a reality separate and perhaps even superior to the reality experienced by the majority.

Although the book made Cervantes internationally famous during his lifetime, it did not make him rich. *Don Quixote* has proven to be influential not just in literature but as an inspiration for artists and composers. Writers including Tennessee Williams, Salman Rushdie, Charles Dickens, and Jorge Luis Borges have included references to the novel in their own work. Maurice Ravel and Richard Strauss have written music inspired in part by Cervantes. Adaptations include *Man of La Mancha* (1965), a successful Broadway musical. The description of life in 17th-century Spain is extremely detailed and at times interesting in itself, although many of the references will be obscure to modern readers.

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## ***The Eagle Has Landed*** (1975) **Jack Higgins**

This is the best-known adventure novel by English author JACK HIGGINS (1929– ), who has also written under the names Harry Patterson, Hugh Marlowe, Martin Fallon, and James Graham, although he has used his own name exclusively since 1979. Higgins specializes in international intrigue and adventure and often makes use of unusual, even flawed heroes. His work can be compared to that of HAMMOND INNES and ALISTAIR MacLEAN, although he is inclined toward plots that involve more overt violence.

The story begins with Jack Higgins, or a fictional version of himself, discovering a hidden tombstone in a remote English village, suggesting that a group of German paratroopers were buried there in 1943. His inquiries are met with hostility until he finally finds someone who will tell him the story. The frame story then disappears, and we see the earlier events in Nazi Germany—which obviously would be unknown to the supposed narrator—during which Adolf Hitler orders his subordinates to plan the abduction of Winston Churchill. They consider it a pointless exercise but are surprised to find what appears to be a viable plan, involving the infiltration of a small group of soldiers into a remote village where Churchill is scheduled to visit.

Although the German leadership is divided, Himmler pushes the plan. In order to succeed, they need a loyal German who can pose as an English soldier, and their most viable choice is Kurt Steiner,

recently disgraced and court-martialed for helping a Jewish prisoner escape. Although they have reservations about his loyalty, the recent arrest of his father on a treason charge provides leverage. An Irish nationalist is enlisted in their cause and is sent to establish himself in the area well in advance and to procure the necessary equipment. A Boer woman living in the area has already proven herself to be a competent and reliable agent for German intelligence.

The Irishman, Liam Devlin, proves to be the weak link in the plot despite his apparent competence. He has fallen in love with a young local girl who discovers that he is involved in something clandestine but assumes that he is active in the black market. More seriously, he is betrayed by a local criminal boss. Although Liam kills the latter, he leaves the man's brother alive, and the brother goes to the police and identifies Liam from pictures of prominent IRA terrorists, which sets off an immediate alarm. Their cover is completely blown when one of the Germans dies in the process of saving two children who have fallen into the river and the uniform he wears under his disguise is exposed.

Their situation begins to deteriorate rapidly. They are forced to take the entire village hostage, only a few dozen people, but two women escape, one of whom alerts a nearby American unit. A renegade Englishman who was forced upon the unit begins to swagger and nearly precipitates a panic, while in London the police have identified Liam,

and two officers are en route to arrest him. When a glory-seeking American officer precipitates a blood-bath, only Liam, Steiner, and one other man escape. Steiner then makes a last, doomed effort to complete his mission, while Liam is content to leave.

### Critical Analysis

*The Eagle Has Landed* is an example of a form often referred to as a “secret history,” that is, it involves actual historical events or personages but deals with a significant situation or series of actions that are not part of the historical record, suggesting that the truth has been suppressed for some reason, either intentionally or because the information was lost. This is in contrast to “alternate history” stories in which the significant event actually moved history in a different direction than the one we know.

One of the strongest elements in the novel is the portrayal of Kurt Steiner, a patriotic German who nonetheless disagrees with the choices his leaders have made. Steiner is loyal to his homeland, but despises what his government is doing, which leaves him in an impossible dilemma. The conflict between loyalty and personal ethics is ideal for developing a character whose future choices the author wishes to conceal from the reader. Higgins also does an excellent job of portraying the situation in Germany in the waning days of the war—the insane optimism, the dichotomy between those who knew the war was lost and those who still thought that Germany was invincible. The officer who convinces Steiner to lead the mission has as little choice in the matter as Steiner himself. “We’re all up the same dark alley looking for a way out.”

Almost all of the people directly involved in the plot against Churchill, with the exception of Hitler and Himmler, are described in sympathetic terms, a particularly effective method of suggesting the insanity of warfare. The Irish separatist who acts as their advance agent is also antifascist, and his intervention to help a young woman who is being assaulted is an automatic response even though it puts their mission in jeopardy. Steiner’s soldiers are all loyal to him personally and shared in his original fall from grace. Even the woman spying for the Germans is motivated by the cruel treatment she and her family received from the British in the past rather than because of any affection for

Germany. Steiner openly asserts that “war is only a matter of perspective” and that any of them might have been equally committed to the other side if circumstances had been different. Later, when the plane that delivers them to England is shot down by its own side, the pilot wonders just who it is that he is supposed to be fighting.

Ultimately, Steiner realizes that in war, or life in general, people are all subject to forces larger than themselves, and that even free will may be partly illusion. He asks himself if people can ever really control the game or “does the game possess you?” His sense of duty drives him to seek out and assassinate Churchill even against impossible odds, and he is himself killed on the verge of success—although Higgins revealed that he was not really dead in a sequel, *The Eagle Has Flown* (1985). Liam Devlin returned in that and two other novels. A final piece of clever irony is that it was not the real Winston Churchill but one of his doubles who was in danger, and that even if the mission had accomplished its goal, it would have been of little use as propaganda. The impressive 1976 film version is a reasonably loyal translation to the screen, though considerably compressed.

### espionage

Spy stories often straddle the border between the adventure story and the detective or mystery novel. At one extreme are the brash, action-filled adventures of JAMES BOND and his imitators, while at the other we find the more restrained but no less thrilling works of ERIC AMBLER and John le Carré’s *The SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD* (1963). Although there is almost always some degree of mystery involved in spy stories, such as the problem of identifying a foreign agent among several apparently innocent characters or locating a missing document, most have a stronger element of adventure than is found in crime and detective fiction. In a detective story the goal is to unmask the villain; spy stories usually require that the villain be apprehended or foiled in some more active manner. Detectives are almost never in physical danger themselves and may not even appear in the story until the crime itself is already complete, but the protagonists of spy novels are almost always

in jeopardy until the plot is completely resolved. Mystery novels tend to be confined to a single, contained setting while spy novels may range across multiple continents. The protagonists of spy stories are generally more active than their counterparts in the mystery field, and questions of motive are rarely involved.

The earliest noteworthy novel of espionage is probably *The Spy* (1821) by James Fenimore Cooper, in which a mysterious stranger is assumed to be either an emissary from General Washington or a British secret agent. Other novels such as *The SCARLET PIMPERNEL* (1905) by the Baroness Orczy and *SCARAMOUCHE* (1921) by Rafael Sabatini incorporated elements of political intrigue in their plots, but it was not until *The RIDDLE OF THE SANDS* (1903) by Robert Erskine Childers that the modern spy story began to emerge. Childers was writing in the tradition of the future war novel, which flourished in England in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, predicting the invasion of the British Isles by various other European powers, most commonly as in this case Germany. Unlike most of his contemporaries Childers concentrated on the gathering of intelligence about an imminent attack rather than the conflict itself, thus anticipating the modern novel of international espionage. Although no longer widely read, it is one of the most influential pieces of fiction of its time.

Joseph Conrad's *The SECRET AGENT* (1907) was a much more skillfully written story and is certainly better known, but writers such as E. Phillips Oppenheim and William Le Queux developed the form, writing dozens of now forgotten adventures involving international intrigue and shadowy intelligence operatives. Some of their plots are quite ingenious, but their prose was limited and seems awkward by contemporary standards. Their many books are now very difficult to find. John Buchan's *The THIRTY-NINE STEPS* (1915) and *GREENMANTLE* (1916) are classic spy novels that combined a well-conceived plot with strong characters and intelligent prose. It was not uncommon for well-respected mainstream writers to try their hands at spy thrillers, including Graham Greene, JOHN P. MARQUAND, and W. Somerset Maugham, the last of whom actually worked as an intelligence operative. Greene also wrote one of the

most effective parodies of the form, *Our Man in Havana* (1959).

The cold war following World War II provided fertile ground for spy stories, which began to evolve into two separate branches, romantic and realistic. The most famous example of the first is Ian Fleming's James Bond, a British secret agent who combined ruthless efficiency with a flamboyant style in a series of romantic adventures that pitted him against SMERSH, a Soviet intelligence agency, as well as several international criminals. The success of the Bond stories and films inspired many imitators. The Matt Helm series by DONALD HAMILTON, the Commander Shaw novels by Philip McCutchan, and the Modesty Blaise comic strip and novels by PETER O'DONNELL all owe their inspiration at least in part to Fleming's imagination. Films and television shows in the Bond tradition, or making fun of it, include *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Get Smart*, *I, Spy*, *Danger Man*, the Austin Powers and *Our Man Flint* movie series, and *24*.

The second branch of spy fiction strives for more realistic, grittier depictions. They commonly feature antiheroes, that is, less than entirely admirable characters who succeed, or sometimes fail, because of or despite their personal shortcomings. They can either be broken or flawed by some weakness, or simply be innocent individuals thrown into a dangerous situation against their will and perhaps beyond their understanding. Eric Ambler is among the most consistently successful of these writers, as well as John le Carré, whose *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) is one of the most important spy novels of all time, and Len Deighton, whose Harry Palmer is a criminal impressed into intelligence work.

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, many spy novelists put greater emphasis on technological developments, and the hero's opposition is more likely to be a sinister multinational corporation, a terrorist group, or a criminal conspiracy than a foreign government. Most of Robert Ludlum's novels fall into this category, as do those by Tom Clancy, Clive Cussler, and Craig Thomas. Recent trends suggest that counterterrorism will be a major theme in spy fiction for the foreseeable future. Other spy novelists of note include Desmond Bagley, William F. Buckley Jr., F. Van

Wyck Mason, Manning Coles, Brian Cleeve, Ken Follett, Frederick Forsyth, Michael Gilbert, Adam Hall, JACK HIGGINS, Edward S. Aarons, Philip Atlee, and DENNIS WHEATLEY. Some MEN'S ADVENTURE SERIES are primarily spy stories, including the

Death Merchant series by Joseph Rosenberger and the Phoenix Force series by Don Pendleton and others, although in most cases the element of espionage is simply an excuse for a succession of violent action sequences.

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## fantasy adventures

There is such a large proportion of fantasy fiction that are primarily adventure stories that one could write an entire book describing them without exhausting the possibilities within the genre. This discussion will be a much briefer survey covering the most frequently used fantasy adventure motifs and suggesting some of the best writers working in each area of interest. The vast majority of fantasy published during the past two decades has fallen into two broad categories, generally but not universally referred to by the terms *high fantasy* and *sword and sorcery*. The two terms are not, however, either precise or mutually exclusive, and elements from each can often be found mixed with the other. Sword and sorcery is generally more explicitly adventure fiction, but almost all high fantasy involves strong elements of danger and physical conflict.

High fantasy is almost always set within a society that strongly resembles those of medieval or feudal Europe. There are usually kings and queens, castles, wizards or sorcerers, and magic is generally an important element in the plot. Sometimes elves or other races share the world with humans, and in many cases dragons, unicorns, and other mythological creatures can also be found. Except in rare cases, technology is at a level considerably earlier than the Industrial Revolution, and government is by some form of aristocracy, usually with royalty. Although there may be dissatisfaction with the current rulers, there is almost never agitation for democracy, socialism, or any other political system.

Magic is usually neutral, that is, it is neither good nor evil, though it can be used for good or evil purposes. There may be strict rules about how the magic works, or no discernible rules at all. In some cases magic is considered a valuable talent; in others it is a crime and practitioners are outlawed. The best known example is the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien, which includes such nonhuman races as orcs and goblins. Although much of high fantasy restricts itself to human characters and often closely resembles historical fiction, the social systems and many other plot elements generally follow Tolkien's pattern. The conflict in high fantasy frequently involves less adventurous matters such as political intrigues and power struggles, but there is almost invariably a strong element of adventure as well, captures and escapes, perilous journeys, battles between individuals or armies, malicious spells, or malevolent creatures. Among the most popular writers working in this area are George R. R. Martin, Mercedes Lackey, Robert Jordan, L. E. Modesitt Jr., Raymond Feist, Jennifer Fallon, and Katharine Kerr.

A few high fantasies make use of actual historical settings. These are usually set in early Europe, Victorian England, or in the ancient Mediterranean region. Some of the best historical fantasy has been written by Sara Douglass, David Gemmell, Thomas Burnett Swann, and Thomas Harlan. Mideastern and Asian fantasies are less common and are almost always set in an alternate world that has the culture and appearance

of ancient Japan or the eastern Mediterranean, but little if any of the same history. A sampling of the best oriental fantasies would include books by Barry Hughart, Tim Lukeman, Kara Dalkey, Ernest Bramah, and Jessica Amanda Salmonson.

The single largest subset of historical fantasy is the ARTHURIAN ADVENTURE involving King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Other fantasy with historical settings involve Greek or Roman or Norse legends, and Irish or Celtic mythology. Patrick Adkins, Thomas Burnett Swann, Mickey Zucker Reichert, and Poul Anderson have all produced outstanding work that incorporates actual mythology. The Old West has also been used as a fantasy setting by a number of writers, including Joe Lansdale, Mark Sumner, Elizabeth Ann Scarborough, and MAX BRAND. One other significant branch of historical fantasy is the time travel romance, in most of which a woman from current time is magically sent back to some historical period where she survives a series of adventures before finding true love. The most notable examples of this are by Diana Gabaldon and R. Garcia y Robertson. Historical fantasy has the advantage of being set in a world about which readers are likely to know a great deal already, but most genre writers prefer the greater creative freedom provided by a totally imaginary world.

Sword and sorcery is more likely to be set in a relatively primitive society, among nomadic clans or simple tribesmen. The most famous name in sword and sorcery is ROBERT E. HOWARD, creator of Conan and other rugged heroes who overcome their enemies, magical and mundane, through swordplay and other physical talents, but who rarely use magic themselves. Although Howard and many of his imitators featured heroes who were more likely to settle problems with their fists than with their minds, it should not be assumed that the stories are equally unsophisticated. The presence of magic, usually associated with some evil entity, is even more prevalent in sword and sorcery than in high fantasy, and the level of technology is frequently lower. Adventure and violent action are much more important elements, and the story is focused on a single protagonist or a small group of characters. Good examples of sword and sorcery can be found in the work of Robert E. Howard, Fritz Leiber, David

Gemmell, Andrew J. Offutt, L. Sprague de Camp, and the early novels of Michael Moorcock.

An increasingly popular subset of the genre is the urban fantasy, whose best known practitioner is Laurell Hamilton, author of the Anita Blake series. These stories are set in the contemporary world, usually with urban settings and strong female protagonists, and often borrow ideas from the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The existence of mythical creatures—most frequently vampires and werewolves—is usually a secret hidden from all except those who have somehow learned that humans are not alone in the world. These creatures may be either good or evil and often gather in clans or tribes to fight one another. Some urban fantasies involve the same basic situations but are set in an alternate version of the world where everyone knows about supernatural creatures, who have at least to some extent been integrated into society. The leading writers in this genre include Charlene Harris, Yasmine Galenorn, Kat Richardson, and Rob Thurman.

Young adult fantasy adventures follow much the same pattern, but the Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling stand out because they are an interesting mixture of forms. The scenes in contemporary England resemble urban fantasy, while those at Hogwarts are closer to high fantasy, though without the royalty. The Potter books are actually more reminiscent of the English schoolboy novel than of traditional fantasy, although with a much higher component of adventure. Other young adult fantasy authors worth pursuing include Diana Wynne Jones, William Nicholson, Philip Pullman, and Ridley Pearson writing with Dave Barry. Humorous fantasy rarely involves any serious adventure, but Piers Anthony and Terry Pratchett are exceptions to the rule, often using quests and perilous journeys in their novels of Xanth and Discworld respectively.

Lost world fantasy is another form that has dropped in popularity, in large part because there are no longer any significant unexplored areas of the world to use as settings, rendering such stories more or less implausible. Some authors work around the problem by setting their stories in the ancient world, frequently one in which Atlantis or Lemuria really existed. Marion Zimmer Bradley and Jane Gaskell each wrote several novels along these lines.

More traditional lost world adventures include *GREEN MANSIONS* (1904) by W. H. Hudson, *KING SOLOMON'S MINES* (1885) by H. Rider Haggard, and most of the novels by A. Merritt.

The two most common sources of adventure in fantasy are quests and warfare. The quest is usually a search for a magical item that has some significance either as a symbol or as a source of power. Tolkien's Ring trilogy is an inverted quest in which the perilous journey is designed to dispose of rather than acquire the artifact, but the effect is the same. The object is frequently a magical sword or talisman, but might also be a human being, a sign of office, or some other item or piece of knowledge. Fantasy warfare usually takes two forms, the invasion and the rebellion. In the former a presumably benevolent kingdom or city is menaced by an outside force, which may consist of barbarian tribes, a rival nation or city, or an inhuman race. In many cases the invaders are led or at least assisted by an evil sorcerer. The rebellion story almost always involves a usurped throne rather than a legitimate but evil ruler. The true heir or some combination of rebels effects a restoration or transition to a more benevolent ruler.

Yet another subdivision of fantasy involves animals exclusively or as major characters. The protagonists are generally but not always described as if they were human beings, and their adventures are essentially the same as those of characters in other fantasy novels. Notable examples of this include *WATERSHIP DOWN* (1972) by Richard Adams and *Duncton Wood* (1980) by William Horwood. Animal fantasies have been in general decline in recent years, but the Redwall series by Brian Jacques is a notable exception, having reached almost 20 volumes. Various animals have been popular in fantasy novels including horses, birds, wolves, and even moles, but the most common is the cat.

Horror or dark fantasy is usually more concerned with atmosphere and suspense than adventure, but a loosely defined subcategory there is sometimes called "occult adventure." This was a much more popular form in the past than it is now. Writers such as DENNIS WHEATLEY and Seabury Quinn specialized in the occult adventure and were well known and widely read in their time. Modern practitioners include F. Paul Wilson, Mark

Frost, and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, the latter of whom mixes dark fantasy—her recurring hero is a nonevil vampire who has lived for centuries—with historical fiction. Other horror writers who often incorporate physical adventure into their novels include Graham Masterton, Dean R. Koontz, Robert McCammon, and William Hope Hodgson.

Many of the best fantasy adventure writers are more difficult to categorize. Among those worth special mention are China Mieville, Ian R. MacLeod, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Steph Swainston, Dave Duncan, and Mary Gentle. Classic fantasy novels of high adventure include *The Worm Ouroboros* (1922) by E. R. Eddison, *Figures of Earth* (1921) by James Branch Cabell, and many of the short stories of Lord Dunsany. On a less literary plane several shared world series—all based on role-playing game systems—have evolved into elaborate series of adventure stories, including the Dragonlance and Forgotten Realms series, Shadowrun, and Warhammer.

### **First Blood** (1972) **David Morrell**

Canadian author David Morrell (1943– ) has written more than a dozen novels of high adventure including *Creepers* (2005), a novel of urban spelunking, and its sequel, *Scavenger* (2007), but he is undoubtedly best known for his first novel, *First Blood*, which was the basis for the 1982 film and which introduced the character Rambo. Readers who have seen the movie first are likely to be very surprised at how little it resembles the novel.

Rambo is a young man with long hair, a Vietnam vet with no job and almost no money, a drifter who has been hustled out of a series of towns by policemen who are wary of his appearance. When he reaches the town of Hope, the local sheriff gives him a polite but firm push onward, but this time Rambo is determined to leave of his own volition, returning twice despite orders to the contrary. The confrontation escalates with neither man willing to budge, and Rambo is eventually arrested for vagrancy. While being processed at the police station, Rambo is troubled by phobias he developed while being tortured by Vietcong troops, and he snaps, killing one officer and seriously wounding another before escaping on a motorcycle. Sheriff

Teasle leads a search party, determined to capture the fugitive even if he has to venture outside his own jurisdiction to do so.

With a team of dogs and a helicopter, Teasle expects no difficulty tracking Rambo even in the mountains to which he has fled, but he does not know that his quarry has armed himself with a hunting rifle. After several exciting chase sequences, Rambo is brought to bay, but he turns the tables, causing the helicopter to crash, thereby killing two of his pursuers. It is only after he is fully committed that Teasle learns that Rambo is an ex-Green Beret who won the Congressional Medal of Honor and who is an expert commando. The pursuit continues with more lives lost, after which Rambo evades the cordon and returns to wreak further havoc in town before his final confrontation with Teasle leaves both him and the sheriff dead.

### Critical Analysis

Rambo is an excellent example of the sympathetic monster, a character for whom one can feel deep sympathy even while knowing that his actions have made his destruction necessary. Morrell carefully engages sympathy before revealing the other side of Rambo's personality. He has obviously been damaged by the war psychologically as well as physically. He is clearly the underdog—outnumbered by hundreds of police and national guardsmen, and his contention that he has a perfect right to visit the town without being harassed by the police is reasonable. He even admits that Sheriff Teasle was polite and fair and convinces himself that he is making a point rather than trying to be provocative. The dichotomy in Rambo's character is emphasized when he conducts an interior dialogue, arguing both sides of an issue before making his decision.

Only after he has been arrested is his darker side revealed—he has assaulted and killed people in the recent past, never without some reason he considers valid but clearly indicating that he has lost the usual societal constraints against taking human life. He has been trained to kill by the military and was told that it was right to slaughter his enemies in Vietnam; that makes it difficult for him to recognize why the same logic might not hold true for his enemies back home. Teasle is also a man with a distinguished military career and a

stubborn streak that makes the two of them natural antagonists. But what initially looks like a struggle between law and order and anarchy is more complicated than it seems because Rambo is as much a product of his society as is Teasle. After Rambo has killed more than a dozen men and is now clearly a menace, Morrell nudges the reader's emotions in the opposite direction, providing details about Rambo's childhood, during which he was treated abusively by his father and ignored by the rest of the world. More recently he has been effectively abandoned by the country for which he endured torture and deprivation. The natural tendency to favor the underdog colors the mix, and the reader is left with contradictory feelings about what inevitably must follow, an ending that is necessarily tragic.

The theme is explicitly stated during a conversation between Teasle and Captain Trautman, a military officer who arrives as a consultant, and who was involved in Rambo's commando training program. Trautman charges Teasle with supporting a system that is designed to create monsters like Rambo who are taught to kill without a moment of regret. "You tolerate a system that lets others do it for you." Rambo was treated as little more than a weapon, his training confined to martial skills, and that left him with no profession once he left the service. It is Trautman, the professional soldier, who insists that no one in their right mind would like the military, that it is at best a necessary evil. There is also a clear implication that neither Rambo nor Teasle had free will. They were fated to have this confrontation, and Rambo realizes that if he could go back in time to when it all started, nothing would happen any differently the second time. It is not a question of whether or not he could have controlled himself, but whether or not he wanted to do so.

The 1982 film version undercuts the theme of the novel by making Rambo more heroic and the police the villains. Rambo survives and is arrested, but not for murder. In the film version only one police officer dies, almost by accident, and contrary to the novel Teasle also survives. Morrell also did the novelization of the second Rambo movie, *Rambo: First Blood Part Two* (1985), which provides details about Rambo's previous military career. The fourth movie in the series was released in 2008.

**Forester, C. S.** (1899–1966)

Cecil Scott Forester was actually the pseudonym of Cecil Louis Troughton Smith, an English writer of mysteries, stories set against the backdrop of World War II, and several historical adventures, although he is best known for the series of books and shorter works that became the saga of Horatio Hornblower. These follow the career of a young ensign in the British navy during the Napoleonic Wars who rises through the ranks after a series of successes and failures in his professional life that are mirrored by similar rises and falls in his personal relations. The books were written over the course of three decades and not in chronological order. Forester was working on another installment at the time of his death.

Chronologically the first book is actually a collection of short stories, *Mr. Midshipman Hornblower* (1950), which cover his life from his entry into the navy as a young boy through his promotion to lieutenant. “The Duchess and the Devil” is particularly effective. He is briefly a prisoner of war during a conflict with Spain and actually receives his commission while still a captive. *Lieutenant Hornblower* (1952) is more concerned with the relationships among the officers aboard a military vessel, with Hornblower serving under an intense and perhaps unbalanced captain. The conflict between his sense of duty and his opinions about the treatment of the crew and other related matters becomes pivotal, the strain increased by his tendency to doubt his own opinions. Due to the reduction in pay that follows the end of hostilities, he supports himself for a time by gambling. In *Hornblower and the Hotspur* (1962), he is again serving at sea, this time in the English Channel, which affords him an opportunity to get married. He then has various adventures when war with Napoleon resumes, distinguishing himself on more than one occasion. The contrast between his experiences as a naval officer and his family life is particularly engaging. *Hornblower and the Crisis* (1967) is an unfinished novel plus a few miscellaneous short stories.

*Hornblower and the Atropos* (1963) is the lightest in tone, often very funny, with Hornblower searching for buried treasure and outwitting the Turks in a series of clashes and special missions. *Beat to Quarters* (1937, also published as *The Happy Return*) was actually the first book written.

Hornblower, recently promoted to command of his own warship, travels to the Pacific and gets involved in Spanish colonial politics. *Ship of the Line* (1938) shifts the action to the Mediterranean, and *Flying Colors* (1938) takes him to France for one the most uncharacteristic of the adventures, which takes place almost entirely on land. It also shows Hornblower at his worst, inconsiderate of others and with too high a regard for his own accomplishments and abilities.

*Commodore Hornblower* (1945, also published as *The Commodore*) moves forward in time to describe a middle-aged Hornblower, now participating in a naval engagement in the Baltic Sea. The passage of time has smoothed some of his rough edges, and he makes more of an effort to keep an open mind. He also has much more self-confidence, as well as a hint of cynicism. In *Lord Hornblower* (1946) he once again spends more time on shore than at sea. His marriage begins to disintegrate, and an old affair is resumed. *Hornblower in the West Indies* (1958) generally revolves around Hornblower’s romantic troubles and describes a series of episodic adventures late in his life.

The best of Forester’s non-Hornblower adventure stories is *The AFRICAN QUEEN* (1935), in which two people negotiate a hazardous waterway in Central Africa in an effort to attack a German gunship. *The Gun* (1933) has a somewhat similar plot. The story takes place during Napoleon’s war with Spain. The protagonists have the unenviable job of transporting a cannon across impossible territory in order to use it in a pivotal battle. The novel was filmed as *The Pride and the Passion* (1957). *To the Indies* (1940) takes place during the early colonization of the Americas. A man who defied the Spanish Inquisition endures a shipwreck and other misfortunes. *The Sky and the Forest* (1948) is an adventure among the natives of the Congo. *The Captain from Connecticut* (1941) chronicles the exploits of Josiah Peabody, captain of an American frigate during the War of 1812. *Rifleman Dodd* (1932, also published as *Death to the French*) is set during the Napoleonic wars. Several stories about adventures during World War II were collected as *Gold from Crete* (1971). This body of high-quality work has unfortunately largely been overshadowed by the Hornblower saga.

### **Critical Analysis**

The Hornblower novels became the benchmark against which all similar stories of life at sea are inevitably measured. Such stories include series by Alexander Kent, Dan Parkinson, and most notably PATRICK O'BRIAN, the only writer specializing in sea stories who approaches Forester's stature. The saga was also loosely the inspiration for the Commodore Grimes series by A. Bertram Chandler and the Nicholas Seafort novels by David Feintuch, both of which transplanted the seagoing chronicles into outer space.

Hornblower is a complex character who constantly experiences doubts about his actions and his worthiness, even at times his loyalty to the Crown. His introverted nature often isolates him from his fellow officers as well as the women he loves, and after he is promoted to a command position, the artificial barriers imposed by rank and protocol aggravate the situation. His various adventures are not strictly speaking based on any single historical figure, but they were apparently inspired by events in the lives of several actual naval officers.

Although Forester is sometimes critical of aspects of the command structure in the British Navy of the period, it is obvious that he also admires the efficiency and effectiveness that made

England for a time the greatest naval power in the world. It was almost certainly the discipline and professionalism of the British Navy that made them such an effective force during wartime. While Hornblower is in many ways an exemplary officer, judicious when it is necessary to make important decisions, ingenious in his methods, and fair to his subordinates, he is less successful as a man. He is disloyal to his wife, distant from those who love him, and unhappy through much of his life. Although Hornblower's flaws are preexisting, the pressures of command exacerbate them.

There is a clear progression in the development of the character from book to book when read chronologically. Although Hornblower's career is for the most part a steady rise through the ranks, his personal life alternates between highs and lows that are often unrelated to his professional success. There are some discrepancies in details about his personal history, however, resulting from adjustments Forester made in the books written after 1950, which generally were designed to describe the early part of his career that had only been alluded to in previous volumes. The series provides an in-depth portrait of a man, but it also describes an age and a way of life in meticulous detail.

# G

## ***The Great Train Robbery*** (1975)

**Michael Crichton**

Although almost every novel by Michael Crichton (1942– ) contains at least some element of adventure, in most cases these are secondary to other facets of the story, such as speculation about the future of science in *Jurassic Park* (1990) and *Prey* (2002), or sinister intrigue as in *Disclosure* (1994) and *Airframe* (1996). Two other novels, *Congo* (1980) and *The Lost World* (1995), plus the historical novel *Eaters of the Dead* (1976) are more properly adventure stories, but Crichton also wrote this fictionalized account of actual historic events, the robbery of an English train in 1855. Although *The Great Train Robbery* appeared early in his career, it remains one of his most interesting novels and, like TRUE-LIFE ADVENTURES, it demonstrates that exciting events are not confined to fiction.

The early stages of the scheme to steal a shipment of gold bullion are laid out in a protracted and painstaking account. One step involves securing wax impressions of the four keys needed to open the two safes in which the gold is to be shipped by rail, after which it is to be loaded on a ship and taken to France. It is imperative that no one realizes the keys have been compromised because this would result in a new set of locks. The keys themselves are kept in three separate locations for security reasons. The copies are acquired in part because the leader of the gang, Edward Pierce, ingratiates himself with the family and friends of a prominent banker by means of an elaborate series of ruses. Pierce also obtains the assistance of a skilled burglar, a former chim-

ney sweep presently held in Newgate Prison, who is freed in a daring prison break, and a complete, duplicate set of keys is now in Pierce's possession.

Although it is not always clear how many of the complications are based on fact and how many originate in the author's imagination, it is inevitable that such a complex operation would run into difficulties. The security procedures at the railroad office where two of the keys are kept are completely altered just as the gang members are about to stage their clandestine visit, requiring a complete revision of the original plan. The schedule of gold shipments is also changed, and the two safes are sent for maintenance, suggesting the possibility that they might be fitted with new locks. A dangerous chance encounter with one of the banker's relatives is deftly sidestepped, but when one of the minor players turns informer, the problem is less easily dealt with, even though the informer did not know the specific target of the heist. Through artifice, bribery, and some good luck, the conspirators overcome every obstacle set in their path. Even when the police hear rumors that something major is being planned, Pierce uses a nice piece of misdirection to send them looking in the wrong direction.

Despite all of the careful planning, the railroad changes security procedures again at the last minute, responding to the theft of some rare wine from another train—which turns out to have been an unrelated hoax. Pierce is forced to improvise and, despite some unnerving setbacks, their efforts are successful. They replace the gold with lead shot and throw the bullion from the train to be retrieved by

a colleague. It appears that they have committed the perfect crime.

### Critical Analysis

Historical fiction that is closely based on actual events requires that the writer thoroughly research not only the actual incident but also the cultural and political background of the time and place where the story takes place. The main variation from true adventure stories is that the author—who was obviously not personally involved in the original incident—is free to interpolate information that is not known, even to alter facts when necessary to the plot. Crichton has reviewed not only the records of the actual trial, but also the culture of the mid-Victorian age, paying particular attention to the impact of the railroads, which transformed England dramatically during that period. It is not obvious why he chose to alter the names of some of the characters. Although the major facts are known, Crichton has invented much of the detail to create a more interesting story. He also chose to emphasize the historical setting by using 19th-century slang expressions in the narration as well as in the dialogue.

From the outset readers know that the criminals will eventually be caught since there are frequent references to their trial. That does not, however, lessen the dramatic effect of the ingenious and painstaking steps taken by Pierce, a criminal genius, in preparing the heist. It is almost by chance that his well-laid plans are disrupted, and even then only after the robbery itself has succeeded. Pierce's plan was so effective that it was not known for more than a month, at which point the substitution had been made, on the train, at sea, or upon arrival in France. Some of his associates were never captured, and the gold itself was never recovered. In real life Pierce was sent to prison, although Crichton arranges for him to escape in the closing pages of his novel.

It is common in caper stories to portray the major characters in at least partially sympathetic terms, playing on the popularity of the romantic outlaw—ROBIN HOOD, for example—and eliciting the reader's admiration for the clever scheme concocted by the protagonists. Although Crichton follows this pattern his characters are presented in very neutral, even unsympathetic terms. Other than Pierce himself, the conspirators are almost

interchangeable, and even in his case readers never see more than the outer façade of his personality. Crichton provides no personal history for any of the conspirators, and the presentation is oddly flat and unemotional at times. If this had been a straightforward account, that would make more sense, but since he has altered and fabricated many of the events he describes, it is less obvious why he chose not to develop his characters as well.

Crichton interrupts the narrative with several short but informative descriptions of some facet of Victorian society. Each of these is designed to explain or enhance the scenes that follow, and together they provide an interesting and informative look at the London underworld of the period, as well as glimpses into other oddities such as the pervading fear of premature burial and the contradictory attitudes about animal baiting. The novel became a movie in 1979.

### *Green Mansions* (1904) W. H. Hudson

William Henry Hudson (1841–1922) was an Argentinean writer whose parents settled there after emigrating from the United States. Hudson in turn spent most of his adult life in England. By profession he was a naturalist specializing in ornithology, and he wrote a considerable body of nonfiction, as well as several novels, of which this is his single most famous work.

*Green Mansions* is the story of Mr. Abel, described in the prologue as a Venezuelan living in British Guiana. The initial narrator is an unnamed British subject who prevails upon Abel to describe his personal history, the retelling of which is the bulk of the novel. As a young man Abel was peripherally involved in an unsuccessful effort to overthrow the government. To escape retribution he decided to travel into the interior of the continent, lured onward by stories of distant tribes possessing great quantities of gold. He is finally disabused of his dreams of wealth and prevails upon a local chief, Runi, to allow him to take up residence in his village.

Abel begins to explore the surrounding forest, including an area that his hosts avoid, claiming that it contains some unspecified danger. He notices nothing until one day an unusual bird song

seems to follow him, although he cannot identify its source. He begins to visit the area daily, almost always sensing that he is not alone and often hearing the birdlike sounds without ever seeing their source. Eventually he catches a glimpse of a young girl who instantly vanishes, and when he mentions having seen her to the villagers, he is offered a wife and other rewards in return for an unspecified service he will perform for them. Further inquiry reveals that they want him to kill the forest girl, a proposition he rejects with disgust.

He finally meets her when she appears while Abel is confronting a poisonous snake. Although he is bitten, he recovers in the hut occupied by Nuflo, an elderly man who says the girl is his granddaughter Rima. When she appears, she speaks to him in Spanish, although she rarely uses the language outside the hut. Nor does she look quite the same, and neither of them explain why she normally speaks only in the musical language except to suggest that it is "the voice that God has given" her. Abel does not believe she is really Nuflo's granddaughter, and he is puzzled by her origin as well as her insistence that no life be taken, even for food. Their relationship grows closer, but Abel is still completely ignorant of her origins.

Eventually he mentions a remote area known as Riolama, and Rima recognizes this as her place of origin. Nuflo is coerced into preparing for a trip, compelled by his apparent fear of Rima's influence with Heaven. He also provides an account of how he first found Rima, or more correctly, her mother. He was part of a band of outlaws who were hiding in the deserted region of Riolama when he found a strange woman, injured, and brought her to a settlement where she gave birth. She died a few years later, leaving Rima alone with Nuflo. After discovering that her mother's people are extinct, Rima returns to Nuflo's hut, traveling a day ahead of the two men. When Abel arrives, he is captured by his former hosts, who tell him that they have trapped and killed Rima. Enraged, he betrays them to a hostile tribe, and they are all killed, after which Abel leaves.

### Critical Analysis

*Green Mansions* has much in common with Lost World novels such as *LOST HORIZON* (1933) by

James Hilton. Since the author was by profession a naturalist, it is not surprising that he describes scenes in the wilderness in evocative, often lyrical terms, painting elaborate word pictures of the landscape, the lighting effects, and the foliage. Hudson may have been partially inspired by persistent legends of a mysterious white race living in the depths of the jungles of South America. The story is told in a leisurely style that is no longer in fashion, spending considerable effort describing the settings and only very slowly revealing any pertinent facts.

Hudson suggests the complex motivations of the novel very early. While recovering from an illness, Abel is sheltered by a petty criminal who nonetheless protects the traveler, because "even cruel savage brutes and evil men" are at times capable of kindness and compassion. He passes through the territory of numerous tribes he characterizes as "beasts of prey," but admits that they did him no harm, and in fact provided food and shelter even though he had nothing with which to repay them. Even though they live in the natural world, they act as though they are not a part of it, a fact that Abel realizes only after seeing how Rima's acceptance of the natural order of things allows her to communicate in ways not possible for most people.

The biblical references are fairly obvious. The *Green Mansions* are a kind of garden of Eden, complete with a serpent and an innocent Eve. Abel, the son of Adam, fills his father's role this time. Through his contact with Rima, he acquires knowledge that eventually leads, if not to his own destruction, at least to the destruction of what he believed to be true. Rima's own true nature is ambiguous. Although she remembers her dead mother and seems perfectly human, she has almost magical abilities in the forest. Her clothing is spun from spiders' webs, and she can apparently communicate with birds. She perceives Abel's inner nature in some extraordinary fashion that he does not understand, insisting that he has multiple names. Innocent of knowledge of the outside world, she asks Abel to describe it to her, but is disheartened when he admits that he knows of no one else who might understand her mysterious language. Her innocence is further emphasized when she falls in love with Abel, but is unable to understand the emotion, which makes her feel uneasy.

It is obvious almost from the outset that Rima is doomed. She is too innocent and gentle to survive in a hostile world, any more than her mother's people could have survived. At the same time, her motivations are frequently obscure, and it is never clear why she felt compelled to travel alone and ahead of her companions during the closing chapters. Her death and Abel's subsequent madness are symbolic of the stresses Hudson believes people have imposed on themselves by loosening the bonds to the natural world and trying to impose human will on nature. Though there may be apparent gains in the short term, the loss of beauty and a sense of participation in the natural world will in the long run be tragic.

### **Greenmantle** (1916) **John Buchan**

Scottish novelist John Buchan, First Baron Tweedsmuir (1875–1940) was a prolific writer of both fiction and nonfiction, in addition to having had a very active political life, during the course of which he served in South Africa and as governor general of Canada. *Greenmantle* is one of his more ambitious adventure stories, a sequel to *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915), which is probably his best-known book. Richard Hannay is a mining engineer who helped defeat a German espionage ring in the earlier adventure, and he is the unlikely leader of a group spying on the Germans during World War I in this sequel.

The war is well under way, and there have been persistent rumors that German agents are planning to instigate a jihad inside the British controlled territories in the Middle East. Repeating a device from the first novel, Hannay is provided with a cryptic message that will prove to be the key to the solution. This time he has allies, including most significantly Sandy Arbuthnot, a man whose familiarity with the politics of the region will prove valuable and who would later be the main character in another adventure story, *The Courts of the Lion*. A mildly comical American named John Blenkiron volunteers to help by posing as a German sympathizer, and an old friend of Hannay's is recruited after they meet fortuitously during the early stages of the operation. They set out separately, but Hannay and his friend remain together

when they enter Germany disguised as disgruntled Boers. There they encounter Colonel Von Stumm, a stereotypical German martinet, who for a time accepts Hannay as a potential asset, although plans go awry and the Englishman becomes a fugitive. His subsequent adventures are reminiscent of those he experienced in *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

In one of the many astonishing coincidences that Buchan routinely employs in his plots, Hannay happens to encounter the captain of a river barge whose engineer has just died, enabling him to take the dead man's place in order to facilitate his escape, and by another coincidence he is reunited with his friend, who had escaped separately. Hannay subsequently makes some prodigious and incredible leaps of intuition and identifies Hilda von Einem as the person in charge of the planned jihad. He also hears the first mention of "greenmantle," which we eventually learn has no significance other than as a code word for the Muslim holy man the Germans hope to use to trigger the jihad. The two spies finally reach Constantinople, where they run into trouble with corrupt officials and a fanatical religious group known as the Companions of the Rosy Hours.

Eventually all four spies are reunited, pool their information, and unravel most of the details of the planned religious war, but when they penetrate further into the conspiracy, they discover that the supposed prophet is dying of cancer. Various enemies show up with increasing frequency during the waning chapters, and when the prophet eventually dies, von Einem chooses one of the Englishmen to take his place, unaware of his true identity. The contending forces converge for a series of violent encounters against the backdrop of a major military battle.

### **Critical Analysis**

The perfunctory characterizations of *The Thirty-Nine Steps* have been replaced in the sequel by more detailed portrayals of the supporting characters. There are other structural differences that make this a more complex and occasionally even confusing novel. In his first adventure Hannay was drawn into the situation involuntarily and spends most of his time reacting to the gambits of others. This time he volunteers for the dangerous assignment and initiates most of the conflict. Although the

four main characters have individual adventures, Buchan restricts the viewpoint to Hannay, who must be brought up to date periodically by his allies. Their mission is advanced by a series of favorable coincidences, a flaw that appears regularly in Buchan's fiction.

Like many other writers, Buchan did not view war as a noble occupation. "It's idiocy, but all war is idiotic. . . ." He did, however, believe that there was a serious, clear cultural difference between the British and the Germans. Although he takes pains to assert that the German people as individuals could be just as admirable as anyone else, he characterizes their culture and their cities as seeming "to have no soul." Berlin resembles a gigantic factory rather than a human community. Germany produces "good and bad, cads and gentlemen", but is peculiar in its ability to instill in all of them a patriotic fervor akin to fanaticism. Buchan cannot resist the temptation, however, to ascribe to Von Stumm—the archetypal German warrior—suggestions of an effeminate perversity.

We are also told clearly that while the civilizations of the Orient should be respected, they are also clearly inferior to that of the civilized Englishman. The prophet brings an "honourable message" but its purpose has been sullied by the machinations of von Einem, and he is little more than a puppet. Buchan also repeats his view that war is tragic and wasteful when Hannay refers to "the crazy folly of war." In fact, Hannay eventually begins to think of the entire project as a conflict between individuals rather than nations, a political rivalry with no other justification. "I hardly bothered to think where my sympathies lay." He and his friends are caught in a process that is beyond their control or even their understanding.

The coincidences that advance the plot become increasingly intrusive as the story progresses. The heroes escape through luck more often than by the use of their wits; the villains are brilliant except when it suits the plot for them to be otherwise; and the heroes solve the puzzles confronting them by means of startling flashes of insight rather than by logical deduction. This ongoing flaw carries through to the end when one of the four spies is chosen to replace the dead Moslem figurehead, providing a unique means of scuttling the entire plan.

Although Buchan expends considerable effort on characterization compared to the previous Hannay adventure, only his heroes really come to life. Colonel Von Stumm is a caricature with no redeeming qualities, and the reader is unlikely to feel much pleasure at his inevitable downfall. The corrupt Turk, Rasta, has virtually no personality at all. Hilda von Einem remains a shadowy, unseen figure for most of the novel, is described in exaggerated terms, and when she finally appears onstage she rather predictably falls short of the image Buchan has suggested, and her defeat and death is peculiarly flat and disappointing. For all its shortcomings, however, *Greenmantle* is an exciting, colorful adventure.

Richard Hannay returned for further adventures in *Mr. Standfast* (1919), a more episodic story describing his efforts to track down a German spy in England, followed by Hannay's return to the battlefield, and *The Three Hostages* (1924), a more unified novel in which Hannay, now married in the aftermath of the war, confronts a criminal organization that has kidnapped his daughter. Hannay also makes a brief appearance in *The Courts of the Morning* (1929). Talbot Mundy's *KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES*, published in 1916, has a very similar plot, although the action is set in India rather than in Europe.

### Grey, Zane (1872–1939)

Zane Grey was the penname of Pearl Zane Gray, an American writer who became famous for his romanticized novels of life in the Old West. Grey, by profession a dentist, published his first western novel in 1910 and his most famous, *RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE*, in 1912. He was one of the first American authors to become wealthy through his writing, and more than 100 movies have been based on his work. Although he is best known for his westerns, Grey wrote almost 100 novels, many of which were magazine serials that did not appear in book form until after his death, as well as stories of adventure, fishing, and life in the wild.

Grey's fascination with the Old West was apparent early in his career. *The Last of the Plainsmen* (1908) reads more like a historical adventure novel than a western and is largely

based on actual events. Unlike his other novels of the American West, it is essentially a TRUE LIFE ADVENTURE. The protagonists survive a perilous journey through the Grand Canyon in the years before civilization had reached that part of the continent. They face treacherous rivers, swamps, and wild animals before arriving at their destination. Most of Grey's early novels make use of many of the now familiar western themes—range wars, cattle rustling, rogue gunmen, stage robbery. The code of honor that Grey believed to be pervasive during that period appears early in his work, as in *The Heritage of the Desert* (1910). The protagonist is nearly killed when he refuses to defend himself against a young gunman, restrained by the knowledge that his opponent's father saved his life. The code is reinforced when the father tells him that he is under no obligation and should feel free to shoot to kill when they next meet each other. *Riders of the Purple Sage* is often cited as the first modern western novel and remains Grey's single most famous work. The young heroine is determined to protect her ranch from outlaws and other threats, but despite her efforts she has nearly given up when a stranger comes to her assistance.

In *The Lone Star Ranger* (1915), a Texas ranger and a deputy marshal attempt to track down and capture a band of rustlers operating near a small town, only to discover that the local mayor is working with the outlaws. Their efforts are further complicated by the fact that one of them is in love with the mayor's niece. This was the only western Grey wrote as a first-person narrative, and it is notable for its realistic depiction of the consequences of cattle rustling. A gold rush generates the main conflict in *The Border Legion* (1916). A professional gunman organizes a group of killers to discover the locations of the most profitable gold strikes and kill the unlucky prospectors in order to seize their claims. His plans are undercut because one of his underlings is actually a lawman working undercover. When he takes a beautiful young woman captive, he precipitates the confrontation that will prove to be his undoing.

*To the Last Man* (1921) was an abridged version of a magazine serial that was not published in its entirety in book form until 2004, as *Tonto Basin*. Two families struggle to make a living raising

cattle in the same area, and when one side begins to steal from their neighbor, the rivalry escalates into a range war. *Wanderer of the Wasteland* (1923) is the story of a man who incorrectly believes he has committed murder and who has various adventures fleeing from imaginary pursuers before discovering the truth. Most of *Under the Tonto Rim* (1926) is seen from the point of view of a young woman who seeks a new life after her mother dies and her sister marries a local cowboy. Grey's female characters are very often strong, competent people. *Wyoming* (1932) repeats the theme of a community banding together to fight against lawbreakers, in this case another band of cattle thieves. *Raiders of Spanish Peaks* (1938) is one of Grey's best novels, another story of rustlers and efforts to bring a gang of outlaws to justice.

The ephemeral nature of law and order in the Old West is well illustrated in *Valley of Wild Horses* (1947), one of several novels that only appeared in book form posthumously. The protagonist is a wanderer who has lived a violent, undisciplined life in the past. His combative nature inevitably leads to a confrontation with a father and son who hold an entire town hostage, demanding protection money from the residents, paying the local marshal to look the other way, and chasing off unwelcome outsiders. *Black Mesa* (1955) suggests that one should take care before wishing for a more exciting life. The protagonist is a newcomer who lacks many of the appropriate social and physical skills and is ignorant of the western character. He falls in love with the wife of a dangerous and ruthless criminal but refuses to back away. *Fugitive Trail* (1957), one of Grey's last novels, is on one level a story of bank robbery and cattle rustling, but the real story is the manner in which the protagonist deals with a complicated problem involving his personal sense of honor.

### Critical Analysis

Much of the romantic tradition associated with the Old West was popularized in, if not created by, the work of Zane Grey, who was also the first widely read writer to portray Native Americans in a favorable light. It would be fair to say that there is not a single writer of western fiction who has not been indirectly, if not directly, influenced by Grey's

novels. Nor are there many western movies or television shows that do not owe at least part of their inspiration to his work.

Although it was never as explicitly stated as it is in Grey's novels, there was in fact a code that functioned in the early West, primarily because it had to serve the functions of a system of laws that had yet to be implemented or enforced. Most human interactions relied on the concept of personal honor held by the individuals involved. Much of the increasingly elaborate set of laws that dominated the more developed part of the country was totally inappropriate in the western context, and there were even differences between what was perceived as acceptable conduct in the towns and what was tolerated on the trail. Grey's great achievement was to portray this nebulous code consistently in his fiction, so that a coherent, if not entirely accurate, picture of that time and place could emerge. His continuing influence on the western novel is rivaled only by J. R. R. Tolkien's influence on modern fantasy.

### ***Gulliver's Travels* (1726) Jonathan Swift**

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), an Irish writer of both fiction and nonfiction, is most famous for this classic adventure story as well as his short satire “A Modest Proposal” (1729), which suggested that the solution to the problem of the poor was to eat them. The first edition of *Gulliver's Travels* in 1726 was revised by Swift and appeared in altered form in 1735. Although it was intended to be a farcical satire of then current events, most of the attitudes and foibles of human nature that Swift skewered in the 18th century are still prevalent today. Over the years, however, the novel has been viewed more as a classic adventure story for children, and many editions have been heavily edited to remove the author's political opinions and more bitter satire. In some cases the later adventures have been omitted entirely.

The novel actually consists of four separate voyages. The first and most famous takes Lemuel Gulliver, a ship's doctor, to the island of Lilliput, where he awakens after surviving a shipwreck to find himself tied down by hundreds of tiny but otherwise normal-appearing humans. Swift

spends some time providing details about their culture, which includes humorous exaggerations of European customs, alternating this with Gulliver's ongoing plight. Over the course of time, he gains limited freedom of movement and even some popularity at court, particularly when he wades over to the rival island of Blefescu and steals 50 of their warships, thereby forestalling an invasion. His success inevitably creates enemies at court, however, and he is subsequently accused of treason. Despite all of his actions on behalf of Lilliput, he is condemned to the “merciful” sentence of being blinded rather than executed. He flees to Blefescu, which appears marginally better managed, and then refits a boat he finds adrift and returns to civilization.

Gulliver quickly becomes restless and sets out on another voyage. Once again he is stranded on an uncharted island, this one actually an unknown Pacific continent known as Brobdingnab, inhabited by giants in contrast to the tiny Lilliputians. Swift was undoubtedly using these variations of size to suggest that one can gain much understanding by examining things from a new perspective. Once again, Gulliver is a prisoner, this time essentially a pet protected by a young girl, but eventually sold to the local queen. Fortunately, the people of Brobdingnab are in general much more enlightened and reasonable than those of Lilliput, and most of Gulliver's misadventures there result from carelessness, his own bad judgment, or the intercession of birds and other animals.

Eventually Gulliver is accidentally set adrift, is rescued by English sailors, and returns to England only to set out on a third voyage. This time he is attacked by pirates and ends up on another island, Laputa, which flies through the air and is inhabited by ordinary-size humans. He explores their city and several more familiar anchored islands, observing another strange culture, but most of this portion of the narrative is spent satirizing the impractical attitudes of the scientific establishment in Great Britain and Gulliver's actual adventures are inconsequential.

The final voyage takes him to the land of the Houyhnhnms, where he arrives after being attacked by his own crew. The human populace, or Yahoos, are primitive and abhorrent. The land is ruled by the Houyhnhnms, talking horses, and Gulliver

spends some time explaining the English system of government to them, just as he did with the king of Brobdingnab, while they ask pointed questions about inconsistencies. He eventually returns to England, but his last voyage in particular has made him wary of humans, and he becomes a recluse.

There have been numerous sequels to *Gulliver's Travels*, of which the best known is *Mistress Masham's Repose* (1946) by T. H. White. The movie versions have confined themselves to the first two adventures. Several terms from the book have come into common usage, including *yahoo* as a disreputable person, and *Lilliputian* to suggest something small and delicate.

### Critical Analysis

The best of satire works as narrative as well as criticism. *Gulliver's Travels* is, in its first half, one of the earliest and best pieces of satirical fiction. Although the specific individuals and groups whom Swift was satirizing exist no longer, the same attitudes and prejudices are as prevalent as ever and his barbed commentary is just as valid, and effective, today as it was when he first wrote it. The war between Lilliput and Blefescu hinges upon a trivial matter of personal preference, the question of whether eggs should be opened at the large or small end, and one cannot help but be reminded of more recent quibbles about the shape of negotiating tables and details of conference seating plans.

Similarly, when the Lilliputians conclude that Gulliver's watch is his god, since he consults it before taking almost any action, their misconception pokes fun at the modern obsession with timeliness, schedules, and the productive use of time. Individuals in Lilliput who aspire to higher office in the government pursue their quest and receive their positions in relation to their ability to dance on a tightrope. Swift thereby suggests that the successful politician must tread a narrow path between differing viewpoints, never actually leaning toward either faction despite personal inclinations. When Gulliver refuses to subjugate Blefescu, even the emperor of Lilliput proves ungrateful. "Of so little weight are the greatest services to princes when put into balance with a refusal to gratify their passions."

Nor does Swift spare conventional religion or other nongovernmental authorities. The Lilliputians

bury their dead upside down so that when they are resurrected their feet will be positioned properly in relationship to Heaven. Gulliver observes that the more enthusiastically judges cite their habit of leniency, the more likely it is that they will impose cruel, extreme punishments. Similarly, he notes that the outcome of trials is almost always in accordance with the judge's predisposition rather than the evidence. Human institutions, as represented by the Lilliputians, are based on nonsense, operate arbitrarily, and often act in opposition to their own interests, and certainly those of the people they are supposed to serve. Even in relatively sensible Brobdingnab, the scientists declare that Gulliver's very existence is impossible, denying the evidence of their own senses.

In Brobdingnab, Gulliver notices that skin which appears smooth and flawless from a distance is actually mottled and unhealthy-looking from close at hand, suggesting the same results if one looked closely at human endeavors and institutions. Gulliver eventually lectures the king about the advantages of life under the English system, suggesting that the members of Parliament, the leaders of the Anglican Church, and the judiciary were all men chosen for their wisdom and talent. Gulliver then lists dozens of questions the king asked, frankly skeptical of the honesty, integrity, and incorruptibility of the system. These questions, of course, are those that Swift is himself posing. Gulliver never answers these, leaving the implications to the reader. The king goes on to interpret English history as a series of wars and murders, wonders if gambling could possibly be as innocent and honest an occupation as Gulliver suggests, and questions the need for a standing army among a people who are not at war. He concludes that "ignorance, idleness, and vice" are the prerequisites for government service, and thus the interpretation of laws lies in the hands of those "whose interests and abilities lie in perverting, confounding, and eluding them." This despite Gulliver's earnest efforts to describe English institutions in laudatory terms.

The king is particularly appalled at the concept of war and armaments, and he is horrified when Gulliver suggests that he could manufacture gunpowder. Gulliver exhorts the reader not to think

too unfavorably of the king for his shortsightedness, an “unnecessary scruple” of which Europeans would “have no conception.” Although life in Brobdingnab sounds idyllic in many ways, Gulliver characterizes it as “ignorant,” the product of “defective” education. Of course readers are meant to draw the opposite conclusion.

The people of Laputa are so caught up in scientific and mathematical endeavors that they can barely function socially. This section was Swift’s sarcastic exaggeration of the attitude he perceived to be prevalent in the British Royal Society—that the inquiries of science were somehow aloof from human affairs. The Laputans drop rocks on their landbound enemies, which is perhaps the first reference in literature to aerial bombardment. An alternative method is to hover over an enemy’s land so that they are trapped in perpetual darkness. This third section is considered the least interesting of Gulliver’s adventures. Perhaps feeling more bitter than previously at the time he was writing it, Swift belabors his points unnecessarily, and Gulliver’s actual adventures are of little interest and almost offhandedly described.

Just as the first two voyages switched from tiny people to giants, so do the final two alternate between a people so involved with the abstract that they have little regard for their bodies to the land of the Yahoos, who have little intellect and grossly repulsive bodies. Gulliver’s disdain for the Yahoos reflects Swift’s contempt for the foibles of human society. His conversation with the Houyhnhnms about the English constitution is reminiscent of his earlier discussion in Brobdingnab, but Swift’s language is harsher and less witty. Gulliver ends up despising the human race and living in isolation, and the final section has been the source of considerable speculation about Swift’s disenchantment with the English system.

### ***The Guns of Navarone* (1957)**

**Alistair MacLean**

Although British writer ALISTAIR MacLEAN (1922–87) wrote more than two dozen novels during his career, his second book, *The Guns of Navarone*, is the one for which he is best remembered. MacLean had worked as a schoolteacher, writing occasional

short pieces to earn some extra money, and when his first novel was well received, he set out to make his living as a writer, specializing in action-filled adventure stories. Several of his early books drew on his experiences during World War II. Although the events in this novel are entirely imaginary, they are a dramatic depiction of events that might plausibly have occurred, and the background is authentic.

A small group of commandos, led by Captain Mallory—the world’s most famous mountaineer—are to infiltrate the German-held island of Navarone, scale an almost impossible cliff, and sabotage an artillery unit that is so well placed that it commands all approaches to a neighboring island, from which a large number of Allied troops needs to be evacuated. The guns are nearly impregnable, protected by an overhanging cliff face and a contingent of soldiers. The team’s adventures start even before they reach the island. They capture an eavesdropper; the engine on their fishing boat breaks down; they have to destroy a German patrol; and when they present their forged papers to pass a German guard post, they immediately and inexplicably fall under suspicion, a forewarning of further treachery to come. Hours later, a major storm threatens to sink them within sight of their initial goal, the cliffs of Navarone island.

They make the climb successfully, but not before having dealt with an unexpected sentry and the loss of many of their supplies thanks to a poorly tied knot. The presence of the German soldier suggests that news of their plans has reached the enemy, which they interpret as evidence that the eavesdropper has somehow escaped and revealed their plans to the enemy. One of the group breaks his leg and retards their progress, so it takes much longer than expected to ascend into the snow-covered mountains. They are also unable to outrun their pursuers, a specially trained and equipped German unit that has been alerted to their presence on the island.

The commandos eventually meet two local partisans who help them, but the presence of the wounded man complicates matters even further, and he unsuccessfully attempts to kill himself rather than endanger the mission. A few hours later, a German patrol surprises them in the cave where they are hiding, and the entire party is taken

prisoner. There are more cat-and-mouse games before they escape, discover the identity of the traitor among their number, learn that the timetable has been moved up, and finally enter the fortress to successfully sabotage the guns.

### Critical Analysis

Although MacLean does not appear to have intended the novel to be anything more than an exciting thriller, the early chapters do include some ironic commentary on the contradictions of warfare. The captain who is the team's liaison during the early stages of the mission is a pompous fool more interested in appearances than results, who refuses to believe ill of a spy caught eavesdropping and who has to be coerced into cooperating. At one point a member of the group not quite facetiously suggests that the incompetent captain is as dangerous as the enemy and should be shot. Later, when the commandos need a disreputable boat to convey them quietly to Navarone, the officer who procures it for them sees nothing unusual in the fact that he is acquiring it from their supposed Turkish enemies. Not all of the British soldiers are honorable, and not all of the Germans are the opposite. At least one of the German officers is described as a principled man, and Mallory takes great pains to avoid killing him.

The novel is remarkable for the depth of its characterization. Andrea, a Greek partisan, hates the Germans and kills them efficiently, but he always regrets the deaths he causes, feeling that he has no right to judge. He's a "killer with a kindly heart." Stevens is terrified of every physical and

mental test, but paradoxically is so averse to appearing frightened that he functions as one of the most courageous of the group. Each of the main characters is carefully differentiated from the others, and there is never the sense that a character has been introduced solely so that he can be killed at the proper moment.

Like many other writers who choose war as their setting, MacLean considers it a foolish pastime. He characterizes nationalism and other political systems as tools that "self-seekers and fools and knaves" employ as "justification for the slaughter of millions . . ." Mallory reflects upon the unfairness that men of such quality as those with him should suffer and die in war, and later feels sympathetic toward a German sentry they are forced to kill, considering it wasteful. After they are captured, Mallory acknowledges that one of the German officers is a man he would have immediately liked if it had not been for this "damned, crazy war."

MacLean later wrote a direct sequel, *Force 10 from Navarone* (1968), which incorporated plot elements from the 1961 film version as well as from the book. Mallory returns to lead another clandestine mission, this time into Yugoslavia to destroy a crucial bridge. Although there are similar plot twists, the sequel did not match the quality of the original. MacLean soon abandoned wartime settings in favor of contemporary international intrigue, but one other novel, *H.M.S. Ulysses* (1955), which takes place aboard a World War II naval cruiser, is also notable and reflects more of MacLean's own experiences in the military.

# H

## **Hamilton, Donald** (1916–2006)

Although he also wrote westerns and other adventure stories, Donald Hamilton is best known for his long-running Matt Helm series. Hamilton was Swedish by birth and returned there late in his life, but spent most of his time in the United States. His early novels were mysteries and westerns, of which the most notable is *Assassins Have Starry Eyes* (1956), in which a scientist tries to rescue a kidnapped woman, but he would probably have been forgotten quickly if he had not created his assassin hero, Matt Helm.

Helm was introduced in *Death of a Citizen* (1960) as the agent of a mysterious government spy organization. The novel also established the characters of his children, his ex-wife, and Mac, his superior. Helm, whose code name is Eric, is peripherally involved in espionage, but his primary function is to eliminate enemy agents. In the first novel an old partner from World War II appears and tricks Helm into helping her with a clandestine operation before he discovers that she has switched sides. His second appearance, *The Wrecking Crew* (1960), is a more standard story of espionage. Helm is sent to Sweden to assassinate an enemy spy, but to do so he must first figure out the man's real identity. In *The Removers* (1961) a call from his ex-wife leads to action against a professional criminal organization that poses a threat to national security, as well as his family. Helm disobeys orders in order to protect several prominent politicians from being assassinated in *The Silencers* (1962), establishing another pattern in the series. For Helm, orders are more

like guidelines, and he discards them whenever he decides that his judgment is better than that of the bureaucrats who employ him.

Helm has to take over for an agent he accidentally killed in *Murderers' Row* (1962), then exposes a secret organization designed to transport kidnapped scientists and others out of the country. It is unclear whether or not he has actually eliminated his chief opponent, and returning villains feature prominently in later books. Helm is sent to track down the man who may have stolen a Soviet missile from Cuba in *The Ambushers* (1963) and crosses paths with a female Russian spy who will also return in future volumes. Soviet agents have inserted themselves into the lives of prominent Americans in *The Shadows* (1964), and Helm pretends to marry one of the likely targets in order to expose the operation. *The Ravagers* (1964) has a convoluted plot about an ill-advised plan to sink a Soviet submarine.

*The Devastators* (1965) is one of the best and most complex in the series. British, Chinese, Russian, and American spy agencies all converge, each with its own particular agenda, when an obsessed scientist goes into hiding in Scotland in order to prepare and release an unstoppable plague. This was the most ambitious installment in the series, and the larger scale of subsequent assignments suggests that Hamilton may have been reacting to the popularity of the JAMES BOND series by Ian Fleming. The pattern continues in *The Betrayers* (1966), wherein Russian agents are trying to use the Vietnam war to provoke a confrontation between the United States and China, a plan that Helm thwarts. Helm

is ordered to kill some innocent witnesses to a “UFO” sighting in *The Menacers* (1968), but takes on Russian agents instead. He eliminates a fellow assassin in *The Interlopers* (1969), another Russian agent whose job is to kill the president-elect before he can take office.

*The Poisoners* (1971) mixes professional criminals with Russian and Chinese spies, with Helm ordered to find out who murdered an American agent and why. *The Intriguers* (1972) reveals that the head of a major American spy service has decided to expand his power at the expense of rival government agencies, and the result is a shooting war between Helm and fellow American agents. Foreign spies almost outsmart Helm in *The Intimidators* (1974), after which he rescues a group of kidnapped socialites. He is tricked into participating in a plot to ruin an oil company in *The Terminators* (1975), but discovers the truth in time.

*The Retaliators* (1976) has the most convoluted plot of all the Helm novels. It was the first of his books to be nominated for an Edgar Allan Poe award. Helm is part of a team sent to Mexico to prevent a political assassination, but he is under a cloud because of a mysterious deposit made into his bank account. His efforts are further hampered by the return of one of his old enemies, a Chinese spymaster, and agents of an organization plotting to eliminate the entire agency for which he works. *The Terrorizers* (1977) was also nominated for an Edgar, but is not nearly as good. Helm wakes in a hospital with amnesia and spends the rest of the novel trying to remember his past and prevent a group of drug dealers from killing him. There was a lengthy gap before the next Helm adventure, *The Revengers* (1982), which was also much longer than any of its predecessors. Hamilton reintroduced several of the recurring characters from earlier books, then killed most of them. Many of the familiar plot devices from early in Helm’s career are reprised—the villain lost at sea, the rival agency working outside the law, and others.

*The Annihilators* (1983) is a revenge fantasy. Helm responds to the death of a friend by a series of actions that result in a change of government in South America. His next challenge has an even greater impact on the world; in *The Infiltrators* (1984) he foils a plot to overthrow the government of the

United States. *The Detonators* (1985) is another long adventure that Helm survives more through luck than skill, averting the explosion of an atomic weapon on American soil. *The Vanishers* (1986), as the title suggests, returns to the theme of kidnapping, as well as pitting Helm against the head of yet another renegade American intelligence agency.

Although Helm is considering retiring in the early chapters of *The Demolishers* (1987), the death of his son at the hands of terrorists results in another revenge fantasy, and possibly the highest body count in the series. Helm returns to his usual business in *The Frighteners* (1989), one of Hamilton’s best, this time preventing the overthrow of the government of Mexico. *The Threateners* (1992) involves a fairly routine battle with more drug dealers, and *The Damagers* (1993) mixes terrorists and professional assassins. One further adventure, *The Dominators*, was completed before Hamilton’s death but has not yet been published.

### Critical Analysis

Although his first few novels have plots similar to those of ERIC AMBLER and John Buchan, Hamilton was more heavily influenced by Dashiell Hammett and other HARD-BOILED DETECTIVE writers, adapting many of their techniques to his spy novels. He initially attempted to be slightly more realistic than the James Bond novels of Ian Fleming, but became more melodramatic and reflected a more conservative political stance as the series progressed. When Helm’s early adventures were turned into a series of four Dean Martin movies during the 1960s, the results were farcical spoofs that had little to do with the books. Matt Helm was also featured in a television series in 1975 that bore even less resemblance to the novels.

Most of Helm’s assignments are considerably less grandiose than those of Bond, although he shares the latter’s ruthlessness and talent for finding escape routes from impossible situations. Helm is more of a professional assassin than a spy, although he often exceeds his orders and involves himself in matters outside his specialty. The darker side of his nature is evident in several of the novels, notably *Murderers’ Row*, in which he is supposed to beat up a fellow agent to make her story more plausible, but accidentally kills her.

Although Hamilton wrote lively plots that carry the reader along, Helm's cold-bloodedness seems to contradict some of his other qualities, and his character is occasionally inconsistent. Plot elements begin to repeat very early in the series—double agents, kidnapped women and children, villainous women falling off boats and disappearing, Helm disobeying orders, impersonations—and become very formulaic in the last several volumes. Nor does Helm undergo any significant change during the course of the series, which can be read just as easily in random order, except that in the latter books he is occasionally portrayed as being somewhat sentimental about his old friends and enemies. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between heroes and villains, both of whom act pragmatically and ruthlessly, and the female characters in particular are almost interchangeable from one book to the next. Some of Helm's enemies clearly have admirable traits that some of his friends unfortunately lack. Hamilton also suggests that all governments resort to the same dirty tactics behind the scenes and, particularly in *The Ravagers* and *The Intriguers*, that sometimes government policy is hijacked by ambitious individuals with their own agendas. He blames much of this on softhearted politicians who are, in his view, unwilling to admit that tough action is often necessary.

### hard-boiled detectives

Properly speaking, the hard-boiled detective story is a subset of the mystery genre. A typical mystery, however, is more frequently an intellectual puzzle rather than an adventure story—static, with little action except perhaps in the closing chapters. The reader is usually engaged in a guessing game with the author, almost always involving the identity of the murderer. Sometimes—as in locked room mysteries—readers are also kept in the dark about the method used to commit the crime. There may be some latent danger that the protagonist might be the next victim, but the plot is comparatively passive, perhaps with suspense but little and often inconsequential physical action. The classic detective story involved interrogations, searches for clues, and sifting of evidence.

Hard-boiled detective stories may also involve a mystery, but often the solution is revealed well

before the conclusion. Knowing who committed the crime and why, the reader is not as concerned about guessing the solution but is instead caught up in the adventures of the protagonist, usually a private detective, sometimes a reporter or other investigator, who takes risks to investigate the circumstances of the crime and bring the party responsible to justice. Fist fights, gun battles, chases, captures and escapes—all elements of generic adventure fiction—are all standard features in hard-boiled mysteries. A particular style of slang is often employed, sometimes authentic, sometimes invented by the author.

The rough-and-tumble detective first began to appear in the pulp magazines of the 1920s and 1930s. Carroll John Daly (1889–1958) wrote a story titled “The False Burton Combs” (1922), which is sometimes cited as the very first example. The protagonists often operated outside the law to achieve their goals, even acting as vigilantes on occasion, eliminating criminals who seemed beyond the reach of the police and courts. They are at best tolerated by the authorities, who are frequently as corrupt as the criminals. Clashes with organized crime were common news items during the 1920s, and this was almost certainly an influence on the type of stories pulp writers produced during that period.

The first important writer of hard-boiled detective fiction was Dashiell Hammett (1894–1961), whose most famous novel, *The Maltese Falcon* (1930), featured Sam Spade, who became the template for the financially insolvent, tough, honest, but unappreciated private investigator. Hammett was a former Pinkerton agent who used his own experiences to provide a realistic background for his crime fiction. Although he was not the first hard-boiled writer, he quickly became the most imitated. After turning out a considerable body of traditional pulp style crime stories early in his career, Hammett began to try for a more realistic effect in the later Continental Op stories, but it was *The Maltese Falcon* that established his reputation. Spade is broke, on bad terms with the police, and acts in a direct and sometimes crude manner. Hammett also wrote more sophisticated mystery fiction such as *The Thin Man* (1934), but Sam Spade only appeared again in a handful of short stories.

The hard-boiled private eye became a much more distinct and defined form in the work of Raymond Chandler (1888–1959), whose Philip Marlowe achieved the same or even greater stature than Sam Spade. Marlowe was featured in several novels and more than a dozen short stories, but Chandler was not a prolific writer, and much of his later work was for the movies. His work is certainly among the most influential in the mystery field, and Marlowe has been portrayed on the screen by Powers Boothe, Robert Mitchum, Humphrey Bogart, Eliot Gould, and others. Marlowe combined attributes of the pulp hero—strength, determination, and a sense of honor—with more modern sensibilities. He was well educated, has a strong sense of professional ethics, and sympathizes with those who deserved it. Most of his adventures involve professional criminals, mysterious meetings, physical assaults, gun play, and much more overt action than was common in the classic detective novel.

Ross MacDonald was the pseudonym used by Kenneth Millar (1913–83) for the Lew Archer series. Although this detective's name is borrowed from Sam Spade's partner, Miles Archer, MacDonald's private eye more closely resembles Philip Marlowe. Unlike most other hard-boiled detectives, Archer tended to be an observer rather than an active participant, and the stories are more focused on the characters and how they are affected by events than are those of most of Archer's rivals. At the opposite end of the spectrum is Frank Morrison "Mickey" Spillane (1918–2006), the author of the very popular Mike Hammer novels. Hammer has some superficial resemblance to Marlowe or Spade, but is a very different character. Where the others try to avoid violence, Hammer relishes it. He has a low opinion of women, uses and discards them thoughtlessly, and usually solves his cases through brawn rather than brains. He kills without hesitation or regret. There have been several movies and three television series based on the Mike Hammer character, most of which have toned down the sometimes extreme behavior described in the novels.

John D. MacDonald (1916–86) wrote mostly nonseries novels until late in his career, when he introduced Travis McGee. Technically speaking, McGee was not a private detective. He called

himself a "salvage consultant" and spent his time recovering "lost" items, usually bending the law to take them from criminals. McGee is a comparatively more sophisticated and financially successful figure, but otherwise functions in the same way as Marlowe or Archer. Robert Parker (1932– ) is probably the best-known living writer specializing in hard-boiled detective fiction, particularly his Spenser series. Spenser is a private detective in the Marlowe mode. Parker's other recurring protagonist is Jesse Stone, whose adventures also incorporate some elements of the hard-boiled detective story.

Brett Halliday was the pen name of Davis Dresser (1904–77), a prolific writer whose books appeared under a variety of names. Although Halliday was not nearly as talented a writer as those mentioned above, his books about Michael Shayne were very widely read and led to a number of films as well as the *Michael Shayne Mystery Magazine*. Sara Paretsky (1947– ) modified the form for her female private detective, V.I. Warshawski, who mixes feminine wiles with aggressive tactics. The Kinsey Millhone series by Sue Grafton (1940– ) also features a female investigator, but Millhone is slightly more conventional in her habits. A short-lived series by Mercedes Lambert about lawyer Whitney Logan is also worthwhile. The Honey West novels by G. G. Fickling actually preceded any of these writers, but they have largely been forgotten. West was a private investigator who broke the rules whenever she felt it necessary. The television series based on her character was a watered-down version casting her as less capable and constantly requiring rescue by her male partner.

Other writers who have produced notable novels in the hard-boiled tradition include Chester Himes, Walter Mosley, Cornell Woolrich, Frank Gruber, Delano Ames, Philip Jose Farmer, Brian Garfield, Richard Prather, Lawrence Sanders, Stephen Marlowe, Dan Simmons, Jonathan Latimer, Michael Collins, Lawrence Block, Ed Gorman, and Charles Willeford. Ross Spencer (1921–98) wrote several spoofs of hard-boiled detectives, of which the best is *The Dada Caper* (1978). Other series such as the Saint by LESLIE CHARTERIS, the LONE WOLF by Louis Joseph Vance, and even the JAMES BOND novels by Ian Fleming make use of some elements of the hard-boiled detective story, although

they are not generally considered part of that form. Several MEN'S ADVENTURE SERIES involve hard-boiled private detectives or vigilantes, including the Destroyer, the Death Merchant, Matt Bolan, the Penetrator, Sexton Blake, and several others. These are more significant for their sheer volume than for their individual quality. Some police procedural series, such as John Sandford's Lucas Davenport novels, portray their police department heroes as essentially hard-boiled detectives who usually work within the framework of the law.

Hard-boiled detectives have also appeared in other genres. Glen Cook's Garrett series and the Nightside novels by Simon R. Green blend fantasy with magic, as does *Stalking the Unicorn* (1987) by Mike Resnick and *Darkworld Detective* (1982) by J. Michael Reaves. P. N. Elrod's vampire novels featuring Jack Fleming have intermittently followed the hard-boiled pattern. A great many paranormal romances involve bounty hunters, vampire killers, and other modifications of the tough detective, almost invariably with a woman as the protagonist. There have also been crossovers with science fiction, including the Matthew Swain series by Mike McQuay, *The Steel Eye* (1984) by Chet Godfried, and the Gil Hamilton series by Larry Niven. Among the more interesting variations within SF are the uplift novels by S. Andrew Swann, whose private eye is an intelligent, genetically altered tiger, and numerous spoofs of the form by Ron Goulart, William F. Nolan, John Zakour, and others.

### **Heart of Darkness** (1899) **Joseph Conrad**

Joseph Conrad, born Teodor Józef Konrad Nałęcz-Korzeniowski (1857–1924) in Poland, became a naturalized British citizen, only learning the English language as an adult. After years of traveling the world on merchant vessels, Conrad settled down and became a very popular, though never financially successful, writer and is today considered one of the first modern novelists. Most of his work can be read either as straightforward adventure or as more serious literature in which the characters experience dramatic changes.

*Heart of Darkness* is comparatively short, and opens on a ship traveling down the Thames. Marlow, a guest on the yawl, is regaling his fellows

with reminiscences from his past. He mentions that as a young man he was fascinated by the unexplored interior of Africa, which was blank white space on maps at the time, later filled in with names until the words created a kind of darkness. To satisfy that craving, he signs on as captain of a commercial riverboat run by one of the colonial authorities. Upon arriving at his new job, he finds that the boat has sunk, and he spends months just making it seaworthy again. His first priority after the repairs are done is to check the status of an agent named Kurtz, who has been out of touch for months, but he is hampered by a shortage of rivets, even though there is a surplus of them back on the coast. The station master clearly dislikes Kurtz, but since he is their most efficient source of ivory and is by all reports an extraordinary man, he is constrained from acting against him overtly.

Shortly before reaching the outpost, they find a written warning to be careful, and not long afterward the steamboat is attacked by arrows and spears. Marlow and the others presume that Kurtz has already been killed. In fact, he is alive, and his assistant tells Marlow that the natives fired upon them because they were afraid that he would take Kurtz away from them, perhaps even at Kurtz's order. It appears that in his quest for ivory, Kurtz may or may not have become mentally unstable as well as physically ill, and certainly he has acted in a brutal and deadly fashion. They take him aboard the steamer, but he dies before they reach civilization. Marlow goes to visit his fiancée and lies to her about Kurtz's final moments.

### **Critical Analysis**

Although most critics have interpreted the story as an indictment of colonialism and racism, there have also been charges that Conrad portrayed native Africans as uncivilized and as symbols rather than human beings. This is a highly subjective reaction because all of the characters are symbolic in the story, and since Conrad's purpose was clearly to illustrate that colonial policy was designed to steal the resources of the colonies and not to better the lives of its original residents, it is hardly surprising that the white characters receive the bulk of the author's attention. There are also constant references to light and darkness, black and white, but

not in racial terms. For example, the unexplored portions of maps of Africa are blotches of white, and those areas dominated by European colonists are black.

While still in the Thames, Marlow remarks that “darkness was here yesterday.” He also comments on the incursions of the ancient Romans into what was then Celtic Britain, suggesting that the Romans did not intend to colonize but to exploit, drawing a parallel to the then current exploitation of Africa. “Their administration was simply a squeeze.” Later, while passing through a deserted village in Africa, Marlow concludes that if a column of African soldiers had marched through an English village, it would have been abandoned in like fashion. He dismisses the possibility that conquest implies superiority because “strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others.” Marlow likens colonization to robbery and murder and suggests that the process of empire building is seizing the property of those “who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses.” He characterizes a period of his life when he imposed on others to “as though I had gotten a heavenly mission to civilize you,” suggesting the intrusive habits of missionaries.

Clearly Marlow suspects that he is not going to like what he finds even before he reaches Africa. When he signs his contract, he senses that there was “something not quite right,” and the clerks are transparently sympathetic. He feels like an “emissary of light” about to enter the darkness, a contrast that is repeated throughout the novel. Marlow is skeptical, however, when one of the clerks suggests that he will be helping to teach the natives a better way of life, reminding her that the company’s purpose is and always will be profit, not education or uplifting the natives. The quest for profits seems to him an “imbecile rapacity” and the trading station “a lot of faithless pilgrims bewitched inside a rotted fence.” When an expedition passes nearby, Marlow thinks of its members as “sordid buccaneers” and “burglars.”

The Europeans Marlow encounters are generally corrupt, desensitized, or unbalanced, while the natives seem “natural and true.” There is a particularly disquieting juxtaposition of scenes when Marlow turns from the sight of horribly mistreated native prisoners to a European whose attire is an

“unexpected elegance.” When he sees a French warship shelling the jungle indiscriminately, it strikes him as both inappropriate and ineffective. The roughness of the country implies that “nature herself had tried to ward off the invaders.” Conrad also indicates that the banality of life among the company officials has made it impossible for them to correctly interpret the real world. Marlow realizes that he is spending all of his time dealing with trivialities during the trip upriver, and as reality fades, the “inner truth is hidden.” Whenever they pass local settlements, he is both made nervous by their uninhibited emotions and compelled to feel a kinship to them as fellow humans. The requirements of his duties as a captain, as a civilized man, overcome his inclination to join them in their celebrations. He is not, however, entirely free of European prejudice. The fireman on the steamboat is an African who has been minimally trained for that task, but who still interprets what he has been told in terms of superstition. Marlow thinks of him as being just as remarkable as if he were a “dog in a parody.” Rather than uplifting the natives, the Europeans have made them absurd.

Kurtz is an enigmatic character. On the one hand, he has adopted some of the local customs, while on the other, he asserts that Europeans have the advantage of appearing as nearly supernatural beings, a fact that should work to their advantage. Although on several occasions readers are told that Kurtz is a master of words, an eloquent speaker who elicits powerful responses from his audience, he himself is subject to violent impulses that appear irrational. In that same sense, the European powers may speak of their mission of enlightenment and education, but these arguments are undercut by their violent and avaricious actions. Marlow ultimately begins to think of the “civilized” world as chaotic and nonsensical.

Absurdity abounds in the novel. The African workers aboard the steamboat are paid regularly so that they can buy food in the villages they pass, but there are no villages so they go hungry. One of the men at the station is the official brick maker, but since there is no straw, he has never made any bricks. When his helmsman is killed, all Marlow can think about is disposing of his bloody shoes. Everyone considers Kurtz to have been a genius,

but no one can quite describe what it was that he was a genius about.

*Heart of Darkness* has been an enduring cultural influence, most notably as direct inspiration for the film *Apocalypse, Now* (1979) and the novel *Downward to the Earth* (1970) by Robert Silverberg. Considering its age, it holds up remarkably well for modern readers, both as commentary and as pure entertainment.

### ***Hercules My Shipmate* (1944)** **Robert Graves**

This classic retelling of the legend of Jason and the Argonauts has also been published as *The Golden Fleece*. Robert Graves (1895–1985) was an English poet and novelist whose nonfiction studies of ancient mythology are also highly regarded. His other historical novels include *I, Claudius* (1934), which takes place in ancient Rome, and *Count Belisarius* (1938), set against the backdrop of the Byzantine Empire, but his best adventure novel is this detailed account of Jason's quest to recover a revered golden fleece from the distant kingdom of Colchis.

Jason is the son of a deposed ruler who returns as an adult to claim his throne, which does not please his uncle, Pelias, who had been appointed regent during the interim. The uncle tricks Jason into committing himself to a perilous, probably suicidal voyage to distant Colchis on the Black Sea, where he is to recover a golden fleece sacred to the god Zeus, even though Jason is himself an adherent of the rival worship of the Triple Goddess. The initial crew of the *Argos* is chosen by Hylas, the child Hercules loves obsessively, but Hercules himself leaves partway through the voyage when Hylas runs away. Undaunted, perhaps even relieved, the remaining Argonauts add other crew members as they continue toward their goal. Among their number are such familiar names as Castor, Pollux, Orpheus, and Argos, for the mission has attracted all of the self-styled heroes and prominent local rulers in southern Greece.

After various encounters and dangerous escapes, they eventually reach Colchis where, through deceit and enterprise they steal the golden fleece. The king's daughter, Medea, falls in love

with Jason and leaves with them, and the king himself is killed. Medea's brother assumes the throne and immediately accompanies his fleet in pursuit of the Argonauts, trapping them twice but being outwitted on both occasions. The novel ends with the return of the fleece to the shrine of Zeus, the breakup of the company, the resolution of Jason's conflict with Pelias, and a brief summary of what befell many of them in the years that followed.

### **Critical Analysis**

Many of the basic plots and story situations of all literature originated in the mythologies of the Greeks, Romans, Scandinavians, and other peoples of the world. The quest for an object of power, usually magical, generally by a group of companions united specifically for that purpose, is probably the most common plot in contemporary fantasy and appears somewhat disguised at times in other genres. Whether the protagonists are searching for the only place where an evil object can be destroyed, as in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy by J. R. R. Tolkien, or for a long-lost object with a mysterious past, as in Dan Brown's *The DA VINCI CODE* (2003), they are on some level following in the footsteps of Jason and the Argonauts, or Odysseus's quest to return home in *The ODYSSEY*. Medea is not the only young woman seduced into running away from her powerful family with a handsome adventurer. Pelias is an antecedent of Polonius and other avaricious regents, and Jason is certainly far from being a unique heroic figure, flawed or otherwise, whose remarkable accomplishments did not bring ultimate happiness.

As a scholar of mythology, Graves was obviously meticulously careful to remain consistent with Greek legends, with a few deliberate, notable exceptions, filling in the blanks freely from his imagination. He also made a strong effort to bring the characters to life, to make them more than mere stereotypical heroes with no more humanity than a comic book superhero. Jason is lacking in confidence, unsure of his own abilities, dismayingly naïve, and more concerned with appearances than realities. Hercules is portrayed uncompromisingly as a bully, a drunkard, and probably a manic depressive who cannot even control his own impulses, let alone plan a complicated operation. There are

signs that he recognizes his own shortcomings. He declines to be appointed leader of the Argonauts and often claims to regret accidentally killing his friends and allies, but this seems to be a matter of form rather than genuine feeling. Graves portrays him as participating in the orgies on Lemnos, although most versions of the legend state that he abstained. He also suggests that Hylas deliberately abandoned Hercules rather than the usual explanation that he was taken away by force or guile.

The early chapters of the novel include a fairly comprehensive discussion of the evolution of the Greek religion, the move from worship of the Triple Goddess to her replacement by Zeus and other male deities, and the effect this had on an entire range of cultural activities. Although the gods and goddesses do appear in the novel, it is not clear whether or not this is meant metaphorically, and it may be that if they have any reality at all it is a product of the will of the mortals who have created them. Graves alters other fantastic events to suggest mundane explanations. Scylla and Charybdis are purely natural phenomena, and the harpies that plague blind King Phineas are actually just bats. The supernatural guardians of the fleece have similarly realistic explanations. Graves does, however, remain faithful to the ambiguous heroism of Jason, whose victories frequently involve deceit and betrayal, reducing his stature to that of a talented but not particularly admirable man. He also portrays the Argonauts as stubborn, argumentative, divided, and jealous of one another's accomplishments, hardly the heroic image that appears in most modern retellings of the legend, or the 1963 film *Jason and the Argonauts*, which is in many ways closer to the original legend than is Graves's version.

### **Higgins, Jack** (1929– )

Jack Higgins is the most commonly used pen-name of British writer Harry Patterson, who has also written as Hugh Marlowe, Martin Fallon, and James Graham. After training as a teacher, Higgins published his first novel in 1959, soon turned almost exclusively to thrillers and adventure stories, and became a best-selling author with the publication of his most famous novel, *The Eagle Has Landed* (1975). Several of his books

fall into loosely connected series, particularly since the late 1990s.

His first novel, as Harry Patterson, was *Sad Wind from the Sea* (1959), in which a man intercedes on behalf of a kidnapped girl and has a series of adventures in mainland China. *Cry of the Hunter* (1960) was the first of many novels that would feature IRA members as protagonists. A highly placed member of that organization is captured and then freed, but proves to be a dangerous liability who must be eliminated. A recently released convict becomes the prey in a deadly manhunt in *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1961), and in a somewhat similar vein, a recently freed prisoner of war battles amnesia and treachery in *Comes the Dark Stranger* (1962). *Hell Is Too Crowded* (1962) features an innocent man caught up in intrigue, a tourist who finds himself framed and hunted by the police, but more typically a Higgins hero walks into a dangerous situation willingly.

*The Testament of Caspar Schultz* (1962, also published as *The Bormann Testament*) introduced the first of Higgins's recurring heroes, Paul Chavasse, a spy whose initial adventure involves the acquisition of a document that provides details about escaped Nazi war criminals. His exploits continue in *Year of the Tiger* (1963), which was completely rewritten in 1996 and reissued under the same title. Chavasse is sent into China to smuggle out a scientific genius. He eliminates a double agent in Albania in *The Keys of Hell* (1965) and outwits a megalomaniacal billionaire with a private army in *Midnight Never Comes* (1966). Posing as a criminal, Chavasse infiltrates another criminal conspiracy in *Dark Side of the Street* (1967) and still another in *A Fine Night for Dying* (1969).

Higgins continued to write stand-alone novels parallel to the Chavasse series. *Dark Side of the Island* (1963) is an atmospheric story set on a postwar Greek island where memories of the recent conflict have not died. *Pay the Devil* (1963) was a change of pace, a historical novel about an American who comes to Ireland during the civil war and finds it impossible to avoid personal involvement in the local conflict. *Seven Pillars to Hell* (1963) was the first of Higgins's World War II adventures, set against the backdrop of the German attempt to

capture the Suez canal. It was completely rewritten and reissued in 1995 as *Sheba*.

*Passage by Night* (1964) is a vigilante novel with an international flavor. The protagonist has steadfastly avoided returning to Castro's Cuba after nearly dying during a previous visit, but when Cuban agents kill the woman he loves, he sets out to avenge her death. *Thunder at Noon* (1964) is a romanticized version of the career of bank robber John Dillinger, revised and reissued as *Dillinger* (1983). *Wrath of the Lion* (1964) concerns efforts to track down a renegade submarine. *The Graveyard Shift* (1965) introduced Nick Miller, an unorthodox police officer, who returns to investigate an apparent suicide in *Brought in Dead* (1967) and a serial killer in *Hell Is Always Today* (1968). All three novels are more properly police procedurals than adventure stories, but Higgins relies more on physical action in his plotting than traditional detection.

*A Candle for the Dead* (1966, also published as *The Violent Enemy*) is another story of conflicting motives within the IRA, and it also repeats the theme of an escaped prisoner turned hero. The novel was filmed in 1967. *The Iron Tiger* (1966) is one of the best of the early novels, a perilous journey across Tibet in the midst of the Chinese invasion. *East of Desolation* (1966), the first book published as by Jack Higgins, is nearly as good, the story of a seemingly routine flight into Greenland to examine a plane wreck that turns out to be much more complex than the protagonist pilot anticipated. *In the Hour Before Midnight* (1966, also published as *The Sicilian Heritage*), opens with a daring prison break, followed by efforts to rescue a girl kidnapped and held somewhere in Sicily.

*A Game for Heroes* (1970) is a World War II spy novel set on the Channel Islands late in the war. *Night Judgement at Sinos* (1970) is another of the better early books, a complicated story of intrigue in the Mediterranean. *The Last Place God Made* (1971) is set in South America, the story of two pilots who struggle to survive despite a shortage of cash and too many enemies. *Toll for the Brave* (1971) recycles a number of familiar devices, the man framed for a crime he did not commit and the war veteran struggling to find a place for himself in peacetime. Higgins broke his usual pattern again for

*The Wrath of God* (1972), set in 1920s Mexico. The search for a legendary bandit has much the feel of a classic western despite the comparatively modern setting, and it was filmed as one in 1973.

*The Khufra Run* (1972) features another rough-and-tumble pilot as its protagonist, this one involved in a treasure hunt in Algeria that turns nasty. The IRA provides the antagonist in *The Savage Day* (1972), in which an undercover agent must locate and recover a shipment of stolen gold bullion. *A Prayer for the Dying* (1973) brings back the protagonist of *Cry of the Hunter*, an IRA member who has vowed that his current assignment will be the last time he kills anyone. It was filmed in 1987. *Run to Morning* (1974, also published as *Bloody Passage*) involves an effort to rescue a number of people held prisoner in Libya.

Although several of Higgins's novels had been very favorably received, he did not achieve best-seller status until *The Eagle Has Landed* (1975) appeared, a gripping story about a secret German mission to kidnap or assassinate Winston Churchill. The novel also introduced the character of Liam Devlin, an IRA operative who would return as protagonist in three more novels. Years later, after Devlin has retired from active operations, he is coerced by British intelligence into helping track down a dangerous KGB agent in *Touch the Devil* (1982). He undertakes a similar mission in *Confessional* (1985). Higgins then wrote a direct sequel to *The Eagle Has Landed*, *The Eagle Has Flown* (1985), a multisided battle to determine the fate of the man who led the earlier mission and who survived, although he is presumed dead at the conclusion of the original novel. Devlin also returns briefly in the Sean Dillon series.

*Storm Warning* (1976) was told from the point of view of German partisans during World War II, in this case a group attempting to cross the Atlantic from South America to Germany during the waning days of the war. *The Valhalla Exchange* (1977) takes place largely during the same period, complementing the previous book in that it describes efforts by prominent Nazis to escape to South America. *Day of Judgment* (1978), on the other hand, is another variation of the daring rescue, this time from the other side of the Iron Curtain, with nothing new to recommend it. *To Catch a King* (1979, sometimes

referred to as *The Judas Gate*) returns to World War II, in this case during the very early days of the war. German agents endeavor to seize members of the British royal family who have taken refuge in Portugal, preparatory to installing a friendlier regime following the end of hostilities.

*Solo* (1980, sometimes referred to as *The Cretan Lover*) is a round-the-world chase adventure, with a crack agent pursuing an internationally famous pianist and assassin. *Luciano's Luck* (1981) mixes the Mafia, the German army, and foreign agents in a complex story about efforts to sway the loyalties of organized crime figures in Italy. *Exocet* (1983) is a fairly routine spy thriller set during the Falklands War. *Night of the Fox* (1986) was the first in another short series. In one of his best novels, Higgins describes a dramatic effort to rescue a man from captivity in German-held Europe. Time is essential because the prisoner knows many of the details about the planned D-day invasion. Higgins continued this story with *Cold Harbour* (1990), about clandestine operations against the Germans just prior to the landing, and *Flight of Eagles* (1998), in which two brothers find themselves fighting on opposite sides. Higgins turned to international terrorism and drug trafficking for *A Season in Hell* (1989).

*Eye of the Storm* (1992, also published as *Midnight Man*) introduced Sean Dillon, who has featured in virtually all of Higgins's novels since. Dillon is a professional assassin who has worked for a number of terrorist groups. His latest employer is Iraq, which wishes to strike a blow against Britain, and the result is an entertaining cat-and-mouse game between the wily killer and a seasoned counterterrorism specialist. Dillon survives and is coerced into working for the British in *Thunderpoint* (1993), in which he is sent to South America to retrieve a cache of World War II documents from a sunken German submarine. The less satisfactory *On Dangerous Ground* (1994) has him dodging Mafia hit men in Hong Kong. He then crosses swords with a master assassin in *Angel of Death* (1995), now thoroughly redeemed despite his terrorist past.

*Drink with the Devil* (1996) brought back Liam Devlin, now an elderly man. Dillon is assigned to locate a cache of hidden gold that could finance a fresh rebellion in Northern Ireland, an exciting adventure that echoes *The Savage Day*. Another

old plot is recycled, though with considerable embellishment, in *The President's Daughter* (1997). The president of the United States discovers that he has a grown daughter previously unknown to him, but she is kidnapped while he is still trying to deal with the ramifications, and he calls upon Dillon to help rescue her. Dillon has to track down a rogue splinter group within the IRA in *The White House Connection* (1999) and avenges a woman's death by destroying a criminal empire in the routine *Day of Reckoning* (2000). He averts a plot to assassinate the president in *Edge of Danger* (2001) and makes an enemy who returns in *Midnight Runner* (2002). Another lost Nazi document resurfaces in *Bad Company* (2003), but this time Dillon is charged with suppressing it rather than making it public. Terrorists and assassination figure again in *Dark Justice* (2004), but by now the Dillon books were becoming somewhat predictable, and his next adventure, *Without Mercy* (2005) is a rather flat vigilante novel. The most recent volume in the series, *The Killing Ground* (2007), draws upon various standard Higgins's ploys, including the kidnapped girl, the fanatical terrorist organization, and the daring rescue.

*Sure Fire* (2006, written with Justin Richards) is the only recent novel that does not feature Dillon as its protagonist. Two young men must grow up fast when their mysterious father is kidnapped. *Night of the Fox*, *Eye of the Storm*, *Confessional*, *On Dangerous Ground* and *Thunder Point* have all been filmed.

### Critical Analysis

In his early novels Higgins mixed two distinct types of heroes. The first is the professional, either a criminal, a soldier, a revolutionary, or some variation, all of which are naturally inclined toward violence and adventure. He occasionally used the innocent bystander as hero, similar to the works of HAMMOND INNES and ERIC AMBLER in that the protagonist would be drawn into a situation not of his own making and would rise to the occasion. As his career progressed, Higgins concentrated increasingly on the professional, differentiating himself from most of the other leading thriller writers.

Particularly in the early novels, Higgins had yet to master his storytelling skills. The novels vary from comparatively slow-moving and derivative to

fast-paced and original. The steady improvement becomes obvious during the early 1970s, and by the time he wrote *The Eagle Has Landed*, he was adept at nearly every aspect of his craft, creating strong characters, believable and vivid backgrounds, and plots that were both exciting and convincing. Most of his better novels are set during World War II and are secret histories, that is, they describe historical events that did not in fact occur but which—in the context of the story—were hidden from public view. Although other adventure writers have occasionally used flawed heroes as protagonists, Higgins seems to prefer characters who have contradictory motivations. Several of his heroes are admitted terrorists, others are criminals of one sort or another, and even those who work for legitimate government organizations are often guilty of bending the rules for their own convenience. His diverse settings, well-paced plots, and multilayered intrigues have made him one of the most respected and successful of contemporary thriller novelists.

### ***A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929)**

#### **Richard Hughes**

Richard Arthur Warren Hughes (1900–76) was an English journalist who wrote both poetry and prose but who published only four novels, of which this is the most famous. *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929, also published under the name used for its theatrical version as *The Innocent Voyage*) was also made into a motion picture in 1965. It is one of the classic stories of adventure at sea as well as an insightful look into the minds of children.

The story opens by describing the Bas-Thorntons, an English family who are staying in Jamaica in an attempt to better their financial circumstances. Although the time frame is not stated, steam vessels are beginning to replace wind power and piracy is no longer a serious problem. The two oldest children of the five are Emily and John, and it is Emily who shapes much of the activity for them all, particularly by creating a fantasy world of fairies and talking animals. Through their eyes the reader catches glimpses of the society in which they live, where it is important for the white Europeans to keep up appearances at all times, but more important, readers also discover that they

experience a kind of reality of which adults are unaware. A minor earthquake shakes the island, after which Emily is convinced that she will never again experience anything as exciting. She does indeed seem less impressed by the hurricane that destroys their home and all of their belongings only a few days later. As a result of this disaster, their parents decide it is time for the children to be sent home for schooling in England.

A few days after the ship sails, the parents receive a letter from the captain indicating that his ship was attacked by pirates and that all the children were killed. The ship was in fact taken by pirates, without a battle or any serious injuries, and the children only remained aboard the pirate vessel by accident after the captain sailed away in a panic, perhaps thinking them dead. The pirates attempt to put them ashore at a settlement, unsuccessfully, and John accidentally falls to his death. Almost through inertia, the pirates accept that the children will accompany them during their inept and mostly unsuccessful attempts to seize more ships. Only after Emily is injured in another accident and then, in a moment of panic, stabs a captured sea captain fatally, do the pirates decide to make other arrangements.

The captain rightly suspects that the murder during their last encounter has finally roused the authorities and that warships will be looking for them. To avoid being caught with the children aboard, he changes the name and appearance of the ship and arranges for the children to be transferred to a larger vessel, pretending that he has rescued them from pirates. Emily is the first to reveal the secret, but then it is elaborated upon as the children—who had fantasized battles and horrid deeds throughout their stay—discover that the adults on the new ship believe every word and incident they invent. They are returned to London, where the stories become even wilder, and in response to the curious prodding of adults, the children eventually come to believe that they must be true. This anticipates the spate of false, suppressed childhood memories that were so controversial during the 1990s. Ultimately, Emily testifies against the pirates and, although not by intention, she tips the balance in favor of their conviction for murder, the one crime they never committed.

### Critical Analysis

Hughes's novel was quite controversial when it first appeared, in part because of the unusual depiction of the children as amoral, unpredictable savages. It was almost certainly an influence on William Golding's *LORD OF THE FLIES* (1964) and is still one of the most fascinating glimpses into the minds of children ever written. Hughes warns the reader in the opening pages that this will not be a gentle or sentimental story, describing the death of two elderly women who were either deliberately starved to death or were fed ground glass. The landscape is littered with crumbling ruins and a litter of feral kittens, which are so unfriendly that the woman who finds them is just as glad when they run away. The kittens' behavior is a foreshadowing of that of the children, and later, when they first go aboard ship, Hughes even compares them to curious cats. The children occasionally resort to "disproportionate stories," distinguishing them from actual lies.

Emily and her siblings, like their parents, are preoccupied by appearances. She is shocked not by the fact that other children run around barefoot, risking bites by scorpions, but more accurately because such behavior seems like inappropriate informality. Events and experiences have a disproportionate effect. During the hurricane early in the novel, the children are more distressed about the fate of their pet cat than the welfare of an elderly servant who is found lying limp and unconscious near his hut, because there is "a vast distance between a Negro and a favourite cat." Hughes also tells us that children "have little faculty of distinguishing between disaster and the ordinary course of their lives." What the parents and children alike believe to be their love for one another is not love at all. The children hardly even notice their mother and are much more attached to one another than to either parent.

Emily is the character whose personality is revealed in the most detail. She is only 10 years old when the story opens and is just beginning to think of herself as a discrete individual. Hughes allows the reader to observe her thoughts in order to illustrate that there is a fundamental difference between the personalities of children and adults. One example is their ability to be deceptive. While

adults always experience misgivings about lying, even if it is just fear of being caught, children "can hide the most appalling secret without the least effort" and, because they believe in their own inventions, they are very convincing. Later, only half humorously, Hughes tells us that babies and toddlers are not really human; "they are animals," and behave in accordance with a different set of norms than adults or even older children. With maturity comes a different "kind of thinking," and the immature are in one sense "mad." After they leave the pirates, Emily has a confrontation with a baby alligator, and the two are described as seeming more alike than different.

Although the pirates display some fondness for the children, it is difficult to feel sympathetic toward them. One of the girls is molested, then dropped overboard when she is wrongly suspected of killing a man. Emily narrowly escapes similar treatment, and in general they are tolerated rather than looked after. They are kept in the hold and make friends with a pig and a monkey, suggesting that they are savages or animals rather than civilized human beings. The fact that the pirates did not actually murder anyone does not absolve them from complicity in the death of a captive, who was actually killed by Emily in a nervous frenzy. The adults in the novel function as little more than elements in the setting, however, because what Hughes sought to accomplish and brilliantly achieved is an insightful, sometimes frightening look into the unformed mind of individuals who have yet to become truly human.

### *Hopscotch* (1975) Brian Garfield

In addition to his novels of contemporary adventure and suspense, American writer Brian Francis Wynne Garfield (1939–) has written western fiction as Brian Wynne and Frank Wynne. His crime novel *Death Wish* (1972) became a best seller and was followed by several sequels. He wrote a number of suspense novels and other fiction as well as notable biographies and histories. *Hopscotch*, which won an Edgar as best novel, may be his best single novel. The protagonist is Miles Kendig, an American intelligence operative stationed in Europe during the last years of the cold war; he has grown very

tired of what he sees as an elaborate game whose participants have lost their moral compass. After being involuntarily retired, he receives a message from a Soviet agent, Yaskov, suggesting that the two meet the following day to discuss an interesting proposition. Yaskov wants him to change sides so that he can stay in the “game” and not die of boredom. Kendig declines, and they part amicably.

When an obnoxious American agent demands to know the substance of the conversation, Kendig is finally stirred to find a new interest in life, a dangerous new game pitting himself against former friends and foes alike. To encourage the others to play, he writes the first chapter of a book designed to reveal many of the dirty tricks performed by both East and West, including some shocking revelations about political assassinations, then sends copies to multiple publishing firms, knowing that the various intelligence agencies will know about it within days. The game is under way. He will continue to send portions of the projected book until and unless they can stop him.

An active agent named Cutter, who is nearly as iconoclastic as Kendig, is put in charge of the operation to capture or kill him, and he is able to anticipate many of Kendig’s maneuvers. Unfortunately, this does not result in Kendig’s capture or death, even when he lures them on by letting them get so close that he is nearly captured. He risks losing the game again when he breaks into the house of a British intelligence official and is arrested by the police who, fortunately, mistake him for a simple burglar. Kendig escapes but realizes that it is time to cover his tracks before his luck runs out and he is killed by one side or the other. He fakes his own death, and the book never gets published.

Several of Garfield’s other thrillers are also adventure stories. *Relentless* (1977) pits a Native American police officer, Sam Watchman, against a desperate fugitive in a manhunt across the American Southwest. Watchman returns in *The Threepersons Hunt* (1974), which also focuses on a dangerous search through the desert. *The Romanov Succession* (1972) involves an international conspiracy during the early stages of World War II. *Kolchak’s Gold* (1973) describes an exciting treasure hunt to find a fortune smuggled out of Tsarist Russia before the Communist takeover. The characters in

*Tripwire* (1973) plan to transport a load of stolen goods down a dangerous river. *Fear in a Handful of Dust* (1979) is an intense story of survival in the desert. *The Paladin* (1980) is a tale of espionage during World War II. Garfield has written very little adventure fiction since the 1980s but the best of his work has remained in print.

### Critical Analysis

This unusual novel about the intelligence community, though it is not really a spy story, is built around one of the most interesting characters in adventure fiction. Garfield establishes Kendig’s dissatisfaction and ennui in the opening scenes, during which he casually plays a hand of poker in which he has no interest even though the pot is the largest in his gambling career. He envies other people their ability to believe in their convictions, implying that he no longer does. The possibility of spending a leisurely life with considerable wealth does not appeal to him. His disenchantment is in part due to the changing nature of the job he once held; field agents and analysts are being replaced by computers, and decisions are based on achieving specific goals, with no reflection upon the means employed. He also sees less difference between the East and the West than in the past, considering the two sides as equally repugnant, although the “West’s leadership was more petty” than the East. Field agents are being reduced to puppets manipulated by their bureaucratic superiors and are not truly committed to anything but routine. It is typical that Kendig is valued more by his former enemy than by his former employer.

The depiction of government as dysfunctional and contradictory is illustrated both directly and indirectly. Myerson, Kendig’s last boss, invites him to lunch just after asking for his resignation. A recruiting poster touting job training in the armed forces is adjacent to another soliciting employers to hire unemployed veterans. Kendig is equally contemptuous of the FBI, which he describes as spending much of its time organizing Communist cells, just so that it will have something to report about. He characterizes the senior intelligence community as “not the sort of people who learned from history” and admits to himself that despite being entertained by the idea that his actions will

help reform the system, it is likely to be only a momentary disruption of the status quo.

Part of the novel's appeal is the idea of one iconoclastic rebel fighting against the establishment, the natural tendency to side with the underdog, and people's general distrust of the intentions of large government agencies who feel as though they are above the law. With the exception of Cutter and possibly Yaskov, all of Kendig's major opponents are depicted as corrupt, self-serving, or inept, and even those two have become cynical. Cutter bears a strong resemblance to Kendig and is perhaps a younger version. He is just as clever and resourceful, and there are indications that his opinion of his superiors is closer to Kendig's than they would like it to be. At one point he declares that "this office is making a deliberate effort to corner the market on stupid blunderers." He sees a semblance of a conscience in his assistant, Ross, "which is all but unique around here."

Although there are moments of humor and a happy ending, the reader is likely to have mixed feelings. There is no doubt that the criminal acts and overbearing attitude of Kendig's opponents are going to continue. The incomplete manuscript will never be published, and the most onerous of his enemies believe Kendig is dead and that they have won. The other agents are "caught in the gears of their great machinery" and subscribe to a "sinister idealism." The suggestion that espionage has become increasingly technological and less dependent on humans has since been demonstrated by the rising popularity of techno-thrillers by Tom Clancy and others.

Despite the effect failure will have on his own career, Cutter professes considerable respect for Kendig throughout the chase. Even Ross, though initially hostile to Kendig and unable to understand his motives, eventually acquires a grudging respect for their quarry, though he knows that his own actions might help Myerson to have Kendig killed. Eventually Kendig's own attitude changes, and he realizes that he has developed a new interest in living, even though he has maneuvered his enemies into a position where his death seems inevitable.

Although Garfield wrote the screenplay for the film version, he kept only the core story and changed the tone considerably, adding a great deal

more humor. Although the result was an entertaining movie, it has a very different atmosphere than has the book.

### **Howard, Robert E.** (1906–1936)

Although Robert E. Howard is best remembered for his fantasy adventures, he produced a surprisingly large body of adventure fiction, more than 300 stories in less than 10 years, including many historical adventures, westerns, prizefighting stories, and detective tales. His most famous single character was Conan, a barbarian warrior who lived in an imaginary prehistoric civilization, rising from slave to ruler during the course of his career. That series alone spawned two motion pictures, a television series, a comic book, and several dozen novels by other writers, as well as giving rise to the sword and sorcery branch of contemporary fantasy fiction. The popularity of Conan and other Howard heroes such as Kull, Solomon Kane, Bran Mak Morn, and Red Sonja has to a great degree overshadowed Howard's nonfantastic adventure fiction, much of which is among his best work. He was so prolific that he was able to support himself writing full time for the low-paying pulp magazines during his early 20s, but he maintained a surprisingly high level of quality and originality even at his most productive pace.

Howard grew up in Texas, where he learned to love literature but detest schooling. He was athletic and interested in sports, particularly boxing, and became fascinated with history, declaring it an endless source of inspiration for his fiction. His mother developed tuberculosis and was sick for several years, which contributed to his frequent spells of deep depression. Howard had talked of suicide and death at an early age and professed to believe in reincarnation. When his mother's illness became terminal, Howard took his own life, leaving behind a large body of work, including many fragments, some of which were later completed by other writers. Although none of his fiction was collected in book form during his lifetime, Howard's frequent use of the same characters in multiple stories suggested obvious groupings when his renewed popularity in the 1970s brought most of his work back into print. His continued appeal to a general readership eventually led to academic recognition.

Howard wrote the best of his nonfantastic adventure stories during the 1930s, much of it for *Oriental Stories*, a pulp magazine that only lasted four years. Howard was greatly influenced by Harold Lamb's historical novels and nonfiction, and was particularly interested in the interface between the Asian and European peoples. The Orient, in this context, was primarily what people now think of as the Mideast. Typically his heroes were larger than life characters, quick with their fists and afraid of nothing, succeeding because they allowed the warrior side of their nature to displace the veneer of civilization. They were usually involved in either a perilous trek across dangerous territory or were searching for some kind of hidden treasure. Although most of his stories had upbeat endings, his protagonists were occasionally doomed by their own human failings. If they died, they did so heroically.

Many of these stories were set during the Crusades, a period that particularly interested Howard because of the clash between European culture and that of the Middle East and Asia. Godric de Villehart, a Norman knight introduced in "Red Blades in Black Cathay," is a prime example on the kind of protagonist that most interested Howard. Although Godric set out on the Crusades intending to find a worthy purpose in life, he quickly became disillusioned. The wealthy Christian merchants whom he assumed would support his efforts begin to require payment before they will assist Crusaders even to reach the Holy Land, let alone support them while they are in battle, and the war against the Saracen has become an affair of commerce rather than a heartfelt endeavor or an expression of religious fervor. In order to pay for food and shelter, the Crusaders were forced to work as mercenaries, and were more often sent into battle against their fellow Christians than against the enemy that they had intended to fight. Godric acquires a new patron who sends him on a thankless task, to lead a body of Crusaders on a quest to find the mythical kingdom of Prester John and steal its riches. There follows a series of adventures as his steadily shrinking company eventually rescues a princess and find themselves fighting for Genghis Khan. Through Godric, Howard relates that over time, vigorous and barbaric societies will always overcome more sedate civilizations.

"Hawks of Outremer," set shortly after the Third Crusade, introduced Cormac FitzGeoffrey, a Gaelic knight who is not disillusioned by the worldly aspect of the Crusades only because he never held any illusions to start with. His journey to the East is not a virtuous quest but is primarily an effort to escape his enemies in Ireland and secondarily to make his fortune. Despite his worldly ambitions, he is principled enough to attempt to rescue a man to whom he is indebted. FitzGeoffrey returned in "The Blood of Balshazzar," this time framed as a thief and murderer. Similarly, Cahal Ruadh O'Donnel, the hero of one of Howard's most famous adventures, "The Sowers of the Thunder," is an Irish expatriate who travels to Jerusalem with a party of 13th-century Muslims. Howard's extensive research into the culture and technology of that era is impressive, presenting an accurate and very believable stage on which his heroes and villains can contend. O'Donnel is forced to join the men following a prominent Crusader who has turned outlaw and who attacks Christian caravans, but who is ultimately revealed as one of the few honorable men in the story despite his criminal avocation. The two eventually sacrifice their lives in a vain effort to warn the inhabitants of Palestine about an impending attack by Mongols. Despite a tendency to use coincidences as shortcuts in the plot, this is one of Howard's best adventure stories.

The protagonist of "Lord of Samarcand" is a Scot rather than Irish, but is otherwise almost indistinguishable from O'Donnel. The setting is late in the 14th century when warlords ruled most of the Orient. Donald MacDeesa helps defeat a particularly cruel tyrant, only to be betrayed by his close friend, Timour (aka Tamerlane) and the treacherous Persian girl whom he loved. Other stories with similar themes and treatments include "The Lion of Tiberias," "Gates of Empire," "Road of Eagles," "Hawks of Egypt," and "The Shadow of the Vulture." Howard maintained his high standards of historical accuracy in almost every story. Although his protagonists are generally interchangeable, they are all men of principle, and sometimes they perish for just that reason.

Several of Howard's Oriental stories were set in the then present, i.e., the 1930s. Three of the best of these feature Kirby O'Donnell, an American

but otherwise virtually interchangeable with several of his other heroes. He first appeared in "The Treasures of Tartary," an adventurer and fortune hunter traveling in Afghanistan, hoping to steal a fabled treasure, a less ambitious version of the quest of Dravot and Carnehan in Rudyard Kipling's "THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING." His quest is helped along by another string of coincidences, but he succeeds primarily by using both his wits and his physical strength to overcome obstacles, negotiating a secret passage and surviving a clash between two rival bands, neither of them favorably inclined toward him. O'Donnell returned in two additional stories, both better than his debut. In "Swords of Shahrazar" the treasure is an important dispatch; if it falls into the wrong hands, it could result in the end of British rule in India. His final appearance was in "The Curse of the Crimson God," in which he sets out on another perilous treasure hunt. Other stories with similar plots include "The Brazen Peacock" and "The Black Bear Bites."

The Francis Gordon stories are also among Howard's best work. Gordon is yet another fortune seeker. He tracks down a fabulous treasure in "Blood of the Gods" and infiltrates a secretive organization of thieves in British India in "The Country of the Knife." Gordon's final adventure was set during World War I, but while "Son of the White Wolf" is exciting, it is also a rather confusing story about renegade Turks, espionage, and double agents.

Howard's stories of the Old West often had a very different flavor than did traditional westerns. In an era in which western fiction invariably had happy endings and impeccably honorable heroes, Howard created men who were a mixture of strength and weakness, good and bad. Sometimes they succeeded despite their faults, but sometimes they failed despite their merits. He emphasized the role of personal honor rather than the rule of law as the motivating force for those who wore a badge, similar to the code espoused by ZANE GREY, but had a more realistic view of its implementation. The best of his western tales are "The Vultures of Wahpeton," "The Last Ride," and "The Dead Remember." His later westerns, though still adventure stories, tended to be more whimsical, resembling folk tales rather than the dark, violent, action stories of his earlier years. The best of these

is "The Riot at Bucksnot." A separate series of stories, collected as *A Gent from Bear Creek* (1975), featured Breckinridge Elkins, an American explorer and woodsman whose exploits included encounters with grizzly bears, outlaws, and even the legendary pirate, Captain Kidd. Surprisingly, Howard wrote very few pirate stories, but two of them are among his better adventures, "Black Vulmea's Vengeance" and "Swords of the Red Brotherhood."

Most of Howard's boxing stories featured Steve Costigan, a two-fisted fighter who traveled the world, getting into trouble whenever he put foot on shore. Howard's characters fought formally and informally, using their fists to get out of trouble and their mouths to get into it. The Dennis Dorgan stories were originally meant to feature Costigan, but Howard was so prolific that he had to change the name and use a pseudonym to sell these. "The Iron Man" and "Champ of the Forecastle" are particularly fine examples.

### Critical Analysis

Howard's fantasy adventures are overwhelmingly dominated by Conan, who has become the icon for sword and sorcery heroes. As is the case with most of Howard's short fiction, the Conan adventures have been collected and cross-collected numerous times, although a single omnibus edition appeared in 2000. The best individual short stories include "The Tower of the Elephant," "Black Colossus," and "People of the Black Circle." Howard excelled at creating larger-than-life characters whose motivations and thought processes were straightforward and logical. Although capable of sophisticated thinking, Conan is typical of Howard's protagonists, with no patience for obfuscation or justification. An act or person is either good or evil, and the immediate response to evil is action, usually violent. The author clearly had considerable sympathy for simpler times, and it is evident that he believed civilization was a temporary state of affairs, that it would collapse of its own complexity and be replaced by the more desirable barbarism, which at least promoted honesty and the right of each person to choose his or her own course.

The Kull stories are considerably less polished than most of his other fiction, but "The Mirrors of Tuzun Thune" and "The Shadow Kingdom" are

excellent and the latter is often cited as the first example of pure “sword and sorcery” as a subdivision of fantasy. Bran Mak Morn was a Pictish warrior who battled various enemies, usually Romans, and whose best adventure is “Worms of the Earth.” Solomon Kane was a 16th-century pirate whose notable history had high points in “The Hills of the Dead” and “Red Shadows.” Other fantastic adventures of note include “The Gods of Bal-Sagoth” and the supernatural story “Pigeons from Hell.”

Given the volume of work Howard wrote in a very short time, and the low-paying markets for which he was working, one might expect crude, rushed prose and poorly constructed plots. The aspect of his work that made Howard so successful then, and so enduringly popular since, is the surprising sophistication of his work. His historical settings are thoroughly researched, and his prose is smooth and often filled with remarkably vivid descriptions. This may in part be attributed to his early efforts to become a successful poet. Although his verse is well regarded, it was not economically feasible for him to devote much time to work he had little opportunity to sell. His characters, particularly the protagonists, are often interchangeable, but his willingness to accept that even the best people are imperfect helped distinguish his work from the cookie cutter adventures that filled the pulp magazines in the 1930s and are overwhelmingly forgotten today. It is no accident that virtually all of Howard’s fiction has been reprinted, usually multiple times, while even the names of most of his contemporaries are remembered only by specialists.

### ***The Hunt for Red October* (1984)**

#### **Tom Clancy**

In his 1975 novel, *HOPSCOTCH*, Brian Garfield’s protagonist laments that espionage has become increasingly a matter of electronic surveillance, computer analysis, and technological innovations. The accuracy of that prediction is demonstrated by the rise in popularity of high-tech spy stories such as this one by American writer Tom Clancy (1947– ), the first of several books to feature Jack Ryan as primary protagonist.

Captain Marko Ramius is the commander of a revolutionary new Soviet submarine, but he is half

Lithuanian, despises the communist system, which he blames for the death of his wife, and decides to strike back. On what should have been a training mission, he murders the political officer and implements a plan to defect to the West. Several of his senior officers are aware of his intentions; all are unmarried men who share his distaste for the Soviet system. In Washington Jack Ryan, a data analyst for the CIA, is assigned the job of determining the submarine’s capabilities. When the Soviet navy mobilizes in an attempt to destroy Ramius before he can accomplish his goal, Ryan advances his opinion that the submarine plans to defect. That means that they need to contact Ramius to start with, and then develop a ruse by means of which the United States can maintain custody of the submarine and avoid having the Soviets demand that their property be returned. Matters are further complicated by a malfunction aboard another Soviet submarine in the area that results in its loss.

The presence of so many Soviet ships in close proximity to the East Coast necessarily forces the American navy to respond. The senior officers managing the situation must find a way to conduct the operation safely and effectively without informing most of their subordinates of too many details because to do so would compromise any clandestine effort to acquire and hold onto the *Red October*. Ryan eventually manages to communicate with Ramius and divert the submarine to a secret rendezvous. A further complication arises when another political officer aboard the ship has secret orders to sabotage the submarine if necessary to prevent it from falling into enemy hands.

Ramius fakes a malfunction in order to plausibly evacuate his crew, after which Ryan is forced to kill the saboteur. A mothballed American submarine is detonated underwater in the vicinity to convince the Russians that the *Red October* has been destroyed. The climax comes when one of the Russian submarines correctly identifies the *Red October* and attacks, but the attacker is destroyed fortuitously before they were able to broadcast an alarm.

#### **Critical Analysis**

*The Hunt for Red October* was originally published by the Naval Institute Press and might never have

become a best seller had it not been praised publicly by President Ronald Reagan. It was Clancy's first published novel although subsequent books with Ryan as protagonist have sometimes been set earlier in his career. Ryan eventually becomes president of the United States in *Executive Orders* (1994). Clancy based some of the elements in the book on real events, a mutiny and a defection both of which took place within the Soviet navy.

Clancy clearly believed that communism was a doomed system because it "ignored a basic human need" by banning religion. Ramius, though not specifically a Christian, was taught from the Bible as a child and believes in the existence of the human soul. The repression of religion was just one of the many grudges he held against the system; the death of his wife due to a corrupt and inefficient medical system finally pushed him past the breaking point. Ramius also recognizes troubling inconsistencies, like the state's declaration that informing on other citizens is laudable, while he was himself shunned as a child because it was mistakenly believed that he had done so. Critical as Clancy might be about the Soviet hierarchy, he shares the almost equally cynical view of Western intelligence agencies as other writers such as Brian Garfield and John Le Carré. One of the naval officers working with Ryan observes that the CIA "had too many people whose only skill was kissing ass."

Much of the novel involves technical discussions or descriptions of various pieces of equipment. Some authors of techno-thrillers have become so wrapped up in the details that they lose many of their readers, who either cannot follow the intricacies or just are not interested in that aspect of the story. Clancy maintains a careful balance between the two, interjecting technical data at intervals, avoiding most jargon in favor of comprehensible terms, and never prolongs the

exposition so that it interrupts the flow of the main plot. In fact, the story switches viewpoint constantly, from Ryan to the *Red October* and to other vessels in both the American and Soviet fleets, and the quick shifts of perspective help to create a sense of urgency and forward movement. Clancy also demonstrates a thorough understanding of how military operations are conducted, as well as a reasonable interpolation of what might happen given the intricacies of international politics at the time the novel was written.

Several other factors also helped to distinguish *The Hunt for Red October* from the general run of techno-thrillers. The first and most important was Clancy's construction of a complex but understandable set of interlocking puzzles—how could the fugitive submarine be contacted and acquired without murdering those crew members who wish to return to the Soviet Union and without the Russians discovering the truth. Second is the structure of the novel, a sequence of short, succinct scenes that waste little time and never dilute the suspense. Third is Clancy's familiarity with the technical aspects of the story and his ability to make even extraordinary circumstances seem completely plausible and authentic. The retrospective criticism of Ramius's career by senior party members at the Kremlin has a similar air of verisimilitude. Although there is not a great deal of time spent developing the characters, readers learn enough about both Captain Ramius and Jack Ryan to give them depth and individuality.

In an interesting similarity between Clancy's novel and Brian Garfield's *Hopscotch*, a trusted professional leads both sides on a chase because he possesses knowledge equally valuable to East and West, and in both cases the fugitive's superiors are characterized as corrupt and self-serving, the two plots resolving by a ruse involving a faked death.

**Innes, Hammond** (1914–1988)

Ralph Hammond Innes was an English novelist, the majority of whose books were contemporary adventure stories, although he is sometimes compared to Joseph Conrad because of his introspective characters and vivid settings. Innes initially worked as a journalist and served as an artilleryman in the air defense during World War II along with fellow writer VICTOR CANNING, which experiences are reflected in several of his early novels. He was also a veteran yachtsman, and his interest in the sea is increasingly evident in his fiction, particularly after 1955. Innes was noted for the careful research he conducted before writing each of his novels, which were set in various parts of the world.

Innes's first significant novel was *Wreckers Must Breathe* (1940, also published as *Trapped*). The location is the coast of Cornwall, an area infamous in the past because criminals hung false beacons to lure ships onto the rocks where they could be plundered. The protagonist becomes curious about a mysterious stranger and eventually uncovers a plot involving a hidden German submarine. Unlike many wartime adventure stories, Innes took great pains to make both his characters and situations plausible, a strategy that he never abandoned throughout his career. *The Trojan Horse* (1940) similarly blended suspense and high adventure, with its protagonist on the run from the British police after being framed for a crime he did not commit, and also from a secret organization of Nazi spies who want to steal a technological breakthrough he has made. *Attack Alarm* (1941) less successfully mixes espionage with

accounts of action in the British air defense system, reflecting Innes's service in the military.

His next novel, *Dead and Alive* (1946), was written before the war but revised prior to publication to reflect the changed state of Europe and is closer in tone to the novels he would write for most of the rest of his career. The protagonist labors to make a stranded landing craft seaworthy and later sails to postwar Italy, where he gets almost innocently involved in black market intrigue. *The Killer Mine* (1947) is very similar in tone and in terms of the main conflict but is much more polished. An Englishman who deserted during the war regrets his past decisions and wants to start a new life, for which purpose he agrees to help drain the water from a submerged mine so that it can be used as a base by smugglers. Many of Innes's heroes would have similarly troubled pasts and wrestle with moments of weakness, discovering an inner strength and sense of honor that earns them a reprieve from the difficult situations in which they find themselves.

*The Lonely Skier* (1947, also published as *Fire in the Snow*) was filmed as *Snowbound* (1948). Typically, the protagonist has come to the Alps for an innocuous reason, in this case to develop background for a movie script. He is drawn irresistibly into a plot involving a cache of Nazi treasure believed to be concealed in the area. There are some similarities in his next novel, *Blue Ice* (1948), which also involves a treasure concealed in the mountains. Innes had by now established himself as possibly the most popular adventure story writer

alive, and he continued to hold that position for another decade. *Gale Warning* (1948, alternate title *Maddon's Rock*) was the first of several novels to be set partly or entirely at sea. A ship, supposedly sunk during the war, sends a radio distress call a year later. One of the survivors from the initial attack learns of the signal and decides to discover what really happened that day, and where the ship has been during the interval. This was one of Innes's most effective novels.

*The White South* (1950, alternate title *The Survivors*) was filmed as *Hell Below Zero* (1954). The first half of the novel takes place during an ocean voyage, but the scene changes when the ship is caught in the Antarctic ice and the survivors must struggle against the elements in what is possibly the most hostile environment on Earth. There is another guilt-racked protagonist in *The Angry Mountain* (1950), a man who finds renewed interest in life when he becomes involved in a web of international intrigue in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius just before a major eruption. Innes had been on the scene when Vesuvius erupted in 1944. The Berlin airlift is the backdrop for *Air Bridge* (1951), with another typical Innes character on the run from the police because he was forced to break the law by circumstances not entirely within his control.

*Campbell's Kingdom* (1952), which was filmed under that title in 1957, is a variation of the traditional western, updated to the 20th century and set in the Canadian Rockies. The protagonist inherits a tract of wilderness land from his grandfather, who believed that there was oil to be found there. When the grandson tries to prove that the theory is correct, he runs into trouble from a group of ruthless and ambitious men who want the property for reasons of their own. *The Naked Land* (1954, also published as *The Strange Land*) repeats the same basic plot in a new setting, North Africa. Various international interests are vying for control of a piece of land in Morocco. Innes used the same general location a few years later for one of his best novels, *The Doomed Oasis* (1960), which deals with intrigue surrounding efforts to preserve a dying outpost of civilization in the desert.

Arguably the best of his many novels is *The Wreck of the Mary Deare* (1956), which also resulted in the most successful of the films made

from his work, released in 1959 and starring Gary Cooper and Charlton Heston. It had previously been partially developed for the screen by Alfred Hitchcock. The *Mary Deare* is a barely seaworthy ship whose last voyage is troubled by murder, robbery, and mayhem. *The Land God Gave to Cain* (1959) starts with the receipt of a distress call from an explorer lost in the Arctic wastes, resulting in a rescue mission complicated by hidden motives and violence. *Atlantic Fury* (1962) was another thrilling novel of life at sea, this time aboard a freighter during a particularly violent storm.

Although he continued to write steadily until just before his death, he no longer published one or two books per year, and usually at least two years passed between titles. *The Strode Venturer* (1965) marked a turning point in the author's career. The action moves from secretive meetings of wealthy and influential men in London to relatively uncharted ocean reaches and an island that seems to have disappeared. This is the first novel in which Innes's growing concern about the erosion of the natural world became evident. *The Levkas Man* (1971) follows the longest fallow period in Innes's career and displays his usual mixture of mystery and action, this time involving the search for an archaeologist in Greece who may have made an extraordinary discovery. *The Golden Soak* (1973) deals with another variety of treasure hunt, efforts to locate a legendary Australian gold mine that may not have been exhausted. Both *The Golden Soak* and *The Levkas Man* were produced as miniseries in Australia in 1979 and 1981, respectively.

*North Star* (1974) followed his usual pattern. The protagonist is another fugitive pursued by both the police and a group of violent labor activists, as well as from past decisions that he now regrets. He takes a dangerous posting aboard a ship searching for oil in the North Sea, where he discovers that he has simply exchanged one dangerous situation for another. *The Big Footprints* (1977) is set in a very near future when elephants are on the verge of extinction and the future of Africa may lie in the hands of people with few principles and secret influence. This novel has a more overtly conservationist theme than any of Innes's other work, except possibly *The Black Tide*. *The Last Voyage* (1978) was a departure from his usual format

although it also involves a lengthy sea voyage. It is more of a historical novel, a fictionalized version of the adventures of Captain Cook, cast in the form of a lost diary. Cook was an early explorer of the Pacific Islands whose actual diaries have been published. Innes recapitulates his explorations and encounters while fleshing out the characters of the captain and his crew.

*Solomon's Seal* (1980) is also set in part among the Pacific Islands. The protagonist is conducting research into the history of the Holland family, which leads him on a voyage of discovery and peril involving rebellion, voodoo, and a mystery that extends across generations. There is a strong stand against pollution in *The Black Tide* (1983). A man bent upon revenge against an old enemy takes passage on a ship whose captain and crew are peculiarly secretive, and who are somehow connected to a foundering oil tanker off the coast of Cornwall. *The High Stand* (1986) returns to the Canadian wilderness, where a millionaire has disappeared after mysteriously changing his will. The protagonist searches for him and uncovers an impressive fraud, but only after overcoming a series of adversities and thwarting a crew of villains.

The setting for *Medusa* (1988) is a Mediterranean island where the protagonist runs a small business, runs into trouble with a local gang of smugglers, then is framed as an assassin. Once again an unlikely and somewhat flawed hero rises to the occasion and triumphs over misfortune. Innes returned to the icebound south for his next two novels. *Isvik* (1991) recounts the chronology of efforts to recover a wrecked ship locked in the ice of Antarctica, with that plot intertwined with additional conflicts among members of the expedition, leading to a dramatic climax. *Target Antarctica* (1993) involves a similar effort. Edwin Cruse is hired to fly an aircraft out of the Antarctic, but he is unaware that a bitter woman is determined to use that event to avenge herself against her old enemies. The last published Innes novel was *Delta Connection* (1996), set during the fall of the Ceausescu regime in Romania. A visitor caught in the upheaval is forced to kill a secret police officer and then escapes from the country, after which he is sent to Afghanistan for further adventures.

Innes also wrote several adventure stories for younger readers under the name Ralph Hammond.

### Critical Analysis

In most of Innes's novels the primary dramatic conflict is usually man against nature or some act of God, although there are almost always human opponents as well. This tendency was tempered somewhat during the 1980s because Innes became increasingly concerned with conservation, pollution, and environmental destruction, most significantly in *The Big Footprints*. Although many of his leading characters tend to be similar, he always expended considerable effort to provide them with depth and uniqueness, so that the reader would feel empathy for their situation and be caught up in the ensuing excitement. His attention to background detail was extraordinary, and he brought a number of unfamiliar international locations to vivid life. The reader is consistently left with the feeling that the adventures described could have happened to perfectly ordinary people rather than suave secret agents or professional adventurers.

Often the main character experiences additional conflict internally. Although ultimately all of them redeem themselves, considerable doubt about the moral integrity of his protagonists often arises in the early chapters. They are driven men, motivated by ambition, by the need for revenge, by fear of discovery or capture, or by more complex emotions. In *Killer Mine*, the hero is perfectly willing to cooperate with smugglers in order to reclaim the life he had previously thrown away through a poor decision. The hero of *Air Bridge* is a wanted criminal; *Delta Connection* follows the adventures of a man who has technically committed murder; the protagonist of *The Black Tide* is planning to kill in cold blood as an act of vengeance. These and other examples suggest that it is not what one has done in the past but what one decides to do in the present that is important, that past mistakes can be atoned for by counterbalancing wise decisions. In some cases the best way to save the world might be to save ourselves.

While Innes does not present a vision of the world as bleak as that of Stephen Crane's "The OPEN BOAT," which suggests that the universe is at best uncaring, at worst hostile to humanity, it is

clear that he believes that the natural world is to be respected as a dangerous place. Innes's books are filled with tremendous storms, erupting volcanoes, searing deserts, and frozen wastelands. Particularly in the latter books, he stresses the importance of integrating civilization into the ecosystem, maintaining a balance rather than risk irreversible damage, as in *The Big Footprints* and *The Black Tide*. Titanic forces contend in all of his novels, whether the battlefield is the physical world or the minds of their characters.

### ***Ivanhoe* (1819) Sir Walter Scott**

*Ivanhoe* was the fifth of 16 Waverley books, a series of historical novels by the Scottish novelist and poet Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) and the first that he set outside Scotland. Scott was one of the first writers to become widely popular in both Europe and America while he was still alive, and several of his books and poems are still widely read today. *Ivanhoe* was a strong influence on Howard Pyle's *ROBIN HOOD* (1883) and other modern retellings of that story. Scott's historical adventures, which essentially invented the form, often placed heavy emphasis on the concept of chivalry and the daring deeds of his protagonists although he has been criticized for his unrealistic portrayal of the periods in which his stories were set.

*Ivanhoe* is undoubtedly his most popular novel and probably his most influential. Wilfred of Ivanhoe is a young Saxon living in an England that has become increasingly dominated by the Norman invaders. Ivanhoe is forced to leave home after being disinherited because he professes love for his father's ward, Rowena, interfering with a planned political marriage. He goes off to the Crusades, then returns in disguise to compete in a tournament. There he uncovers a plot to rob a moneylender and make off with his daughter, Rebecca, acquiring an archenemy in the process. The theft and abduction are averted for the time being. Ivanhoe competes in the tournament, conducts himself well, but is wounded. Unable to go home, he is tended by Rebecca, but they are both taken prisoner by allies of King John, joined by Ivanhoe's father, his ward, and others in captivity. King Richard has also secretly returned to England,

and he appeals to Robin Hood and his band to help lay siege to the castle and effect a rescue. A battle ensues with various complications before all but Rebecca are rescued. She is now the prisoner of Ivanhoe's enemy, a templar knight, but the political situation is such that she is falsely accused of witchcraft and will die unless a knight can be found to represent her interests.

Ivanhoe successfully defends Rebecca, who is acquitted of the charges against her, and the evil templar dies. Ivanhoe receives his father's permission to marry the ward, thanks to the intercession of King Richard. Various threads of the story are resolved, and the couple lives happily ever after.

### **Critical Analysis**

Historical novels almost always involve adventures, not because people lived more exciting lives in the past but because writers make use of the most interesting times and events as backgrounds for their fiction. Scott, whose previous novels had all been set in his native Scotland, chose Yorkshire in the aftermath of the Norman Conquest because it was the perfect venue for a story involving the clash of separate cultures in early Britain.

Scott's romanticized vision of early Europe was useful for literary purposes but was not always historically accurate. There is, for example, a Franciscan monk in the story even though the order had not yet been established. His novels are criticized for their idealized and inaccurate descriptions, but they are also credited with stimulating interest in the past. It is generally believed that Mark Twain, who was particularly outspoken in his dislike of Scott's fiction, wrote *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889) in part as a critique of Scott's unrealistic version of history. Twain also named a wrecked ship in *ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN* (1884) the *Ivanhoe*, and in the final chapters pokes considerable fun at the implausible events found in novels by Scott and Alexandre Dumas. *Ivanhoe* shares the common flaws of Scott's work—wordiness, melodramatic speeches, and contrived plot elements. Despite his shortcomings, however, Scott is credited as being the first modern historical novelist. Nor was he entirely uncritical of the chivalric code. Although he praises its encouragement of heroic deeds and

acts of compassion, he also points out the tendency toward reckless individualism and bravura.

Another interesting and unconventional aspect of the novel is the relationship between Ivanhoe and Rebecca. Although he ends up marrying Rowena, his father's ward, Rebecca is clearly the more complex and interesting character. It is also worth noting that Scott included an admirable Jewish character, Rebecca, during a time when anti-Semitism was on the rise. While Scott recognized that modern Britain evolved out of a melding of different cultures, he was not yet ready to suggest that such a disparate couple could make their lives together. It is difficult to judge the attitudes of the characters themselves because Scott never allows the reader to observe their thoughts, only their physical actions.

The plot, while exciting, is sometimes difficult to follow and in a few places so contrived that it seems implausible. Athelstane, who was dead and

buried following the battle to free the prisoners, reappears later in the novel, having been prematurely interred, which is not only a jarring development but contributes very little to the story from that point forward. Ivanhoe's archenemy conveniently dies at a crucial point because of the pressure of conflicting desires. Although Robin Hood and some of his followers make an appearance, their part is relatively minor, although Scott did invent the story of Robin splitting one arrow with another during the archery tournament, which became a standard element in the later versions of the story.

Although there are similar adventures in some of the other Waverley novels, only two are notable. *Quentin Durward* (1823), which even Mark Twain admired, is set in 15th-century France. A Scotsman joins the guard for King Louis XI and becomes peripherally involved in French politics in addition to his ordinary duties. *Rob Roy* (1817) takes place during the Jacobite rebellion.

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## ***Jamaica Inn* (1936) Daphne du Maurier**

Daphne du Maurier (1907–89) was a British writer of French descent who was active in Cornish politics and who set much of her fiction in Cornwall. She is best known for her suspense novel *Rebecca* (1938) and her short story “The Birds,” both of which were turned into movies by Alfred Hitchcock, as was *Jamaica Inn* (1939), although in this last case with a dramatically altered ending.

Following the death of her mother, Mary Yellan goes to live with her aunt and uncle. Her uncle, Joss Merlyn, is the landlord of the Jamaica Inn, which has developed a bad reputation in recent years, catering only to the dregs of society. Joss is a brute who mistreats his browbeaten wife, and Mary immediately regrets that she has come. The inn clearly does not accept overnight guests, and even the bar is infrequently opened. Mary discovers a locked room that is somehow connected with mysterious visitors in the night, but her aunt will not tell her what is really going on. Within a week she suspects that her uncle is involved in a smuggling operation, but for her aunt’s sake she decides not to inform the authorities.

Mary meets the landlord’s young brother Jem, who seems more agreeable despite being a self-professed horse thief, but she dares not trust him despite their mutual attraction. After an unpleasant visit from a local magistrate, Mary secretly follows Joss onto the moors, becomes lost, and is rescued by Francis Davey, a vicar, to whom she confesses her belief that murder has been committed at the inn. Her troubles worsen when she learns

that Joss is not just a smuggler but a wrecker, part of a band of criminals who lure ships onto the rocks and murder any survivors who might interfere with their pillaging of the wreck.

She eventually falls in love with Jem, who is taken into custody for stealing a horse, and has another encounter with the vicar, who tells her that the government is about to take steps to put the wreckers out of business. Joss becomes infuriated one night and forces her to accompany his crew on their next mission, which precipitates a crisis because the countryside is roused against the wreckers. Joss fears another person, probably the real brains behind the gang, which leads to the exciting climax in which readers learn who is really directing the wreckers.

### **Critical Analysis**

Daphne du Maurier’s literary reputation has fluctuated dramatically. Her two best-known novels, *Jamaica Inn* and *Rebecca*, were both written during the 1930s, when romantic escapist fiction was very popular. A critical bias against “popular fiction” prevented a serious analysis of her work until much later in her career, at which point her ability to create vivid settings and situations was finally appreciated. She was heavily influenced by the 19th-century work of the Brontë sisters and Wilkie Collins. It also seems probable that the opening sequences of this novel—a carriage journey through dark and unfamiliar territory, the nervous coachman who abandons her at the first opportunity, the building shunned by its neighbors—was inspired by Jonathan

Harker's arrival at the castle in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1898), which it closely resembles.

The characters are constantly described as having qualities like those of animals. Mary makes particular note of her uncle's teeth, which make him resemble a wolf, and later she thinks of him as a "monstrous cat," though he "drinks like a fish." He in turn compares her to a cat and suggests that the two of them were more alike than either of them realized. Her aunt's devotion to her brutal husband is "doglike." Even the road outside the inn "stretched like a snake" into the distance. Mary herself is particularly sensitive to the signs of animals, hears the mice in the wall, the cock's crow in the morning, and notices the marks of horses' hooves in the mud. She walks the moors during the days to watch the ravens, sheep, and even the buzzards. One of the customers is described as a "poor beast" who squats "like an animal." Joss refers to the man's "dog tricks" and orders that he be stripped of his clothing to emphasize his lack of human qualities. When this is done, the man responds by "bleating like a sheep." Mary later sees him "screaming like a hare" while his pursuers brandish a horsewhip, and thinks of them as a pack of hounds when they are searching for her.

She also characterizes her aunt as a butterfly, though Joss compares her to a magpie, and when the vicar drives her home, she notices that he "looked like a bird" and later he refers to her as a newborn chicken. Even Jem describes his hunger as feeling "as empty as a worm," tells Mary that he grew up "as wild as a hawk," describes his brother's drinking bouts as leaving him as unsteady as "a newborn calf," and later tells Mary that she looks like a monkey. When he taunts Mary about her supposed timidity, she "rose like a fish to the bait." Joss refers to his victims as "flies caught in treacle," and when he reveals his secret to Mary, she sees him as being a monstrous beast who has "lost all hold on humanity." Indeed, in her eyes, all men and women were "like the animals on the farm." Another man resembles a "turkey," and an infant makes the sounds of a kitten.

The use of animals to denote character and behavior is particularly noticeable in the waning chapters because the near disastrous final campaign of the wreckers reduces them to panicky animals,

"rats in a trap" who "scuttle like curs" and bleat like sheep. Joss responds by vowing they should "live like fighting cocks." The symbolism carries through to the end, when Mary begins to realize the truth about the vicar by finding a sketch he drew with his congregation as sheep and himself as a wolf. Du Maurier is suggesting that despite the trappings of civilization and culture, people can be like animals who respond instinctively to danger and uncertainty.

Du Maurier's physical descriptions of her settings is particularly noteworthy. She does a superb job of evoking the desolate but beautiful landscape of the moors. She sees the surrounding countryside as a kind of amorphous entity, a masculine image whose crags are fingers pointed at the sky. The quietness there has a pagan quality and is "not the peace of God." Other inanimate objects are described in human terms as well. The clock ticks irregularly, "choking and gasping like a dying man" and later its ticking sounds like footsteps. The furnishings at the vicar's house seem like "sleeping things." The hills frown, the night is an ally, the dawn an enemy, and the daylight accuses the wreckers of their guilt.

Mary Yellam is a complex character, brave enough to stand up to her uncle and to wander the moors by herself, but perceptive enough to understand that the line between aversion and attraction is a very thin one. She recognizes her own ambivalent feelings about Jem, whom she thinks she could love under other circumstances even though he is a thief and possibly a murderer. Eventually she realizes that the right course is to rely on herself rather than on others, and she is still planning her own escape when Jem rescues her at the climax. She reveals the conflicts of duty, duty to family, the law, and to oneself, and the transition from dependence to independence of spirit.

### James Bond

The character of James Bond was created by British writer Ian Fleming (1908–64), who produced 14 books in the series before his death, writing very little else during his career. Additional installments were added after Fleming's death, including one by Kingsley Amis (1922–95), one by John Pearson,

16 by John Gardner, and 12 by Raymond Benson, as well as two movie novelizations by Christopher Wood. An additional James Bond novel was written by South African writer GEOFFREY JENKINS, based on notes compiled by Jenkins and Fleming, but it has never been published. Bond has become the archetype for the suave intelligence operative, and the success of the original series spawned numerous imitations from writers including Philip McCutchan, Philip Atlee, Edward S. Aarons, Norman Daniels, Robert Sheckley, F. van Wyck Mason, and others, although the closest to a serious rival was probably the Matt Helm novels by DONALD HAMILTON. The character and career of Bond in the books is considerably different from his portrayal in the movies, which became progressively less related to Fleming's work.

Bond first appeared in *Casino Royale* (1953), which has been filmed twice for the screen and once for television. Bond is assigned the job of ensuring the bankruptcy of a foreign agent by beating him at baccarat. Fleming claimed that portions of the novel were based on his own experiences during World War II. The success of the first Bond book led to a quick sequel. In *Live and Let Die* (1954) Bond travels to Jamaica to undermine the operation of Mr. Big, who is helping to finance Soviet spy activities. The novel is sometimes criticized for its negative or patronizing portrayal of the black characters and its superficial knowledge of voodoo. An industrialist plots to explode a nuclear weapon in London in *Moonraker* (1955, also published as *Too Hot to Handle*), and Bond then uncovers an illegal diamond smuggling operation in *Diamonds Are Forever* (1956). Fleming also wrote a nonfiction book about the same subject, *The Diamond Smugglers* (1957).

*From Russia with Love* (1957) is probably the best-constructed and written of Fleming's novels. Bond subverts a young Russian woman in order to steal a decoding device, initially unaware that it is a trap whose purpose is his own assassination. Fleming may have intended to end the series here since the novel ends with Bond's apparent death; however, he returned as a convalescent in *Dr. No* (1958), which was inspired in part by the works of SAX ROHMER. The novel was originally intended as a television screenplay, but was

subsequently expanded when the initial film project fell through. Bond is recovering from his poisoning during a vacation in Jamaica, where he discovers and outwits another spy who has been sabotaging American missile tests. *Goldfinger* (1959), another of the more interesting stories, involves a plot to steal all of the gold in Fort Knox. *For Your Eyes Only* (1960) is a collection of shorter adventures.

*Thunderball* (1961), in which Bond thwarts a plan to steal nuclear weapons, was also originally a screenplay, in this case written by Fleming and two other writers, but the novelization appeared well before the movie, which was later remade as *Never Say Never Again* (1983). *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962) is narrated by a young woman, and Bond appears only toward the end of the novel. She is menaced by two gangsters until Bond shows up and saves the day. It seems likely that this was not originally meant to be a Bond story at all. *On Her Majesty's Secret Service* (1963) involves the brainwashing of British citizens so that they will carry biological weapons into the country. Bond does get married this time, but his wife does not survive the book. His self-esteem and career is therefore on the skids in *You Only Live Twice* (1964), but he manages to finally kill Blofeld, his archenemy, before suffering an accident that results in amnesia. *The Man with the Golden Gun* (1965) was the last full-length novel written by Fleming, whose health had been failing for several years. Bond returns to London, brainwashed, almost assassinates M, is deprogrammed, then sent to Jamaica on another assignment. The plot rambles a bit and is less convincing than its predecessors. *Octopussy and the Living Daylights* (1966) is another collection of shorter pieces.

Given the popularity of the James Bond character and the success of the movie franchise, it is not surprising that the series was eventually continued by other writers. Kingsley Amis wrote the first, *Colonel Sun* (1968), under the name Robert Markham. A second novel under that pseudonym, actually written by South African writer Geoffrey Jenkins, has not yet been published. It sends Bond on a mission to Greece to rescue a kidnapped M and foil a plot by Chinese agents to embarrass the British government.

After a gap of more than a decade, John Gardner was chosen to continue the series. He

wrote 14 original novels between 1981 and 1996, as well as two movie novelizations, starting with *License Renewed* (1981). Gardner brought Bond and his supporting characters up to date and pitted him against a terrorist organization that plans to seize several nuclear power plants. SPECTRE, an international criminal organization introduced by Fleming, was reconstituted in *For Special Services* (1982), and a neo-Nazi organization attracts Bond's attention in *Icebreaker* (1983). Bond is discredited and fired as part of a ruse to ease his way into SPECTRE's organization in *Role of Honor* (1984), a story line that carries over into *Nobody Lives Forever* (1986).

Someone is assassinating former agents in *No Deals, Mr. Bond* (1987); a cult threatens to destabilize British politics in *Scorpius* (1988); and another group of terrorists menace a summit meeting in *Win, Lose or Die* (1989). *Brokenclaw* (1990) involves Chinese agents intent upon stealing a new submarine technology and is reminiscent of *Dr. No*. The best of Gardner's Bond novels is *The Man from Barbarossa* (1991), in which he works with Israeli agents to defeat terrorist plans in the Mideast. Gardner's last four novels are less interesting, involving various plots to murder intelligence operatives and other officials, another neo-Nazi organization, and more terrorists. Gardner's plots resembled those of Fleming, but the atmosphere was considerably different. Bond seems less brash and dispassionate, and the political intrigues more convoluted.

Raymond Benson took over the series with *Zero Minus Ten* (1997), which abandoned some of the background developed by Gardner. It combines several previous Bond themes, terrorists in Hong Kong, a wealthy but criminal businessman who cheats when gambling, and a stolen nuclear weapon. There is another hijacked nuclear missile in *The Facts of Death* (1998), along with a biological weapon designed to provoke a war between Greece and Turkey. *High Time to Kill* (1999) mixes stolen secrets and more terrorists, and introduces the Union, an organization with which Bond will joust for two more books. *Doubleshot* (2000) is a very complicated novel in which the Union attempts to discredit Bond and maneuver England into another war. Bond apparently wipes the organization out in *Never Dream of Dying* (2001). Benson's final origi-

nal Bond novel was *The Man with the Red Tattoo* (2002), which brings back an old friend and pits them both against a bioengineered virus. Benson also novelized some of the movies.

Charlie Higson has written about the young James Bond, and there is a trilogy about Miss Money Penny by Kate Westbrook. A new novel by Sebastian Faulks, *Devil May Care*, was published in 2008. Unlike the previous continuations, this novel is set within Fleming's original timeline and is a direct sequel to *The Man with the Golden Gun*. Bond's continuing popularity is supported by the movies, despite their divergence from the books, and by his stature as the prototype for all gentleman spies that followed. Although the stories are frequently implausible and often contrived, Bond remains a genuine hero in a time when there are too few of them in literature.

### **Jaws** (1974) **Peter Benchley**

American writer Peter Benchley (1940–2006) became an immediate celebrity with the publication of this, his second novel, which became the inspiration for a series of four movies and countless imitations. The story opens with a young woman going for a late night swim during which she is fatally attacked by a shark. Sheriff Martin Brody and two other men discover a portion of her body on the beach the following morning. Brody plans to close the beach for a couple of days to be safe, but there are pressures in the town to keep things quiet so that there will be no effect on the tourist season. A second fatality a few days later makes it impossible to prevent the news from reaching the public, and even before Brody can begin to react to this new development, a third victim is killed in front of a crowd.

Brody has numerous problems in addition to the shark. He feels guilty about giving in to pressure from the mayor, which resulted in two deaths. In addition old tensions involving his wife, who used to be a part of the wealthy, sophisticated vacation crowd before she married him, resurface with the arrival of Matt Hooper, a shark expert who knew her years earlier. Hooper and Brody's wife become intimate, and Brody suspects the truth, resulting in open tension between the two men.

After several days pass without incident, Brody consents to open the beaches again, and another attack almost claims a new victim. Desperate, Brody hires Quint, a grizzled, opinionated fisherman, to hunt down and kill the shark, and he and Hooper accompany Quint to sea despite Brody's mild phobia about the ocean. They eventually find the shark, which displays signs of unusual intelligence, and the ensuing battle leaves the shark, Hooper, and Quint all dead.

The movie *Jaws* appeared in 1975, the first summer blockbuster. The subsidiary story lines differ dramatically from the novel. There were three inferior sequels and many indirect copies involving everything from sharks to bears.

### Critical Analysis

Adventure stories such as *CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS* (1897) by Rudyard Kipling and "The OPEN BOAT" (1898) by Stephen Crane observe that nature is not necessarily hostile but essentially uncaring. Other writers, however, contend that nature can at times be most definitely and personally hostile and that is certainly the case in *Jaws*. The novel was not only an immense best seller, which resulted in a major film, but it became a significant icon in the suspense field. There were numerous attempts to capitalize on its success by invoking sharks and other ocean dwellers in books and on the screen. Most of these have justifiably fallen into obscurity, but Benchley's original still remains the benchmark against which all similar stories are measured. There is a tendency among critics to believe that if a book is immensely popular, it probably lacks serious literary value. This view assumes that entertainment in itself is not a literary value. While *Jaws* has several flaws, it is economically written, suspenseful, and clearly touched a sensitive nerve in the reading public.

Nor is the novel completely lacking in serious purpose. Benchley raises more than one social issue during the course of his story. The most obvious one is the conflict of public interest between those who wish to suppress the story of the shark attack because it might discourage the essential tourist influx and Brody, who caves in to pressure but still thinks that the right thing to do to protect the public was to have closed the beaches after the initial attack. The local merchants may have been

shortsighted but they were motivated by a common interest in the welfare of the town as well as themselves, and past history suggested that the initial attacks would not be repeated.

Benchley also works in some criticism of the pampered, privileged class, characterizing the people on the beach as being so divorced from the real world that they have "no body odor." They are not "stupid or evil," were well-educated and bright, but they "chose to know almost nothing." They were insulated from the real world by wealth and the barriers, real and imaginary, erected between themselves and those lacking their advantages. Their disengagement from normal human feelings is illustrated by the tourists who come to Amity solely in hopes of seeing a shark attack.

The subplot in which Ellen Brody tries to recapture her lost youth by having a dinner party for Hooper helps to establish her personality as well as increasing the reader's understanding of her husband. It further emphasizes the artificiality of the society created by the elite. The subsequent mutual seduction between Ellen and Hooper seems out of character, and its length seriously interferes with the flow of the central plot. Brody's suspicions about their rendezvous fuels the animosity that comes to a head aboard Quint's boat, but his reaction seems disproportionate given the lack of evidence.

Benchley also touches on the question of endangered species when Quint reveals that he plans to use a dead porpoise as bait for the shark. Hooper objects strenuously to what he sees as a violation of laws involving environmental protection, but Quint takes a more pragmatic approach, insisting that the laws were aimed at large-scale harvesting and not the occasional animal he kills. He refuses to accept that the law should be allowed to interfere with his ability to make a living.

Although *Jaws* is his most famous novel, Benchley's later adventure fiction is generally better written. Treasure hunters and tourists clash fatally in *The Deep* (1976). *The Island* (1979) follows the efforts of a writer to investigate the Bermuda Triangle, where he discovers that a society of pirates has secretly survived for more than three centuries, a low-key lost world adventure. *Beast* (1991) was an obvious attempt to repeat the success of *Jaws*, this time using a giant

squid to menace bathers and fishermen. Although quite suspenseful and well written, it was clearly a reprise. *White Shark* (1994, also published as *Creature*) also involves a sea creature, in this case a biologically engineered humanoid with gills that kills various people before being hunted down and destroyed. Most of Benchley's novels were made into motion pictures.

### Jenkins, Geoffrey (1920–2001)

South African journalist and writer Geoffrey Jenkins was the author of sixteen novels of high adventure. He also wrote a JAMES BOND novel that has yet to be published, based on discussions with Ian Fleming. Jenkins's work was popular in both Europe and America during the first half of his career, but his later novels were not as successful outside of Europe.

Jenkins made his debut with *A Twist of Sand* (1959). The protagonist is Captain Geoffrey Peace, who agrees to take a scientist on a journey by land and sea into a particularly dangerous region on the African coast. Their ordeal includes a 30-mile trek across a desert, encounters with a variety of wildlife, and the attentions of a sniper determined to murder the scientist. Jenkins was immediately compared by critics to HAMMOND INNES and Nicholas Monsarrat because of his combination of high adventure and accurately depicted sea lore.

His second novel anticipated some of the elements in *JAWS* (1974) by Peter Benchley. *The Watering Place of Good Peace* (1960) describes the efforts of two men to build an effective shark barrier along part of the coast of Mozambique. Their efforts are contrasted to a previous endeavor by two men with similar names who were engaged in a more mysterious effort in the same region a century earlier, and the two separate stories eventually intersect. *A Grue of Ice* (1962, also published as *The Disappearing Island*) changes settings dramatically to a legendary island in Antarctica. There is conflict between the crews of two ships who find themselves in unexplored waters, but the real story is the fight for survival against the frigid wasteland and treacherous currents.

*The River of Diamonds* (1964) continued the muted lost world theme. The story takes place in

Africa during the early days of the diamond miners. The title refers to an underground river that leads to a fabulous cache of precious stones. Despite the promise of a great fortune, every previous attempt to exploit the diamond field has ended in violent death, a mystery that is unraveled by the end of the novel. *Hunter Killer* (1966) is still another story of violence at sea, this time more in the mode of Tom Clancy. A British-American missile project is in danger of being shut down, so a prominent scientist—who happens to be the vice president of the United States—is to be transported by submarine for a critical meeting. The protagonist is the hero of *A Twist of Sand*. Although an exciting adventure story, the major plot device—the race to launch the rocket before American submarines can track them down—is too contrived to be plausible.

*Scend of the Sea* (1971, also published as *The Hollow Sea*) bears some superficial structural similarities to *The Watering Place of Good Peace*. The protagonist has long been fascinated by the fact that his grandfather was lost at sea in almost the same place where his father disappeared when the aircraft he was piloting was brought down by a storm. He and his companion must solve the mystery surrounding the coincidence without becoming simply the next unexplained disappearance. The novel is based on two actual disasters, though the author's solution is imaginary. Diamond smuggling is at center stage again in *A Cleft of Stars* (1973), in which a wrongly convicted man risks death at the hand of a pair of killers in order to discover the secret of a diamond larger than any ever before discovered.

A South African naval officer is sent to the diamond coast in *A Bridge of Magpies* (1974) where he and two others become interested in the wreck of a ship sunk by a German U-boat during World War II. A mysterious freighter and a phantom submarine appear, and a deadly game to solve a decades old puzzle begins. Another World War II mystery is at the core of *Southtrap* (1979), which includes a shipwreck, murder, and treason. *A Ravel of Waters* (1981) is also set at sea, aboard a revolutionary new sailing vessel whose qualities are to be proven by a record-breaking sea voyage. That journey is interrupted, however, by the murder of the captain and other acts of sabotage that

suggest there is more than casual interest in the ship's capabilities.

*The Unripe Gold* (1983) returns to the diamond fields of South Africa. Various outsiders show up in a small mining town, each of them obviously concealing a secret. Their common interest is a vein of iridium, the control of which could alter the international balance of power. A British engineer joins a geological team in the somewhat similar *Fireprint* (1984) and uncovers a plot to exploit local natural resources. *In Harm's Way* (1986) involves terrorists and a deadly race against time to prevent a disaster. A new dam is about to be opened in Lesotho in *Hold Down a Shadow* (1989), but a vengeance-minded fanatic wants to sabotage the project and cause a massive flood. *A Hive of Dead Men* (1991) reworks themes from the previous two books. Terrorists plan to use a public ceremony as the setting for their next attack. Jenkins's final novel was *A Daystar of Fear* (1993). It also reworks old themes, including the wreck of a ship sunk during the war. A stolen necklace, a perilous dive into the ocean, and sinister conspiracies all lead up to an exciting though predictable climax.

A *Twist of Sand*, *The River of Diamonds*, and *In Harm's Way* have all been filmed, the last as *Dirty Games* (1989).

### Critical Analysis

Geoffrey Jenkins wrote novels in very much the same style as Hammond Innes, although they almost always include sequences set at sea. His characters vary only slightly from one book to the next, and his villains are generally more colorful than his heroes. Jenkins's ability to describe life at sea and survival in hostile environments was exceptional. Most of his plots are straightforward, even predictable, although embellished with some clever twists. Given the uniform quality of his books, it is surprising that he had so little success in the United States from the 1970s onward, although Jenkins's occasional criticism of international politics in general and American foreign policy in particular may have been a factor. Jenkins also tended to rework the same ideas and used similar settings in most of his novels, particularly during the 1980s, which suggests that he had settled into a comfortable formula and was not interested in being innovative.

### *Johnny Tremain* (1943) Esther Forbes

This Newbery Award-winning novel for young adults by American writer Esther Forbes (1891–1968) is still considered one of the most notable works for that audience, and it has been almost continuously in print since its original publication. In addition to her several novels for younger readers, Forbes wrote *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In* (1942), for which she received a Pulitzer Prize for history, and her familiarity with the historical background is evident throughout the novel.

Johnny Tremain is an apprentice silversmith living in Boston just as the American Revolution is about to begin. He is one of three teenagers with the same master, and the other two are somewhat jealous of his quick wits and obvious popularity with the family, which expects him to marry one of the daughters. Even Paul Revere admires his work. His future is cast in doubt, however, when an accident leaves him with a crippled hand that seems likely to end his career before it has started. He becomes sullen, preoccupied, and resentful. Eventually he decides to risk everything and approach a prominent merchant to whom he is supposedly related, even though the man is known to be dishonest.

After unjustly being accused of a crime, Johnny is acquitted, but his nemesis, Mr. Lyte, continues to take advantage of him. He finds a new vocation, riding a horse and delivering messages throughout the city, employed by a kindly family with a printing press. That connection provides him with a good vantage point to view the events leading up to the rebellion and allows him to meet such critical figures as John Hancock and Sam Adams and eventually to be part of the boarding party that dumped the British tea in Boston Harbor.

Johnny becomes further involved, eventually carrying messages to rebel groups, spying on the British soldiers, and concealing stolen weapons. The story ends with the death of his best friend, Rab, but with the rebellion well under way. Johnny's own future seems to have taken a new and more solid form.

### Critical Analysis

*Johnny Tremain* is Forbes's most famous novel and has remained popular with young adult readers ever since it first appeared. The story of Paul

Revere is one of the most familiar incidents of the Revolutionary War, and the book uses that event and the lure of patriotism to draw readers into an imaginary re-creation. Forbes did not “write down” like many other writers aiming at a young adult audience. Although her protagonist is a young boy, the prose is sophisticated and intelligent, and the situations he faces are the same as those that would apply in adult fiction. In this she follows in the tradition of Robert Louis Stevenson, who frequently used teenage protagonists in his adventures, as in *KIDNAPPED* (1886).

The unenviable position in which Johnny finds himself, with no family, few friends, and a disability that makes only the most undesirable jobs possible, is in sharp contrast to conditions today, and Forbes draws attention to a situation where a child is forced by necessity to make decisions which should be deferred until he is more mature. The sources of conflict in the days just prior to the Revolution are too complex for him to understand them completely, but he is caught up in the general dissatisfaction with British rule, which Forbes introduces through veiled conversations and suggestive actions initially on the periphery of the story, later at its center.

There is a considerable contrast between the two families who take Johnny in. The Laphams are concerned primarily with maintaining the family business and finding good matches for their daughters. They value hard work but discount any education not related directly to their profession. When Johnny is no longer able to perform to their expectations, they find reasons to scorn and even punish him, and eventually abandon him to his fate, though their children remain loyal to their friend. The Lornes are equally involved with their own business, but they value book learning and the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake. They make allowances for his deficiencies and help him to better himself, training him to ride a horse and making their extensive library available for his use.

As the tension grows between the colonies and the crown, Forbes begins to reveal the underlying sources of tension, the belief by the English government that the colonials would place more value on “their pocketbooks than their principles” and the determination by certain colonists to force a clean break with the old world. Johnny

recognizes that the leaders of the rebellion do not want a peaceful solution, that they believe independence is necessary even if that means a war with the British. Despite his loyalties to the Sons of Liberty, Johnny harbors no ill will against those ranged against them. He matures quickly under these circumstances, discovering that at 16 he is “a boy in time of peace and a man in time of war.” Forbes wrote the novel in the middle of World War II, and that probably influenced the shape of the final chapters, which suggest that it is sometimes necessary for a few to make the ultimate sacrifice to benefit the many.

### ***Journey into Fear* (1940) Eric Ambler**

British thriller writer ERIC AMBLER (1909–98) wrote two classic novels early in his career, both involving international intrigue. The first was *A COFFIN FOR DIMITRIOS* (1939), the story of an international criminal mastermind. The second was this story of espionage and assassination, in which he introduces many of the literary devices that would reappear frequently in his subsequent novels.

Not surprisingly, given the time it was written, the novel is set during the opening days of World War II. Graham, the protagonist, is an engineer working for an arms manufacturer who is traveling to Turkey on business related to the upgrading of their navy. Graham is an undistinguished, even unimaginative man who is more interested in the problems of his profession than in the war unfolding around him. On the eve of his departure for home, he is lightly wounded by a man lurking in his hotel room, an incident he dismisses as a botched burglary until an interview with the head of the Turkish secret police convinces him otherwise. The authorities prevail on him to forgo the train and take a second-rate passenger ship to Greece, aboard which he runs into a professional dancer named Josette, whom he had met earlier.

It is not long before the reader is led to suspect that some of the passengers are not what they appear. The Turkish salesman, Kuvetli, works for a company that does not exist. Josette becomes hostile when Graham suggests she may have been in Greece before, and her husband is an obviously shady character. Haller seems inoffensive, but why

would a German academic choose to book passage among people hostile to his country? Graham just wants to get the trip over with, but when he returns to the ship after a layover in Athens, he discovers that there is a new passenger aboard, the same man who tried to kill him in Turkey. Graham takes Josette into his confidence, but she proves to be an unhelpful ally. When he discovers that his revolver has been stolen from his cabin, he begins to panic.

Graham decides his only choice is to steal the killer's gun and throw it overboard, but his plans go awry when Haller reveals that he is also a German agent and that Kuvetli works for Turkish intelligence. Kuvetli suggests an alternative for the normal landing in Genoa to avoid assassins waiting for them. Their best-laid plans go awry, however, and it is up to Graham to act on his own behalf if he is to survive to reach England.

### Critical Analysis

Ambler's protagonists are almost always initially oblivious to their danger and stumble into trouble through accident or mischance. Graham falls into this pattern, although his reluctance to accept that he is in danger despite his expertise in naval ordnance and the urgency of his present mission is perhaps slightly unreasonable. The heroes of Ambler's later books were much quicker to understand their situation and take steps for their own self-preservation.

In an unusually clear insight into Graham's mind early in the story, he finally realizes that someone is trying to kill him. He moves from disbelief to a conviction that he must have unconsciously done something terribly wrong to merit such terrible enmity. The head of the Turkish secret police is able to convince him that he faces a genuine threat, even providing a psychological profile of the professional assassin. This detail about the psychology of both men was very unusual in suspense fiction during the 1940s, which generally painted its heroes and villains in solid black and white.

Ambler's aversion to war and its effects on the innocent is obvious in this novel and his later work. One of the characters describes war with considerable understatement as "unpleasant," and others refer to it as "stupid" and as "a terrible

thing." The ambiguity is illustrated when Graham asserts that "most armies commit atrocities at some time or other." It is worth noting that the German spy master aboard the ship is well-mannered and sociable despite the rude response he receives from some of the others and despite the nature of his true mission. Although he describes himself as a "good German," he is nonetheless convinced that Europe has set about its own self-destruction and that the quest for knowledge will be set back by centuries. He observes that the appreciation of art and creativity has been replaced in recent years by admiration only of brute force. Further blurring the distinction between right and wrong, another of the passengers insists that during World War I strategic targets were left untouched because they were protected by business interests that straddled national and political lines.

One of the distinguishing features of Ambler's spy novels is that many seem entirely plausible. His heroes are usually terrified amateurs rather than the self-assured, larger-than-life figures of the JAMES BOND series and similar work. Nor is the killer an archfiend. He is described at various times as simply a businessman, dispassionate and methodical, with no genuine interest in the issues that dictate the necessity of Graham's death. Graham's vacillation between abject terror and complete disbelief is convincingly portrayed and entirely reasonable. His flirtation with Josette embellishes his character even further, and his ultimate realization that it will lead nowhere is poignant and believable.

Ambler also makes extensive use of irony. The only one of the passengers whom Graham actually likes is Haller, who is not only a German national, but eventually reveals himself as Moeller, the master spy who ordered Graham's murder. Moeller despises public violence, however, and invests considerable effort in finding a way to eliminate Graham in private. Graham's relationship with Josette undergoes several ironic reversals. When he meets her at the night club and arranges a meeting in Paris, he has no intention of keeping his promise. When he discovers that she is a fellow passenger on the ship, he pretends that he intends to keep their tryst, and during the course of the voyage his attitude changes and he decides to do so. When

circumstances change again, he reluctantly accepts the fact that the assignation is impossible, but after escaping his enemies, he is almost accidentally reunited with her. But now that he is emotionally prepared to have an affair, he discovers that he must pay for her time, which disposes of his romantic interest entirely.

*Journey into Fear* is not just a classic spy novel. The characters, even the subsidiary ones whom Graham meets aboard ship, are fully developed and sharply defined. Ambler's portrayal of the emotional state of a man under extreme stress is insightful and convincing. It is in many ways the very best of his novels.

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## ***Kidnapped* (1886) Robert Louis Stevenson**

Because of his poor health, Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94) traveled extensively outside his native Scotland and used foreign locations like the South Pacific, India, and America for some of his fiction. This historical novel was set primarily in his native Scotland, however, during the 1750s, and follows the adventures of young David Balfour, who sets off to the House of Shaws following the death of his parents. When he arrives, he is somewhat dismayed by the unpleasant reputation of the house, managed by an uncle whose very existence was previously unknown to him, but he perseveres in his intention to pay his respects and determine whether his own position might be improved by the association.

He is greeted somewhat uneasily by his uncle Ebenezer, who almost immediately tries to trick him into falling to his death and who obviously is afraid of the young man. Balfour notices some oddities about the respective ages of his father and uncle and begins to suspect that he may be heir to the money which Ebenezer hoards in his house. This is confirmed when Ebenezer arranges for him to be taken captive aboard a disreputable ship and carried off to be sold into slavery in the New World.

His fortunes begin to change when the ship runs down a boat and takes aboard Alan Breck, a proscribed Scottish rebel and member of the Stewart clan. The two of them take over the ship's roundhouse and successfully defend it against the crew, killing several of them. The ship is subsequently wrecked, and Balfour finds himself alone on a small, uninhabited island off the coast of Scotland. After

he reaches the mainland and survives encounters with two separate thieves, he learns that Alan and at least some of the crew have also survived the shipwreck. He sets off in pursuit of Alan and after several additional adventures stumbles into the middle of an assassination, after which he is assumed to be in league with the rebels.

Reunited with Alan, the two become hunted fugitives as they make their way across Scotland to Balfour's home county, where they cleverly trick Ebenezer into revealing his criminal actions. Balfour comes to an accommodation with him by which he becomes self-supporting.

Stevenson wrote a sequel, *Catriona* (1893), which details the further adventures of the two main characters in Scotland and in Holland, ending with Balfour's marriage, but it was not well received and is rarely read today.

### **Critical Analysis**

Although Stevenson's work had been dismissed in the past as simply entertainments for children, his literary reputation has grown in recent years. The long period of neglect may have resulted from the presumption that a book whose protagonist is a boy in his teens would not be serious entertainment for an adult, and since many of Stevenson's heroes are in fact teenagers, it was easy to dismiss him on that basis. The distinctions about the differing audiences for fiction today did not apply in Stevenson's time, and the challenges that Balfour faces, both physical and philosophical, are the same that would have greeted an adult character.

Balfour is unusually intelligent and begins maturing almost from the outset. Although he overestimates his own abilities to deal with his treacherous uncle, he quickly recognizes that his initial evaluation of the sailors by whom he is held prisoner was unfairly low. “No class of man is altogether bad,” he decides. He is further perplexed when Alan Stewart tells him of the feud between his family and the Campbells, whom he considers totally without honor. It is particularly troublesome for Balfour because his only true friend and benefactor was a Campbell. The complexity of the political situation—the story is set in the years following the unsuccessful Jacobite rebellion against the crown—and the ingrained animosity between clans in Scotland is difficult for him to comprehend. Balfour learns to respect most of the Highlanders among whom he wanders, even though he personally remains loyal to the throne. Stevenson interjects his own sense of values when one of the characters asserts that the only two things of which people should never grow tired are “goodness and humility.” Although he counts himself a loyal subject of the king, Balfour finds himself resenting the soldiers who enforce the subjugation of the Highlanders. When he believes Breck to have been party to the assassination, he is equally repelled, caught between two different definitions of what is right and just. “Alan’s morals were all tail-first,” he concludes, but just as deeply felt as his own.

Stevenson makes an offhand reference to Daniel Defoe’s *ROBINSON CRUSOE* (1719) during Balfour’s sojourn on the deserted island, lamenting the situation in books in which castaways always have tools or a trunk of provisions or the wreck of a ship to pillage, where he has nothing at all. In contrast, Balfour might easily have perished on the small island where he is stranded, even though he could easily have waded to the mainland during low tide if he had been observant of his surroundings. Stevenson may also have been reacting to some degree against the romanticized adventure stories of Sir Walter Scott, whose heroes were invariably blameless and brave. Balfour recognizes that even his close friend, Alan, harbors unfair prejudices and irrational responses to some situations, and that Alan is reckless rather than brave, whereas Balfour

himself is not afraid to admit that his courage rises only when there is not an alternative. It is a more sophisticated portrayal of the heroic figure than was common among Stevenson’s contemporaries.

### **Kim** (1901) **Rudyard Kipling**

Although Nobel Prize–winning writer Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) was British, he spent much of his lifetime in other parts of the world, including a prolonged stay in Vermont and many years in India, where he was born and spent his childhood. *Kim* is Kipling’s most famous novel of India, the story of a poor boy cast adrift following the death of his parents. His skin is so darkened by living outdoors that he resembles the natives and passes for one, but despite his inexperience with the British he always keeps in mind his father’s prediction that he will become great thanks to a red bull on a green field, although 14-year-old Kim has no idea to what that might refer.

Kim befriends an itinerant lama who is on a quest to find a sacred river. He becomes the lama’s disciple, initially to take advantage of the association, later through conviction, and travels across India with him. Kim has also agreed to carry a message from a local merchant to an English officer, which he is intelligent enough to know is a code as well as perceiving that the merchant is an agent of the British secret service. Curious, he eavesdrops and learns that there are plans for a rebellion against British rule and that the army is to be mobilized to quell it beforehand, a “punishment” rather than a “war.” He and the lama have further adventures before encountering the military unit in which his father once served, whose flag is a red bull. They recognize Kim after examining his locket, tell him his real name is Kimball O’Hara, and send him off to be schooled as a white man despite his objections. They have already determined that he is potentially an important piece in the “Great Game” waged between Britain and Russia for control of the subcontinent because of his ability to pass as a native.

Kim objects to being held as a “prisoner” in the school, but is enticed by the possibility of becoming a spy. The military authorities respect his potential since he is able to blend in with the local cultures

unobtrusively and is fluent in several dialects, and therefore tolerate his occasional self-awarded vacations. Kim eventually resigns himself to his schooling, which lasts three years, after which he is reunited with the lama for his remaining adventures.

Kim decides to rejoin the lama on his pilgrimage, but when they reach the Himalayas, they run into agents of the Russian Empire. Various complications ensue, but Kim ends up in possession of a bundle of important papers. He and the lama escape and deliver the documents to the British, but Kipling never reveals definitively whether Kim ultimately chooses to remain among them or whether he joins the lama on his quest for further enlightenment. His final comments suggest the latter.

### Critical Analysis

*Kim* is a classic coming-of-age novel, introducing readers to a boy of 14 who becomes a man at 17. At several points in the story Kim refers to himself in the third person, making it clear that he seeks to know just who he is because he falls into the rift between two cultures. Although European by birth, he has been raised so much a part of the mixed society of India that he identifies more strongly with them than he does with the sahibs, and he is clearly more comfortable with the lama than with the stern officers who train and educate him once his true identity is known. Although his motives for staying with the lama might initially have been opportunistic, he begins to identify with the man's spiritual quest, which mirrors his own search for answers. Even after voluntarily becoming an agent of the secret service, his political and social alliances still do not completely coincide. He shares the lama's distaste for female companionship on the grounds that they distract him from his true purpose, even when he does not understand clearly what that purpose is, and he honors his promises to the military authorities, even when he does not entirely understand them.

Kipling grew up in the setting where Kim's adventures take place, so he had considerable insight into the mixture of Hindu, Sikh, and Islamic customs and philosophies. He was also cognizant of the effect that British rule was having on the local culture, some of it unintentional. The trains, for example, make travel more convenient,

but they result in a mixing of castes and other practices that are technically forbidden or at least frowned upon. Several incidents occur in which the native people quite literally cannot understand why the British behave as they do, and the depth of misunderstanding works in both directions. One officer remarks that "the more one knows about the natives the less one can say about what they will or won't do." The reader also learns that the British and the Indians both question each other's cleanliness and have other striking differences about conventional behavior.

At the time in which the novel takes place, Britain and Russia were involved in a complex battle of diplomacy, espionage, sabotage, and destabilization throughout the Indian subcontinent and adjoining areas. This constant shifting and plotting—known as the Great Game—is generally suggested rather than explicitly stated until the second half of the novel, which varies between straightforward adventure and a story of clandestine espionage. Despite the melodrama in the closing chapters, the story remains focused on Kim and his internal quest, an adventure that takes place within his mind while his body is participating in another, more dangerous one.

While Kipling does show considerable respect for the native Indian cultures, he also betrays his belief that the imposition of British norms introduced a superior form of civilization and that India was improved by their presence. Nevertheless, even the most enlightened of the British officers treat the natives as though they were willful children rather than adults. Some of the Indian characters refer to the mutiny as a "madness" that infected the troops, rather than a rebellion against conquerors. Kipling also believed that there is a clear distinction between good and evil, and that some people are consumed by one or the other. A retired Indian soldier observes that "if evil men were not now and then slain it would not be a good world for weaponless dreamers."

Kipling chose to provide all of the information about his characters through their actions and dialogue. Kim's thoughts or emotions must be interpreted from how he reacts and what he says. Although this makes it more difficult to identify closely with the character, it was probably necessary

given Kipling's intention to accurately depict a culture that would have been almost completely alien to most of his readers. The story is filled with the idiom, religious beliefs and homilies, and the customs of the varied native peoples Kim encounter, all of which are already familiar to Kim and would therefore not require him to consciously consider them.

Several other classic adventure stories have been set during the British rule in India, including *KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES* (1916) by Talbot Mundy and many of the novels of John Masters. *Kim* has also been cited as having influenced a variety of other writers, including Robert A. Heinlein and Marion Zimmer Bradley because of the way in which Kipling described an unfamiliar culture from within. Because of its popularity with younger readers, the novel is sometimes cited as an example of children's literature, but it was originally intended for an adult audience. T. N. Murari and Laurie R. King have both written sequels to Kipling's novel, which has been filmed twice. Some of the characters in the novel were apparently based in part upon authentic historical figures.

### ***King of the Khyber Rifles* (1916)**

#### **Talbot Mundy**

Talbot Mundy was the most popular pseudonym used by British writer William Lancaster Gribbon (1879–1940). As a young boy Gribbon ran away to India, where he pursued a number of careers, not all of them entirely legal. Eventually he emigrated to the United States, where he began writing fiction in 1911, becoming a citizen in 1916. His comments about his early life are suspect given inconsistencies and his failure to mention his difficulties with the law. He spent considerable time in Africa as well as India and drew on those experiences for much of his fiction.

The king in the title is Athelstan King, a captain in the British army in India who also works for the Secret Service. His superiors are concerned that the Germans may be stirring up the hill people in the north in preparation for launching a jihad against the British, who have transferred most of their best troops to Europe to fight in World War I. King is supposed to investigate in tandem with a mysterious woman named Yasmini, who appears

more intent upon having him assassinated than being his partner and who departs for the north without waiting for him to join her. Yasmini is also a power among the natives for no clear reason, and the rebels believe that she is on their side. She sends a trusted aide, Rewa Gunga, to accompany King on his journey, during which he seeks not only Yasmini but the mysterious, legendary "Heart of the Hills."

King is somewhat devious himself. After winning the personal loyalty of 30 hillsmen, he disguises himself for the balance of the journey. Although he appears to be a man of simple motives, Mundy hints at greater depths. When King learns that the price of admission to the forbidden city of Khinjan is to murder another man, he is relieved to discover that his chief assistant killed a mullah rather than a British officer, even though he recognizes that there was still the cost of a human life and acknowledges his own prejudice. He is described as a man who mixes the logic and intelligence of the West with the mysticism and insight of the East.

King finally reaches the secret Khinjan Caves, an enormous underground world where thousands of men live in hiding. There he finally catches up to Yasmini, more than halfway through the book, and even at this point it remains unclear where her true loyalties lie, particularly when she literally hands King the head of his brother, who commanded a nearby fort. It is only then that he discovers that the Heart of the Hills is a woman whose preserved corpse lies within the cavern, along with a similarly undecayed body of a man. Yasmini is the woman's double and, to his amazement, King discovers that he is a mirror image of the dead woman's lover.

Yasmini reveals to him the truth about her allegiance; she has played the Germans and the English against each other and plans to lead the jihad in a conquest of India, with herself and King as its new rulers. Unfortunately for her plans, King remains loyal to his oath, and there is also another player in the game, a mullah with German sympathies, possibly even a German in disguise. The main plot is resolved, and Yasmini's loyalties hesitantly return to the British. John Buchan's *GREENMANTLE* (1916), which also pits a spy against a plot by Germany to launch a jihad against British rule, provides an interesting contrast.

### Critical Analysis

Although Mundy spent a short period of his life in India, his novels suggest dissatisfaction with some aspects of British rule mixed with clear admiration for others. The Europeans are described in the early chapters as having two distinct cultures: the newcomers from England who are inflexible, have no respect for the natives, and are more concerned with appearances than results; and the old guard who understand and respect the people they rule and seek to guide rather than coerce them. Major Hyde, who accompanies King for a short period, believes that his companion has gone native and is openly contemptuous, but King responds blandly. The blindness of people like Major Hyde is described as a serious liability because it leads Europeans to underestimate the intelligence of the natives. "The West can only get the better of the East when the East is too cock-sure."

Mundy often depicted his heroes as larger than life characters who were at their best in adversity. He comments that in times of war there is a greater likelihood of men being sent to their appropriate places in the world, and that "in that one respect war is better than some kinds of peace." King is a kind of precursor to JAMES BOND, a quietly efficient spy and saboteur, ruthless when necessary, smart enough to think several steps ahead of his enemies, quick to resort to violence when it is appropriate, and drawn toward beautiful, dangerous women, though never to the point where he forgets his duty. In a land where it is important for a man to keep up appearances despite adversity, he fits in perfectly. An air of mysticism suffuses the story. Mundy suggests that the people of Asia are more in touch with the spiritual world, and it is evident that he and Yasmini are the reincarnations of the two people whose bodies are revered in the Khinjan Caves. This was probably a product of Mundy's interest in theosophy, the belief that all religions are simply parts of the greater spiritual evolution of humanity.

Dramatically, the first half of the book is a straightforward, very entertaining adventure, but once King reaches the hidden caves, the pace of the plot slows and it begins to resemble a typical lost world novel in which the protagonist is gradually introduced to the wonders of the hidden

civilization, although in this case it is the wonders of Yasmini and her mystic visions that holds his attention. With never any doubt where King's sympathies lie, there is little suspense even when he pretends to be taken in by Yasmini's blandishments. After the cache of arms is destroyed and the threat is eliminated, Yasmini switches allegiance again, but mostly offstage in a less than convincing aboutface.

Although most of Talbot Mundy's fiction is out of print, he was a very strong influence on several writers, most notably ROBERT E. HOWARD. *King of the Khyber Rifles* is Mundy's most famous novel, but he is also highly regarded for his Tros trilogy, consisting of *Tros of Samothrace* (1925), *Queen Cleopatra* (1929), and *The Purple Pirate* (1935). Tros, the son of Perseus, battles Vikings and Romans, makes a perilous journey across the known world, and becomes briefly romantically involved with Cleopatra, queen of Egypt. Athelstan King returned in the very inferior *Caves of Terror* (1924). The Jimgrim trilogy is also noteworthy, consisting of *The Nine Unknown* (1923), *The Devil's Guard* (1926), and *Jimgrim* (1931). The protagonist travels around the world, encountering a mystical secret society in each book, and thwarting plots to manipulate human civilization. *Om: The Secret of Ahbor Valley* (1924) is a very good lost world novel. Most of Mundy's other work is of considerably less interest.

### *King Solomon's Mines* (1885)

#### H. Rider Haggard

This famous lost world adventure by British author H. Rider Haggard (1856–1925) is narrated by Allan Quatermain, a British hunter and explorer in south central Africa. He is approached by Sir Henry Curtis and Captain Good, who seek his help in looking for Sir Henry's brother, who disappeared in the area some time before. They are joined by an African, Umbopa, who claims to be descended from people in the region they plan to search.

The early stages of their journey involve a dangerous elephant hunt and the crossing of an almost impenetrable desert where they nearly lose their lives. The expedition is reduced to four survivors who nearly starve crossing snow-covered mountains among which they find a 300-year-old corpse

perfectly preserved by the cold and thin air. They reach the land of the Kukuanas at last, finding a race that has degenerated from the ancient times when they were dominated by the Egyptians under King Solomon. The intruders are nearly killed by a hunting party moments after their safe arrival, but are spared at the last moment. The Kukuana are ruled by Twala, who stole the throne from his brother by killing him, after which the true heir, an infant, disappeared with his mother. It is obvious that Umbopa is the missing child, now an adult and ready to reclaim his throne, taking advantage of the widespread discontent with Twala's rule.

Twala is actually the puppet of Gagool, a woman who has apparently lived for centuries. She is immediately suspicious of the newcomers, and her experiences of white visitors from generations earlier makes her dubious of their claims of great power. Twala is clearly patterned after Cetshwayo, the Zulu king, and their language that is very close to the Zulu's supports that supposition. Thanks to a fortuitous eclipse, Quatermain is able to create a panic among the enemy and precipitate a civil war. The tide of battle ebbs and flows, and the outcome is finally achieved by a trial of single combat between Sir Henry and Twala.

As their reward, Quatermain and the others had been promised diamonds from the hidden mines. Gagool is forced to lead them there, although she intends to see that none of them return. She does in fact trap the three outsiders, but is herself killed in the process thanks to the intercession of a Kukuana woman who has fallen in love with Cook. They escape through a concealed passage, leaving most of the treasure behind. *King Solomon's Mines* has been filmed several times.

### Critical Analysis

Although Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Lost World* (1912) gave a name to this type of adventure, one of the first and greatest of all "lost world" novels was this famous African quest story, the first to feature Haggard's heroic white hunter, Allan Quatermain, who returned in *ALLAN QUATERMAIN* (1887) and several inferior sequels. The lost world motif had appeared earlier, as in *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864) by JULES VERNE, but only flourished late in the 19th and early in the 20th centuries

because of the interest in exploration of uncharted portions of the world, primarily South America, Asia, and Africa. Because it is no longer practical to imagine entire civilizations cut off from the rest of the world, few modern writers have attempted anything similar.

Haggard introduced many of the standard devices of the lost world story, including the stolen throne, the animosity of the high priest or priestess, trial by single combat, the unattainable treasure left behind, and the doomed love affair. His work influenced numerous writers, including A. Merritt, EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS, and Rudyard Kipling. The novel was an immediate success despite its unusual style, much less informal than most fiction of the late Victorian period, and written in the first person rather than the third. Haggard was himself influenced by the adventure writers who preceded him, and there are references within the story to both *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1846) by Alexandre Dumas and *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) by Daniel Defoe.

Quatermain is a remarkably honorable man who probably reflects Haggard's attitude when he states that he sees no difference between the races in terms of honor and nobility, that he has met Europeans who were beneath contempt and Africans who were much to be admired, a remarkably enlightened attitude for the 19th century. On the other hand, he shared the prevalent British assessment of the native intelligence. Quatermain's opinion of one bearer, for example, is that he was "for a native, a very clever man." The love affair between Cook and a Kukuana woman is, of course, doomed from the start, which she acknowledges herself as she is dying, but that Haggard could consider their love possible at all was quite daring for his time. It is impossible to determine how much of the prejudice Quatermain expresses is part of his character and how much it reflects Haggard's own opinions.

When Umbopa addresses Sir Henry as an equal, Quatermain is infuriated by his audacity, while admitting that it is a reflection of the man's intelligence as well as his sense of his own prestige, but Haggard suggests that his protagonist is making a serious misjudgment despite the later revelation that he is to be the king of Kukuanaaland. Umbopa

notes that “it seems to me that we are very much alike” although he is unable to understand why Quatermain wants to spare Gagool’s life for the sake of the great knowledge she has accumulated by living for multiple generations. Like the Kukuanas whom he now rules, Umbopa lacks the capacity to appreciate the accumulation of knowledge for its own sake.

The political setup in Kukuanaland has been repeated many times in lost race adventures by other writers and has become one of the more common themes in modern fantasy as well, the usurped throne being reclaimed by the rightful heir after his return from exile. As is the case with several of his other novels, Haggard places the main climax three-quarters of the way through the narrative. The defeat of Twala is followed by a series of minor adventures, including Captain Good’s nearly fatal illness, the final confrontation with Gagool, and their return trip. This is partially mitigated by the revelation that Gagool was the mastermind of Twala’s regime, but her demise, the escape from the

cavern, and the discovery of Sir Henry’s missing brother are all relatively colorless compared to the battle for the throne.

The richly described landscapes are a major part of the novel’s appeal. Haggard had spent several years in South Africa as a young man and adapted some of the spectacular scenery to create his fictional Kukuanaland, which is more or less situated in what is now the Congo. He had also collected stories from explorers and longtime residents and patterned many of his characters after people he had met. Quatermain is a fatalist who believes that when his time to die approaches, he will be unable to affect the outcome, but that does not prevent him from struggling whenever he is in danger. Captain Good is fastidious to the point of obsession, bringing a supply of stiff white collars on the trek. “I always liked to look a gentleman.” This preoccupation with appearances was a common trait of the British officer class and can also be seen in Talbot Mundy’s classic Afghan adventure, *KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES* (1916).

# L

## **“The Lady or the Tiger?”** (1882)

**Frank R. Stockton**

Some adventures take place over the course of a considerable period of time, while others may last only for an instant. Some adventures involve battles and chases and perilous escapes, while some consist solely of the need to make a single life-threatening decision. The latter is the case in this famous short story, one of those classics whose plot is familiar even to many who have never actually read the story.

Frank R. Stockton (1834–1902) was a journalist and writer whose most successful work consisted of fairy tales and fables for children, although he is now remembered almost exclusively for this single story. Although not specifically intended for a younger audience, it is constructed and narrated in much the same manner as his other fables, and the inconclusive ending made it a popular entry in textbooks because it so readily generated classroom discussion. It also manages to squeeze considerable complexity into a relatively few words.

The setting is a nameless kingdom in an unspecified time, whose ruler is an absolute and tyrannical monarch. The king has also instituted a unique system of justice. Whenever anyone is accused, he is taken to the arena, at one end of which are two closed doors. Behind one door is a fierce and hungry tiger, and behind the other is a lady, but there is no way for the prisoner to determine which is which. The prisoner is then forced to choose which door to open. If he chooses badly, he is invariably killed by the tiger. If he chooses well, he is promptly married

to the lady, even if he already has a wife of his own. This procedure is followed even when it is already clear that the prisoner is beyond any shadow of doubt guilty, or equally certainly innocent. The king declares this to be justice because the decision is left up to “impartial and incorruptible chance.” Not even he knows which door is which until one is opened, the system administered in some fashion that Stockton never explains. His people might be expected to object to the randomness of the king’s “justice,” but in fact the trials are infrequent and are always a popular occasion. After all, “its perfect fairness is obvious.”

The immediate crisis in the story develops when the king’s beautiful daughter becomes romantically involved with a low-ranking courtier. They are indiscreet, the king is unhappy, and the courtier is arrested and sentenced to the arena. The lady chosen as the potential reward at his trial is another member of the court, a beautiful woman who has flirted with him in the past, and whom the king’s daughter hates with unbridled passion. The last element leading to the climax is the daughter’s successful discovery of the secret of the two doors. She knows on this occasion which leads to death and destruction and which to life and marriage. The courtier is brought out and bids his perhaps final respects to the royal family. His eyes meet those of the princess, and he knows that she has discovered the secret that can save him. When she makes a slight gesture with one hand, he recognizes which door she is directing him to open. Relieved, he turns away and toward the doors.

At this point, Stockton steps out of the story to address the reader directly. Given the daughter's jealousy of the other woman and her realization that whatever happens she and her lover are to be parted forever, would she have directed him toward the door of safety or would she have preferred that he die, quickly if cruelly, so that her rival would never have the satisfaction of marrying the man she loved? And is it even possible that the prisoner might consider the same question himself and decide that she was sending him to his death? Stockton never answers in the story, and, indeed, he was asked frequently during his lifetime, but always refused to commit himself.

### Critical Analysis

"The Lady or the Tiger?" might easily be dismissed as a minor trick story, but it provides a surprisingly complex glimpse at the way conflicting emotions and desires can complicate what might otherwise be a straightforward decision. All of the drama of a much longer adventure is crystallized into a single moment of decision. The king's autocratic and arbitrary system of justice is obviously deplorable, but Stockton insists that the population at large feels no sense of indignation. In fact, the periodic trials of accused criminals are popular social occasions. Only a tiny minority of people are ever subjected to the test, and presumably some proportion of those are actually guilty. Of the innocent, one out of every two stands to gain by surviving the ordeal since the king picks potential wives who are viewed as rewards rather than burdens. The tacit public support for injustice is a reflection of what Stockton probably saw as inequities in one or another supposedly enlightened government in the late 19th century.

The story is set during the "olden times" in a mythical country ruled by a tyrannical but idiosyncratic and "semi-barbaric" king whose generic nature suggests a universal application. Stockton never provides names for either the country or any of the characters, suggesting that arbitrary governments are not just a historical oddity. The king's word is absolute, and his slightest fancy is transformed into fact. "When he agreed with himself, it was done." It is likely that he is thoroughly bored, because he actively enjoys opposition, but only so that he can amuse himself by crushing it.

At the moment of truth questions affect the outcome. Does the princess love the prisoner unselfishly? Is she willing to see him spend his life in the arms of another woman, particularly a woman she personally detests, with no realistic chance of ever enjoying his company again? Or is her love closer to obsession? Would she prefer to see him dead, either to spare herself the knowledge that she has lost him to her rival, or simply to spite the woman she hates? Hers is a decision of conscience. The prisoner, on the other hand, must make a decision of judgment. If he knows the princess at all well, then he must recognize in her those elements of selfishness and affection that will affect her decision. But does he know her well enough to decide whether or not she will tell him the truth? One could speculate that the princess might guess that he would take all of this into account, and deliberately disregard her message.

Ultimately, what started as an even chance remains exactly that. The prisoner would do just as well flipping a coin. Or perhaps this is one of the rare occasions when there is indeed some justice in the system. If he really loves the princess, he should be able to understand how she would think, and if he does not, then their affair may have been dishonorable after all. The enduring quality of "The Lady or the Tiger?" is not so much what it says about the characters as what it suggests about people and the ability to understand love.

### L'Amour, Louis (1908–1988)

American writer Louis L'Amour began selling short stories as early as the 1930s, but it was not until the 1950s that he began to write full-length novels, predominantly in the western genre. A typical L'Amour protagonist is a wandering, introspective, but highly competent man who does not intend to insert himself into the affairs of other people but responds quickly to an affront or to protect the helpless. *Westward the Tide* (1950), set against the backdrop of the gold rush, was his first book, which he followed with four adventures of Hopalong Cassidy originally published under the pseudonym Tex Burns.

His first significant novel was *Hondo* (1953), loosely based on actual events, set at the beginning

of the Apache wars. Hondo Lane is a wandering ranch hand who befriends a woman and her son against both the Apaches and an abusive husband. Although the novel reflects many of the qualities and defects of the pulp tradition—sketchy characterization, oversimplification, and a clear distinction between good and evil—the story is quietly effective in a manner uncommon among writers using similar themes. L'Amour occasionally included romanticized versions of actual people and events in his later fiction. *Hondo* was almost a template for several novels that followed. Another wanderer protects a widow from avaricious ranchers in *Crossfire Trail* (1954), and an introspective man defends his own property from a similar threat in *Guns of the Timberlands* (1955), another of his better books. *The Burning Hills* (1956) also has a fugitive risking himself to help a woman in danger.

Gunslingers or hired guns figure prominently in several of the early novels. *Showdown at Yellow Butte* (1953) attempts to provide some insight into the minds of men who kill for money, but the heroes of *Utah Blaine* (1954) and *Kilkenny* (1954) are both motivated primarily by their desire to uphold their personal property rights, as is the hero of *Silver Canyon* (1956), set in the midst of a range war. *Heller with a Gun* (1955) has its hero agreeing to escort some actresses across a dangerous patch of territory, and the hero of *To Tame a Land* (1955) similarly has a professional gunman rescuing a kidnapped woman from outlaws. *Sitka* (1957) was the only book from the 1950s to employ a more ambitious plot. Although it has some of the trappings of a western, it is more properly a historical novel that includes extensive scenes in Russia as well as a sea battle, all linked to the fight to dominate the fur trade in Alaska. *Killoe* (1962) also treads the border between historical novel and western, this one describing the efforts of a group of Texans to migrate westward following the war with Mexico. However, L'Amour was clearly more comfortable with familiar western plots.

In *Last Stand at Papago Wells* (1957) the fight for survival in the desert takes precedence over the personal animosities of its characters. L'Amour quickly returned to conflict over the ownership of land or grazing rights in *Radigan* (1958) and *The First Fast Draw* (1959). *Flint* (1960) saw some

superficial changes in what had become the standard L'Amour hero, in this case a man who went east, became rich, then retired to the West, where he gets involved in a clash over control of ranch land. During the early 1960s L'Amour began writing superior work with some regularity. *Shalako* (1962) is a simple but effective novel about a man forced by circumstances to take the part of a group of European tourists who fail to appreciate the dangers surrounding them. Two related novels, *The Day Breakers* (1960) and *Sackett* (1961), launched what would be L'Amour's longest single series, following the adventures of various members of the Sackett family. He would continue to add to this saga throughout the remainder of his career.

*Lando* (1962) is reminiscent of *DESTROY RIDES AGAIN* (1930) by MAX BRAND. A man wrongly convicted of a crime returns from prison to seek revenge. *Fallon* (1963) and *Kiowa Trail* (1964) make an interesting contrast. In the first the citizens of a newly formed town contend with a group of ruthless outlaws. In the second a band of outraged ranchers battle a town dominated by people who take advantage of visiting ranch hands. Outlaws who wish to reform despite the obvious barriers are featured in *Catlow* (1963) and *Dark Canyon* (1963), while *Hanging Woman Creek* (1964) reverts to the woman in peril at the hands of land-grabbing villains, or ore-stealing miners in the case of *The High Graders* (1965). A crooked mining operation figures again in *The Empty Land* (1969).

L'Amour's best novels during this period tended to be those that varied from his usual pattern. *How the West Was Won* (1962) veers once again toward historical fiction with its portrayal of settlers and their problems surviving in the undeveloped West. *High Lonesome* (1962) is essentially a heist story followed by a long chase sequence. *Mojave Crossing* (1964) has one of the best developed female characters in L'Amour's fiction, but the story itself is somewhat pedestrian. *The Broken Gun* (1966) is actually a murder mystery, although the crime took place 90 years before the story opens. The protagonist of *The Man Called Noon* (1970) suffers from amnesia and nearly dies trying to discover the truth about his past.

Familiar themes continued to dominate L'Amour's work in the late 1960s. Feuds lead to vio-

lence in *Matagorda* (1967) and *Brionne* (1968), and falsely accused men must prove their innocence in *The Key-Lock Man* (1965) and *Chancy* (1968). The protagonist must help a lonely woman protect her property in *Mustang Man* (1966) and *Conagher* (1969), the latter one of the best from this period. Survival in a hostile environment is the primary challenge in *Kid Rodelo* (1966). Conflict with the Indians became a more common theme, particularly in *The Lonely Men* (1969), *Down the Long Hills* (1968), and the best of the three, *Kilrone* (1966).

The early 1970s saw L'Amour adding to the Sackett saga with more regularity, as well as starting the Chantry series, but with few exceptions he continued to recycle old plot ideas. Typical L'Amour loners must protect an orphan in the rather contrived *Reilly's Luck* (1970), a woman and her gold in *Under the Sweetwater Rim* (1971), menaced women in *The Ferguson Rifle* (1973) and *The Man from Skibbereen* (1973), and an entire family is in jeopardy in *The Quick and the Dead* (1973). *Galloway* (1970) is another story of a range war, complicated by marauding Apaches. *North to the Rails* (1971) is a more interesting account of a strange partnership on a cattle drive, and *Callaghen* (1972) involves a map and a treasure hunt. Epic searches became a minor theme, repeated in *Treasure Mountain* (1972). His other novels from this period, *Tucker* (1971) and *Ride the Dark Trail* (1972) deal with a quest for revenge and yet another plot to steal a land title. By the 1970s L'Amour had settled comfortably into his niche and was content to venture only occasional and limited experiments with his fiction, a pattern that held until the following decade.

L'Amour introduced one new significant theme as the 1970s progressed, the displaced person carving out a new life in the Old West. An English fugitive escapes to the New World in *To the Far Blue Mountains* (1977); a shipwrecked man decides to remain in America in *Fair Blows the Wind* (1978); and a petty criminal from New York becomes an unlikely lawman when he moves to the West in *The Iron Marshall* (1979). He also wrote two prequels to his popular *Kilkenny*: *The Rider of Lost Creek* (1976) and *The Mountain Valley War* (1978). *Borden Chantry* (1977) once again blends western and mystery plots. *The Proving Trail* (1979) also starts as a murder mystery, then progresses to an

extended chase, and there is another treasure hunt in *Over the Dry Side* (1976). *Bendigo Shafter* (1979) is a slightly less traditional western, dealing with the settlement of a town in the West followed by a journey to New York.

A significant portion of L'Amour's novels after 1980 were not westerns, although they still generally involved adventures. *The Strong Shall Live* (1980) is another story of survival. *The Warrior's Path* (1980) and *Jubal Sackett* (1985) are both set in colonial America, and *The Lonesome Gods* (1983) takes place during the settlement of California. *The Walking Drum* (1984) was the first novel to be set exclusively outside North America, a historical adventure in early Europe that ends rather abruptly, suggesting that a sequel was planned but never written. There were also four contemporary novels. *Night over the Solomons* (1986) and *West from Singapore* (1987) are fast-paced thrillers set in the Pacific. A test pilot is captured by the Russians in *Last of the Breed* (1986). *The Haunted Mesa* (1988), one of L'Amour's most successful novels, involves a scientist's attempts to discover the secret of the Anasazi, a lost culture from the Southwest.

Although his work was much more diverse during the 1980s, L'Amour did not abandon his traditional style. *Comstock Lode* (1981) is set against the turmoil of the silver rush. *Milo Talon* (1981) involves a search for a missing woman. Although L'Amour's protagonists were almost always men, strong female characters appear in *Ride the River* (1983) and *The Cherokee Trail* (1982). An elusive criminal must be hunted down and captured in *Son of a Wanted Man* (1984). A few collections of short stories had appeared earlier, and multiple volumes assembled from his earliest short fiction appeared in book form following his death in 1988. Some of the best of these are in the Bowdrie series, which chronicle the exploits of an unconventional Texas Ranger.

### Critical Analysis

L'Amour may have been the last of the great western writers, bringing to an end an era that started with ZANE GREY, saw the rise of Max Brand, Ernest Haycox, Luke Short, William MacLeod Raine, and many others, then the decline into a marginal genre in which only L'Amour was able to achieve best-seller status. Dozens of movies have been based on

his work, taking advantage of his straightforward, linear plots. The majority of his novels make use of standard western themes—range wars, rustlers, gunslingers, women in peril, affairs of honor, long treks in the wilderness, and the tension between ranches and towns. Most of L'Amour's more memorable stories appeared early in his career, and although many of the later ones are more polished and technically superior, they tend to be restatements of tales he had already told.

Despite the relative simplicity of his plots, L'Amour recognized the complex issues underlying the conflicts in the Old West. Both towns and the nomadic ranch hands had legitimate complaints against one another, and the contests over land use were rarely clear-cut. Although Indians were often portrayed as antagonists, he accords them considerable respect, and the majority of his villains are outlaws, corrupt officials, avaricious ranchers, and men seeking revenge for real or imagined affronts. His continued popularity despite the decline of the western genre in general attests to the quality of his work.

### ***The Last of the Mohicans* (1826)**

#### **James Fenimore Cooper**

One of the first American novelists of note, James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851) had difficulty settling down as a young man. He was expelled from Harvard for misconduct, resigned his commission in the navy, and was in his 30s when he finally began writing novels, most of them about the exploration of North America's wilderness. *The Last of the Mohicans* is the second and best of the five Leatherstocking novels, the history of a frontiersman named Natty Bumppo, also known as the Long Rifle, and the basis for the television series *Hawkeye*.

Hawkeye is a tracker and hunter during the days of the French and Indian Wars, and his companions are the Mohican warrior, Chingachgook and his son, Uncas, who would have been the last of the Mohicans if he had survived the novel. They encounter Major Heyward, who is escorting a singing teacher and the two daughters of the local military commander, supposedly traveling secretly to a place of safety when they are betrayed by their

guide. Hawkeye leads them to a place where they can hide for the night, but they are attacked by hostile Iroquois at dawn. When their ammunition runs out, the sisters insist that Hawkeye and the two Mohicans abandon them and go for help, and the three reluctantly do so.

The party of four remaining are captured by a war party led by their former guide, Magua, but are subsequently rescued by Hawkeye, though the chief villain escapes once more. They reach the fort, find it surrounded by hostile French troops, but manage to enter under the cover of fog. Unfortunately the fort falls, and the two women are carried off by Magua once again. Hawkeye leads a party in pursuit, and they eventually rescue the two young women, but Uncas is killed in the final battle with Magua. Thus his father becomes the last of the Mohicans.

#### **Critical Analysis**

Cooper viewed the American Indian as noble savages who valued honor, according to their code, and lived in many ways a more exemplary life than the Europeans and colonists. The governments of the Old World, particularly England and France, were in Cooper's opinion corrupt and inefficient, and they victimized both sides in North America with their endless maneuvering against one another. At the same time, he recognizes that the threat of the "savages" was exaggerated by fear and became a potent force in the former colonies. Hawkeye himself is a symbol of the rugged individualism that was thought to characterize American frontiersmen during this period. Although his exploits are entirely fictional, Chingachgook was based on an actual person, and the main plot of the novel is also very similar to an actual abduction that occurred during the French and Indian Wars.

The prose is full of minute detail about their surroundings, their dress, the history of the area, and the legends of the Mohican people. This density means that the plot does not move as quickly as is prevalent in modern adventure stories. Although steeped in authentic detail about the frontier—even including footnotes providing historical, cultural, and geographical data—the novel is not entirely realistic. Among other things, Hawkeye and most of the other characters speak in an elaborate formal style that seems particularly unlikely from an

unschooled frontiersman who asserts that he has only read a single book during his lifetime.

Although Hawkeye and the two Mohicans recognize the need to act coldly and efficiently when necessary, that is not true of the other characters. The singer, David Gamut, objects when they kill a young colt to prevent it from giving away their location to the enemy, and later Major Heyward almost intervenes to save one of the Iroquois who is swept over the falls, then encourages his companions to waste powder finishing off a fatally wounded opponent to end his suffering. In each instance, Hawkeye insists that their own survival takes precedence, although in the latter case he eventually complies. Hawkeye has adopted the fatalistic acceptance of destiny common to his friends, and even Heyward demonstrates similar feelings after his party is taken prisoner. When Magua escapes, they conclude that it was "foreordained" that he should do so and express no regret at their limited success. Despite his lack of formal education and his fatalism, Hawkeye is extremely religious, thanking God frequently for his gifts, and ascribes his faith to his familiarity with God's creation, the natural world, which speaks to him far more impressively than any words crafted by men.

Through Heyward, readers catch a glimpse of Cooper's feelings about the conduct of warfare. His admiration for the kind of personal courage he describes in the characters of Hawkeye and the Mohicans is obvious, but the impersonality of what was then modern warfare is viewed with considerably less favor. "The beauty and manliness of warfare has been much deformed . . . Our ancestors were far above such scientific cowardice." Cooper suggests that the ideal man mixes intelligence and reflection with self-confidence and assured action. Gamut, who provides some comic relief during the course of the story, is criticized by Hawkeye for having concentrated on a single aspect of human existence, his singing, to the exclusion of all of the other things that make life worth living. In fact, even though Gamut spent considerable time in the enemy camp, he was not observant enough to take note of anything that proves helpful in extracting the captives from their enemies.

The Mohicans were not actually extinct in a biological sense, but their language, culture, and

tribal identity had already disintegrated at the time Cooper wrote his novel. He characterized the Iroquois and their subsidiary tribes as less noble and there is no question that he saw the passage of the Mohican as a sign that the expansion of the colonies had exacted a high price. Even Magua, the chief villain in the novel, is not entirely unjustified in his relentless hatred of the whites, because it was they who introduced him to the alcoholic drinks that led to his disgrace and humiliating corporal punishment at the hands of the British.

The other Leatherstocking novels include *The Pioneers* (1823), set in colonial New York, *The Prairie* (1827), in which an aging Hawkeye moves farther west, *The Pathfinder* (1840), and *The Deerslayer* (1841), the last being a prequel in which Hawkeye helps rescue Chingachgook's wife. Cooper also wrote one of the first novels of espionage, *The Spy* (1821).

### "Leiningen versus the Ants" (1938)

#### Carl Stephenson

Very little is known about German writer Carl Stephenson (1883–1954), who apparently never published any fiction other than this remarkable story. It became one of the most frequently reprinted short stories of all time, and it remains among the most popular of the classic tales of adventure, and perhaps the most dramatic story of man versus nature. Ironically Leiningen's opponent is not an animal that one might normally think of as dangerous—lions, tigers, poisonous serpents—but rather a simple insect, an ant, although in this case gathered in numbers so great that a single man is dwarfed in comparison. This paradox is not lost on the protagonist himself, who eventually realizes that he has underestimated his opponent.

The author never provides much description of either Leiningen or the plantation, except to state that he has managed it alone for several years and that it borders a major river infested with crocodiles and piranha, with a moat surrounding it. The ants are not the tiny familiar ones. Army ants are the size of a man's thumb and are very aggressive. They periodically swarm in huge masses and devastate the countryside, stripping every bit of foliage from trees and crops. Animals who stray too

close are attacked by large groups of ants, which instinctively seek the eyes to blind their prey. Even the largest animals can be stripped to the bone in minutes. In this particular instance the ants are advancing in a front two miles wide and 10 miles long, and Leiningen’s plantation is directly in their path. Leiningen takes a number of precautions in advance, including filling the moat and clearing the trees back from either side. When the ants first arrive, they do come to a halt on the opposite bank, sending flanking movements along either side until the plantation is completely surrounded except where it faces the river.

Initially it appears that the moat will halt their advance. Leiningen and his men are able to repel the advance units that manage to cross the water, but only because of the narrow width of the battle front, and even then one of the workers is badly hurt. An increase in the volume of the water provides some initial success. The ants respond by forming into distinct masses before entering the water, and each volume of ants is then able to float independently. Leiningen counters by instructing the man controlling the inflow from the river to alternately raise and lower the water levels so that the successive rushes of water will carry away the invaders. To the amazement of the defenders, the ants turn leaves into tiny rafts in such numbers that they begin to cover the water’s surface, a moving pontoon bridge over which even more invaders might pass.

Leiningen reluctantly retreats to the inner moat, and spirits rise when the ants stop at the gasoline-filled ditch. The respite is brief, however, as the encroaching army begins to cover the fuel with sticks, bark, and other debris. Feeling responsible for the men who trusted him, Leiningen decides that he must personally take the last desperate risk, a dash for the dam in order to release all of the river’s water and flood the entire plantation. Wrapped in protective clothing and soaked with gasoline, he saves the day, almost dying in the process.

### Critical Analysis

“Leiningen versus the Ants” is a highly focused story that intentionally ignores some of what might ordinarily be considered necessary literary qualities. Except for the title character, there is no effort to

develop any of the characters on the plantation or reveal any of their names. Even Leiningen is something of a cipher. His past is irrelevant, and the only facet of his personality given in any detail is his conviction that the power of his mind can overcome what he views as the mindless aspect of nature. Until the midway point of the story, he still thinks of the ants as an elemental force like wind or rain and not as a living opponent. He seems an honorable man and a strong leader because all of his employees stand by his side even in the face of a danger that would normally send them fleeing in panic, but even this small concession is an aid to the plot, since to do otherwise would leave him to face the ants alone.

Leiningen’s classification of the ants as an “act of God” that can be overcome through the use of human intelligence is shortsighted and almost fatal. By the time the battle is concluded, he has recognized that he is opposed by living creatures motivated by their own sense of purpose. Stephenson frequently describes the activities of the ants in military terms, and Leiningen eventually thinks of the battle as a “war.” The ants have scouts and flanking units and in some fashion plan their campaigns. Only when it appears to be too late does Leiningen admit to himself that this is not just an indifferent natural catastrophe but a force with a “cold and violent purpose.”

The ants are willing to sacrifice countless numbers of their followers in order to achieve their goals, and it is easy to draw a comparison to trench warfare during World War I. Leiningen compares their presence to drought, flood, and plague, without realizing that in a sense they encompass all of these and more. They despoil the land they cross, leaving nothing alive in their wake, not even the grass, and while they may follow the path of least resistance, they are willing to confront obstacles head-on if there is no way to bypass them.

Leiningen’s characterization is largely superficial. He has managed his Brazilian plantation for three years and has earned the intense loyalty of the 400 men who work for him. There is no mention of family or friends; readers learn nothing of his own nationality or background; any insight into his mind and personality is limited to the immediate conflict. Leiningen sets great store on

preplanning and insists that he has anticipated the danger, refusing to evacuate despite the urging of the district commissioner, and his stature with his employees is sufficient to keep them at his side even though their instincts tell them to flee.

Leiningen is also arrogant, believing that “the human brain needs only to become fully aware of its powers to conquer even the elements.” Eventually he will learn, as do the characters in “The OPEN BOAT” by Stephen Crane that the universe is not impressed by his posturing. If anything, Stephenson’s world is more akin to Peter Benchley’s *JAWS* (1974) and even more dangerous than Crane’s. The latter is simply indifferent to the fate of men, while the former actively seeks to cut life short. Although Leiningen ultimately prevails, it can be safely assumed that his belief in the supremacy of the human mind will never be quite as firm as it once was. Stephenson may have been commenting upon the commonly held belief that humanity’s dominance of the world was established by divine right, that ingenuity and strength of personality could overcome any obstacle. Even Leiningen’s triumph is a physical rather than mental accomplishment; he runs across the ant-infested ground to reach the dam controls, defying them to stop him. Another natural force, the water from the river, stems the tide rather than the ingenuity of Leiningen’s preparations.

Stephenson’s story was adapted as a radio play and then as a full-length movie in 1954 under the title *The Naked Jungle*, with Charlton Heston playing Leiningen. In order to flesh out the plot, the filmmakers added conflict with a villainous rival planter and Leiningen’s difficulties adapting to the presence of his mail-order bride. The plot is otherwise very loyal to the original story, although the visual effects were not nearly as effective as Stephenson’s description of the encroaching army of ants.

### ***The Lodger* (1912) Marie Belloc Lowndes**

This modest thriller is the best-known novel by English writer Marie Belloc Lowndes (1868–1947). It is usually classified as a mystery novel although the identity of the murderer is apparent from the outset, and the story involves neither detection nor any real account of the crimes. It is an example

of a more static adventure, a situation where the element of excitement is unwelcome because it intrudes into not only the lives of the protagonists but into their home.

The Buntings are an older couple living in England who have fallen on hard times. Their rental lodgings have been empty for some time, their savings exhausted, and they are in debt. Just as it appears that they will be forced into abject poverty, a peculiar man calling himself Sleuth appears and rents two of their apartments at an inflated price. Sleuth’s appearance coincides with a series of brutal murders in the area attributed to a Jack the Ripper–style killer known as the Avenger. Although he has a number of odd habits—going out late at night, reading the Bible obsessively, and displaying misogynistic traits—the Buntings are willing to overlook his peculiarities because his rent makes the difference between starvation and simple poverty.

As the killings continue, however, Mrs. Bunting begins to suspect that the lodger is responsible, and the situation grows more critical when Mr. Bunting’s daughter from an earlier marriage comes to stay with them for a while. Mrs. Bunting’s suspicion turns to near certainty, and her behavior becomes so erratic that her husband realizes something is wrong. She also becomes very upset when their friend, Joe Chandler, comes to visit and court the daughter because Chandler is a police officer. Eventually she decides to attend an inquest, hoping to hear some evidence that will enable her to believe Sleuth is innocent, but her dilemma worsens when she hears the details of the crimes. Then a chance encounter between her husband and Sleuth on the streets makes him suspect the man as well, although he is equally unwilling to act upon his suspicion.

Eventually the Buntings each realize that the other knows the truth, and a chance encounter at Madame Tussaud’s reveals that the lodger is an escaped madman with a religious mania. This precipitates Sleuth’s flight and disappearance and the Buntings never hear from him again.

### **Critical Analysis**

In most adventure stories the protagonist initiates the action, either by consciously setting out

to experience some new, exhilarating activity, by making some error that precipitates a chain of events, or by reacting to an external stimulus that jolts one out of the normal lifestyle. *The Lodger* is one of those rare occasions when the protagonists are not at all the kind of people one would expect to relish, or even participate in any kind of adventure, by choice or otherwise. In this case the excitement and suspense invade their home and transform a familiar environment into a perilous one, even though they themselves are never in any physical danger.

Emma Bunting is certainly the most interesting character in the novel. She suspects Sleuth of being the Avenger almost from the outset, but she is also most protective of her home and of the source of income that makes the maintenance of that home possible. She thinks of her house as a citadel that she must defend from outsiders "even if the besiegers were a mighty horde *with right on their side*." The security of her family trumps, at least for a time, her obligation to society as a whole, although the pressure generated by her decision not to act makes her physically ill.

Most of the adventure in the novel takes place within Mrs. Bunting's mind. Until very late in the story she is the only one who suspects that the lodger is the killer; in fact, during the first half, she is the only character who actually meets him. Although there is no evidence that she is ever in any physical danger herself, she undergoes moments of terror, apprehension, and anxiety even as she attempts to convince herself that her suspicions are baseless. She also insists to herself that the reason she has not confided any of her suspicions to her husband is that she wishes to spare him the anxiety she is experiencing, although she fears that he would act precipitously and inform the police. This would deprive them of Mr. Sleuth's income and return them to their previous impoverished state. Only after she attends the inquest and sees the relatives of the victims does she begin to think of the consequences of inaction and experiences feelings of remorse. Even pushed to this extremity, she refuses to act.

The isolation that exists between individuals, even in a close, loving marriage, is shown when both of the Buntings, morally certain that their lodger is

the Avenger, neither is tempted to communicate the intelligence to the other, let alone inform the authorities. Even the potential threat to the daughter, Daisy, is insufficient to move them. The author also illustrates the power of social pressure in that each of them, particularly Mr. Bunting, is convinced that informing on the man will necessarily tarnish their reputation so much that they will never be able to find suitable employment again.

The ending is rather contrived and much less plausible than the preceding chapters. Sleuth and Mrs. Bunting just happen to be in Madame Tussaud's museum while the new chief of police is touring. He just happens to have once met the escaped lunatic he believes responsible for the murders, and he just happens to reveal the details of that case within Mrs. Bunting's hearing. Even when their suspicion has turned to certainty, the Buntings both feel a degree of sympathy for Sleuth, and when he disappears they express hope that he is all right. They are spared the necessity of risking public disapprobation by his departure. The murders abruptly cease, and readers never learn his fate, an ending that seems unsatisfactory today. The story has been filmed four times, including a silent version by Alfred Hitchcock that bore very little resemblance to the original plot.

## **The Lone Wolf** (1914–1947)

### **Louis Joseph Vance**

The suave, cultured master criminal Michael Lanyard is the hero of this series of crime adventure novels by American writer Louis Joseph Vance (1879–1933). Lanyard's exploits were almost certainly a major influence on the Saint series by LESLIE CHARTERIS. In the opening volume Lanyard becomes unhappy with the course of his life and decides to abandon the criminal life, and he functions as a freelance spy and adventurer from that point onward. The Saint's personal history is very much the same. The series of nine books ended when Vance was accidentally killed in a fire.

*The Lone Wolf* (1914) introduced Lanyard as a young English boy left at a house of questionable repute in Paris in 1893. He grows up unsupervised and is eventually taken under the wing of an Irish jewel thief, by whom he is trained as a master

thief and warned never to take the risk of making friends. As the Lone Wolf, he becomes a notorious burglar in his own right following the death of his mentor. Upon returning to Paris some years later, he is implicated in the murder of a detective from Scotland Yard, pursued by a group of French criminals who nonetheless enjoy the benefits of high society, and falls in love with a young American girl, Lucy Shannon, who is subject to the power of an American crime lord who seeks to organize the French underworld under his leadership.

Lanyard is confronted with a series of problems. Someone has penetrated his façade as an art expert and is trying to coerce him into joining the criminal organization led by the mysterious American. When he refuses, they attempt to frame him for the detective's murder, but a clever ruse allows Lanyard to turn the tables, at least for the moment. His attempt to slip out of Paris is complicated, however, by the presence of Lucy Shannon, who appears to have secretive business of her own, and the two end up hiding out together. His affection for her helps precipitate Lanyard's decision to bring his career outside the law to an end. As if matters were not already sufficiently complex, he also runs into an old enemy, a vengeful German spy whom he had outwitted in the past. Lanyard comes up with a scheme to get them both out of Paris, but Lucy inexplicably deserts him at the last moment and returns to the gang. Lanyard disguises himself, remains in Paris, then eventually gets the girl, foils the villains, and escapes to England after an exciting aerial chase sequence.

Since all of the loose ends are tied up at the end, it is entirely possible that Vance never intended to write a sequel, but four years later he did, *The False Faces* (1918). World War I is ravaging Europe, and Lanyard, whose wife, Lucy, and their son were killed at the hands of Ekstrom, a villain who supposedly died in the first adventure, has been working unofficially for the British Secret Service. He takes passage to the United States under an assumed name, but the voyage quickly becomes anything but restful. They are attacked by a German submarine and, more immediately significant, there are several German agents aboard. There is also another mysterious woman, Cecilia Brooke, who is involved with the conveyance of

sensitive intelligence information to officials in the United States.

Lanyard rescues the woman when she is attacked, but he is unable to detain or identify her assailant. Two German agents then try to coerce him into revealing the location of the document given to him by Brooke, while the captain threatens to expose him as the Lone Wolf if he does not surrender it to him. Everyone's plans are rendered void when German agents throw him off the ship just before it is torpedoed, and he is only saved rather implausibly when the attacking submarine surfaces directly beneath him. The submarine is working from a secret base on Martha's Vineyard, where Lanyard eventually gets ashore and, after a series of adventures, retrieves the missing document, defeats Ekstrom, exposes a spy within the British Secret Service, and reunites with Brooke.

Vance continued Lanyard's adventures in *Red Masquerade* (1921). Now a formal member of the British Secret Service, he is engaged in counter-espionage against Russian communists who are plotting to undermine the British government. After completing a particularly dangerous mission, he becomes a prime target for assassination, so he is asked to resign in *Alias the Lone Wolf* (1921), in order that he might save his own life. He decides to indulge himself with a walking trip through France but stumbles into the middle of an attempted robbery. He comes to the rescue, meeting another beautiful woman in the process. The woman possesses a valuable collection of jewels, and naturally there is an array of villains plotting to seize them. Eventually the jewels disappear, and Lanyard helps retrieve them after a series of wild adventures.

Vance temporarily abandoned the character after the less than successful *The Lone Wolf Returns* (1923), but brought him back for three further adventures in the early 1930s, *The Lone Wolf's Son* (1931), *Encore the Lone Wolf* (1933), and *The Lone Wolf's Last Prowl* (1934), the last being the final novel Vance completed before his death. Lanyard acquires a son he never knew he had, as well as a daughter-in-law, in the first of these, and the reputation of the father is extended to the son, so that they are both viewed askance by the authorities even though they are equally innocent. In *Encore the Lone Wolf*, Maurice Lanyard is the primary

protagonist, facilitating the recovery of a fabulous collection of jewels that disappeared many years earlier and foiling a collection of criminals in the process. The *Last Prowl* reprises some of the action of *The False Faces*. Lanyard senior is accompanying a woman on a voyage to South America, but there are jewel thieves aboard, and the trip is punctuated by multiple thefts and murder.

### Critical Analysis

Michael Lanyard is a suave, appealing protagonist who might have been more popular had Vance been more consistent in tone and quality from book to book. Vance was a skilled writer who constructed lively plots and imbued his settings with the feel of reality, but his books varied so much in atmosphere and structure that he never acquired a strong following, and the long gaps between volumes in the series did not help matters. He was particularly skillful at creating vivid settings ranging from the night life in Parisian cabarets to travel by passenger ship through a war zone. If Vance had not died at a comparatively young age and had reshaped the series into a consistent pattern, the *Lone Wolf* might have attained the same status as the *Saint*.

Lanyard's repudiation of his unsavory background is the result of his realization that all criminals are essentially stupid, that even the most successful ones could do far better if they turned their intelligence to legitimate enterprises, although paradoxically Lanyard himself never achieves any great financial success after reforming. The concept that "crime does not pay" dominated crime fiction for most of the 20th century, even though like most aphorisms it is not always true. The transition in the attitudes of various characters is not as convincing as are other aspects of Vance's writing. Lanyard's sudden revelation that he has led a less than exemplary life is far too sudden and simple, although another sequence in which he considers reverting to his old life is very effective. Some of the plots rely on coincidences, particularly chance encounters between Lanyard and other characters, but for the most part the story lines are straightforward and linear, consisting of a series of adventures intermixed with not very surprising revelations.

Having decided to write the first sequel, Vance disencumbered his hero by having his wife and

child die before the action starts, and his romantic alliances from that point on are similarly circumscribed. The title of *The False Faces* refers to the assumed identities of several of the characters, including Lanyard himself, a metaphor repeated in the later novels. Vance's descriptive powers are particularly strong in the second novel, which is the most consistently entertaining in the series. As was the case with most of his work, Vance was less careful about his depiction of the minor characters. The German submarine crew and secret agents are all the exaggerated caricatures one might expect during wartime. German expansionism is described as a "loathsome incubus incarnate" accompanying other indications of Vance's antipathy. Lanyard's inadvertent rescue by the surfacing submarine is also stretching coincidence, although it is very effective dramatically, as is his later escape and single-handed destruction of that vessel.

The later novels vary in quality as well as in tone, with *The Lone Wolf's Last Prowl* standing out as the best pure adventure, although it seems hastily written and may not have been Vance's final draft. Detailed, evocative settings are largely absent from his later work, and plot elements are often variations of those Vance had already used. Lanyard continues to be a charming character, however, and it is surprising that the last few books have never been reprinted. Vance wrote several other mysteries and thrillers during his career, but none matched the quality of the *Lone Wolf* series.

### **Lord Jim** (1900) **Joseph Conrad**

Polish born Teodor Józef Konrad Nałęcz-Korzeniowski (1857–1924) became a British citizen and changed his name to Joseph Conrad, and is today recognized as one of the first major modern novelists. *Lord Jim* is one of his best-known works, wherein Marlow tells of the title character who went to sea as a young man and entertained romantic dreams of what he would find there, only to discover that it was oddly "barren of adventure." Since Conrad had himself pursued a similar career in his youth, it is not surprising that the story has an authentic feel throughout. After a short stay in a hospital, Jim finds himself adrift among the failures of the merchant marine and finally takes

a posting aboard a decrepit ship in order to shed the feeling that he is wasting his life. The ship is carrying a party of Arab pilgrims when it strikes an unidentified floating object, precipitating a disaster. Jim impulsively abandons ship with the rest of the officers, leaving the passengers behind to die, and although the pilgrims are subsequently rescued, the behavior of the officers outrages public opinion and Jim becomes the scapegoat.

Jim describes what really happened aboard the foundering ship to Marlow at great length, his attempts to free the lifeboats, his last-minute almost involuntary leap into the only one that had been successfully launched, his conviction at the time that the ship had gone down moments later. With his reputation ruined and his right to serve as a ship's officer revoked, Jim faces an uncertain future until Marlow intercedes and finds him a clerical position. Unfortunately, stories of his past follow, and he skips from job to job, trying to find a place where the story of his disgrace is unknown or forgotten.

Eventually Jim gets a job in the remote region of Patusan in Malaysia. The area is torn by political strife and plagued by bandits, yet Jim manages to organize the people, set up a defensive system, and establish enough stability to impress the local rulers and win the affection of the people, who call him "Lord Jim" thenceforth. Through these acts, Jim redeems himself in his own eyes, and those of Marlow, although he has made powerful enemies in the process. Some time later, the town is attacked by another gang, which is successfully driven off, although Jim's friend Dain Waris is killed during the attack. Jim is himself killed by the dead man's despairing father, who blames him for the loss of his son.

### **Critical Analysis**

Although Conrad never identified the inspiration for this story, the account of Jim's disgrace appears to have been based on a very similar incident that took place in the Sea of Arabia. Jim is a man who sought adventure, but who found his career tedious and initially experienced excitement only in his imagination. When he takes the job on the rundown ship, he feels as if he is condescending to serve with inferior men, although "they could not touch him; he shared the air they breathed but he

was different." His status as an outsider is emphasized when he joins the captain and two other officers in a lifeboat, and they threaten to throw him out. The entire sequence that follows makes a powerful contrast to Stephen Crane's "The OPEN BOAT" (1898), where the shipwrecked men are mutually supportive of one another.

The narrator, Marlow, states that his initial reaction to Jim was to consider him criminally weak, a quality he found more reprehensible than actual dishonesty. During the course of the naval inquiry, Marlow hopes for a miracle, some excuse that will rescue Jim's reputation, but none is forthcoming. The inquiry is, in his opinion, useless because you "can't expect the constituted authorities to look into the state of a man's soul." This is mirrored by his description of one of the members of the board, a highly respected ship's captain who is secure in his conviction of his own superiority, envied by his peers, but who "committed suicide very soon after."

As Marlow gets to know Jim better, he concludes that he "was of the right sort; he was one of us." That is, he was a superior man despite his current unfortunate circumstances, and his single act of infamy was an aberration rather than a character flaw. In fact, Jim is more distressed by his failure to take the opportunity to act heroically than he is by the perception that he was derelict in his duty, and when offered money to disappear before the end of the inquiry and avoid punishment, he rejects the prospect stiffly, refusing to run from adversity. As the story progresses, Jim is seen not so much running away from the past as he moves from one job to the next, but running forward toward some assumed future opportunity to prove that the earlier incident was not a fair reflection of his personality.

The author uses an account of the quest for new sources of pepper by European traders to suggest that it is not necessarily the inherent value of the goal that is important. The men who lived, and sometimes died, for pursuit of that trade were motivated as much by the hope to prove themselves by succeeding against the odds as by the desire to make a profit. In Jim's case, he continues to move from one job to another not just because he is made uncomfortable by his past failure but also because he is anxious to achieve a counterbalancing success.

He came to the sea in search of adventure, failed in his first opportunity, and is determined to correct the situation.

Conrad used a very complex and sophisticated literary structure. The bulk of the story is narrated by Marlow—who also tells the story in *HEART OF DARKNESS* (1902)—but he is retelling stories related to him by the other characters, which results in a multi-layered narration. This also exposes the reader to differing viewpoints while describing the same sequence of events. There are occasional redundancies, particularly in Marlow’s observations about Jim’s emotional state, but there are also decided changes in tone from one section to the next. The two halves of the novel are quite different: The first half moves slowly except during the reconstruction of the events surrounding the foundering ship; the latter half compresses a great deal of plot into a relatively short span, covering the last several years of Jim’s life. This reflects Jim’s state of mind, which is trapped in a miasma of regret and frustration until he reaches Patusan, but is freed once he has a definite purpose and an opportunity to prove himself.

### ***Lord of the Flies* (1954) William Golding**

This was the first and remains the most famous novel by Nobel Prize-winning British writer William Golding (1911–93). A large group of boys aged approximately six to 12 years old are marooned on a small island with no adults, where they evolve a flawed society of their own, providing an allegorical look at what the author interpreted as inherent flaws in basic human nature. Because of its perceived controversial portrayal of the human spirit and the depiction of violence among young children, the novel has become one of the most frequently challenged books in American libraries.

The novel opens with two boys meeting at the edge of a scarred piece of land where an escape capsule of some sort crashed. They were among a party jettisoned from a plane under attack in what appears to be a major war sometime in the near future, but the details of how they arrived are not essential to the story and are never provided. As soon as the rest of the boys gather together, they elect Ralph as chief, primarily because he blew the

conch shell that attracted them all to one location. Their initial efforts to deal with their situation are disorganized and unproductive. An attempt at a signal fire burns a sizable portion of the forest, and repeated hunting expeditions provide no meat despite the presence of wild pigs on the island. Ralph’s efforts to construct huts on the beach are slow because only Simon is willing to work on them after the first rush of enthusiasm has dissipated.

The situation continues to deteriorate. The fire is allowed to go out the day a ship passes near the island. An assembly designed to restore order breaks up in confusion and rancor with talk of ghosts. The nonexistent Beast becomes a nebulous bogeyman that takes on more reality when a dead airman’s body falls by parachute onto the island, the sound of which frightens some of the boys into near hysteria. At the same time the animosity between Ralph and Jack becomes progressively more open, eventually leading to a split into two separate “tribes.” Jack’s group slaughters a pig and leaves its head as a gift for the Beast, and it is this head that the author refers to as the Lord of the Flies. Simon then discovers the truth about the dead airman, but he arrives on the beach in the middle of a thunder storm and just as the majority of the boys are engaged in a ritual dance, during the course of which they beat him to death.

Recognition of their capacity for violence brings on the equivalent of warfare as Jack’s tribe attacks the others to steal Piggy’s glasses, the only means they have of starting a fire. A second confrontation results in Piggy’s death and a manhunt designed to kill Ralph, who survives only because of the arrival of a naval vessel at the island.

### **Critical Analysis**

Golding wrote the novel in part as a response to an earlier book, *The Coral Island* (1857) by R. M. Ballantyne, which portrays good and evil in far more discrete terms. Strongly allegorical and filled with Christian symbolism, *Lord of the Flies* is the author’s interpretation of certain elemental human qualities—competition, survival instinct, the need for a hierarchical structure and the opposing attractiveness of chaos, and the primitive that lies buried in each person. Before Ralph and Piggy meet the rest of the boys, they find a gardenlike area full of

fruit, at which point Ralph removes his belt, the clasp of which is shaped like a serpent, and swims naked, finding the absence of clothing “strangely pleasing.” This establishes the island as a substitute for the Garden of Eden in the opening pages.

The boys begin interpreting, or misinterpreting, adult concepts almost from the moment they arrive. When they elect Ralph as their chief, they think of the voting process as a new “toy,” and the island itself becomes their personal property. Although they express pleasure to be without adult supervision, they almost immediately decide that they want “lots” of rules, some of which make sense, but none of which are applied evenhandedly. “We’ve got to have rules and obey them. After all, we’re not savages.” But they are. At the same time, they conclude that until the grownups arrive, they can have “fun,” and in fact only a small minority actually attempts to do any constructive work like building shelters or hunting the pigs. Their priorities become more immediate, subject to whim rather than common sense. Jack’s determination to hunt down and kill a pig becomes more important to him than being rescued. They even evolve a simple class structure divided between the “biguns” and the “littluns,” the oldest and the youngest, and later split into separate tribes.

The choice of leader is almost a product of chance. Ralph was the one who blew the conch and brought them together, but it was Piggy’s idea. Piggy is clearly the smartest of the boys. The only signs of intelligence during their first day on the island are “traceable to Piggy,” and he points out that they need shelter and that their first signal fire served no purpose. He tells them that they are acting like “kids,” which only emphasizes his role as the outsider, already evident from his being overweight, nearsighted, and asthmatic. Ralph admits to himself, but not to the others, that he cannot think constructively the way Piggy does. When they become convinced that the Beast has taken over the mountain, only Piggy has the “intellectual daring” to suggest a new site for the signal fire. Ralph also is “vexed to find how little he thought like a grown up” unlike Piggy, who often does.

The bonds of society loosen very quickly. As memories of adult intervention are fading, the older boys become less circumspect about hurting

or taking advantage of the younger ones. When Jack’s attempt to camouflage himself results in a savage mask, it serves to release him from some of his earlier inhibitions. Ralph’s attempt to use an assembly to reverse the deterioration of their living conditions has the opposite effect, with talk of ghosts frightening some and with Jack openly challenging his authority, declaring that the rules they established earlier no longer have any weight. When Ralph hesitates, Piggy warns him that “we’ll soon be animals anyway” if nothing is done to reassert control. That becomes closer to literal when a group of the boys torment Robert, pretending that he is the pig they have been hunting. When they finally begin painting their bodies, it signifies their “liberation into savagery.”

Some of the symbols in the novel are of a military nature, showing the violence on the island as very similar to that currently convulsing the world at large. Ralph pretends to be a fighter plane, and when the boys topple a stone off the mountain, it hits the ground like a “bomb.” Jack’s contingent wear uniforms and march with military precision, although paradoxically they are a choir. Other symbols imply paganism or the devil, the evil side of human nature. The boys cast shadows on the beach that look like bats, and one of them believes that there is a giant, secretive serpent living in the forest. When the boys place the pig’s head on a stick as a sacrifice to the Beast, they are unconsciously creating a symbol of the devil, for one of Beelzebub’s titles is the Lord of the Flies. Simon’s delusion that the pig head is talking to him does reveal a hint of their real problem when it tells him that the Beast is part of them all, not an external force to be confronted or avoided. When he subsequently discovers the truth about the dead man on the mountain, he is killed before he can convey that knowledge to the others. Mindless passion overcomes the intellect.

The details about what is happening off the island are deliberately left vague to give the story a more universal and lasting appeal. However, the decay of the boys is clearly a reflection of the decay of society as a whole, which is involved in very similar acts of savagery on a much greater scale. The failing is not the shape of society but is inherent in human nature itself. The quest for survival

overrides all other priorities, and civilization is just a mask.

**Lorna Doone** (1869)

**Richard Doddridge Blackmore**

Although English novelist Richard Blackmore (1825–1900) was one of the more popular writers of his time and a strong influence on Robert Louis Stevenson, he is largely forgotten now with the exception of this, his most famous work. *Lorna Doone* is a sweeping romantic adventure story set in the early years of the 18th century. It has remained a popular classic despite a plot now considered overly melodramatic and unnecessarily complex and 18th-century patterns of language, which make the dialogue sound artificially formal to modern readers.

The Doones and the Ridds are rival families living in rural England. John Ridd, the protagonist, is engaged in providing for his mother and sisters on their farm after his father has been killed by the Doones. Although he remains committed to avenging the murder, he is distracted first by family responsibilities and then by falling in love with Lorna, who is engaged despite her objections to marry the current head of the Doone family. This gives Carver Doone an even greater reason to hate John Ridd because he recognizes that Ridd's love for Lorna is returned. The crisis escalates when Lorna's guardian dies and she escapes with Ridd's help to hide at his farm.

Through a series of coincidences, they discover that Lorna is actually a missing heiress who has a rightful claim to a large fortune. Under the then current English law, this makes her a ward of the king, and she is forced to return to London. Given her new circumstances, it is unlikely that she would ever be allowed to marry Ridd, her social inferior. The plot takes another turn, however, when the king dies and a civil war erupts over the question of succession. Ridd is taken prisoner during the conflict, but performs heroic service while in London, for which he eventually receives a full pardon, even though he was innocent.

Ridd is then selected as the leader of a group who wish to wipe out the Doones because of their constant troublemaking and their most recent treason. This is largely accomplished, but Carver

survives. When he discovers that Lorna has finally received permission to marry Ridd, he crashes the wedding, shoots Lorna, and escapes, although he is later killed during a fight with Ridd. Lorna recovers and they live, presumably, happily ever after.

### Critical Analysis

Blackmore lived much of his life in Devon, the location of the Doone Valley, and set much of his fiction in that environment. The Doones are in fact based on an actual Scottish family. Blackmore had studied law, but due to his epilepsy he was unable to practice that profession and turned to writing instead. His initial efforts included some poetry, but it was not until the publication of *Lorna Doone*, an immediate success, that his new vocation was established. Blackmore had spent several years as a farmer, and his observations of and affection for the natural world are evident in his fiction, which includes evocative descriptions of the countryside. His last novel, *Springhaven* (1887) is another interesting adventure story, set during the Napoleonic Wars.

*Lorna Doone* includes many of the classic elements of the historical romance, a genre that writers like him and Sir Walter Scott helped to create. There is a clear distinction between good and evil—the Doones and the Ridds, a forbidden love affair, the young woman forced toward marriage with a man she despises, a battle for the throne, the hero accused of a crime of which he is innocent, the heroine in peril, the eventual rise of the countryside against the villains, and the final battle to the death. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Blackmore was not attempting to comment upon the human condition, criticize the flaws of contemporary society, or provide a popular interpretation of philosophical or cultural issues. His purpose was solely to provide entertainment, and to do so in that era meant portraying women as relatively helpless and constantly in peril, and men as rugged, chivalrous, and either heroic or villainous. The star-crossed lovers who eventually find the barriers to their relationship removed was also commonplace, as was the revelation of unsuspected wealth or noble ancestry. Although the term *romance* did not have its current connotation as a literature of torrid emotions and sexual tension, Blackmore's fiction is generally much closer to the modern concept in terms of

theme and atmosphere than was that of Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, and other writers of that period.

Blackmore had as well a positive aversion to satire, which John Ridd explicitly denigrates when he states that of all human activities, “satire is the very lowest, and most mean and common.” He compares it to bullying and asserts that the virtuous man will regret having lapsed into such unmanly habits. Blackmore’s views of class distinctions are less easy to categorize. It is made clear that even simple things like the manner of dress or of eating are different from one class to the next, but despite the overwhelming tendency of people of that time to marry within their own class, the love affair between Ridd and Lorna obviously had the author’s approval.

Nor was Blackmore interested in the intricacies of characterization. Carver Doone is an unmitigated villain, prone to violence, self-gratification, and with absolutely no redeeming qualities. Lorna is described almost as an object rather than a person. Both Doone and Ridd want to possess her rather than know her. Even Ridd, despite some rudimentary character traits, is more of an icon than a human being, the simple but honorable hero who overcomes numerous obstacles to defeat evil and protect those unwilling to protect themselves. Blackmore’s plotting is much more skillful, although there are times when he engages in excursions into rhapsodic descriptions of the countryside that are prolonged to the point where they seriously affect the progress of the story.

Given its classic story elements, it is not surprising that *Lorna Doone* has been brought to the screen in 11 different versions, one of the most frequently filmed novels of all time. The novel itself has remained in print without a break ever since its first publication. Blackmore’s other fiction has been less fortunate, obscure and almost impossible to find.

### ***Lost Horizon* (1933) James Hilton**

English author James Hilton (1900–54) wrote a number of best-selling novels during his career, and also won an Oscar for his screenwriting. With the possible exception of *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, this has

proven to be his most popular novel, the story of a hidden civilization concealed somewhere in the Himalayas. It was the inspiration for a movie and a Broadway musical, and the term *Shangri-La* has come into general usage as an idyllic place free of the worries of the world.

The opening chapter establishes the frame story in which two men discuss a mutual acquaintance, Hugh Conway, who was recently found in a Chinese hospital, suffering from amnesia. The first narrator claims to have recorded his account of his adventure, recollected during his recovery, which makes up the bulk of the novel. Conway was one of four passengers on a hijacked plane who initially believe that they are going to be held for ransom. They finally crash-land in Tibet, but the pilot falls into a coma and dies without telling them anything except that there is a lamasery nearby named Shangri-La, in a valley called the Blue Moon. The foursome are preparing to search for it when a party consisting of Chang, a Chinese lama, and his attendants find them and conduct them along a perilous path to Shangri-La, which overlooks the hidden valley. They endeavor to engage porters to guide them out of the area, but Chang is peculiarly reticent on the subject and insists that none of the local people will leave the valley, suggesting that they wait for a party of outsiders scheduled to bring in supplies sometime within the next few months.

Three of the four settle in well. A swindler who was being pursued by the authorities is thus content to remain in seclusion. A missionary sees it as her duty to arrange for the “enlightenment” of the lamas, even if, or rather, especially if the circumstances are less than ideal. “There’s no good in doing a thing because you like doing it.” Mallinson is the only one impatient to leave. At the same time, the secretiveness of Chang and the others is disturbing, as is Conway’s growing suspicion that their arrival was expected, perhaps even arranged in advance. Conway learns that the pilot was originally from the valley, which leads him to believe that there is some sort of plot involved, though he cannot imagine what its purpose might be.

Eventually Conway is granted an audience with the High Lama, who tells him about the man who founded the lamasery at Shangri-La centuries

earlier. During the course of that conversation, Conway realizes that this is the same man, impossibly old but still alive. Something in the valley extends the lives of certain people, unfortunately primarily outsiders. Their numbers were originally maintained by replacing those accidentally killed with travelers, but now they are forced to recruit through abduction and that is why the plane was hijacked. Once having arrived, they will never be allowed to leave. Conway conceals this information from his companions, and appears to be content to remain, particularly when he begins to fall in love with Lo-Tsen, a Chinese woman who is one of those whose aging has been retarded. The lamas believe that they have created a kind of time capsule that will survive the collapse of civilization, which they have foreseen following a future war.

Conway becomes a confidant of the High Lama, who tells Conway that he has been chosen as the next leader of the lamasery, then dies a few moments later. Mallinson, the discontented member of the group, then tells Conway that he and Lo-Tsen are leaving with the supply train and that he must accompany them or be trapped forever. Conway is torn by conflicting desires and obligations and is talked into escaping. Through a combination of circumstances, Conway, Lo-Tsen, and Mallinson do manage to leave, but it appears that only Conway lived for very long after they reached the outside world. The story then reverts to the frame, which includes a deliberately ambiguous ending suggesting that Lo-Tsen may have aged dramatically in a matter of weeks after leaving.

### Critical Analysis

*Lost Horizon* is firmly in the lost world tradition as established by H. Rider Haggard, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and others. The protagonist, Conway, has an unusual attitude toward adventure. He finds it exciting, exhilarating, and interesting, but avoids taking chances at every opportunity. The rewards do not seem to him commensurate with the risks involved. He is a bit dismayed during the hijacking to hear that the others believe that he has special qualities, which will prove to be an asset, based on his distinguished service record and a reputation he does not feel he entirely deserves. Conway is a bit of an oddity, a professional diplomat but unambitious,

lacking in convictions or even opinions, someone who is not interested in “excessive striving.” He observes early in the novel that there is little apparent difference between sanity and lunacy in either man or God.

Conway turns out to be unusually well suited to live in Shangri-La. He is a bit of a Luddite, praising the lamasery for having escaped the “fatal knowledge of machinery” despite its modern conveniences. He also suggests that contact with the outside world would be a form of contamination. Of the four, he is the only one who treats the Tibetans as equals; the others are patronizing or even abusive. Conway begins to suspect the truth unconsciously, even before he learns that the aging process is significantly slower in Shangri-La. He tells Chang that “time means less to you than it does to most people.”

The government of Shangri-La, if it can be called a government, is a kind of benevolent theocracy mixed with anarchy. The greatest punishment possible is expulsion, since that would expose the exile to the aging process. Chang tells the visitors that “our principal belief is moderation” but is reticent about describing any other details about the local religious system. There is some contradiction in their proclaimed policy of minimal interference with others, since the four outsiders were deliberately abducted and are being held against their will.

The advantage of a longer life, according to the High Lama, is not that one can get more things done, but that one can do them properly. Books can be read in a leisurely fashion rather than skimmed, and an area of study that might be lightly touched upon in the outside world can be explored in depth in Shangri-La. He observes that Western culture has paradoxically increased the time available to people and made it impossible for them to derive any benefit from what they have gained. In his view, ambitions are “maladies,” and “laziness in doing stupid things can be a great virtue.” When Conway applies the word *slackers* to the people in the valley, Chang replies that a world of slackers might well be preferable to the state of tension that currently exists. The High Lama shares this opinion, believing that civilization outside the valley is determined to destroy itself, and that the only place examples of art, literature, and human intellectual thought

have a chance to survive the coming apocalypse is in the hidden valley.

The novel is sometimes criticized as chauvinistic because the antiaging process works primarily on Westerners, suggesting a mild racism. This conclusion seems inappropriate given the high opinion Conway has of the local Asian culture, the presence of Lo-Tsen, and the very favorable portrayal of Chang. It is more likely simply a plot device designed to justify the abduction that brings Conway to Shangri-La in the first place.

### “The Lottery” (1948) Shirley Jackson

American writer Shirley Jackson was famous for her quirky, unclassifiable novels and short stories, of which this—along with her novel *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959)—is clearly her most remembered work. Jackson wrote a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction, ranging from supernatural horror, to domestic humor in *Raising Demons*, to psychological suspense in *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* (1962). “The Lottery” itself is impossible to classify in terms of genre. The adventure in this case is very short-lived, very close to home, and very effectively understated.

The story opens in a small, unnamed town. The day is pleasant and bright, and the citizens are gathering for the annual lottery, which appears to be a festive event. The first characters we see are young children, fresh out of school for the summer, who are industriously engaged in amassing piles of stones, the first hint that things are not as they seem. Otherwise, they act as one would expect children to behave. The adults follow, equally mundane, talking about taxes and crops and local gossip. The man who runs the lottery is described as “jovial,” and he sets about preparing for the drawing as though it was just another minor task.

Tessie Hutchinson is the primary protagonist, a housewife who is perfectly content to go along with the ceremony until her family is chosen in the first round. Only then does she declare that it “wasn’t fair.” When she is selected from the second round—drawn from among the Hutchinson family only—she is stoned to death by family and friends as the consummation of some mysterious ritual.

### Critical Analysis

Easy to misread, this story is set in an unusual, out-of-the-way town inhabited by atypical people. Jackson clearly did not mean this to be the case, since the opening paragraph mentions that the lottery is not peculiar to the location of this particular sequence of events, that it occurs in other towns as well. Jackson establishes that this is not an aberration in time either. The tradition of the lottery goes back to the original founding of the town, so far back that the original rituals that accompanied it have been long forgotten, suggesting that whatever situation might have led to past prejudices no longer applies today.

The story is an allegory that, like the best of allegories, can be read on more than one level. The unsettling events that take place at the lottery ceremony are entertaining in their own right, but they also represent more subtle, less overt behaviors in the real world. One element is the tendency to be trapped by tradition. No one remembers the real purpose of the lottery, but it is still conducted every year, and no one would think of suggesting that it be discontinued. Similarly, the story is a clear indictment of the pressures of conformity. Not only do the townspeople refuse to question the rightness of the ceremony, they immediately redefine the winner/loser as an outsider, no longer under the community’s protection. The lottery is also representative of the human tendency to choose a scapegoat, an individual or individuals who can be blamed when things go wrong and punished so that people do not have to accept any blame or punishment.

The act of isolation can even split families. Tessie tries to convince the community to include her married daughter in the second drawing even though it is contrary to the rules, and after she is chosen, her own family members are among those who stone her to death. Not only do the townspeople kill Tessie, they relish the act and perform it enthusiastically, suggesting that people are not only subject to prejudices but that they delight in them because the selection of someone else as the outsider reinforces the belief of belonging. Even in her last moments, Tessie does not believe that the lottery is wrong, only that her selection as this year’s victim is unfair.

The mechanism by which the victim is chosen—pure chance—suggests that no one is safe from such ostracism, that a random event could transform anyone into an outsider in the blink of an eye. The senselessness of the ritual is emphasized when it is discovered that Clyde Dunbar is not present because of a broken leg, requiring his wife to draw in his place. Even though everyone knows the age of her children, she has to be formally asked if she has a son old enough to stand in because that is part of the ceremony and they refuse to vary from tradition. When someone mentions that another town is considering abandoning the lottery, the response from Old Man Warner, the oldest man in town, is that doing so would be the equivalent of abandoning all human progress since barbarism. For him and his neighbors, the lottery therefore is the symbol of civilization, a comforting structure however illogical.

When “The Lottery” was first published in *The New Yorker*, it generated much controversy and hate mail, thereby proving the validity of its theme. Jackson later stated that the story was meant as an indictment of “the pointless violence and general inhumanity” that she perceived lay under the veneer of everyday life in America. Jackson was living in Bennington, Vermont, when she wrote “The Lottery,” and her perception of the anti-intellectual leanings of her neighbors plus her ongoing arguments with the local school are generally believed to have provided much of her inspiration. The story has been filmed twice, both versions of which emphasized chases and escapes and managed to leave out most of the allegorical nature of the story, and was also adapted as a radio play and other forms, including a ballet.

### **Ludlum, Robert** (1927–2001)

Popular American thriller writer Robert Ludlum produced more than 20 contemporary adventure stories, many of which have been adapted for the screen. His name has since been used to promote a number of posthumous novels written in whole or in part by other writers, but it is unclear how much of that material was actually by Ludlum himself. Although Ludlum used a very limited number of plots and just varied the details from

one book to the next, he acquired a large and devoted following.

His first novel, *The Scarlatti Inheritance* (1971), is less adventure than drama, the story of a wealthy man whose Nazi sympathies entangle him with a number of historical characters. The same is true of *The Osterman Weekend* (1972), a deadly chess match in which the protagonist tries to figure out who among his companions are members of an international conspiracy. *The Matlock Paper* (1973) began to set the pace for subsequent books, an action-filled story of a man who infiltrates a criminal organization and discovers that it is larger and more powerful than even the government realizes and that he will be lucky to escape with his life. *Trevayne* (1973), originally published under the pseudonym Jonathan Ryder, is very similar, suggesting that a secret alliance exists between big business and organized crime that manipulates both the government and public opinion. Ludlum used the Ryder name again for *The Cry of the Halidon* (1974), a more straightforward adventure story involving the search for a secret buried in the jungles of Jamaica. The plot is so complicated, however, that the pace of the novel is adversely affected.

*The Rhinemann Exchange* (1974) involves German expatriates living in South America and a secret plot between the German government and certain parties among the allies, which is exposed by the protagonist after various misadventures. *The Road to Gandolfo* (1975), which first appeared under the name Michael Shepard, involves a brazen plot to kidnap the pope. *The Gemini Contenders* (1976) anticipated Dan Brown’s *The DA VINCI CODE* (2003) in that the secret sought by various parties would undercut Christian beliefs if made public, specifically by providing evidence that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross but was replaced at the last moment by another man. There is another international conspiracy in *The Chancellor Manuscript* (1977), this time to take advantage of secret files compiled by J. Edgar Hoover.

*The Holcroft Covenant* (1978) reprises Ludlum’s interest in secretive but powerful postwar neo-Nazi organizations. The hero is an architect who discovers that his father stole substantial amounts of money from the Nazi hierarchy during the war, intending for it to be distributed to victims after

hostilities ended. His attempts to carry out his father's wishes are opposed by a sinister organization that hopes to establish a Fourth Reich. There is yet another secret society in *The Matarese Circle* (1979), this one with similar sinister plans that can only be stopped if two aging cold war spymasters can forget their old personal grievances against each other and work cooperatively.

*The Bourne Identity* (1980) was the first in a series of three novels about Jason Bourne who, in this first adventure, is suffering from amnesia and has no idea why various organizations, including the CIA, are apparently intent upon killing him. Bourne, whose real name is Webb, returned in *The Bourne Supremacy* (1986), coerced into attempting an assassination after someone kidnaps the woman he loves. Ludlum's third and final novel in the series was *The Bourne Ultimatum* (1990), in which he has his final confrontation with his archenemy, the terrorist known as Carlos the Jackal. Eric Van Lustbader later added two more Bourne adventures, *The Bourne Legacy* (2004), in which he is framed for murder, and *The Bourne Betrayal* (2007), wherein he rescues an old friend missing in Africa, but later suspects that things are not as they appear.

*The Parsifal Mosaic* (1982) is an ambitious spy story, with a rather unbelievable subplot in which an unbalanced American official forges secret treaties with the Soviet Union and China that could set off a major international conflict. A group of megalomaniacal generals plot to seize control of the world in *The Aquitaine Progression* (1984), and an international terrorist organization is infiltrated by the protagonist of *The Icarus Agenda* (1988). *The Road to Omaha* (1992) is the sequel to *The Road to Gandolfo* and is a somewhat less than serious story about the discovery of a treaty that puts the Strategic Air Command on Indian-owned land. There is minimal adventure involved.

*The Scorpio Illusion* (1993) reprises many of Ludlum's standard plot devices, the retired spy called out of retirement for one last assignment, in

this case tracking down a terrorist who is plotting to assassinate the president of the United States. *The Apocalypse Watch* (1995) is a variation of *The Holcroft Covenant*, an international conspiracy by ex-Nazis to take over the world. Another retired agent is recalled to duty in *The Matarese Countdown* (1997), sequel to *The Matarese Circle*, wherein the secret criminal society that was defeated in the earlier book resumes operations under new and even more dangerous leadership. Ludlum's last book published during his lifetime was *The Prometheus Deception* (2000), another duel between intelligence agents and a terrorist organization.

Five novels were published under Ludlum's name posthumously, of which *The Sigma Protocol* (2001) is probably the only one he wrote in its entirety. The hero is the son of a Holocaust survivor who learns of an international conspiracy and derails its plans. Four other novels have since appeared, based on fragments or outlines left by Ludlum and completed by an unidentified ghostwriter: *The Janson Directive* (2002), *The Tristan Betrayal* (2003), *The Ambler Warning* (2004), and *The Bancroft Strategy* (2005). There have also been several novels in the Covert-One series, written by various authors, supposedly based on Ludlum's notes. They all deal with a secret government organization that specializes in battling sophisticated conspiracies.

### Critical Analysis

Ludlum's work remains very popular. His stories frequently employ the device of having a single man in opposition to a powerful, often international conspiracy, and prevailing through intelligence, determination, and considerable luck. The novels generally involve violence and thrilling action sequences, but the pace is occasionally slowed by ponderous subplots and background explanations. Ludlum's later work often repeated plots and situations from earlier novels, but it was a popular mixture for books that were consistent best sellers.

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## **MacLean, Alistair** (1922–1987)

Scottish novelist Alistair MacLean served in the Royal Navy during World War II, which provided much of the authentic background for his early novels. His first book, *H.M.S. Ulysses* (1956), was the closest he came to using his actual wartime service, the story of an escort ship detailed to guard a convoy even though the vessel and crew have already been exposed to unusually rough conditions and are in need of rest, repair, and recuperation. They battle the weather as well as the enemy during a surprisingly active six-day voyage that ends with the destruction of the ship. The novel was very well received both by critics and readers and was compared favorably to *The CRUEL SEA* (1951) by Nicholas Monsarrat. MacLean became even more popular with his second and best-known novel, *The GUNS OF NAVARONE* (1957), which described efforts by a small group of commandos to sabotage an artillery emplacement on a Mediterranean island. This novel in particular established many of the plot elements that MacLean used repeatedly in his later work, notably the traitor hidden among the protagonists, startling plot reversals, and desperate journeys across dangerous landscapes.

With his popularity clearly established, MacLean began writing approximately one book per year, a schedule he maintained with few variations throughout his career. He switched his setting to the war in the Pacific in his third book, *South by Java Head* (1957). The Japanese are about to conquer Singapore, and a disparate group of people make a desperate attempt to escape by sea. Although there

is a female among the main characters, there is virtually no romantic content in the novel, another characteristic of MacLean's fiction. *The Secret Ways* (1959, also published as *The Last Frontier*), is a novel of espionage, the first of MacLean's novels to be set after the war. A prominent English scientist is hidden somewhere in Hungary, and British Intelligence knows that there are plans to release a statement by him denouncing the West. They send their most experienced agent to defuse the situation and hope to return the man in question to British control.

*Night without End* (1959) was MacLean's first novel written in the first person and also the first of several using Arctic settings. A plane carrying a number of people across northern Greenland crashes after it is sabotaged, and the survivors are rescued by members of a small scientific outpost in the area. An already dangerous situation becomes even worse when the outpost's only radio is destroyed, followed by a series of events that suggest at least one of the party is a killer. The various internal and external threats reinforce one another in one of MacLean's most suspenseful thrillers. *Fear Is the Key* (1961) is also told in first person, the protagonist being a tough, unconventional hero wanted for a murder he did not commit. With a young woman as his quasi-hostage, he leads the police on a desperate chase before he is able to prove his innocence. This was the closest MacLean had come to writing a conventional crime novel, and it is the weakest book of his early career.

In 1961 MacLean published the first of two pseudonymous adventures as Ian Stuart, supposedly

to prove that the popularity of his books was not based solely on his past achievements. *The Black Shrike* (also published as *The Dark Crusader*) reads very much like a JAMES BOND novel. A secret agent investigates the disappearance of several scientists in the South Pacific and uncovers a plot to shift the balance of world power, thwarting a handful of Chinese villains in the process. The second Stuart novel, *The Satan Bug* (1962), is in fact one of MacLean's very best. Another secret agent is investigating the apparent theft of some experimental bacteria from a bio-warfare laboratory in England. The villains are criminals who threaten to release the virus in London unless a considerable ransom is paid. The 1965 film version moved the story to the western United States. *The Golden Rendezvous* (1962) is in much the same style, the story of the kidnapping of a nuclear scientist as part of an elaborate criminal conspiracy, but it was inferior to the two published as by Stuart.

*Ice Station Zebra* (1963) like *Night without End* has an Arctic setting and is told in the first person. A remote Arctic weather station signals for help, indicating that there has been a fire and that they are in desperate need of evacuation. An American nuclear submarine is sent to the rescue, but there are additional difficulties. The weather station is actually a listening post to spy on Soviet military activity, with a saboteur aboard the submarine, as well as within the outpost staff. After various heroics including a trek across the ice and sabotage inside the submarine, the survivors are rescued, secrets are revealed, and the Communist agents are exposed. Three years passed before MacLean published a new novel, *When Eight Bells Toll* (1966), the longest gap in his entire career. This was another spy story mixed with adventure at sea. Five cargo ships have disappeared in the Atlantic, and the protagonist is given the assignment of finding out what happened to them, which leads him to a secretive, avaricious businessman in Scotland.

*Where Eagles Dare* (1967) was written as novel and screenplay almost simultaneously. The plot bears a strong resemblance to *The Guns of Navarone* except that the mission is to penetrate a secure Nazi base in the Alps in order to rescue a British general before he breaks under interrogation. A secondary plot reveals that the mission is an

elaborate ploy designed to expose the identities of German agents within the British military. Wheels within wheels complete what was easily MacLean's most complicated novel. MacLean's connection to the film industry was further reflected in *Force 10 from Navarone* (1968), the only sequel he ever wrote, which continues the story from the film version rather than from his original novel. Several of the surviving members of the commando party are dispatched to Yugoslavia to help the resistance destroy a key bridge, but once again there are spies within the group and further plot complications.

MacLean's novels from this point forward were noticeably less violent and more superficial, with backgrounds that were usually only sketched in and characterization minimized. *Puppet on a Chain* (1969) involves an Interpol agent investigating drug dealers who becomes their target in a series of murder attempts. *Caravan to Vaccares* (1970) includes another attempted kidnapping, this one enlivened slightly by being set within a gypsy community. *Bear Island* (1971) is another Arctic thriller involving a murder plot among the members of a film crew traveling to a remote island for a shoot. MacLean then wrote two nonfiction books before returning to thrillers with *The Way to Dusty Death* (1973), set in the world of automobile racing. It follows the adventures of a man accused of crippling his girlfriend in a senseless accident. But as in most of MacLean's novels, the action suggests that another explanation will be revealed only in the closing chapters.

*Breakheart Pass* (1974), essentially a western novel, set aboard a train during a blizzard, broke MacLean's usual pattern of contemporary settings. The various characters each have something to hide, and the revelations and interactions form the heart of the story. The plot is quite good, but MacLean fails to evoke that historical period. *Circus* (1975) reverts to the Navarone plot, this time requiring a clandestine entry into an East German prison and the extraction of plans for a secret weapon. The agents chosen include a trapeze artist who is also a clairvoyant, an unusual twist that results in an implausible and unsatisfying resolution. *The Golden Gate* (1976) has an equally strained plot. Criminals kidnap the president of the United States and other dignitaries and hold them

prisoner on the Golden Gate Bridge, which has been rigged with explosives. While ransom negotiations are under way, the leader of the gang agrees to let reporters approach, one of whom turns out to be an FBI agent who saves the day.

There's a stolen nuclear weapon and a plot to destroy an offshore oil rig in *Seawitch* (1977). *Goodbye California* (1979) uses the same basic plot on a larger scale, in this case a plan to use an atomic explosion to trigger an earthquake that will sink most of California into the Pacific Ocean. Both of these were routine despite the grandiose premises, but *Athabasca* (1980) proved to be considerably better, another novel of life inside the Arctic circle. A group of saboteurs are engaged in a mission of terrorism, this time with an oil pipeline as their target. *River of Death* (1981) moves to a completely different environment, the jungles of South America, for a story of hidden German war criminals, a stolen treasure, and a quest for vengeance.

In *Partisans* (1982), a reprise of MacLean's World War II novels, a mission to provide vital information to resistance forces in the Balkans is complicated by plots within plots. Terrorists use bombs to flood part of the Netherlands in *Floodgate* (1983). *San Andreas* (1984) is another war story, set aboard a hospital ship that has become a prime target for the Germans for reasons unknown to those aboard. MacLean's last novel, *Santorini* (1986) involves contemporary geopolitical intrigue. A plane crashes near a NATO warship whose officers have already been puzzled by the presence of a mysterious civilian yacht. Although MacLean's last few novels have plots that sound exciting and complex, they are much less tense and engaging than his earlier work, and the surprise revelations are more predictable.

### Critical Analysis

MacLean's later novels are not nearly so successful as his early work, in part because he began to repeat plot elements and themes, but also because there is less texture to the prose. The characters are sketched in, and even the physical descriptions seem hasty. He was, however, quite influential, and writers such as TOM CLANCY, Clive Cussler, Stephen Coonts, and other techno-thriller writers have evolved logically from MacLean's subject matter.

MacLean wrote in a clear, straightforward style with minimal subplots, using colorful settings as a backdrop to the heroic endeavors of his protagonists.

MacLean's early work is very similar to that of JACK HIGGINS, but in later years he seemed to favor much more melodramatic plots with strong physical elements, perhaps influenced by the possibility of further screen adaptations. More than half of MacLean's novels—mostly the early ones—were made into movies, generally remaining faithful to the original story. Many of the later books are so sparingly written that they feel like story treatments rather than completed works of fiction. A collection of short stories, *The Lonely Sea*, many of which involve adventures at sea, was published in 1985.

### *The Man in the Iron Mask* (1847)

#### Alexandre Dumas

French author Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870) is most famous for his novel *The THREE MUSKETEERS* (1844), to which he wrote two sequels, the second of which—*The Vicomte de Bragelonne* (1847)—was so long that it appears most commonly in English translation as three separate books, the last being *The Man in the Iron Mask*. All three sections take place during the reign of King Louis XIV of France, and they follow the last adventures of the musketeers, three of whom die in the final book. The sequence also introduces Raoul, son of Athos, although he does not survive either. The first two-thirds chronicle the new king's initial faltering steps, D'Artagnan's resignation from his service, and later reinstatement when Louis begins to master the art of politics and assert himself.

Aramis, one of the famed musketeers, visits a nameless prisoner in the opening sequence, asserting that the man—ignorant of his own identity—is actually the twin brother of King Louis, imprisoned to avoid a question about who should rule. Aramis, who is distressed by the king's apparent weakness, wishes to replace him with his brother. He has been pressured by circumstances into taking this step because he favors a minister named Fouquet, who was the target of the king's displeasure and whose eventual ruin seems inevitable unless the throne changes hands. To this end, Aramis recruits the

assistance of his friend Porthos, who is less adept at understanding court politics.

The plot does not necessarily involve revealing the secret, and Aramis suggests that the conspiracy continue, but only after an exchange has been made and the ruling king has switched places with his unfortunate brother. Ironically, Fouquet undermines the plot, rescuing Louis and forcing Porthos and Aramis to flee for their lives. D'Artagnan, as head of the musketeers, is ordered to apprehend and execute his two friends, and in another irony the king also orders the arrest of Fouquet, his savior. D'Artagnan considers resigning his post but is talked into remaining.

The pursuit of Porthos and Aramis is exciting, and those chapters are among the best of Dumas's work. Athos succumbs to grief after his son dies, and Porthos ultimately falls prey to physical weakness and is killed during the chase, but Aramis escapes to Spain. Late in the novel, D'Artagnan also perishes at the height of his own career during the war with the Dutch, leaving only Aramis of the original group of four to survive their final adventure.

### Critical Analysis

Dumas's speculation that King Louis had a twin brother made this a particularly intriguing novel. The masked, mysterious prisoner during Louis XIV's reign was a real historic figure whose identity has never been discovered. He was routinely reported to be wearing a velvet mask, later romanticized as having been made of iron, and great pains were made to conceal his appearance from the public. There have been numerous theories about the man's identity, and the possibility that he was the king's brother was not original to Dumas, although making him an identical twin was a clever innovation.

Modern readers may be somewhat confused by the intricacies of French politics of the 17th century, although they are undoubtedly no more convoluted than they are at present. This is particularly true because *The Man in the Iron Mask* is the final third of a considerably larger work, and much of the detail about motivations and loyalties is established in the less frequently read precursors. Readers who jump directly from *The Three Musketeers* (1844) may be disoriented by the change in the status of the characters and the

political landscape. Aramis has taken holy orders during the interval, while Porthos and Athos have retired. Only D'Artagnan remains directly in the king's service. Further confusion results because some publishers split the original work into four rather than three subsidiary volumes, so the actual contents of *The Man in the Iron Mask* vary from one edition to the next.

A good deal of humor is found in the book, particularly in the first half, with D'Artagnan using his wit and sardonic intelligence to negotiate a path through matters of state and, more frequently, proper protocol. With more dialogue and less action than in the earlier adventures in the series, some of the excursions, such as the lengthy discussion of the technique of poetry, do not contribute materially to the plot.

There is clearly a flaw in the plan to replace the king. As clumsy as Louis may be in picking a path through the complex maze of the French court, the disenfranchised brother is far less capable of ruling the country. He has been sequestered from birth, is almost as ignorant of history as he is of contemporary politics, and would certainly never be capable of carrying out the impersonation. Dumas does not make his own feelings clear, but in the final chapter he refers to the musketeers—including the arguably treasonous Aramis—as “noble souls,” suggesting that there was no clear right or wrong in the matter, that the tragedy resulted from honorable men listening to the arguments of their own consciences even when their conclusions were painful to contemplate.

D'Artagnan's dilemma, the choice between honor and duty, is the most impressive nonphysical conflict in the novel. On the one hand, he considers Fouquet a good man, and certainly feels personal loyalty toward his friends, believing it dishonorable to turn against them. But at the same time he has sworn an oath of fealty to the king, and Louis presents a convincing argument that it is his obligation as well as his right to make decisions of state, even if they seem unjust at times. D'Artagnan is ultimately persuaded, though he is not happy with his decision.

The story of the masked man of uncertain identity has been used by other authors since the publication of the Dumas classic. Perhaps the most

interesting is the spy thriller *Who?* (1958) by Algis Budrys, in which a scientist imprisoned behind the iron curtain is returned with an artificial, metallic face and with all other means of positive identification similarly obscured. Dumas also wrote an essay on the subject of the identity of the real “man in the iron mask.”

### **“The Man Who Would Be King” (1888)**

#### **Rudyard Kipling**

A great many of the adventure stories of English author Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) were set in British India, where he was born and spent much of his life, and the surrounding area. Kipling chose to write this particular adventure in the form of a story within a story, thereby putting some distance between the narrator and the two main characters, who are neither reliable nor particularly literate. The initial viewpoint character is an unnamed journalist who encounters two disreputable adventurers and learns of their plans, followed by the return of one of the men after an absence of two years. He then relates the main part of the story, after which the journalist provides a brief resolution.

The journalist first meets Peachy Carnehan on a train somewhere in India. Carnehan is broke but undaunted by his misfortune, and explains his plan to wander through some of the Native States of India, pretending to be a newspaper correspondent. The rulers of these subdivisions of British India have a disproportionate fear of the press and are worried that stories of how they administer their territories might attract the unwelcome attention of the colonial administration, although the narrator, who really is a journalist, knows this is not the case. Carnehan expects to trade on this fear to extort a comfortable lifestyle for an extended period of time. He prevails upon the journalist to carry a message to a friend of his, Daniel Dravot, who supports himself by similar subterfuges, arranging a rendezvous so that the two might combine their resources and each gain the companionship of a fellow European. He does deliver the message, but the journalist has an ulterior motive. He wants the two men together so that the authorities, whom he has alerted, can more easily track them down and deport them as undesirables. He means to do so

at least in part for their own protection, for their scheme is inherently risky. His plans are successful, although the two men eventually realize that he was responsible.

The two drifters show up unexpectedly at the journalist’s office, insisting that they harbor no ill feeling toward him and requesting his help in providing maps and information about the neighboring area of Afghanistan, specifically a relatively unknown region known as Kafiristan, which has never been visited by outsiders. They announce their intention of going there and of using their military skills to help train an army with which they will eventually overthrow the local rulers and install themselves as kings. To ensure their success, they have signed a solemn compact forswearing alcohol and women until they have achieved their goal. A warning that the area is dangerous to outsiders is waved off, and the journalist is invited to witness their departure the following day. Curious, he attends the rendezvous and finds Dravot disguised as a crazed priest and Carnehan as his humble servant. Since the local tribes consider the insane to be good luck charms, the two are invited to join a departing caravan, and their adventure begins, although the narrator—and the reader—must then jump two years forward to find out what happened to them.

Carnehan returns in such bad condition that the journalist almost fails to recognize him, but upon recovering he declares that he and Dravot had achieved their ambition and been crowned kings, although obviously their fortunes have since changed for the worst. He relates the story of their journey, the death of their camels, their encounter with bandits, and their eventual advent in Kafiristan. There they observe two forces involved in a battle with bows and arrows and intercede on behalf of the lesser force, their rifles quickly reversing the tide of battle. They compel their uncertain allies to lead them to their village, where they are received uneasily. Dravot is clearly the dominant personality, and he promptly travels to the enemy village, imposing peace on both peoples. Through use of their rifles, and by training the unorganized warriors into more disciplined troops, the two entrepreneurs quickly begin to spread their influence through the hill tribes, bringing more and more

territory under their control. Their plans are given an unexpected boost when they discover that the priesthood use the secret signs of the Freemasons, and through the coincidental discovery of a hidden symbol of authority.

Although they are crowned as kings, in fact they are regarded by the people they rule as gods. They purchase more weapons and build their army into the most powerful force in the region, until they effectively rule all of Kafiristan. Dravot begins to have even more ambitious dreams; he sees himself forming an empire that will repel the Russian advances in the area and eventually lead to his being knighted by the Queen. Carnehan has a more practical outlook, however, and fears that they will become overextended and so the divisions between the two men begin to grow wider.

The crisis comes when Dravot decides that having fulfilled the terms of their compact, he is no longer bound by it. He decides to take a wife and announces his decision, apparently oblivious to the unrest this creates. Carnehan is unable to tell just what is going awry, but it is obvious that the announced betrothal is precipitating a crisis that could put them both in danger. His attempts to convince Dravot are futile, however, and disaster strikes on the day of the wedding. The unhappy bride bites Dravot, who bleeds, revealing that he is a mortal man. The formerly obedient tribesmen immediately rebel, and the two men flee with a handful of loyal followers, only to be caught within a few hours. Dravot is ceremoniously killed and beheaded, and Carnehan is crucified. Somehow he survives, and his captors set him free, handing him a sack with Dravot's still crowned head inside.

Although Carnehan survives to tell his story, he is clearly hopelessly insane and physically debilitated by his ordeal. The journalist once again intervenes on his behalf, but it is too late this time, and he dies shortly afterward in an asylum. Dravot's overconfidence results from his belief in his own invention, that he has become a god. The more pragmatic Carnehan survives because he understands the truth. Kipling's chronicle of their adventures was brought to the screen in 1975 with Sean Connery and Michael Caine playing the two main characters.

### Critical Analysis

Intertwined in this straightforward adventure story are glimpses of the author's sometimes ambivalent attitude toward the Indian subcontinent and its peoples, which are shown in more detail in his novel *KIM* (1901). England directly ruled a large portion of Kipling's India, but much of it was still administered by local governments that were theoretically subject to the colonial authority, and through them the queen of England. These semi-independent regions, known as the Native States, are described in the story as the interface between civilization and barbarity, with the trappings and outward appearance of the former, but the passions and violence of the latter.

Kipling also describes, somewhat acidly, the outlook of most of the European residents, that the Native States "were created by Providence in order to supply picturesque scenery" rather than serve as self-governing entities. Kipling had a very ambivalent attitude in this regard. On the one hand, he deplored the exploitation of the Indians by avaricious or ambitious Europeans; on the other hand, he had a rather patronizing attitude that reveals itself at times. The natives are often described as almost childlike, unsophisticated, ignorant, even savage. The ease with which the two interlopers fool the tribes of northern Afghanistan suggests a superior intelligence. Dravot's downfall comes not because of the intelligence of his subjects, but because he becomes greedy and betrays himself as mortal.

Only one of the tribesmen is portrayed with any depth—the single chief who remains loyal following the crisis—and even he is sketched in only faintly. Like the loyal teenager in *Kim*, he and his followers risk almost certain death in an effort to spirit the two Europeans to safety. For his pains he dies violently. This can be interpreted as an heroic act of self-sacrifice, but Kipling is ambiguous. It could just as easily be read as a sign that loyalties unwisely expressed can have fatal consequences. Did he die justly because he sided with the Europeans against his own culture, or unjustly because he chose personal loyalty over popular outrage? In the context of Kipling's other stories, the latter seems more likely, but given Dravot's egocentric ambitions and his total indifference

to the fate of the people he governs, perhaps his death is a justifiable response to his collaboration with the oppressors.

The structure of the story is also problematic. By divorcing the primary narrator from the main action of the story, then using a secondary narrator to provide the details of their adventures, Kipling removes the reader one step further from the action. It is not clear why he chose to frame the story in this fashion, which telegraphs most of the final revelations because readers already presume that Dravot was dead, that he did something that undermined their plans, and that Carnehan was lucky to escape with his life. Nor do the characters really learn anything from the experience. Dravot dies still convinced of his own superiority, and Carnehan follows in due course, driven mad by his experiences and exposure. Possibly the journalist may have benefited from hearing their story, but little of his thought processes is revealed so that he might as well have been an omniscient narrator. Despite its faults, however, the story is a powerful illustration of the risks of hubris and of underestimating a people simply because their culture is different.

**Marathon Man** (1974) **William Goldman**

Although William Goldman has spent most of the last 30 years primarily as a screenwriter, he had previously written several notable novels ranging in subject matter from humor to fantasy to horror. *Marathon Man* was his second suspense novel, published 10 years after his intense story about an insane serial killer, *No Way to Treat a Lady* (1964). Goldman would write more thrillers afterward, but none were as successful as *Marathon Man*, and he stopped writing novels altogether in 1986.

The protagonist is Thomas “Babe” Levy, a scholar specializing in history and a hopeful marathon runner. Levy never completely recovered from the trauma of his father’s suicide after he was targeted during the McCarthy hearings as a communist sympathizer. As a consequence, he is obsessively following in his father’s footsteps as a historian, driven by some internal need to expunge the stain on his father’s reputation. Although his experiences with women are a litany of failure, his

recent meeting with Elsa Opel seems promising, but unknown to him, she is part of an organization that has deliberately planned the encounter and contrived his infatuation.

Levy’s relatively bland life is contrasted with that of Scylla, a professional spy and killer first seen when he becomes involved in the murder of another agent under unsettling conditions. Scylla is eventually revealed as Hank Levy, Babe’s older brother. For the first time in his career, Scylla is experiencing feelings of despair and realizes how thoroughly he has cut himself off from the rest of the world. When he narrowly escapes an attempt on his own life, it only emphasizes his sense of dread and loss. Further evidence suggests that he has already been written off by his own people, and that despite his continued usefulness, he is doomed.

Levy, meanwhile, is mugged in Central Park, which deepens his relationship with Elsa, obviously the purpose of the attack. His brother comes to visit and meet Elsa, and he quickly exposes her as a liar, although his brother makes excuses for her behavior, refusing to accept that he is being used. Elsewhere, the muggers have met their employer, an ex-Nazi official who has flown to the United States from Paraguay, using a false passport. The three of them meet Scylla furtively, refer obliquely to a former business relationship now ended, and then Scylla is mortally wounded. He lives long enough to reach his brother’s apartment and dies in Levy’s arms. Only then does the younger man discover the truth about what his brother did for a living, acting as an agent of the mysterious government organization known only as the Division.

Despite assurances that he is under police protection, Levy is kidnapped within hours and subjected to torture by Szell, the Nazi and a former dentist. A friend of his brother appears to rescue him, but it turns out to be a complex trick, and he is soon a prisoner again, now dependent upon his own resources to survive. When his captors finally decide that he knows nothing and prepare to kill him, he manages to get free, and his marathon training makes it possible for him to outrun them and escape. He outwits them once more, appears to be taken in by Elsa, but ultimately kills her and the hired muscle, returning to Manhattan in time to accost and kill Szell as well.

### Critical Analysis

One of the more effective aspects of this surprisingly complex novel is the depiction of the hidden world inhabited by Scylla and his kind. Allegiances are never permanent, and the politics of the situation are almost irrelevant. The man who tried to kill you one day might buy you a drink the next. There is supposed to be nothing personal in any of this, and Scylla's fate is sealed when he begins to feel rather than simply reason. He has become aware that the "game" bears little resemblance to reality and that there is no escape in the long run. His current mission, for example, is to sell information to the Russians that they already have but do not want the West to know they have, so they are forced to negotiate to buy it again. Similarly, even though the German, Szell, is a known war criminal, Scylla acted as his courier transporting stolen diamonds in return for information about other fugitives, with the tacit approval of his superiors.

Goldman's gift for characterization is obvious from the outset. Within the first few chapters he brings four very disparate characters to vivid life, and several minor characters are clearly differentiated. He is also a master of psychological suspense. The scene in which Levy sits in the bathtub, listening to the sounds of intruders outside the door, and his subsequent torture by dentistry are some of the most chilling moments in all of literature.

During one of Levy's study sessions in the library, he attempts to differentiate two Italian painters by examining their work, discovering "the man behind the canvas," which is ironic in that he has never been able to pierce his own brother's façade and has been completely taken in by Elsa. Complementing this is Scylla's dream sequence in which Dr. Mengele wants to take his skin but is resisted because without his skin "people would see right through me." The two brothers are fond of secrets, which was one of the methods they used to occupy their minds following their father's suicide, but even Levy does not know his brother's actual profession.

The truth proves painful to Levy, whether it is the knowledge that his brother lied to him for years, recognition of his own compulsive quest to vindicate his father, or acceptance of the truth

about Elsa's affections. In the closing scenes he finally answers Szell's question—"Is it safe?"—with the truth that it is not. Nothing is safe so long as the world tolerates the kind of evil that Szell and his cronies represent. When he provokes Szell into an attack so that he can kill him, Levy is acting in accordance with his new conviction that evil cannot be dealt with by reason but must be met with and overcome by violence. His father relied exclusively on truth, and when that proved inadequate to defend him, his confidence was destroyed along with his reputation. Levy does not intend to make the same mistake.

### *The Mark of Zorro* (1924)

#### Johnston McCulley

The creator of Zorro was American pulp writer Johnston McCulley (1883–1958), who first introduced the character in a 1919 short story titled "The Curse of Capistrano." *The Mark of Zorro* would prove to be the first of four novels, the other three appearing only after the 1920 silent movie, at which point McCulley adopted the appearance and other details from the films and applied them to his character. Short stories featuring Zorro continued to appear through the 1950s, but they tended to repeat old situations. McCulley also created a number of other masked heroes, including the Green Ghost, but none caught the public's interest as much as Zorro, who appeared on the screen in three serials and later in multiple movies and a television series.

The setting is early California, still a Spanish colony. The privileged aristocrats are served by the peon class, with the governor and his cronies taking shameless advantage of the peasants. Even the church is split into two antagonistic parties, and the friars who side with the common people are similarly persecuted. Zorro has already become a constant irritation as the story opens, punishing the more brutal of the oppressors, stealing from the rich to help the needy. He is contrasted to Don Diego Vega, a rather foppish member of the landed class who shares an odd friendship with the crass Sergeant Gonzales. Although McCulley does not specifically reveal that Don Diego is Zorro until the final chapter, it is obvious from the outset. Gonzales

boasts that he will capture or kill Zorro given an opportunity, unaware that it is his friend's secret identity, after which Zorro publicly embarrasses Gonzalez, which makes him only more determined to capture the outlaw.

Don Diego also begins courting Lolita Pulido, daughter of another don who suffered financial reversals following a political misalliance. He continues the foppish pretense, then returns in the guise of Zorro to flirt with her. She has also attracted the attention of the treacherous Captain Ramon, who is thwarted by Zorro when he tries to force his advances on her. Ramon writes a letter accusing the Pulidos of treason and implies that the Vega family is similarly disloyal. Zorro learns of the plot, but is unable to prevent it from taking root. Although he acts entirely on his own for most of the novel, he eventually persuades a small group of caballeros to take up his fight against injustice.

The governor orders that all three of the Pulidos be arrested immediately and confined in humiliating conditions. Resentment against him is strong, but without a leader to stir them into active resistance, the other landowners refuse to act. Zorro convinces a number of younger caballeros that they are acting dishonorably, then leads them to the rescue of the Pulidos. His attempt to hide Lolita at the home of a Franciscan friar is an ill-advised plan that backfires immediately. She escapes, however, and joins Zorro on the run shortly after he has finally killed Captain Ramon. They are besieged at last and ultimately saved by the caballeros Zorro led the previous day, who force the governor to pardon everyone concerned. Don Diego unmask, revealing his true identity, and announces his engagement to Lolita.

### Critical Analysis

The original adventures of Zorro are among a very few that have become so much a part of Western culture that most people know the story even though they have never read the book, basing their understanding on one or another of the film versions. The character seems to have been inspired by the legend of ROBIN HOOD, *The SCARLET PIMPERNEL* (1903) by the Baroness Orczy, and similar works, and in turn it helped pave the way for modern masked avengers such as Batman and Spider-Man.

Zorro's name is a Spanish word suggesting a devious fox, wholly appropriate to his career. Several other writers have written Zorro novels in recent years, most notably Isabel Allende with her fictionalized biography *Zorro* (2005). Much of McCulley's other adventure fiction, which included several westerns, has never been reprinted.

McCulley's depiction of Spanish-ruled California is not entirely accurate since the area had not been an active colony long enough for the system as described to have been put in place. Considering the markets for which McCulley was writing at the time, *The Mark of Zorro* has a surprisingly light touch, sometimes openly humorous, sometimes sentimental. Although he does not technically reveal the fact that Don Diego is Zorro until comparatively late, there is little effort made to disguise the truth, and most readers would see through the imposture during the opening tavern scene even if they were not already familiar with the story.

Almost every character in the novel is fond of posturing. Gonzales boasts of deeds he is unlikely to accomplish; Captain Ramon never misses a chance to brag of his skills; and Zorro himself takes unnecessary risks on several occasions just to make a formidable impression. Late in the novel, after rescuing Lolita, Zorro's determination to escape is motivated as much by his wish to preserve his image as an undefeated hero as it is by his affection for her. Ramon's less than honorable character is revealed fully when he attempts to force himself upon Lolita after disregarding propriety and forcing her servants to leave the two of them alone. Some scenes are noticeably repetitious. Zorro's first battle with Captain Ramon follows the same pattern as his fight with Gonzales. The motivating power of the reward offered for Zorro's capture is mentioned repeatedly.

Although Don Diego is consciously playing a part, there are hints that he is not as fond of risking his life as his exploits might otherwise suggest. When challenged by Lolita after he suggests that it would be smarter to pay a ransom to Zorro rather than fight him, he retorts that "any man may be manly at times, but it takes a clever man to be sagacious." Lolita is also an interesting character in that she is trapped between obligations to her family, who want her to marry the

socially enviable and rich Don Diego even though he appears cool and dandified, and her yearnings for the excitement suggested by Zorro's clandestine visits. She is also tempted by the considerable wealth of the Vega family, although not so greatly as to overcome her determination to marry a man she can respect.

The plot is at times very contrived. Zorro always seems to be in the right place at the right time. Ramon talks aloud to himself about his plotting so that he can be overheard. No one at the Vega household appears to be aware of Don Diego's frequent, protracted absences while he is playing the part of Zorro, nor does anyone else notice that the two show up in the same place at slightly different times with astonishing regularity. For his part, Zorro spares the lives of his primary opponents on several occasions and for no sufficient reason, simply to set the stage for the climax, and the ease with which he converts a group of caballeros to his cause is implausible.

Although McCulley tends to repeat phrases and observations, he is careful never to let the pace of the novel slow significantly. Despite the sword and pistol play, the story is surprisingly bloodless, with Zorro content to embarrass or wound his opponents rather than seriously injure them. Captain Ramon is the only character to die, and he does so only a few pages before the end of the novel. Although McCulley set up the groundwork for the final rescue by the caballeros, it remains something of a *deus ex machina* because Zorro does not triumph directly from his own actions. The strength of the novel as a classic adventure tale is more dependent on its imaginative content than on its literary qualities.

### **Marquand, John P.** (1883–1960)

John P. Marquand was a distinguished American novelist who won a Pulitzer Prize for *The Late George Apley* (1936) and whose other mainstream novels include *Wickford Point* (1939) and *Melvin Goodwin, U.S.A.* (1951). Despite the critical success of his literary fiction, Marquand is best remembered as the creator of Mr. Moto, a Japanese spy who appeared in six novels, and who was portrayed by Peter Lorre in several films.

Mr. Moto made his debut in *Your Turn, Mr. Moto* (1935), which is narrated by an American, Casey Lee, an embittered, out-of-work pilot who masks his personal failings with outspoken criticism of the American government. As opposed to the movies, in which Moto was portrayed as a private detective, Mr. Moto was a devoted Japanese partisan who recruits Lee's help in spying on the American naval authorities. He is the chief villain in the novel, responsible for multiple murders as well as espionage. Lee is told to take passage on a ship to China, but within hours his luggage is searched, and two strangers enter his room separately in the night, one asking him to carry a message, the other apparently having hoped to intercept it. A murder follows, and a clandestine message is passed, and with the aid of a beautiful spy Lee escapes the ship and makes it to the shore of mainland China.

Chases and escapes ensue. Lee was carrying the crucial message without knowing it. A Chinese agent replaces it with a bogus one, which Lee eventually uses to throw Moto off the scent, allowing him to retrieve a set of important documents himself, although ultimately they are destroyed, depriving all sides of a revolutionary formula for more efficient fuel consumption.

Moto returned in *Thank You, Mr. Moto* (1936). The narrator is another American floundering for purpose in his life, Thomas Nelson, who encounters Moto at a social event in Peking. Nelson's primary desire is "keeping out of trouble." He has an enigmatic conversation with Major Best, a cashiered British officer involved in some nebulous criminal undertaking, and within hours Best has been murdered, apparently in the presence of Eleanor Joyce. Moto meets Nelson at the crime scene and makes it clear that he should mind his own business.

The plot involves stolen art treasures rather than espionage, and the resolution depends on an intrusive coincidence. The man Nelson consults in an effort to discover what is going on turns out to be the rightful owner of the paintings, which have not as yet been stolen from him. Nelson and Eleanor soon find themselves imprisoned by the criminals, along with a disheveled Mr. Moto, until she gives them the advantage and they escape.

Marquand switched to third-person narration for *Think Fast, Mr. Moto* (1937). Wilson Hitchings

is also a different type of hero, a young man recently transferred to China to learn the family business. The opening chapters move quickly, introducing two major plots—Moto's interest in a Manchurian named Chang and the Hitchings family's concern about a Hawaiian casino run by the daughter of the family's most recent black sheep. The two stories converge when Wilson discovers that both Chang and Moto have been making inquiries about the casino. Wilson and Moto arrive separately in Hawaii and confront Eva Hitchings, and both are threatened by unknown parties. Eva accuses Wilson of attempted murder and hints that she is not entirely in control of things at the casino, a claim supported by the inappropriate insubordination of a croupier named Maddock. Captures, escapes, and double crosses follow before the conspirators are exposed and eliminated.

Moto returned in *Mr. Moto Is So Sorry* (1938), also told in the third person and featuring another transplanted American, Calvin Gates, who is en route to Mongolia to avoid a scandal at home and join a scientific expedition. Mr. Moto is with him as he travels across China, as is Miss Dillaway, a commercial artist. The adventure involves a cigarette case that is actually a coded message. As usual things are not as they appear, although most of the revelations are telegraphed well in advance and there are no real surprises. *Last Laugh*, *Mr. Moto* (1942), the last Moto novel published before Pearl Harbor (it appeared as a magazine serial in 1941) is highly derivative. The disillusioned, alcoholic protagonist is essentially another incarnation of Casey Lee. He supports himself by taking paying passengers on his sailboat, but his latest charter—rich American tourists—appear to have a hidden agenda.

The last and technically the best of the Moto novels was *The Last of Mr. Moto* (1957, also published as *Stopover Tokyo* and *Right You Are, Mr. Moto*). The war is over and the new enemy is communism, in this case agents from Russia allied with American subversives trying to move postwar Japan into the communist camp. The protagonist, Jack Rhyce, is not an innocent but an American agent sent to look into matters. He is accompanied by Ruth Bogart, also an agent, and another standard Marquand character. They are clandestinely

checked out by the opposition, but apparently their cover remains intact, after which quite by chance Rhyce spots and identifies the subversive known as "Big Ben." Upon arriving in Tokyo, they are met by Mr. Moto, who is posing as their guide, a pretense they suspect may cover something more sinister. In fact, everyone they encounter seems to have something to hide. With Moto's help, they uncover and foil a plan to assassinate a prominent Japanese political figure.

Marquand wrote one noteworthy adventure story that did not involve Mr. Moto, *Ming Yellow* (1936), although it gives the impression that Moto is lurking in the background. Rodney Jones is another naïve, newly arrived American in China. He ingratiates himself with an irascible, reclusive American businessman by appealing to his interest in collecting a rare porcelain known as Ming Yellow. The process is complicated by the violence generated by guerrilla warfare waged by Chinese opposed to the Japanese invasion of their country. The party is soon chasing and being chased across the Chinese countryside.

### Critical Appraisal

The first Marquand novel opens with the narrator making what would subsequently prove to be an interesting observation about the relationship between the United States and Japan. While his protagonist asserts that there is no good reason for conflict between the two nations, he is also aware that the possibility of war remains in the minds of agents of any foreign power. Only a few years passed before Marquand discovered how close to the surface of those minds military conflict really was. As one of the minor characters tells Casey Lee, "there is always something of a war." The chemical formula that might have altered the balance of power in the Pacific is destroyed by the protagonist, and ultimately both he and Moto conclude that this was probably the best solution, that it might otherwise have given one side an advantage that would have led inevitably to war. This pragmatic awareness of the nature of international competition reappears frequently in the series.

Marquand frequently suggests that people are not in as much control of their own personal destinies as they might think. Thomas Nelson,

protagonist of *Thank You, Mr. Moto*, is also an expatriate American in need of redemption. His favorite phrase is “it does not matter” and he has no ambition to ever leave his comfortable life in a Western enclave in China. Unfortunately, he has discovered that he is once again encumbered by the “material” things in life, that his efforts to disengage from the interests of his fellows have proven unsuccessful. When Moto suggests that he remain at home following the death of Best, he almost immediately sets out to visit the woman who may have been present at the murder. He is also a fatalist who believes that human will is partly illusion, that people are swept away by currents of which they may be unaware, perhaps reflecting the author’s own philosophy.

Marquand’s female characters are generally strong, refusing to shrink from danger if the risk is required to achieve their ends. Both Sonya and Eleanor believe themselves competent and in no need of rescuing. Eva Hitchings ran her own business until she was pressured by criminals into selling out, and Miss Dillaway is formidable in her own right. The major male characters are somewhat more varied, ranging from an alcoholic on the verge of ruin to an intellectual with a head for business and a natural talent for leadership. Although generally deftly done, occasional inconsistencies in characterization appear. Wilson Hitchings, for example, is described as an unsophisticated young man just learning the ways of the world, but he is able to face down a thug with no difficulty, spots a rigged roulette wheel almost instantly, and refuses to cooperate even when confronted with an armed and obviously nervous man.

Moto himself is an unusual character, although readers see more of the masks he wears to fool his opponents than of the man himself. Even when he acts decisively against American interests, he is not unnecessarily cruel. Sonya, his unwilling assistant in *Your Turn, Mr. Moto*, insists that he is not a villain, that he is in fact “a very considerate man.” His better nature becomes more apparent as the series progresses and he is solicitous of the safety of Nelson, the protagonist of *Thank You, Mr. Moto*, and represents law and order as well as Japanese interests. Even so, he is willing to do whatever is required to accomplish his goals. In *Think Fast, Mr. Moto* he has no compunctions about violating the

law to succeed, and as in his first adventure he does not balk at having his enemies murdered in cold blood. Although his personal style is very different, his professional actions are very much in the JAMES BOND tradition. His motives arise from his intense national loyalty, even when they are not necessarily the same as those of the protagonist.

Marquand appeared to lose interest in the character in *Mr. Moto Is So Sorry*, a comparatively weak entry in the series. Although there is the usual intrigue, the story is considerably slower-paced than the previous books, and the banter between Gates and Dillaway is not nearly as entertaining. It is also obvious that the author felt less sympathetic toward the Japanese cause, probably because of the increased militarism and brutality in their Asian conquests. This is even more evident in *Last Laugh, Mr. Moto*, the weakest novel in the series.

*The Last of Mr. Moto* is considered the best of the six, despite the element of Red Scare paranoia that was so prevalent during the 1950s. The opening chapters move slowly but deliberately. Their early chance meeting with and Rhyce’s instinctive recognition of the American subversive is a bit contrived. Marquand takes pains to insist that the Japanese are not “inscrutable,” perhaps to balance his previous portrayals of them in that vein. He also suggests that the Japanese consciously choose the most advantageous aspects of foreign societies to adapt into their own, that their culture is ruthlessly Darwinian in its elimination of trends that are not productive.

### ***The Master of Ballantrae* (1889)** **Robert Louis Stevenson**

The last major novel by Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) was *The Master of Ballantrae*, an unusual historical adventure story in that the villain has the adventures rather than the sympathetic characters. The story is set during the period of the Jacobite risings, a series of unsuccessful rebellions in the British Isles sparked by attempts to restore the Stuart family to the thrones of England and Scotland. The novel takes place at the end of this period, when the Battle of Culloden brought the rebellion to an end. It is narrated by a family servant, with two sections inserted from the diary of another minor character.

It was a common strategy among families at the time to deliberately split their political loyalties so that whichever side ultimately prevailed, there would be a family member to look out for the rest. The Durie household consists of James and Henry, the former being the older brother and master of the estate, their ailing father, and James's fiancé, Alison Graeme. Although Henry should have been the one to join the rising, James overrides his wishes, and when the rebellion fails, it is reported that he has died in the battle. Henry then becomes the head of the household but without adopting the title of master and eventually marries Alison, although both she and his father freely express their preference for James. The situation begins to change, however, when a messenger arrives with word that James is alive after all, having taken refuge in France.

The narration switches at this point to the diary of Colonel Burke, a companion of James who was with him when he became a fugitive from the king's soldiers and then a member of a pirate crew serving under Captain Teach. James quickly became the true master of the vessel, eventually double-crossing Teach and the rest of the pirates and absconding with a few men and all of the captured loot. They escape, but are without friends in North America, and having arrived in the midst of the French and Indian Wars, they set out for Canada since the French were sympathetic to the rebels. During their journey James tells his fellow wanderer, Colonel Burke, that he blames his brother for his misfortunes, revealing the primary conflict for the remainder of the novel.

James reaches France and chooses to remain there, demanding money from his brother even though he has received a healthy pension from the French government. That he is still alive causes considerable upset, and Henry's continuing refusal to tell his wife and father that he is supporting his brother exacerbates the situation when their own finances begin to suffer. After James gets into trouble in France, he returns incognito to Scotland, to the dismay of his brother. James's subsequent efforts to turn the family against Henry are largely successful, but it is eventually revealed that he has actually changed sides and is now a paid agent of the throne.

The tension inevitably leads to a duel, which Henry wins. The thought that he has killed his brother affects his mind, even though his wife has finally seen through the fraud. Adding to the difficulties is the disappearance of the body, and their fear, subsequently justified, that James has once again survived his apparent death. Henry is convinced that he will never be free of his brother, which proves to be the case. James returns again and follows them when they flee to North America, where, after a series of convoluted adventures, he dies. Henry, now clearly insane, follows shortly thereafter.

### Critical Analysis

Stevenson's early romantic historical novels spent little time exploring the minds and motivations of their characters, but as he progressed as a writer, he began to add another layer of complexity to his work. *The Master of Ballantrae*, while at times a rousing adventure story, also demonstrates Stevenson's growing insights into the human psyche and suggests how much the world lost when he died only a few years after this novel was published.

Stevenson incorporates a number of astute observations of human nature into the plot. The relationship between Alison and Henry is complex, having its roots in his unpopularity and her interdependence with his father. Tam Macmorland, the only member of James's contingent who returned after the battle, becomes Henry's chief critic. Stevenson summarizes his motives succinctly, noting that the losers in a battle "are ever anxious to persuade themselves they were betrayed" rather than admit that the fault was theirs. Although the local people know full well that his slanders against Henry are false, "let anyone speak long enough, he will get believers."

The novel is less consistent in its structure than Stevenson's other classics. The switch from one narrator to another is disconcerting, and the mood changes dramatically from one section to the next. James's adventures in North America are brought to a sudden, disconcerting stop, and his return to Europe is recounted only in a brief summary. The portrayal of James includes both admirable and despicable qualities. On the one hand he is intelligent, organized, a natural leader,

and physically brave. On the other he is treacherous and avaricious. His insistence upon fighting for the rebels was based solely on his conviction that it would be to his advantage to do so, and he abandoned the cause as soon as he perceived that the tide had turned against them. Similarly he acts as a friend of the pirates only until the opportunity arises to cheat them, and his comportment as a gentleman continues to decline as his lifestyle becomes more difficult to maintain.

The role of chance in the novel is quite interesting. James flips a coin to decide which of the brothers will take part in the rebellion. He uses it again to decide other matters during the course of the story, including the choice of directions when he is wandering in the wilderness, and whether or not to make their presence known to a passing party of Indians. He explains this to his companion as the best way "to express my scorn of human reason."

The prolonged tension between Henry and Alison is particularly well developed, with both sides guilty of its perpetuation. Henry remains too proud to reveal the truth to his wife, or to refuse his brother's demands. Alison continues to believe in the imaginary version of James, which she has created in her own mind rather than face the reality of what he is, aided in her illusion by his physical absence. When James returns the first time, the narrator provides a detailed analysis of his possible motives for ingratiating himself with some of the household and making sport of the others. He also examines the possible reasons why Alison might deliberately blind herself to his faults. Both of these sets of observations have a more general application, suggesting that Stevenson had become increasingly interested in the psychology of his characters, shaping them to reflect real situations he might have observed elsewhere. The change in Henry's personality following the fight with his brother is subtly but plausibly described.

The climax of the novel is an overly melodramatic tragedy. Henry's insanity and death are the direct result of his brother's actions. Both men are destroyed by a relationship that had trapped them both and linked their fates. Although Henry was more victim than villain, his sad end is in part due to his own stubborn unwillingness to confront the situation early on. James, on the other hand,

is a thoroughgoing cad, one of the most disreputable characters in all of fiction. He is also perhaps the most vividly portrayed character in any of Stevenson's novels.

### men's adventure series

Over the course of the last century, popular literature became increasingly less monolithic and began to specialize and cater to very different tastes, leading to the development of genre fiction and even subcategories within each genre. There was also a very noticeable divergence based on gender, with women, for example, emerging as the predominant readers of romance novels and detective stories while men were more likely to be interested in explicit action, sports, military, and crime fiction. The "penny dreadfuls" of Victorian England were read by both sexes, but shortly after the turn of the last century the era of the pulp magazine began, and separate titles catering to male-oriented adventure stories soon emerged.

By the 1920s and 1930s pulp magazines included a wide variety of both romantic titles and adventure series, the latter clearly oriented toward a male audience. Individual magazines were dedicated to separate genres such as westerns, war stories, and science fiction. Some of these titles published general crime fiction, most notably *Black Mask* and *Dime Detective*, but others relied on a single character for the bulk of their output. Usually each issue contained a complete "novel," and the separate titles all had the same byline, although more than one author might contribute episodes to the series. The most famous of these is Doc Savage, one of two pulp series written as by KENNETH ROBESON, who was most commonly Lester Dent. Savage was a precursor of the modern superhero, extraordinarily efficient, intelligent, and resourceful.

Other series characters from the pulps include Tarzan, created by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS, Buck Rogers, Captain Future, Flash Gordon, the villainous Dr. Fu Manchu by SAX ROHMER, Nick Carter, Dusty Ayres, Operator 5, the Phantom Detective, Secret Agent X, G-8 and His Battle Aces, the SHADOW, the Spider, and the Continental Op. Many of these characters had their own titles, while others appeared sporadically in the generic

adventure or crime magazines. Many of their exploits later appeared in book form, and a few even had their careers extended in that format.

With some exceptions pulp hero fiction for men was very similar across the board despite the genre in which it was being published. Little time was spent on characterization, not even of the hero, and often the villains were the most memorable characters. Women were generally plot elements rather than actual participants in the story. They were there to be menaced and defended, captured and rescued, or to provide someone to whom the hero could explain things. Female characters were slightly more evident in men's magazines like *Spicy Detective Stories*, but sexual situations were usually conveyed by hints and suggestion rather than overtly described, despite the often lurid covers.

Much of the fiction published in the pulp magazines was poorly written and has sunk into well-deserved obscurity. Some of it has proved to have lasting popularity, and writers such as ROBERT E. HOWARD, Dashiell Hammett, MAX BRAND, LOUIS L'AMOUR, Ray Bradbury, and Erle Stanley Gardner all learned much of their craft there. With the decline of the pulp magazines, the best writers moved on to other markets, while most of the rest disappeared from the scene.

Although the larger-than-life hero had pretty much disappeared from magazines by the end of the 1940s, the pulp style adventure for men began to reappear in the 1950s and 1960s in the guise of true stories, similar to the true romance market for women. Magazines with titles such as *For Men Only*, *Stag*, *Real*, and *True* avoided the series hero and often pretended that the stories they published were not fiction. They almost always involved violence, usually at the hands of Nazis or Communists, and generally featured scantily dressed women on the covers. The sexual innuendoes were more obvious, even crude, and characterization remained almost nonexistent. Although in some cases technically better written than the pulp fiction of earlier years, the stories were even more formulaic and less interesting. At one time there were well over 100 different men's adventure magazines being published, the most literate of which was *Argosy*, but although there were some excellent serials and short fiction published in this

medium, it was definitely in a small minority, and most of the writers and stories from this period are just as obscure as those from the pulp era.

Magazine fiction in all categories began to decline during the 1960s and has dwindled in popularity and volume ever since. During the 1970s men's adventure switched to the original paperback, most commonly in the form of crime novels or spy stories, in which a series character battles and overcomes overwhelming odds using violent methods that were frequently outside the law. The most famous of these is the Executioner series by Don Pendleton, which has undergone various transformations during the years since it first introduced its vigilante hero and his one-man crusade against the Mafia. The most successful of his many imitators was the Destroyer, originally written by Warren Murphy and Richard Sapir, and currently by various ghost writers. Remo Williams, the two-fisted hero, is assisted in his crusade against crime by an Oriental master of the martial arts who eventually provides him with almost supernatural powers. The Destroyer series continues, but has been reimagined, and Williams is now as likely to battle foreign agents and traitorous government officials as he is hardened criminals.

Some authors attempted to vary the formula. Andrew Sugar's Enforcer series from the 1970s has a hero whose body has been cloned multiple times, so that when he gets killed, he can be brought back to life to continue his adventures. Other series from this period straddled the line between men's adventure and spy fiction, adopting some of the plot devices of JAMES BOND, but still concentrating primarily on action and violence, with perhaps a hint of sex. Joseph Rosenberger's lengthy Death Merchant series had its hero battling Chinese, Russian, and other foreign powers, as well as finding Atlantis and defeating a variety of superweapons lifted from science fiction. Lionel Derrick's Penetrator series was very similar but generally used less fantastic plots. The Nick Carter series, which started back in 1886, was updated for this new market as well. Piers Anthony and Roberto Fuentes teamed up to mix martial arts with crime fighting in the Jason Striker novels. The best written of these was the Lone Wolf series by Mike Barry (Barry Malzberg), not to be confused with the LONE WOLF

novels by Louis Joseph Vance. Other examples had titles like the *Inquisitor*, *Kill Squad*, *Hitman*, *Sharpshooter*, *Death Squad*, the *Liquidator*, and even the *Big Brain*.

Most of the series based on a single character faded away at the start of the 1980s, and only a few survived. Two new trends began in the decade that followed, both of them influenced by current events—speculation about present or near future military encounters and the emergence of several postnuclear holocaust survivalist groups. A third but less common story line bridged the gap, describing military action during a nuclear war. This last category included the *World War Three* series by James Adair and Gordon Rottman, a similar series by Ian Slater, and more traditional sequences about armored units battling in various parts of the world, including the *Tankwar* series by Larry Steelbaugh and the *Zone* series by James Rouch. As was the case in the pulp magazines, the authors were sometimes a single person, often under a pseudonym, or several different people writing anonymously.

In most cases the military men's adventure series do not take place during a major world conflict or involve nuclear weapons. They are more commonly localized outbreaks primarily against the Soviet Union until its collapse, and against China, Iran, and other nations subsequently. The *Depth Force* series by Irving Greenfield involved a secret naval war between the United States and the Soviet Union, hidden from public view. The *Countdown* series by W. X. Davies had the two countries fighting proxy wars in third world nations, as did the carrier series by Keith Douglass, a house name used primarily by William H. Keith. The Douglass name was also used for another secret war series, the *Seal Team Seven* novels. Ian Slater abandoned his world war series to produce a short-lived, innovative extrapolation in which the United States is shaken by a rebellion by organized militias leading to a prolonged guerrilla war.

Many of these series adopted fantastic elements from science fiction. The *Warbots* series by G. Harry Stine was one of the more fanciful. The armies of the near future are equipped with robots that do most of the fighting in place of human beings. Stine later started the *Starseas* series,

in which an experimental American submersible aircraft carrier battles first the Chinese and then aliens from outer space. James Adair also began a second adventure series, *Deep Core*, borrowing the concept of undersea cities, and Peter Albano had a time-traveling naval vessel in his chronicles of the *Seventh Carrier*.

Fears of a nuclear war provided the basis for more than a dozen men's adventure series, all of which were set in the aftermath of a devastating exchange. The time frame ranged from the days immediately following to a period a few generations later. The details of the settings varied considerably, but the majority assumed a collapse of civilization and a return to savagery, or at least feudalism. There was also high-tech military content in some of them. The remnants of the Air Force battles the enemy in the *Wingman* series by Mack Maloney, for example, and the Navy has partially survived in J. D. Cameron's *Omega Sub* novels. Units of the Army remain operative in the *CADS* series by John Sievert, actually a pseudonym shared by David Alexander and Ryder Syvertsen, both of whom wrote other postapocalyptic series, the *Phoenix* novels by Alexander and the *Doomsday Warrior* adventures by Syvertsen under the name Ryder Stacy.

Many of the rest were almost interchangeable. As Michael McGann, Ed Naha wrote the *Marauders* novels and also authored many of the *Traveler* novels as by D. B. Drumm, sharing that name with John Shirley. The *Traveler* occasionally slipped into self parody, probably deliberately, with even a mutant automobile to vary the formula. Victor Milan wrote the *Guardians* series as Richard Austin and the *Storm Rider* novels as Robert Baron. Robert Tine produced the *Outrider* novels as Richard Harding. Other short-lived series included the *Roadblaster* sequence by Paul Hofrichter and the *Warlord* novels by Jason Frost. Jake Spencer's *Swampmaster* series, which started just as the fad was beginning to pass, provided a slight variation, setting the conflict in the swamps of Florida.

Jerry Ahern, David Robbins, and William W. Johnstone had three of the longest-lasting holocaust series. In Ahern's *Survivalist* novels much of the infrastructure of the country survives the

attack, and the hero is as likely to battle Russians as fellow survivors. That is also the case in the Endworld novels by Robbins and his spinoff Blade series. Johnstone's Ashes series was particularly brutal in its depiction of the savage chaos. His Mountain Man western series was also more accurately men's adventure than western fiction, which is how it was packaged. Robert Adams moved the action generations into the future in the Horseclans novels and described the world as divided into numerous, small warring kingdoms, in which radiation has caused some of the survivors to develop extrasensory powers. For the most part, the postcollapse series disappeared during the late 1990s. The major exception was the Deathlands series, which added matter transmission and other fantastic elements to the mix. This series was created by Christopher Lowder as Jack Adrian, and Laurence James as James Axler. Several other writers have added to the series since, and it is still published on a regular basis, as is a spinoff, the Outlanders, which has a somewhat different back story.

At the end of the 1990s most of the men's paperback action series came to an end, and there have been few replacements. The only potentially interesting new entry since 2000 has been the Rogue Angel series by Alex Archer, actually written to date by Victor Milan and Mel Odom. The series is quite unusual in that it has a female protagonist, an archaeologist who has found the mystical sword of Joan of Arc and who has various adventures around the world while searching for ancient artifacts. Several long-running western men's adventure series include Slocum, written by Jake Logan, Longarm by Tabor Evans, and the Gunsmith by J. R. Roberts, each of which has had well over 300 titles to date. Some writers have been able to write what are essentially men's adventure novels but which are marketed more generally. The Dirk Pitt novels by Clive Cussler and the Sigma Force novels by JAMES ROLLINS are among these. Robert Doherty's stories of Area 41 showed early promise, but the series ended fairly quickly. Although the Internet and the availability of DVDs has cut deeply into the market for men's adventure novels, it is unlikely that they will completely fade away.

### **Moby-Dick (1851) Herman Melville**

This acknowledged classic American novel was actually quite unsuccessful when it was published and did not achieve its present critical acclaim until long after Herman Melville (1819–91) had died. It is based in part on the actual sinking of a whaling vessel after its prey rammed the ship as well as accounts of a killer whale known as Mocha Dick off the coast of South America.

The protagonist of the novel is Ishmael, who wants to put to sea on a whaling ship as a means of adding some adventure to his life. On his way to find a berth, he is temporarily lodged with Queequeg, a professional harpooner with numerous tattoos on his body. Despite Queequeg's odd appearance and manner, the two men become close friends and take passage together on the *Pequod*, a whaling vessel commanded by Captain Ahab, one of the ship's three owners. After setting sail, Ahab makes his first appearance, and Ishmael is left to speculate about the significance of his wooden leg.

Eventually the crew learns the cause of Ahab's unusual behavior. He is on a quest to find Moby Dick, a fabled white whale who bit off Ahab's leg during a previous encounter. When Ahab posts a reward for the first person to sight the whale, his obsessive enthusiasm infects the crew. Only the mate, Starbuck, objects to this course of action. Queequeg is convinced by some preternatural means that he will not survive the voyage and begins building his own coffin. After considerable time passes, they encounter another whaling vessel that recently lost one of its boats along with the men aboard it, but Ahab refuses to help with the search because he is certain that Moby Dick was responsible and his thirst for vengeance overrides all human feelings. The pursuit takes several days, and the final battle is of epic proportions. The whale destroys the smaller boats first, then rams and sinks the *Pequod* itself. Ahab and all of the crew except Ishmael, who remains afloat on Queequeg's coffin, are killed.

### **Critical Analysis**

Melville spent 18 months aboard a whaling vessel, which provided him with much of the background for *Moby-Dick* (the title is hyphenated although the whale's name is not). The novel did poorly when

it was published, and Melville was a minor literary figure until the 1920s, when several critics took up his cause, which also led to the first publication of *BILLY BUDD* (1924). The novel can be read simply as another adventure story set at sea, or as a more serious examination of human passions.

*Moby-Dick* is often deliberately ambiguous. It is possible to interpret either Moby Dick or Ahab as representing good or evil. The fact that Ahab is driven to violence and vengeance despite being a Quaker, and thence a pacifist, suggests that he has been corrupted by his own emotions. His final words suggest the same—"from Hell's heart I stab at thee." Ahab thinks of the whale as the façade behind which lurks a greater intelligence or purpose. The story is cast in the form of a quest, and the whale is perhaps metaphorically the goal that can never quite be achieved and that can destroy if obsessions overwhelm a sense of proportion. Ahab becomes entangled in his own harpoon line and effectively causes his own death rather than being killed by Moby Dick. Ahab is contrasted with Father Mapple, whose church is designed to resemble a ship at sea. Mapple acts as a leader of his flock because he believes he has the favor of God, while Ahab leads his crew simply because he has the power to do so, and even if that means defying God and nature, as represented by the whale. This kind of contradiction occurs elsewhere, as when Ishmael's life is preserved by Queequeg's coffin, a symbol of death.

The whale is not a distinct object separate from the lives of the characters. "Nothing exists in itself." Ahab and the whale are linked, and each is responsible for the actions of both. When Pip is recovered after being lost from one of the boats, he has been affected by a mystical experience that foreshadows the climax of the novel. The implication is that the encounter with Moby Dick is fated, and thus inescapable. Even Ishmael comments that his "free will had received a mortal wound." Ahab's hatred is fueled by his refusal to accept that there can be any power higher than his own, a challenge to God as well as to the whale. He insists that he "would strike the sun if it insulted me." The reader may interpret this as an example of hubris, Ahab's unwillingness to accept any authority higher than his own, or as a manifestation of the human spirit,

the desire to explore and conquer the natural world. Ahab observes that "if we obey God, we must disobey ourselves" and chooses to act on his own inclinations rather than the dictates of any higher power. Despite his madness, the reader may feel a certain degree of respect for Ahab, who believes his will should be subject to no other force. "Truth has no confines."

The novel features numerous biblical references, particularly in the use of proper names. Ahab's submersion and then reappearance lashed to the whale is a restatement of the story of Jonah, who was swallowed by a whale. The protagonist's real name is not clear. He says "Call Me Ishmael" but we never learn whether or not that is accurate. The biblical Ishmael was cast out by his family, and in the final scene of the novel, Ishmael survives and is thus separated from the rest of the crew. Melville points out on numerous occasions that while many of the crew are Christians, they are all just as highly superstitious as are the non-Christian harpooners. Fedallah, the harpooner on Ahab's boat, is often compared to the devil, or as "Ahab's shadow," implying that Ahab's latest endeavors are tainted by evil. Starbuck characterizes Ahab's quest for vengeance as "blasphemous," and Ahab refers to the whale as "accursed."

Melville filled the novel with numerous asides about the whaling industry, with anecdotes ranging from whimsical to weird. These are undoubtedly drawn from his own experience and stories told to him while he was serving aboard a whaling ship as a younger man. Extended passages about natural history reflect Melville's stated intention to create a romantic story that was also educational, that provided information about a part of the world, and a profession, that was largely a mystery to the public at large. He also peripherally addresses the subject of racial prejudice while describing Pip, an African-American, as "brilliant."

Various elements in the book have been interpreted symbolically, although Melville is often ambiguous. Moby Dick can clearly be viewed as a metaphor for God. Ahab's discarding his pipe suggests he was abandoning the pleasures of life in service to his obsession. Melville also betrays his skepticism about established religion on several occasions. "Heaven have mercy on us

all—Presbyterians and Pagans alike—for we are all somehow dreadfully cracked about the head, and sadly need mending.” Elsewhere the narrator characterizes the universe as a “vast practical joke.” Whatever Melville’s own conclusions, he seems content to let readers draw their own.

### ***The Moonstone* (1868) Wilkie Collins**

Prolific English writer Wilkie Collins (1824–99) was the author of more than two dozen novels and is considered one of the creators of modern detective fiction. With the possible exception of *The Woman in White* (1860), this remains Collins’s best-known novel. Most of his novels were thrillers, known at the time as “sensation” novels, and he was very popular during his lifetime, although his later work is decidedly inferior.

The story opens with a recounting of a battle in India during which John Herncastle steals a fabulous diamond sacred to the Hindus. The diamond, known as the Moonstone, is guarded in perpetuity by three watchers, and anyone else who takes possession of it is supposed to live under a curse. Herncastle is a vindictive, reclusive man who eventually bequeaths it to his niece, hoping to pass the curse on to her and his sister to avenge what he perceives as a past wrong. It is conveyed to her by Franklin Blake, who also falls in love with the niece, but he is preceded by three mysterious Indian entertainers, who are accompanied by an apparently clairvoyant child.

In due course the diamond is handed over, but it seems to cast a pall of tension over the entire household, which now includes several guests. That same night the diamond is stolen but, given that they were seen elsewhere, the three Hindus appear to be innocent, suggesting that someone within the house is the thief. The local police inspector proves incompetent, so an expert is called in, a device that would become a familiar fixture in detective fiction for years to come. The niece is oddly affected by the disappearance of the gem and becomes inexplicably hostile to Blake, and one of the housemaids also begins to act very strangely. The expert detective called in is certain that the robbery is a hoax perpetrated by the young woman with one of the servants as her

confidante, but he does not accuse her or suggest her motivation.

The older Verinder refuses to accept the detective’s conclusions and dismisses him after the servant commits suicide. His predictions about future consequences begin to come true in the second half of the novel, narrated by Miss Clack, a prim, religious, and mildly bigoted minor relation, as well as other major and peripheral characters. The story moves from detection back to adventure as efforts are made to secure the whereabouts of the missing gem by stealing documents and luring characters to unsavory locations. After various adventures, including the return of the mysterious trio of Hindus, readers finally discover the truth about the diamond’s disappearance, as well as its present location, although the author adds a hint that it will not rest in peace for long.

### **Critical Analysis**

Although mystery novels in general are outside the limits of adventure as defined here, this classic novel by Wilkie Collins, the last of his major novels, formed a bridge between tales of adventure in the Orient and the modern detective story and is often cited as the first of the latter to appear in English. It is also an epistolary novel, that is, the narrative is presented as a series of documents—diaries and letters—rather than having a single omniscient narrator. The use of multiple narrators in this fashion was copied by other writers, most notably in *Dracula* (1898) by Bram Stoker, but is no longer popular. *The Moonstone* was also almost certainly a major influence on *The Doom Stone* (1939) by Cornell Woolrich. The intelligent, insightful detective who analyzes clues scientifically led logically to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s creation of Sherlock Holmes.

Mixed with the straightforward narrative are clever sequences using more subtle literary devices. A heated discussion at the birthday feast is described in the terms of a sporting event. The use of differing narrators allowed Collins to reveal details about the characters and other elements of the story from widely variant viewpoints. He also employed red herrings and other now familiar elements of the detective story, mixing them with more overt adventures. There is as

well some clever satirical humor, notably in the description of the activities of the Small Clothes Conversion Society, which temporarily redeems trousers pawned by men and alters them so that they will fit only young boys, on the assumption that when they are finally reclaimed they will be passed down to deserving youths.

The use of multiple narrators in the second and more overtly active portion of the adventure serves a number of purposes. The author provides information that would not be available to a single person. The frequent change of perspective adds a sense of movement and urgency to the plot. Not all of the narrators are equally reliable, either through misinformation or even deliberate deceit, lending an extra degree of complexity to the mystery at the core of the story. *The Moonstone* is primarily an adventure story wrapped around a mystery, but within that framework Collins virtually invented the structure of detective fiction that would flourish during the next several decades, eventually becoming a genre of its own. Like most Victorian novels, it is quite long-winded at times, but Collins never drops the thread of the plot and maintains the elements of suspense and mystery until the final revelations.

### "The Most Dangerous Game" (1924)

#### Richard Connell

Although American writer Richard Connell achieved considerable fame for his short stories during his lifetime, he is now remembered for this single adventure tale, which has also appeared under the title "The Hounds of Zaroff." His short fiction appeared regularly in the *Saturday Evening Post* and other popular magazines. Connell was a journalist and advertising copy writer who once edited the *Harvard Lampoon* and who later became a successful screenwriter, most notably for *Meet John Doe*. "The Most Dangerous Game" won the O'Henry Award in 1924.

The story establishes an atmosphere of danger in its opening paragraph. Sanger Rainsford is a passenger on a yacht during a night so dark that he thinks he "could sleep without closing my eyes." His reverie is promptly disturbed by the sound of gunfire, and in his haste to locate the source he

falls over the side into the water. Connell quickly assures us that Rainsford is a man of action, that this was "not the first time he had been in a tight place," and he immediately takes steps to improve his chances of surviving the accident, shedding clothing and orienting himself. His only chance is to determine the origin of the gunfire, whether it be land or another vessel, and swim in that direction. A brief description of his battle with the sea, his care to avoid the dangerous rocks that surround the island, and the potential dangers of the jungle beyond the beach are just the preliminaries. Although Rainsford considers the sea his enemy, he is about to face one considerably more diabolical.

When Rainsford finds a small-caliber shell, he considers it odd that such a relatively ineffective weapon was used against what was apparently a large and dangerous animal. He follows the tracks of hunting boots to a chateau perched atop a series of cliffs, an incongruous sight in the middle of a jungle. Rainsford's host is General Zaroff, who is familiar with Rainsford's book about hunting in Tibet, a common interest that binds the two even though it is clear that there is animosity between them. Rainsford's initial impression is that Zaroff is handsome, although he recognizes some "bizarre" quality in the man's appearance that he cannot clearly define. Zaroff is a Russian, more specifically a Cossack, as is his deaf and dumb but physically formidable assistant, Ivan.

Rainsford admires Zaroff's collection of trophy heads, declaring that he believes the Cape Buffalo to be the most dangerous game of all. Zaroff demurs without providing details, suggesting that he has stocked his island with even something far more menacing. Hunting is his main occupation in life, and he is rich enough to indulge himself. The dichotomy between the two men is readily apparent. Zaroff, who has all the accouterments of civilization, wears formal evening dress, and is extensively read in three languages, is still the primitive, the hunter who exists only for the pleasure of the chase and the kill. His interests are selfish, his actions amoral. Rainsford who, for the moment at least, lacks any of the refinements of civilization, is nevertheless the one with scruples.

Zaroff refuses to immediately divulge the nature of the game he hunts, but he insists that he

has invented “a new sensation.” Rainsford presses the issue until his host tells him that he had grown bored with hunting because he always knew that he would win, and that therefore he chose to hunt the only animal that can also reason, human beings. Rainsford is immediately repelled by the concept, which he considers nothing more than murder. Zaroff’s response is an appeal to Darwin. “Life is for the strong, to be lived by the strong.” He justifies his actions by suggesting that the people he hunts—primarily castoff sailors either shipwrecked or seized—were put on earth specifically to provide pleasure for those strong enough to take what they want.

When Zaroff insists that he is a civilized man, Rainsford objects. “Civilized? And you shoot down men?” This is the only telling conversational blow that he manages, however, because when he accuses Zaroff of being a barbarian, no better than those he chooses as his prey, he has made an enemy. The moment is smoothed over, but clearly not forgotten as Zaroff explains the rules of the hunt. The prey is given a knife and a three-hour head start. If he can last three days, the hunt ends and the man is set free, but “to date I have not lost.” Seven vicious dogs are available for tracking if all else fails. The odds are still, despite Zaroff’s avowal otherwise, stacked heavily in his favor. He also mentions a second trophy room, but Rainsford refuses to visit it.

The following evening Zaroff tells Rainsford that he is to be hunted. Rainsford’s initial reaction is to panic and run straight toward the coast, but he eventually recovers his wits and lays down an intricate, overlapping trail that he does not believe Zaroff can follow. The ruse does not work, and it appears that Zaroff spares his life that first night out of contemptuous amusement, jarring Rainsford’s nerves even further. He constructs an elaborate mantrap that injures but does not incapacitate Zaroff, who is clearly entertained by the prospect of facing a more worthy opponent than usual, although his overconfidence is evident. His sense of his own superiority is his greatest weakness, if only Rainsford can find a means of exploiting it.

Two more traps claim the lives of Ivan and one of the dogs, but Zaroff is still following with the remaining hounds. Desperate, Rainsford leaps off a cliff into the sea, and Zaroff, though not

the reader, assumes that he has perished. That evening, Rainsford appears in Zaroff’s bedroom and, after a brief exchange, kills him, although Connell wisely leaves that last battle to the imagination, skipping over it to the happy ending. Civilization has triumphed over barbarism, or has it? Ultimately, Rainsford was forced to act as would any cornered prey.

“The Most Dangerous Game” has been filmed many times, usually without crediting the original work. The first and closest adaptation was made in 1932 under the original title. The first remake, *A Game of Death* (1945), changed Zaroff to a Nazi, and the second, *Run for the Sun* (1956), strayed even further. Variations of the basic story have subsequently appeared as episodes of the television series *Charlie’s Angels* and as the exploitation film *Slave Girls from Beyond Infinity* (1987). The device of having humans hunting one another has become a familiar plot element and has evolved beyond Connell’s original conception, but his was the first and is still the most famous variation.

### Critical Analysis

“The Most Dangerous Game” is a straightforward adventure story whose appeal is the novelty of the concept and the economy of execution rather than the quality of the prose or the depth of insight into human nature. The two opposed characters are little more than caricatures. Zaroff is the iron fist in a velvet glove, a savage hunter who wears the veneer of civilization as a convenience, only truly coming to life when he is able to cast it aside and indulge his favorite occupation, the hunt and the kill. The death of the prey is essential to the experience, the physical acknowledgment of his personal superiority. If Zaroff cared only for the act of hunting, even hunting his fellow man, then killing would not be necessary for him. It would be an even greater challenge simply to capture the fugitive and set him free.

Zaroff claims to be stimulated by the prospect of pitting his own wits and skill against those he hunts, but even this is a lie. He tells Rainsford at the outset that if his own skills prove inadequate to bring the prey to heel, that he retains seven savage dogs for use in tracking. He admits to having lost one dog in the process, which indicates that he

resorted to this extreme even before Rainsford's arrival. Since the dogs rather than Zaroff succeed, Zaroff is clearly lying; the hunt is incidental to his true pleasure, taking the life of another man. His insistence that life is meant to be lived by the strong and not the weak is either another lie or self-delusion because his system allows for no escape, even by the strongest opponent.

Readers learn a great deal less about Rainsford. His background is even less detailed than Zaroff's. He is a man of action who has been in difficult situations before. Usually calm and thoughtful in an emergency, he has experience in the wilderness and has considerable physical prowess. Although he is appalled when Zaroff reveals his secret, the author never lets readers look inside his head. Zaroff is by far the more interesting of the two characters, but it is not uncommon in adventure stories for the villain to be the more intriguing person.

Connell is not the unsophisticated writer the above discussion might suggest. He uses specific descriptive phrases to build suspense even before anything overt occurs. The jungle is "snarled and ragged" with "rotten" logs, the darkness is "bleak," the weeds are "crushed" and the moss "lacerated," suggesting some kind of struggle even before the discovery of bloodstains. His plot is well-designed and carried out; each paragraph contributes to the progression efficiently and effectively. Some readers might object to the truncated ending. Zaroff meets his fate offstage, jumping from the moment of confrontation to the denouement—Rainsford enjoying the luxuries of the manor house—without even a momentary reflection on the final struggle. Connell wisely concluded that such a scene was unnecessary. At the moment Rainsford outwitted Zaroff by convincing him that the battle was over, the battle was indeed over, but it was Rainsford who triumphed.

### **Mundy, Talbot** (1879–1940)

Talbot Mundy was the most frequently used pseudonym of British writer William Lancaster Gribbon, who ran away from home to join a circus while a teenager and then traveled extensively through Asia and Africa before finally ending up as a writer living in America. Much of his personal life remains unclear because of his habit of embroidering his

adventures, and his reminiscences about his youth are filled with contradictions and anachronisms. He was in trouble with the law on several occasions due to bad debts, questionable investment activity, and poaching, and he changed his name several times to cover his tracks. He became an American citizen in 1916.

Mundy began selling short fiction in 1911. His first, and one of his least interesting novels, was *Rung Ho* (1914, also published as *For the Peace of India*). Mundy's most famous novel was his third, *KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES* (1916), which deals with a plot to overthrow British rule in India. Mundy also wrote historical adventure stories and contemporary occult adventures. Mundy wrote two major series of novels, the first involving the exploits of Jimgrim, an international secret agent whose adventures are reminiscent at times of the Richard Hannay stories by John Buchan, and which anticipated writers such as ROBERT LUDLUM and Dan Brown, whose thrillers often involve secret societies. Mundy's second major series was set in the ancient world and followed the career of Tros, a warrior and wanderer who was caught up in the intrigues of Caesar and Cleopatra and became a major influence on their destinies.

*The Nine Unknown* (1923) is the best of the Jimgrim series. James Grimm and his companions investigate a series of mysterious events and discover the existence of a secret organization that has worked behind the scenes of international politics for many generations and that uses mystical powers to clandestinely manipulate governments and populations. Similar secretive organizations have reappeared in countless novels since, as varied as the less grandiose organizations in *The DA VINCI CODE* (2003) by Dan Brown to the megalomaniacal conspirators in Gerald Kersh's *The Secret Masters* (1953). *The Nine Unknown* itself was not Mundy's original concept; various descriptions of the group appear in mystical writings from Mundy's time—he was involved with one group called Theosophy—and they had also appeared in several now obscure novels.

Jimgrim and his companions returned in *The Devil's Guard* (1926, also published as *Ramsden*). He and his friends travel to Tibet, where they discover two rival monasteries, one devoted to

the advancement of good, the other to the perpetuation of evil. There is a kind of spiritual warfare between the two, and the evil group has the upper hand until Jimgrim intervenes and the tide of battle is reversed. The last notable novel in the series was *Jimgrim* (1931, also published as *Jimgrim Sahib*), this time set in Egypt. A megalomaniacal genius has developed an explosive against which there is no effective defense, so the protagonist and his friends undermine his organization.

Mundy wrote additional stories about Athelstan King and Yasmini, the two main characters in *King of the Khyber Rifles*, but only *The Caves of Terror* (1924) is noteworthy, another story of an underground kingdom where the inhabitants have unusual powers not known in the surface world. *Om: The Secret of Ahbor Valley* (1924) is a lost world novel. The protagonist is pursuing those responsible for the kidnapping of a young woman in India when he stumbles into a hidden civilization whose mystical powers are essentially magical. Although the plot resembles those of H. Rider Haggard, Mundy's approach was much more intellectual and less dependent on physical action, although he provides some of that as well.

Most of the remaining novels are of less interest. *Black Light* (1930) has some moments of high adventure, but its contemplative mood and protracted romantic scenes reduce the tension dramatically. *Full Moon* (1935, also published as *There Was a Door*) revives an earlier theme, the underground kingdom, but far less effectively. *Hira Singh* (1918) is the story of a Sikh from India who enjoys various adventures in Europe during World War I.

Mundy's most substantial work was the trilogy of novels about Tros. The character was introduced in *Tros of Samothrace* (1924), a very long novel that has been subdivided for publication into as many as four separate books under various titles. Tros is the son of Perseus, and in his first adventure he encounters druids and escapes their magical attack, battles Vikings, survives being condemned to a Roman arena, and becomes the personal nemesis of Caesar. Tros returns in *Queen Cleopatra* (1929), making common cause with her as she battles politically and militarily against Caesar and his legions. The concluding volume, *The Purple Pirate* (1935), finds Tros hunted by both Caesar and by the forces

commanded by his former ally, Cleopatra. Among his various exploits, Tros leads an expedition that successfully circumnavigates the world. Although historically questionable, the trilogy is an exciting and imaginative portrayal of the ancient world and Mundy's most masterly work.

### Critical Analysis

Mundy's later novels are technically better written than his early work, but some of the imaginative vigor was lost along the way. His blend of exotic adventure and mysticism was distinctive and was doubtless an influence on ROBERT E. HOWARD and others who wrote for the pulp magazines. Almost all of Mundy's work is currently out of print, and at least half of it deservedly so. Mundy's plots tended to be repetitive, and his interest in Theosophy manifested itself in frequent, sometimes labored excursions into mysticism. Even his best novels are tinged with the same philosophy. At the same time Mundy had a genuine gift for bringing exotic landscapes to life, and the descriptions of the setting are what remain in the reader's memory rather than the characters or the events.

### *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1932)

#### Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall

American authors Charles Nordhoff (1887–1947) and James Norman Hall (1897–1951) met while they were serving in the Lafayette Escadrille, a part of the French air force, during World War I. They both became novelists after the war, sometimes collaborating, and their most famous work together is the *Bounty* trilogy, of which this is the first and best installment. The trilogy is based on an actual series of incidents, which took place aboard a British naval vessel in 1789 commanded by Lieutenant Bligh, and in the years following. Bligh, who was deposed by the mutineers, has become the icon for sadistic martinets although the historical record suggests that he was typical of British naval officers of the period and not unusually severe.

The narrator is a young boy named Roger Byam, who goes to sea for the first time under the tutelage of Lieutenant Bligh, a friend of the family. He is the only completely fictional character among the crew of the *Bounty*. The type of strict

discipline practiced in the British navy is graphically illustrated before the ship even leaves shore when Byam observes a man who has been flogged to death for some offense, but whose dead body must still be subjected to the remaining portion of the prescribed punishment.

Tension begins to build among the ship's complement quite early. Their progress is hampered by storms, a temperamental crew, and conflicts among the officers. Bligh expresses his disapproval of the performance of one of his subordinates, Fryer, by demoting him and promoting Fletcher Christian in his place. Fryer is resentful of both men for what he sees as an unwarranted change in the chain of command. The crew is also dissatisfied with the food served aboard ship, and they voice their suspicion that Bligh was providing inferior food in order to pocket the money he saved by not buying better and more plentiful provisions. As the voyage progresses, Bligh mistreats crew members on various occasions, often out of proportion to their offenses.

The pressure lessens somewhat when they reach Tahiti. Discipline is relaxed, and the men are allowed to go ashore almost at will. Bligh claims to be the son of Captain Cook in order to impress the natives, of whom he is contemptuous. Through Byam's eyes, a great deal of detail about Tahitian life is shown. Christian, among others, takes a Tahitian woman as his lover, and the only unpleasant event during the first few weeks is the unexpected death of the ship's surgeon. Shortly thereafter, Bligh begins to reassert his authority, insisting that gifts from the natives to individual sailors belong to the ship as a whole and not to the particular crew member involved, thereby increasing his potential share at their expense. His spies among the crew are constantly provoking minor crises in order to have something to report. Two crew members finally desert, are hunted down, captured, and punished severely.

Finally the *Bounty* is loaded, provisioned, and prepares to set sail for home. Bligh becomes progressively more irrational, forbidding the use of firearms against the islanders, but then raging when the crew is unable to prevent them from stealing from their stores. He accuses several men, including Christian, of theft and other crimes, and loses his temper at the least provocation. The situation

worsens until one night Fletcher Christian leads a portion of the crew in mutiny, capturing Bligh and cowing those who remain loyal to him. Christian intends to return to England and press charges, and he barely dissuades the crew from having Bligh flogged. They refuse to return, and Christian reluctantly agrees that it would be suicidal to think of putting themselves at the mercy of the Admiralty.

Bligh is set adrift in one of the ship's boats along with more than a dozen of the crew who remained loyal. Other nonmutineers are forced to remain behind and help crew the ship, which is clearly undermanned. Byam intends to go with Bligh, but through a combination of circumstances finds himself stuck with the mutineers. He manages to escape while the ship is taking on natives and provisions in Tahiti, but is stranded there until the next ship comes to visit. Eventually he is arrested as a mutineer despite his protestations of innocence, and he remains in irons while his captors try to locate the *Bounty*. After various adventures he is returned to England, where Bligh accuses him unjustly of complicity in the mutiny, although others of his party testify on his behalf and he is vindicated.

### Critical Analysis

In real life Bligh survived and wrote extensively about the mutiny, and there are also detailed records of the trials of those mutineers who were eventually captured. Nevertheless, there is considerable room for interpretation of the events that took place on the *Bounty*, and the real motivation for the mutiny remains unclear. Such ambiguity leaves considerable room for authors to interpret the facts of the case and invent plausible rationales. It is important to remember that the Bligh and Christian who appear in the novel do not necessarily reflect the character and behavior of the actual historical persons.

The authors forewarn readers of Bligh's inclinations very early. When the narrator first meets him, he inquires if it is true that the natives of Tahiti are happy leading relatively indolent lives, and Bligh responds that "true happiness can only be enjoyed by a disciplined and enlightened people." The authors blacken his character steadily through the opening chapters. He characterizes the crew

as a “lazy, incompetent lot of scoundrels,” orders a man flogged for a minor infraction, and even has sloppy table manners. Chapter 4 is titled “Tyranny,” and it is clear that Bligh is the villain of the story. He is aided in his exploitation of the crew by a small number of sycophants who curry favor by spying and misrepresentation.

The historical record suggests that Bligh was actually unusually lenient, even replacing a mandatory death penalty with a flogging on one occasion. Late in the novel Bligh insists that all who remained behind were guilty, but in fact the real Bligh exonerated several of the captives of any wrongdoing. Bligh served the rest of his career as a valued naval officer and achieved the rank of vice admiral, suggesting that he was not a monster as portrayed by the authors. Their sympathies do not lie entirely with the mutineers, however. Purcell, the ship’s carpenter, despises Bligh but refuses to remain aboard the *Bounty* with “rogues and pirates.”

Similarly, Fletcher Christian is invariably portrayed as a just, honorable, and sympathetic man. He stands up to Bligh for the first time over a string of pearls, meant as a gift for his mother, which Bligh insists upon confiscating. His love affair with a Tahitian woman is deep and honest and not a casual affair. The tension between the two men echoes that of Billy and Claggart in *BILLY BUDD* (1924) by Herman Melville. Christian is another relative innocent who commits a crime under extreme

provocation, although where Billy accepts his fate quietly, Christian is determined to preserve his own life. Billy kills his nemesis, by chance rather than purposefully. Christian abandons Bligh to what he believes will be certain death, but Bligh and most of those accompanying him survive.

One of the high points of the novel is the relatively long and detailed account of the trial of the real and supposed mutineers, which demonstrates how the interpretation of very small elements of a situation can literally mean the difference between life and death. Under British naval law there could be no such thing as neutrality in a mutiny; those who simply refused to take sides were just as guilty as those who broke the law openly. Byam is eventually acquitted, which the reader anticipates since he is supposedly writing the manuscript during his retirement decades in the future.

In real life Bligh and the other castaways survived for more than six weeks in a small boat before reaching land. Nordhoff and Hall chronicled this epic journey in *Men against the Sea* (1934), then completed the story with *Pitcairn Island* (1936), which follows the subsequent adventures of the mutineers. They travel with several native islanders until they reach Pitcairn Island, where they found a small colony that eventually erupts into civil war between the two groups of males. When finally discovered by outsiders, most of the mutineers, including Fletcher Christian are dead.

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## ***The Naked and the Dead*** (1948)

**Norman Mailer**

Although he won the Pulitzer Prize twice and the National Book Award once, American writer Norman Mailer (1923–2007) will probably be best remembered for his first novel, based in part on his World War II experiences in the Pacific, where he served as a cook stationed in the Philippines. The narrative is primarily concerned with events during the campaign to capture the island, but is interspersed with flashbacks to the civilian lives of several of the characters, designed to illustrate how their personal circumstances have dramatically changed not just in terms of their present jeopardy but relative to their interactions with friends and family at home.

The story opens as a group of soldiers take part in a landing on a Japanese-held island. They secure a peninsula along which they slowly advance, but the main defenses have been erected inland so the initial battles are not much more than skirmishes. As the army slowly advances deeper into the jungle-covered island, the story focuses on two separate story lines. One involves a small platoon led by Sergeant Croft, who is impatient with the slow development of the battle and anxious to conduct more aggressive operations. The other recounts the activities and attitudes of General Cummings, the competent but manipulative officer in charge of the overall operation, and his interactions with a younger aide, Lieutenant Hearn, who is torn by contradictory emotions and uncertain whether his superior deserves his loyalty. Hearn

is troubled by the way Cummings treats the common soldiers, though Cummings insists that it is part of his method of making them better fighters and more likely to survive. As the story progresses, Mailer reveals that Cummings is using Hearn as a sounding board for his own beliefs and feels a compulsion to convince him that his policies are valid. Their interactions are mixed with the often violent accounts of the clashes between the invaders and the entrenched Japanese defenders.

After several weeks the invasion force is positioned for a major assault against the well-prepared defenses. Hearn, whose relationship with General Cummings has become increasingly uneasy, is reassigned to lead Croft's platoon on an intelligence-gathering mission, merging the two separate plotlines. He and Croft do not interact well, and that tension is communicated to the others. One of the men is wounded and must be carried by stretcher through the difficult terrain, increasing the tension. Their conflict ends when Hearn is killed, but Croft becomes increasingly unpopular with his men. Elsewhere General Cummings is intellectually pleased with the progress being made by his troops, but is troubled by a vague sense of his own inadequacy. The Japanese resistance becomes increasingly desperate and ineffective, but the survivors refuse to surrender, resulting in wholesale slaughter.

### **Critical Analysis**

Mailer efficiently captures the contradictory and sometimes compulsive behavior of men facing the

prospect of their own death throughout the novel. Croft is motivated by the desire to perform heroic acts, while others retreat into routine tasks or beligerence to conceal their fear. He also serves to establish the various tensions that exist within the army, the gap between officers and enlisted men, and even between officers who entered the service in that category and those who received field promotion from the enlisted ranks. Much of the tension is transference because the campaign is being conducted at such long range that it is difficult to think of the island's defenders as anything but an abstract force. Mailer contends that the majority of officers initially feel a subconscious guilt about their privileged status but "only a few of them still kicked the idea of guilt around in their heads." To a large extent he attributes this distinction to the luck of birth. The majority of officers come from affluent backgrounds, while the enlisted men tend to be less educated and from middle- or lower-class families. Even within the more homogeneous groups there are subtle divisions. The soldiers who have served longer resent the new recruits, and anti-Semitism and racial tension are added to the emotional mix.

The novel is clearly designed to strip the romantic veneer from war and portray it as an ugly, pointless, and cruel activity. Mailer also suggests that while it sometimes allows men to demonstrate the goodness in their nature, it is more likely to result in the exercise of power for its own sake, not just power against the enemy, but power to control the lives of allies as well. Both Cummings and Croft relish the authority of command, and they unconsciously yearn for the rigid structure of the fascist societies that they are ostensibly fighting to defeat. Their enjoyment of the petty use of power is illustrated when Cummings instructs a subordinate to establish a bivouac anywhere, then criticizes him because the ground chosen is not entirely level. He punishes Hearn by putting him in charge of a project to create a recreation tent for the officers, which the enlisted men will clearly resent, to emphasize that those who have power are entitled, if not obligated, to use it. Even though he acknowledges the unfairness of the situation, he tells Hearn that he still has "a normal allotment of decent impulses,"

a claim Hearn receives skeptically. Cummings responds that the more deprived a soldier feels, the better he is able to function in combat, and uses this to justify his tactics.

Mailer's characters are very realistic, each a mixture of commendable and reprehensible qualities, with the less admirable ones unfortunately brought to the fore by their current circumstances. People only appreciate one another by accepting imperfections. The paranoia General Cummings displays does not make him any less brilliant a tactician, nor does Sergeant Croft's egocentric concern with his own accomplishments impede him from performing what he sees as his duty. Lieutenant Hearn believes he is without prejudice, but even he recognizes the limitations imposed by society and that one must "understand your class and work within its limits." Hearn's feeling of superiority toward those less educated does not make him any less sympathetic to their plight. Mailer plays the two men against each other, and there is enough truth in the unappetizing arguments presented by Cummings that they cannot be dismissed out of hand.

Even Hearn, who is intellectually and emotionally repelled, is forced to accept the logic of some of the general's arguments. He is at times unable to articulate his objections, although he feels that the antiseptic discussions are "unclean" when contrasted with the men waiting to learn if they will live or die. At the same time the general feels that Hearn is distanced from common humanity and accuses him of being "inhuman" because of his unwillingness to budge from his own preconceptions. Despite the differences between Cummings and Hearn, they are both intellectually distanced from the situation. Hearn expresses some sympathy with Marxism as a counter to Cummings's authoritarian pronouncements, but it is all just as much a game to him as it is to the general. Mailer emphasizes this by having the two men play an elaborate and closely fought chess match, which the general wins because his commitment to the challenge is the stronger. Only after Hearn is assigned to lead the patrol does he begin to understand the real flesh-and-blood issues surrounding him, and even then his realization is incomplete and comes too late to save him.

Although some critics have suggested that the novel expresses the illusion that things can get better without people realizing they are trapped and without hope, Mailer has contended that “even in man’s corruption and sickness there are yearnings and inarticulate strivings for a better world.” Both Hearn and Cummings believe that they are acting for the common good, and the soldiers almost always act as though they are going to survive, even when the odds are not in their favor. Mailer suggests that too often people fall short of the goals they set or become too rigid to change course when the necessity arises.

***Night Flight* (1931) Antoine de Saint-Exupéry**  
French writer Antoine Jean-Baptiste Marie Roger de Saint-Exupéry (1900–1944) is best remembered for his children’s book *The Little Prince* (1943). He was one of the earliest career pilots, flying single-seat planes in Europe and South America, and it is his personal experiences which provided the background for *Night Flight*. His account of his own career as a pilot, *Wind, Sand, and Stars* (1939) is a fascinating TRUE-LIFE ADVENTURE. He died while flying reconnaissance during World War II, and the details of his death remain unknown even though the wreckage of his plane was later positively identified.

In the early days of aviation every flight was an adventure. Fabien, one of the primary characters in the novel, is well aware of that as he pilots a small aircraft carrying mail back and forth across Argentina. His superior is Rivière, who feels the weight of his duty even more heavily, his responsibility to ensure that the mail is collected and successfully sent to Europe, a responsibility that has become obsession. One of his coworkers is Pellerin, through whose recollection the reader sees how he narrowly escaped a perilous storm that caught him while he was flying over a chain of mountains.

Fabien is conducting what should be a routine flight when he encounters a peculiar storm. Prudence suggests that he land and wait it out, but the pressure from Rivière has been relentless, and he feels obligated to carry on despite the risk. Feelings of alarm spread when he fails to arrive on schedule, causing his wife to become upset, and

even Rivière begins to question his judgment in letting the flight take place. Fabien attempts to land the plane to escape the storm, only to discover that he has gone off course and is flying over open sea. Rivière accepts the eventual loss of the pilot with apparent equanimity and is interested only in restoring the proper schedule as soon as possible. Only he will ever know how deeply the loss has affected him.

### Critical Analysis

There are many adventure stories set on the land or sea, but comparatively few in the air. Saint-Exupéry was a pioneer in the field of aviation and was well aware that the new industry of air transport was engaged in a fierce competition with other forms of travel and commercial shipping, a rivalry that resulted in risky flights and errors of judgment. *Night Flight* is an adventure story in which the dangers and excitement are the result of conscious choices by the protagonist, Fabien, who rejects the security of a less risky occupation.

The underlying theme of the novel is that true happiness can only be achieved by subordination to a duty, either self-imposed or commanded by others. Bravery without a sense of purpose is pointless and silly. Fabien is a courageous man who does have a purpose. The degree of his commitment is revealed in the opening paragraphs when it is suggested that he land and take shelter during a storm and he declines. When he does land, he feels like a conqueror observing the “humble happiness of men.” He is torn between the desire for comfort and safety and the obligations and challenges of his profession, and he decides he is unwilling to give up an “active life” in return for the stolidity and boredom of the villages he visits.

Fabien thinks of air travel as the equivalent of an ocean voyage, the towns and villages analogous to islands. This image is reinforced when Rivière perceives the arrival of one plane as if the sea “surrenders to the shore a treasure long the plaything of the waves.” Later he thinks of the entire continent as a single huge ship, and another town looks like “the bottom of the sea.” The mail service is also compared to life itself. Just as there will always be another letter to carry, so there will always be further duties to perform, and Rivière recognizes that

there will never be time in his life for those other things he has always anticipated accomplishing. Another pilot, Pellerin, has a very different vision, seeing the land as a hostile place opposed to the sky, with mountains as dreadnoughts and danger lying in wait for the unwary. There are numerous references to battles scattered through the narrative. The pilots feel as though they conquer the cities when they pass over, and Rivière feels the need to overcome night itself. Even “action and individual happiness have no truck with one another, they are continually at war.”

Rivière feels that he cannot ever be friends with the pilots because it is his job to make sure that they are punctual, and distance is necessary if he is to remain the voice of authority, evaluating their conduct. He believes that only by enforcing standards, even when they are unjust, can he effectively live up to his own responsibilities. Man is “a mere lump of wax to be kneaded into shape,” and individual personalities were irrelevant to the job at hand. Similarly, the local postal inspector, Robineau, accepts his personal misfortune to always be cast in the role of the “judge” measuring the work of the pilots, even though he suffers from “utter ignorance” about the difficulties that they actually face and overcome. He also feels that his life is a “gray one” that lacks the vigor and adventure experienced by the pilots. Ultimately he questions whether or not he or anyone should have the authority to compel others to engage in activities that might result in their death. Questioning or not, he continues to perform his duties in the manner he has determined to be most efficient. The battle may have been lost, but the war against some nebulous, undefined enemy must go on.

### ***Nightrunners of Bengal*** (1951)

#### **John Masters**

During the course of his military career in British India, John Masters (1914–83) rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel. His experiences form the basis of many of his books and his interest in local history contributed to others. Most of his more than two dozen novels are set in India, and several of them, including this one, are loosely interrelated. *Nightrunners of Bengal* was his first published book,

and it established the pattern for most of his later work, set in British India and usually featuring one generation or another of the Savage family. This particular installment takes place at the time of the Great Bengal Mutiny of 1857, and Masters provides a brief introduction in which he summarizes his understanding of the causes of the mutiny, a combination of patriotism, interference by foreign powers, resentment by elements of a deposed aristocracy, and British arrogance coupled with an inability to recognize the pressures they were putting on the local religion and culture.

The protagonist is Rodney Savage, a young British officer who is troubled by his wife’s patronizing attitude toward the natives. Following what appears to be a failed coup in the state of Kishanpur, Savage is sent as part of a peacekeeping force to reestablish order until the dead rajah can be replaced. Caroline Langford, whom Savage considers a “freak of an English female” because of her outspoken nature and sympathy for the natives, insists that the stories they have heard are false, and suggests that the rajah’s wife, the rani Sumitra, may have orchestrated an elaborate ruse and a murder in order to seize power. Through devious tactics, the rani uses the presence of the British force to support her claim to legitimate rule and eventually offers to hire Savage to train and lead her army.

Savage finds himself in a quandary. Not only does he have ambivalent feelings about Sumitra’s offer, but Langford has approached him with more evidence that Sumitra is a murderer, as well as hints that the local British government agent Dellamain might have accepted a bribe to look the other way. Sumitra eventually tries to seduce Savage, who puts her off. As he is leading his troops back to Bhowani, he encounters a mysterious messenger but dismisses the issue as curious but insignificant. Other troubling signs emerge, including the most potentially offensive, rumors that cow and pig fat are being used to grease the cartridges for the sepoys’ rifles, which would offend both major religions. Savage believes that steps should be taken to address these concerns, but the majority of British officers are stubbornly insistent that discipline must be imposed rather than earned.

The mutiny finally starts in an orgy of violence, and most of the named characters die within the

space of a few pages, including Savage's wife, many of them in quite horrible ways. Savage survives, as does his young son, but they become fugitives pursued by the sepoy who wish to exterminate all of the British, soldier and civilian alike. He is subsequently joined by Langford, and all three are able to survive with the help of Piroo, an Indian who is sympathetic to them and who turns out to be a retired thuggee assassin. They appeal to Sumitra for help, but she was one of the organizers of the mutiny, and their status remains uncertain.

They eventually escape, but the terrible events have unbalanced Savage's mind, and for a time he is consumed by hatred and kills guilty and innocent alike. Eventually he recovers and joins the reorganized and reinforced British troops, who are launching a campaign of ruthless cruelty equal to that of the mutineers. Although he helps avert a disaster and participates in a major battle, the story ends with his decision to walk away from the conflict and create a new life with his son and with Langford, whom he realizes he loves.

Most of Masters's other novels are also stories of adventure. *The Deceivers* (1952) deals with the thuggee cult, and efforts by a British officer to expose their activities. *The Lotus and the Wind* (1953) is essentially a story of espionage set during a campaign against Afghanistan. *Bhowani Junction* (1954) takes place during the last days of British rule, with the withdrawing forces attempting to shore up the local democratic groups in order to avoid a possible communist revolution. *Coromandel!* (1955) reverts to the 17th century and is one of the most adventurous of the books, describing a young man's escapades battling bandits and exploring places where no European had previously visited.

*Far, Far the Mountain Peak* (1957) is set in the years following the establishment of India as an independent nation. A descendant of the Savage family experiences various adventures during the war, then returns to India, intending to explore the Himalayas. There are mysterious attempts to prevent an excavation in 19th-century India in *The Venus of Konpara* (1960) and intrigue ranging from the streets of Bombay to the jungles of the interior in *To the Coral Strand* (1962). An Indian army unit fighting in World War I is caught up in a philosophical as well as physical battle in *The Ravi Lancers*

(1972). Masters broke from his usual pattern in *Trial at Monomoy* (1964), which involves a natural disaster and its effects on a small New England town. His autobiography, *Bugles and a Tiger* (1956) is an excellent TRUE-LIFE ADVENTURE.

### Critical Analysis

Although Masters has been criticized for leaning too heavily toward the British in his interpretation of the events surrounding the rebellion, he clearly believed there was considerable fault on both sides, that the British insulated themselves from the realities of what was happening around them and either underestimated or were willfully ignorant of the nationalist urges, religious fervor, and civil customs they were suppressing. He is particularly critical of the British response to the initial massacre, which he considered every bit as barbaric on their part as was the original provocation. Although the book is a work of fiction, many of the incidents described are based on historical accounts.

Masters establishes much of the underlying tension of the story in the first few pages. A holy man appears to have summoned a flock of crows to the tree under which he sits, a traditional sign of imminent disaster. Savage notices this just before returning to his home, where his wife is chastizing their son for not wearing his hat outdoors. Her concern is that his skin will darken and become indistinguishable from that of "a subordinate's child." Caroline Langford, a young woman with a greater than usual interest in the local culture, asserts that "we English only inhabit the surface of India," and that this ignorance makes it impossible for the two peoples to understand one another. There are hints of simmering resentments and misunderstandings by the natives and complacency and arrogance on the part of the British. Nor does Masters conceal his contempt for political machinations and his conviction that self-serving administrators aggravated the situation by ignoring or even cooperating with those factions who objected to British rule. Dellamain, the local administrator, is "committed by profession to the filth of politics" and supports the rani even though he suspects her of arranging her husband's death and despite her unpopularity with her own people. His willingness to accept bribes to overlook her military ambitions is essentially treason.

Throughout the novel Masters compares India to an enormous castle. The British live in some of the rooms and have visited others, but the greater proportion of the building is unexplored. In this and in other ways he echoes earlier writers who have attempted to portray this period in English history. The character of the Silver Guru, a holy man who turns out to be an Englishman in disguise, is reminiscent of the events in *KIM* (1901) by Rudyard Kipling. There are also strong similarities between Sumitra and Yasmini, the highly intelligent but treacherous woman in *KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES* (1916) by TALBOT MUNDY. Both are women who rebel against their traditional roles in Indian culture to lead massive conspiracies against the British occupation, but both also fall in love with and seduce British officers and try to enlist their help.

Although Savage is a relatively enlightened man who is repelled by the racism of many of his fellow officers, the events of the mutiny alter his perspective so greatly that he brutally murders Prithvi Chand, an Indian nationalist who is himself horrified by the mutiny and who attempts to help the fugitives escape. Savage then describes the killing as “delicious,” a stark illustration of Masters’s contention that the British reaction was every bit as inhuman as was the mutiny itself. Even his son senses the change and is uneasy in his presence, preferring the company of Langford. Eventually he recovers his sense of proportion and is horrified by his own actions as well as those of the British troops sent to quell the rebellion. “White or brown, it made no difference here.” Both sides are ultimately equally guilty for the carnage.

**Northwest Passage** (1937) **Kenneth Roberts**  
American writer KENNETH ROBERTS (1885–1957) was famous for his lengthy, intensely detailed stories of early American history, including this classic set during the French and Indian Wars. Roberts was also noted for his iconoclastic view of colonial America and the Revolutionary War and his sympathetic portrayal of Benedict Arnold. This was the first and is still the most popular of his great historical novels of colonial America.

The narrator is Langdon Towne, a young colonial of good family who has a talent for drawing,

although his family wants him to pursue a more practical vocation. He makes critical comments about two prominent members of the community and finds himself the target of a corrupt official’s wrath, so he and a friend decide to temporarily absent themselves and join the militia. The colonists, led by incompetent British generals, were currently engaged in a war of skirmishes with the French over control of the Ohio valley. The two friends are encouraged to join Rogers’ Rangers, an irregular organization led by a savvy colonial who has proven himself far more effective than his British counterparts.

In that company Towne takes part in a dangerous journey across the wilderness to attack a remote French position. After overcoming various difficulties, the rangers defeat the enemy, but their return trip is much more arduous. They run short of supplies and are forced to build rafts and undertake a perilous river voyage, always under threat of attack by unfriendly tribes. Eventually they reach safety, after which the young woman Towne believes himself to be in love with drops him and marries Rogers.

The second part of the novel is a different kind of adventure. With nothing to hold him in New England, Towne travels to London to learn how to be a better artist. There he crosses paths with Rogers again, who is now excited about the prospect of finding the Northwest Passage. Rogers lobbies various British officials and is eventually appointed territorial governor with authority to conduct the necessary exploration. This sets up the third and final portion of the novel, in which Towne accompanies Rogers back to North America, where both men are caught up in a political struggle involving negotiations with Pontiac and his fellow chiefs, and personal troubles caused primarily by Rogers’s willful and opinionated wife.

The expedition obviously fails, and Towne returns to discover that during his absence Rogers was finally defeated by his political enemies, stripped of authority, and imprisoned under cruel conditions. The closing chapters portray him as a broken man still convinced that he will strike back one day, but it is evident that he has become a caricature of his former self. Towne finds happiness at last by marrying well and settling down to life as an artist, his adventurous days finally behind him.

### Critical Analysis

Although this novel is about the actual, physical search for the Northwest Passage, a water route across the top of North America, the title is symbolic of something else as well. Roberts uses the Northwest Passage to symbolize the urge to find a shortcut to fame and fortune, whether it be a physical goal, an intellectual accomplishment, or some other object of human endeavor. It may also refer to the futility of looking for shortcuts where none exist. All of these nuances of meaning are developed within the context of the novel. Langdon Towne wants to pursue a career as an artist despite the opposition of his family, his prospective in-laws, and the traditions of his society. Even his artist friend believes that he is pursuing the wrong path, that his desire to paint Native Americans as they really look and even his fellow colonials in everyday attire and situations is a romantic notion that holds no promise for advancing his career. Towne remains convinced that he sees another road to success, but just as explorers sought in vain for a northern route to the Pacific, so it appears his quest is also doomed to fail. Even the English political establishment is looking for a shortcut to empire by directing Rogers to find the passage without providing men, equipment, or funds sufficient to support the effort.

In the opening paragraph Roberts hints at his opinion of traditional views of early America by alluding to the “stupidity and cowardice of backyard statesmen.” Their short-sightedness and conviction that they know best is illustrated in the lectures given to the protagonist about the impracticality of drawing as a profession, the work either of impractical women or of men of low character and/or expectations. Roberts’s acerbic and iconoclastic view of historical figures and events pervades all of his historical fiction. All authority figures are included in his indictment—political, military, and clerical. As one of Towne’s friends remarks, “clergymen can’t endure contradiction” and there is no point in arguing with them. He is just as critical of the Royalists as he is toward those inclined toward independence for the colonies. Even Towne’s relentlessly conventional father

belatedly admits that there are limits to what can be tolerated. “You have to stand up to ’em, son, or your life won’t be worth living!”

Although a large portion of the book is set within the context of the French and Indian War, Roberts makes no effort to glorify combat, and Towne observes that “anything, I eventually learned, is preferable to war.” He is further struck by the relative insignificance of man’s endeavors, comparing the appearance of a small army to a mass of ants who believe themselves “ordained by heaven.” The scale of the North American continent as described during their journey also suggests the relative unimportance of human affairs.

Roberts’s portrayal of Native Americans is sometimes reminiscent of James Fenimore Cooper. Rogers treats them as equals deserving respect, and personal loyalty as much as circumstances binds his colonial and native troops together. Roberts contrasts their cultures, however, suggesting that the Europeans were much more disciplined and industrious, but that they were even worse than the most treacherous of the supposed savages when they allowed that quality to slip. Later, through Towne, he tells the reader that he has been told discipline is good for the character, but that he personally is “not convinced of it.” When Towne finally reaches safety following their successful attack, he realizes that the action of the supposedly savage Indians “was no worse than that of white men,” that beneath the veneer, the colonists were every bit as savage as the tribesmen.

The disparity between pragmatic behavior and personal conviction is another recurring theme. Towne is a talented artist who is a failure until he compromises and begins to paint portraits that sell for an adequate price. Rogers knows how to deal with conditions on the frontier, but he is ultimately ruined by his ignorance of and unwillingness to cater to the political realities. Even the Indians observe that the British have consistently wasted their best men and replaced them with self-serving fools. The corrupt and ineffective administration appointed by self-serving men half a world away inevitably resulted in the tensions that led to the Revolutionary War.



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### **O'Brian, Patrick** (1914–2000)

Patrick O'Brian, born Richard Patrick Russ, was a British writer of both fiction and nonfiction. He is best known for the 20-volume Jack Aubrey/Stephen Maturin series of historical sea adventures, which is often compared to the Horatio Hornblower novels by C. S. FORESTER. O'Brian's first book was published while he was still a teenager, and he went on to write novels, short story collections, and historical nonfiction, most of it involving life at sea.

O'Brian wrote two entertaining adventure novels before embarking on the Aubrey series. *The Golden Ocean* (1956) describes a young man's experiences during an effort to circumnavigate the world in 1740. The historical accuracy that would make the Aubrey series so remarkable was already evident in this early novel. The same voyage was the basis for *The Unknown Shore* (1959), wherein the relationship between the two main characters bears considerable resemblance to that between Aubrey and Maturin. The two stories deal with storms at sea, threats of mutiny, shipwreck, and other hardships and dangers.

The first Aubrey novel was *Master and Commander* (1969), which established the two protagonists, Captain Jack Aubrey and the ship's surgeon and occasional spy, Stephen Maturin. The setting is the Napoleonic Wars, during which Aubrey is given his first real command and the job of escorting a convoy to protect it from privateers and pirates. War with France breaks out in *Post Captain* (1972), and Aubrey is trapped in France, where he had hoped to avoid his creditors until

he was able to pay them. He is also involved in an adulterous affair that does not help his home life. After escaping from France, he eventually receives command of a warship and acquires enough prize money in battle to pay off his debts.

*H.M.S. Surprise* (1973) expands on the romantic entanglements of both men while they are engaged in conveying a British ambassador into dangerous waters near India. The organization of a convoy to fend off an attacking French fleet is based on an actual battle. Aubrey is promoted to commodore in *The Mauritius Command* (1977) and leads a group of ships in an attack on two islands the French are using as bases for raids on British shipping. His task is complicated by the inadequacies of two of the captains assigned to his unit.

Aubrey is back in England frittering away the money he has earned in *Desolation Island* (1978). He is assigned a new command and sent to Australia with a load of prisoners including a beguiling American spy, but disease, a hostile ship, and an iceberg make the trip more interesting than intended. This was the first book in the series that clearly suggested that further adventures would be forthcoming. The War of 1812 has broken out in *The Fortune of War* (1979). Aubrey and Maturin have various adventures before being captured and held in Boston for an extended time, but they eventually manage to escape to sea. Their attempts to return to England are frustrated in *The Surgeon's Mate* (1980) when they are chased by enemy vessels, shipwrecked, captured, and imprisoned in

Paris, where the French are particularly interested in Maturin's career in espionage.

They are both free again in *The Ionian Mission* (1981), but Aubrey's finances are worse than ever. His ship is detached from blockade duty to visit the Ottoman Empire, where the two men become entangled in local politics. They undertake another clandestine mission, this time to the Red Sea in *Treason's Harbour* (1983), unaware that a highly placed traitor has betrayed them. The identity of the traitor is still unknown in *The Far Side of the World* (1984), in which Aubrey is temporarily marooned on an island with a similarly cut-off enemy contingent.

Aubrey returns to England again in *The Reverse of the Medal* (1986) and becomes involved in questionable financial maneuvers when he hears rumors that the war with France is about to end. Both he and Maturin have complex political and personal problems now, although Maturin has inherited a small fortune and is financially secure. Aubrey is convicted of fraud, then fined, and dismissed from the navy, so Maturin buys one of his old ships and has it outfitted as a privateer. This sets the stage for *The Letter of Marque* (1988), in which Aubrey restores his finances by successfully preying on enemy shipping, is offered a pardon that he refuses, then a seat in Parliament and promise of reinstatement at some future time. That takes place in *The Thirteen-Gun Salute* (1989), which chronicles their journey to Malaysia on a diplomatic mission to persuade a local king not to sign an alliance with France. Intrigue and murder ensue, followed by a shipwreck.

They are rescued from a remote island in *The Nutmeg of Consolation* (1991). More adventures at sea are followed by a lengthy visit to the barbaric penal colony in Australia. *Clarissa Oakes* (1993, also published as *The Truelove*) takes Aubrey to another small island where he influences one faction to side with the British against the other faction, who are allied with the French, culminating in a major battle. A volcano erupts and damages Aubrey's ship in *The Wine-Dark Sea* (1993), after which he deals with pirates while Maturin engages on a secret mission in Peru.

The duo returns to England yet again in *The Commodore* (1994), in which Aubrey discovers

that his young daughter is apparently mute. He is promoted to full commodore and sent ostensibly to deal with the illegal African slave trade, but actually to foil the latest French plot. Maturin's adventures dominate this installment in the series. Both men are consigned to dealing with minor crises in *The Yellow Admiral* (1996), and Aubrey begins to fear that he has been promoted into effective retirement. *The Hundred Days* (1998) takes place during Napoleon's temporary escape from exile on Elba. O'Brian apparently decided to prune the series of many of the peripheral characters this time, killing off several people, including Aubrey's wife. There is also an extensive and interesting digression into naval superstitions. *Blue at the Mizzen* (1999) was the last novel O'Brian completed before his death. Multiple naval battles ensue when Aubrey is sent to help the Chileans rebel against Spanish rule. The novel ends with his promotion to rear admiral. O'Brian had started one more Aubrey novel, which appeared as *The Final Unfinished Voyage of Jack Aubrey* (2004, also published as *21*). Still in South America, Aubrey meets a papal representative, who turns out to be his illegitimate son.

### Critical Analysis

Several writers have tried to emulate the Hornblower novels, including Dan Parkinson and Alexander Kent, but none except O'Brian is considered superior to Forester. O'Brian has taken immense care to ensure that his books are historically accurate in every detail, and many of the incidents described in the novels are drawn from historical events.

The series can almost be considered one extended novel since the story proceeds linearly and the characters mature and their interactions change as time passes, with interesting parallels in the careers of Aubrey and Hornblower, both of whom were unfaithful to their wives and occasionally suffer financial reversals. The friendship between Aubrey and Maturin is a tempestuous one, and they come close to fighting a duel on more than one occasion. Aubrey's inclination is toward direct action, while Maturin is more circumspect, and their differences often cause friction. Both men are depicted realistically, with flaws as well as noble traits. Aubrey is unfaithful to his wife and incapable of managing his finances, nor is he at ease dealing

with complex political issues. Maturin is occasionally arrogant, becomes addicted to laudanum for a time, and has a quick temper. Their adventures provide an impressive portrait of a past age as well as providing exciting entertainment.

### **O'Donnell, Peter** (1920– )

Peter O'Donnell is a British writer who originally created Modesty Blaise, a kind of sexy but formidable female JAMES BOND, as a comic strip in 1963, which continued until 2001. In 1965 he wrote the first novel in the series, *Modesty Blaise*, from his own screenplay, which was intended to be the basis of the film of the same title released a year later, although it is hard to see any resemblance. The film fared badly, but the novel was so successful that O'Donnell continued to write new books alongside the popular comic strip. The novels range from almost realistic to wildly over the top, with the two protagonists surviving against odds stacked implausibly against them.

Like many popular romantic heroes—the Saint by LESLIE CHARTERIS, the LONE WOLF by Louis Joseph Vance, ROBIN HOOD, and *The MARK OF ZORRO* by Johnston McCulley—Modesty Blaise once lived and worked outside the law. She was the head of an international criminal organization called the Network, but having made her fortune while still young, she has decided to rest on her laurels, disbanding the Network and vowing to lead a legal, if not entirely virtuous, life. She is of uncertain ancestry and no known nationality. Her chief assistant, Willie Garvin, is devastated by this change in circumstances and unable to adjust to such a quiet lifestyle. His decision to become a mercenary landed him in prison under a death sentence, and that allows Sir Gerald Tarrant, an official in British Intelligence, to put pressure on Modesty to use her talents to help the government foil a major jewel robbery. The subsequent action takes place in a variety of exotic settings and at a breakneck pace. Modesty rescues Garvin and enlists his aid against Gabriel, the leader of the jewel thieves, during encounters in France, Egypt, and the climax at a fortress in the Mediterranean. Modesty is not above using her considerable feminine charms when it is to her advantage, but

ultimately she is forced to fight for her life against a professional killer. The action is melodramatic, violent, and rapidly paced, setting the standard for the books that followed.

The popularity of the first novel led to a sequel, *Sabre-Tooth* (1966). A charismatic Mongol leader, Karz, has recruited a small army of mercenaries in a remote part of Asia. His plan is to seize control of Kuwait in order to plunder its oil industry. Karz suffers from a serious shortage of capable assistants, however, and kidnaps a child in order to pressure Modesty and Garvin into joining him. Coincidentally, British Intelligence suspects that something is brewing and asks the twosome to look into the situation. Modesty is then caught on the horns of a dilemma. If she sabotages the invasion plan, the child may die. Her hidden motive is eventually revealed, of course, and she is faced with another bizarre fight to the death, this time against two powerful mercenaries who are Siamese twins, joined at the shoulder.

*I, Lucifer* (1967) introduces a new twist on an old game, extortion. While visiting France, Modesty hears about a series of death threats sent to prominent people. Those who refused to pay are all dead, but each has died of apparent natural causes. Lucifer, the chief villain, has enlisted the talents of a man who experiences psychic visions that accurately predict deaths, and he has used this as a means of convincing people that he is somehow causing those who balk to die. After various adventures in France, the action shifts to Indonesia, where the final confrontation includes a radio-controlled poison capsule inserted into Modesty's body, a coerced fight to the death against Willie, and finally a full-scale battle with automatic weapons and bombs.

Gabriel, the first villain Modesty faced, returns in *A Taste for Death* (1969). Willie rescues a blind girl kidnapped by Gabriel's new organization and goes into hiding in Panama, waiting for Modesty to come to his aid. She successfully relocates them to England, where Simon Delicata, another criminal and an old enemy of Garvin, succeeds in spiriting the girl away to North Africa, where she will reveal the location of a hidden treasure. This time Modesty has to defeat a master swordsman at his own game. A Russian defector and

treasure hunter is the source of the trouble in *The Impossible Virgin* (1971), when he reviews a satellite photograph that suggests a remote African valley holds vast gold deposits. Unfortunately, he is not careful about keeping his knowledge secret, is captured and tortured by a criminal named Brunel, but dies without revealing its location. Brunel then turns his attention to the doctor who attended the man's deathbed, kidnaps him along with Modesty and Garvin, and takes them all to Africa to be interrogated. Before they can escape, Modesty is brainwashed and locked in a cage with a killer gorilla.

In *The Silver Mistress* (1973) Sir Gerald Tarrant disappears, kidnapped by criminals dressed as nuns. A witness avoids capture by the minions of the villainous Mr. Sexton, and his revelations eventually lead Modesty and Garvin to believe their friend is being held captive in France. Their daring rescue attempt fails, and they are captured and forced to fight for their lives against Sexton, who believes himself to be the best martial arts practitioner in the world. O'Donnell recycled plot elements from earlier books this time, and the result is one of the weakest installments in the series. *Last Day in Limbo* (1976) introduced another female spy, Maude Tiller, whose most recent assignment was to investigate Paxero, a secretive criminal who mistreated her during that assignment. Modesty decides to balance the scales, but what is planned as a quick strike of revenge becomes more complicated when they uncover evidence that another friend of theirs, believed lost at sea, may have been held prisoner by Paxero. The ever expanding trail of clues leads them into the jungles of Guatemala to a plantation run by slave labor, where Modesty poses as a slave in order to spy on their master. Unfortunately, her timing is bad as Paxero has decided to shut down the operation and kill all the witnesses.

*Dragon's Claw* (1978) starts with a puzzling mystery. Prominent artists have begun to disappear, including Luke Fletcher, a painter who vanished while swimming in the Mediterranean. When Modesty rescues him in the waters near New Zealand, he has no recollection of what happened or how he moved halfway around the world. A few days later he is murdered, and

Modesty decides to find out who is responsible. Their investigation takes them to a remote island fortress where Modesty has to survive an Old West style shootout. Modesty's disbanded criminal organization is replaced in *The Xanadu Talisman* (1981) by a new organization headed by Nanny Prendergast. In one of the most complex plots in the series, Martel, one of Prendergast's lieutenants, double-crosses her and makes off with a valuable stolen artifact. She sends an assassin after him, and Martel is killed in front of Modesty. Modesty then decides to rescue the dead man's wife, discover where he stashed the stolen item, and kill the assassin. That multiple quest brings her to a secluded mountain keep where she and Garvin are able to survive Coliseum-style battles to the death, effect the rescue, and escape from a small army of killers.

*The Night of Morningstar* (1982) is surprisingly prescient. The Watchmen is a terrorist organization that has struck at locations around the world. Modesty runs into an old friend, a CIA agent, and accidentally blows his cover while he is trying to infiltrate the organization. Both of them are taken captive and learn that the next target is to be the Golden Gate Bridge. Modesty eventually escapes, and she and Garvin head off to North Africa, where they discover that the Watchmen are also plotting to kill the president of the United States and other world leaders. Before they can communicate with the authorities, they are drugged and taken prisoner, and eventually have to fight their way out of an enemy camp. The most recent novel in the series was *Dead Man's Handle* (1985), after which O'Donnell announced his retirement from writing. A criminal organization masquerades as a religious order on a remote Greek island. Once again O'Donnell was content to recycle an old plot. Garvin is brainwashed this time, then set free to assassinate Modesty, who arrives on the island just in time to participate in more gladiatorial-style fights and ultimately save the day. This appears to be Modesty Blaise's final adventure. The comic strip also came to an end in 2001.

O'Donnell wrote two collections of short stories about Modesty, *Pieces of Modesty* (1972) and *Cobra Trap* (1996). Modesty Blaise was recently portrayed in a second film, *My Name Is Modesty*

(2003), which bears virtually no resemblance to either the comic strip or the novels.

### Critical Analysis

The novels are hardly literary masterpieces, although there is a directness and enthusiasm in the narratives that makes up for the often implausible situations. Action-oriented comic book series generally take a very different approach than straight prose, and books that evolve from those origins almost always reflect the same prejudices. Graphic presentations are, by their very nature, visual, and that suggests exaggeration. The physical traits of the characters—muscles, deformities, identifying characteristics—are exaggerated so that the eye can pick them out quickly. Similarly, there is little opportunity to allow the reader into the minds of the characters, so their personalities tend to be comparatively shallow.

Modesty and Garvin are archetypal characters with little depth, and generally the villains are the most interesting as characters, however exaggerated. Although there have been other female spies and private detectives, most notably Honey West, there has never been another series to rival Modesty Blaise's scale of adventures. She was certainly part of the inspiration for formidable female characters such as *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E* and Emma Peel of *The Avengers*. The success of the early books may be in part because she was a dramatically different kind of hero. The concept of the reformed criminal turned into a hero was at one time common among mystery and adventure writers, such as the Lone Wolf books by Louis Joseph Vance, the Saint by Leslie Charteris, and some of the novels of ERIC AMBLER and HAMMOND INNES.

Despite their criminal backgrounds, Modesty and Garvin are clearly on the side of good, although they are not always as respectful of the law. When it comes to protecting an innocent child, seeking vengeance for a fallen colleague, rescuing an imprisoned friend, or preventing a villain from launching violent plans, they are more interested in results than methods. Their connection in British Intelligence is similarly pragmatic; he might regret the necessity of stepping outside the law to achieve some laudable goal, but he never hesitates, nor does he seriously chastise Modesty for doing the same.

This casual attitude toward the law has become even more prevalent in contemporary thrillers, some of which openly advocate vigilantism.

O'Donnell always makes his stories credible and timely, switching from megalomaniacal criminal kingpins in the earlier books to more contemporary terrorists later in his career. Despite her hard-boiled interior, Modesty is described as attractive, even sexy, and occasional innuendoes suggest a less than chaste lifestyle, although O'Donnell shies away from any overt sex. The relationship between her and Willie Garvin is similarly ambiguous. Although they are close friends with hints of strong ties, O'Donnell never suggests that they are lovers, although they may have been in the past.

Ian Fleming's James Bond novels appeal in part to the snobbish side of human nature. Bond circulates primarily within sophisticated society, has refined tastes, a detailed and honorable past, but is rarely emotionally involved during his adventures. Modesty Blaise was a penniless orphan, barely survived childhood, spent years actively circumventing the law, and while she has adopted the styles and manners of wealthy society, her emotions and instincts remain closer to the slums and alleys, and she sometimes lets her emotions overrule her reason. Although Bond and Blaise are superficially quite similar, in practice they are almost total opposites.

### *The Odyssey* (700 B.C., approximately)

#### Homer

*The Odyssey* is one of two epic poems dating from ancient Greece, the other being *The Iliad*, which describes the war between the Greek states led by Agamemnon against the city of Troy. *The Odyssey* describes the long and adventurous voyage home by Odysseus, also known as Ulysses, at the conclusion of that war. Both were originally written in verse form, and modern English translations have appeared both as epic poems and as prose. There have also been a number of retellings of the story by modern writers. The title, a variation of the protagonist's name, has become the term for an extended, eventful journey.

The story opens at the home of Odysseus, who has been gone for 20 years, 10 spent fighting in

the Trojan War, another 10 taken up by his wanderings. His son, Telemachus, and wife, Penelope, are beset by the suitors, scores of men who have virtually taken over the household and who are insistent that Penelope consider her husband dead and choose one of them in his place. Telemachus sets out to find his father, with a little help from the gods, and learns that he has been taken prisoner by the witch, Calypso, who is at that very moment setting Odysseus free, again at the instigation of the gods.

Odysseus reaches another island, where he begins recounting his adventures. He and his followers dwelled for a time with the Lotus Eaters, who were addicted to a drug that robbed them of all ambition or strong emotion. They were captured by the Cyclops, Polyphemus, and won their freedom only after blinding him while he slept, and they visited with Aeolus, who gave them a bag of wind to speed their journey, a gift his crew squandered by letting them all loose at once. They encountered the cannibalistic Laestrygones next, after which only a single ship survived.

Their next adventure is with the sorceress Circe, who turns Odysseus's crew into pigs, but she falls in love with him and eventually allows the travelers to depart, restored to their original forms. Odysseus consults the spirit of the blind poet Tiresias, whose advice is predictably ignored. He also speaks with other spirits and learns about the situation with regard to the suitors back in Ithaca. He and his crew manage to safely pass the island of the Sirens, whose song is so seductive that no man can resist, by having Odysseus tied to the mast and plugging the ears of every other member of the crew. Then they skillfully avoid the multi-headed monster Scylla and the deadly whirlpool Charybdis. Unfortunately, the disobedient crew kill the cattle sacred to the god Helios, for which transgression all but Odysseus are lost in a shipwreck, which explains how he fell into the hands of Calypso.

Odysseus finally reaches Ithaca, disguised as a beggar. Telemachus has returned from his own perilous voyage, the two reunite, and together they plan the destruction of the suitors. An archery competition is held. Odysseus wins, and then the suitors are slaughtered to a man, and he

is reunited with Penelope. His troubles are not over, however, because the populace is angry that he has caused the death of two generations of young men, those who followed him to Troy and now those who sought the hand of his supposed widow, but the gods interfere a third time, and peace is restored.

### Critical Analysis

Although both *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* are credited to a supposedly blind poet named Homer, there is considerable argument on the subject, and many authorities believe that they are both collaborative works that were created by an unknown number of writers over a period of years, while others suggest that "Homer" was actually one or more women, or was not blind, or both. It is not likely that the mystery of Homer's identity will ever be cleared up.

Illustrating an interesting contrast between the heroes of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*, in the former, the most valued qualities of a man are the strength of his arm, his skill and endurance in combat; in the latter, while personal valor is still valued, it often leads to destruction, and the man who hesitates long enough to think prevails. Odysseus defeats the suitors, who vastly outnumber him, because he and Telemachus have worked out their strategy in advance. He survives shipwreck, the lure of the Sirens, and other dangers because he evaluated the situation and devised a method of mitigating the threat rather than simply overcoming his enemies by force of arms. Odysseus uses disguises when necessary, identifying himself as "Nobody" when dealing with Polyphemus, and dressing as a beggar in order to evaluate the situation with the suitors. He uses the same method to judge the loyalty of his friends and family, soliciting their opinions before revealing his true identity.

Numerous characters and situations from *The Odyssey* have become common usage to describe similar situations. *Lotus Eaters* has become a reference to any apathetic group who stubbornly refuse to face their future. An individual trapped between two alternative and equally menacing situations or decisions is described as being caught between Scylla and Charybdis. An odyssey is any extended,

eventful journey, whether mental or physical. Circe has become the symbol of a woman who brings out the worst in men, metaphorically turning them into swine. Tiresias has been invoked by a number of writers intrigued by the idea that the loss of vision might help promote a deeper inner understanding of humanity. Sirens are unusually seductive women, as well as warning sounds that should not be ignored.

While there are several seductive temptations—the Lotus Eaters, Circe, the Sirens—they are all bound to a single location and must wait for prospective victims to come within reach. The other major source of temptation is food, which almost always leads the travelers into danger. They slaughter Helios's cattle in order to eat them, are enslaved when they consume fruit on the island of the Lotus Eaters, and the suitors are led to their own doom at the archery meet and feast in Ithaca. Even Polyphemus is maimed because of his desire to eat his human prisoners.

There have been numerous translations, retellings, and reinterpretations of the original work, as well as hundreds or even thousands of references in novels, short stories, movies, and even songs. Among the more interesting are *The Penelopiad* (2005) by Margaret Atwood, which retells the story from Penelope's point of view. *Cold Mountain* (1997) by Charles Frazier is a retelling of the story in the context of the American Civil War. R. A. Laffety's *Space Chantey* (1968) sets the story in outer space, and it was also an inspiration for *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) by Arthur C. Clarke. Nikos Kazantzakis wrote an epic poem, *The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel* (1938), and it was also an obviously strong influence on *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce.

### ***The Old Man and the Sea* (1951)**

#### **Ernest Hemingway**

This novella was the last major piece of fiction by American writer Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) published during his lifetime. The story won a Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1953 and contributed to Hemingway winning the Nobel Prize for literature in 1954. Hemingway led an exciting and varied life as an expatriate in Paris, participated in the Spanish civil war, was a war correspondent during

World War II in Europe, and lived in Cuba after that war concluded.

The story opens with the introduction of the old man named Santiago, a lonely widower in Cuba whose fishing has been so unsuccessful for the previous three months that he is on the verge of having to beg for money in order to eat. His only friend is a young boy who used to fish with him but who has transferred to a luckier boat at the insistence of his father. The old man fishes with a harpoon and barbed hooks rather than a net, searching for tuna or similar large fish.

This day his luck turns, or so it seems. An unusually large fish takes his bait and is successfully hooked, although it does not seem disturbed or even aware of its danger at first. To the old man's chagrin, he is steadily towed out to sea for the next four hours, and never once even catches a glimpse of the fish on his line. The situation does not change even with the fall of darkness. In the morning the fish finally breaches the surface, revealing itself to be as large as the old man's skiff, the biggest fish he has ever seen. All that day the standoff continues, and a second night falls. On the third day the old man is disoriented as well as exhausted, but he concentrates on bringing the fish closer so that he can use the harpoon.

With considerable difficulty he manages to kill the fish and lash it to the side of his boat. Unfortunately, the carcass soon attracts sharks. The old man kills the first four to appear but loses his harpoon and his knife in the process. Although he eventually reaches shore, he has little more than a skeleton to show for his great effort. He does, however, win the renewed respect of his fellow fishermen and an even stronger allegiance from the young boy, Manolin.

#### **Critical Analysis**

Hemingway's novella operates on multiple levels. It can be read as a straightforward adventure story or as a work of subtle meaning with various possible interpretations. It was something of a departure from his earlier style, which was relentlessly realistic, and while it was highly praised at the time of its publication, some more recent criticism has been less favorable, considering it superficial or as a thinly disguised attack on critics who had been

less than enthusiastic about his recent work. In this interpretation Hemingway is the fisherman and the sharks are his detractors.

Hemingway does not think of the ocean as a dangerous but uncaring place but as an almost conscious entity that can be either kind or cruel, a female personality that “gave or withheld great favours.” The capricious nature of the ocean stands in contrast to the controlled, purposeful activities of the fisherman. He also feels an empathy for some of the sea creatures, particularly turtles, and there are several references to the restorative powers that the natural world provides—shark liver oil aids the eyesight, he gains strength from eating the fish, etc. “I have such a heart too and my feet and hands are like theirs.” When porpoises play around his boat at night, he thinks of them and the flying fish as “brothers.”

He also begins to feel a kinship with the fish he has hooked. Earlier he had lamented that “no one should be alone in their old age,” and now he begins to wonder how old the fish is and whether it is just as desperate to escape as he is to bring it in and reverse his bad fortune. The old man’s attitude toward his prey is amiable rather than adversarial. He thinks of the fish as a friend, an individual worthy of respect, and in many ways his mirror—elderly and alone and nearing death. At the same time he frequently thinks of his cramped left hand as a being separate from himself, “a treachery of one’s own body” which even as a young man he had thought of at times as a “traitor” because it was not as strong as his right. Although he acknowledges that humans are more intelligent, he characterizes the fish as “more noble.” Briefly he wishes that he could be the fish rather than the man. After all, man is “not much beside the great birds and beasts.”

The old man considers the present conflict in contrast to previous battles, earlier attempts to catch a great fish, and in another instance a marathon of arm wrestling when he was much younger. He also begins to wonder if it was “a sin to kill the fish,” whom he thinks of as a brother, but concludes that “everything kills everything else in some way,” that we’re all in constant competition for the right to live. When the sharks take portions of the dead fish, he regrets having caught it in the first place because now it was all for nothing. Human striving

is therefore futile, and the only benefit he receives at the end is a slight improvement of his standing in the community.

The old man is compared to Christ on several occasions, laboring under a mast, wounded in the palms of both hands; he is a fisherman, and he sleeps with his limbs spread in the position of the Crucifixion. His incoherent response to the first sight of the sharks is compared to the cry of pain when a nail is driven through a palm. The man’s struggle with the fish is often interpreted as humanity’s struggle with religion—the fisherman resorts to prayer several times during the battle, although no miracle manifests itself. He has also succumbed to the sin of pride, first in killing a fish that he could not hope to have brought to shore, and then by attempting to prevent the sharks from devouring the corpse even though he knows that it is beyond his capacity.

The story also illustrates the tenacity of a man who refuses to acknowledge defeat. Even though he has gone 84 days without catching a fish, the old man takes to the sea once more. Although he realizes that the fish is probably more than he can handle, he refuses to let it go and try for something more manageable. After the fish is dead and the sharks begin to appear, he recognizes that there is no chance of bringing it home intact, but he refuses to stop fighting the sharks, beating them off with a club fashioned from a tiller when his other weapons are lost. Back on shore, he tells the boy that he will go to sea again as soon as he has rested. This unwillingness to accept the reality of defeat is described as being both noble and pointless.

Similarly Hemingway expresses an ambivalent attitude toward pride. It was Santiago’s pride that caused him to fish farther from land than usual, to attempt to capture a fish he could not possibly take into his boat, and to battle the sharks even when he knew that it was a wasted effort. Pride is therefore both strength and weakness, a defining quality of a man that can lead either to greatness or destruction. It may also be an obsession, because the old man feels compelled to prove his worthiness at every opportunity, as if his past accomplishments did not matter at all.

The last section of the novella provides an interesting contrast to the conclusion of *JAWS*

(1974) by Peter Benchley. In the latter the battle between the men and the killer shark is intensely personal, man against nature. The old man's fight with the sharks is almost entirely impersonal. They are acting as their nature dictates and without animosity. The inevitability and neutrality of death between predator and prey is reinforced during an encounter with a seabird that the old man recognizes will likely be taken by a hawk before it reaches shore. The fisherman is likewise drawn into conflict and measures his own worth by his ability to prevail, whether it be over the marlin, the sharks, or in a brief flashback, a wrestling rival. The world then is a place of pointless striving, and the very act of struggling despite hopelessness is ennobling.

### "The Open Boat" (1898) Stephen Crane

This is the best-known short story of American writer Stephen Crane (1871–1900), whose novel *The RED BADGE OF COURAGE* is often described as one of the most effective stories of life in combat ever written. Crane was himself shipwrecked and spent 30 hours in a lifeboat in 1897, and that experience inspired this classic tale of survival at sea, which delivers as much of a sense of danger and adventure in just a few pages as Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall accomplished in their classic novel *Men against the Sea* (1934).

In Crane's short story four men struggle to stay alive in a barely seaworthy dinghy after their ship sinks off the coast of Florida, an experience that exposes them to extreme and rapid changes of emotion as well as a shift in the way they view the world around them. Crane establishes a sense of conflict in the opening paragraphs by presenting an image of the ocean as a living creature. This alteration of human perception persists throughout the story; inanimate objects appear to have purpose, while plants and animals seem lifeless. The most obvious example is the waves that threaten to swamp them. They were "wrongfully and barbarously abrupt and tall," "impetuous," and are "anxious" to swamp the boat carrying the four men. They are an expression of the "wrath" of the ocean. Similarly the lifeboat "plunged like an animal" and "seemed like a horse," or later a "wild colt." The boat is referred to as "she" or "her." Even the wind seems to have

a voice. Conversely, the seagulls who fly near them seem artificial, appearing to be "gruesome and ominous," and they in turn look at the men as though they were already dead, carrion. Patches of seaweed resemble barren islands. The reversal of the normal order of things is also reinforced by the imagery of water advancing "like white flames," and the sleeping adult men are described as resembling "babes."

The four survivors consist of the captain, who has been injured and who is despondent about the loss of his ship, an oiler named Billie, the ship's cook, and the correspondent, a passenger. Their perspectives have been narrowed by the tragedy. They have no interest in the beauty of the ocean, of the "picturesque" boat, but are constantly aware of the colors around them, because the different colors betray the movement of the water and the approach of darkness. They gradually make their way to an island, but the first beach they approach is so broken up with surf that they dare not land, and the house of refuge established on the shore has apparently been abandoned. Later they attract the attention of people on the island, who wave to them enthusiastically, although it does not appear that they realize that the men are in any danger. Certainly they make no effort to rescue them.

They are forced to spend another night on the ocean, close enough to smell the land, freezing when the violent waves send cold water into the boat. The oiler and the correspondent take turns rowing in order to keep the dinghy properly aligned lest it capsize in the rough seas. A shark circles them relentlessly. The following morning they realize the boat will never make it to shore, but that if they wait any longer, their debilitated condition will make it even more dangerous to try to reach land. The captain orders them to risk the surf, and the boat is in fact overturned. Three of them swim safely to shore. Billie, the only named character, is also the only one who dies (an oiler named Billie drowned during Crane's own real-life experience).

Although Crane describes their physical perils in great detail, he also concentrates on their emotional reactions to their situation. They are at different times optimistic and despairing; they are elated when they first attract the attention of the island's inhabitants, angry when the people on shore fail to recognize their situation, frustrated

when their first approach must be aborted, resigned when they know they must risk everything or face certain death, and even amused when they think they might drown within sight of shore. They consider it "childish and stupid" to express optimism, but cowardly to concede defeat.

Initially the men believe that there is some superior force directing their fate, that God or destiny or something intelligent but other than human has caused them to be brought together in the boat, saved them from the dying ship, and that there must be some purpose behind their experience. Eventually they realize that nature is not actively hostile, merely indifferent, and that affects them more deeply than if they were faced with an actual enemy. "Nature does not regard him as important." The island is "lonely and indifferent." Only when they begin to derive strength from one another does their mood improve.

Crane's suggestion is that humanity does not occupy some exalted position; people are simply one of the many elements of nature, and the universe would continue unperturbed in the absence of the human race just as society continues when one of its members is lost. This was a sharp contrast to the 19th-century sentiment that the Earth was created for human use and that humanity is the pinnacle of creation. He was able to make his point subtly, in the guise of an adventure story, and its message is as relevant today as when it was when first written.

### Critical Analysis

The best adventure stories can be read on more than one level. The surface narrative might be a lively tale of menace and action, but built into the structure of the plot are revelations about human nature. Sometimes the story is a vehicle through which the protagonist—and thence the reader—learns about the world and others, and sometimes it demonstrates the character's evolving understanding of himself or herself. In "The Open Boat" the characters experience an implied revelation about the world, an altered perception the author hopes to convey to the reader as well.

Crane's story is often cited as an early and classic example of naturalism in fiction. The world as depicted is one where nothing is inexplicable,

metaphorical, or supernatural. There is no God, no pre-ordained Fate, no hidden balance to the universe. What people see is what there is. Man is not the master of the world, simply one element among many, and human life is as fragile as that of any other living being. There are neither forces for good nor opposing forces of evil, simply an uncaring, unprejudiced, and unforgiving universe. Crane accepted the viewpoint of Charles Darwin that people are products of their heritage and environment. Naturalism in literature was often criticized as pessimistic and defeatist, and certainly the inability of the men in the boat to secure early rescue places them in a dire situation, although ultimately they, or at least three of them, reach safety through their own efforts.

The story is almost purely descriptive. Although the journalist is clearly the author himself, the narrative is not revealed simply through his eyes. He and the other three men are presented objectively, and readers learn about their thoughts and emotions primarily from the way in which they are outwardly expressed rather than through an intimate look into their minds. Although they experience a range of emotions during the course of the 30 hours of their ordeal, there is an underlying progression. They hope that God or Fate will save them, but there is nothing to suggest that any such force exists to intercede on their behalf. Then they hope that the activities of their fellow men will save them—the rescue hut on the beach and later a small party of people near the shore—but this avails them nothing either. Their potential rescuers are either unaware of their situation or unable to intercede.

Their salvation comes only when they accept the fact that it is their own responsibility to act. Even then the outcome is somewhat random. The oiler, one of the two fittest men in the boat, unaccountably drowns. The captain, who is severely injured, and the cook, who is a much weaker man than the remaining two, both make it safely to shore. This suggestion that success is a product of individual effort and random chance rather than a reward for piety or a virtuous life was obviously at odds with the assumption that events were always directed by God and had purpose, which was a basic premise of most literary works when the story

was published, although literary naturalism became increasingly influential in the years that followed.

### ***Orient Express* (1932) Graham Greene**

Although he was regarded during his lifetime as primarily a literary writer, English author Graham Greene (1904–91) is perhaps best remembered for what he termed his “entertainments,” novels of espionage and suspense, of which this is the most famous. *Orient Express* was almost certainly a major influence on ERIC AMBLER and other early spy novelists.

The story opens with brief introductions to various passengers embarking on the Orient Express, a transcontinental train that carries people from the shores of the English Channel all the way to Istanbul. The passengers are a varied lot, including Carleton Myatt, a businessman who suspects that the men he is traveling to meet are operating outside the law; Richard John, who broods continuously and has an air of mystery; and Coral Musker, a young entertainer who has a faint air of desperation. They are joined by Mabel Warren, a journalist who impulsively boards the train after seeing a vaguely familiar figure among the passengers. Musker falls ill, John identifies himself as a doctor, and Myatt insists that she use his sleeping compartment for the night. Several obvious contradictions suggest that things are not what they seem. John, who identifies himself as a doctor, appears to be unwell. He also carries a British passport, but has a continental accent.

Warren accosts John, identifying him as Dr. Czinner, a political refugee whom she assumes is returning to Belgrade after a five year’s absence. He insists that she is wrong, but she remains determined to interview him before they leave the train. Warren is herself an interesting character, torn by her belief that her lover, Janet Pardoe, who also happens to be on the train, is on the verge of terminating their relationship. She is bitterly cynical, brimming with personal prejudices, and convinced at the same time of her own mental superiority. Although she correctly concludes that Czinner was planning to lead a revolution upon arriving in Belgrade, she is frustrated when he tells her that the rebellion started prematurely and had already failed, and he

refuses to give her an interview. Secretly, he is still undecided whether to leave the train in Vienna or continue to his original destination.

Josef Grunlich, a professional thief, boards in order to escape the scene of his first murder, stealing Warren’s bag in the process, which leaves her stranded in Vienna. He, along with Czinner and Musker, are detained by the military authorities when they cross into Yugoslavia. A court-martial is held immediately, and it is clear that Czinner has been sentenced to death, with minor penalties for the other two. Myatt realizes that Musker is missing and leaves the train and hires a car to take him back to the last station. The prisoners manage to escape, but Czinner is fatally wounded, and Musker is rescued by Warren, who has been pursuing the train. Myatt reaches Istanbul and becomes immersed in his business problems while becoming romantically interested in Warren’s ex-lover.

### **Critical Analysis**

The various train lines known as the Orient Express have been the setting for several stories of adventure and intrigue, including one of Agatha Christie’s best-known novels, *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934). Its route across several international borders makes it an ideal backdrop for stories of espionage and political intrigue, and it is not surprising that Greene chose to use it as the setting for his first thriller. The opening chapter introduces several characters by means of very quick snapshot scenes that enable readers to see events from the point of view of each of the passengers, as well as their initial views of one another. This device is surprisingly effective and provides instant insight into their personalities.

Myatt is convinced that the train is a haven of safety, that “only outside the train was violence of action possible.” Despite his optimism, when they pass through the first station on their journey, the people waiting outside appear “like a crowd of decorous strangers at a funeral.” Warren’s view of the world is even more dour. She believes that humanity is divided into “those who thought and those who felt,” and that while she is among the latter, her lover is one of the former. She also considers their relationship more in terms of a business partnership than an emotional commitment.

Two major moral issues dominate the novel. The first is personal loyalty and the need to keep faith. Czinner is tormented by what he sees as his obligations to the people he left behind and the fear that he might be betraying them by throwing his own life away uselessly. Warren suspects her lover's faithfulness with just cause, but is equally guilty, having already decided to replace her with Musker. Musker in turn feels an obligation to Myatt for having helped her but is unsure how to respond. Myatt knows that he needs to devote himself to his work but is tempted by Musker's clumsy approaches.

The second theme is racism. Myatt is Jewish, and several of the characters, particularly Warren, are prejudiced against him, and this affects the way all of the characters interact. Still another theme is the effect of pride on behavior. Czinner is convinced that his personal popularity with the poor of Belgrade will make it impossible for the authorities to kill him. Warren believes that she can outmaneuver any man in a battle of wits. Grunlich considers himself one of the most skilled criminals of all time, a "man of destiny." Myatt is certain that he has become the personification of the family business, that he and he alone has the capacity to determine its future. Even a minor character, the novelist Savory, insists that he is at least the equal if not superior to D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce.

Greene's other novels of espionage are also noteworthy. A professional assassin is pursued by the police in *A Gun for Sale* (1936, also known as *This Gun for Hire*). *The Confidential Agent* (1939) takes place during the Spanish civil war. *The Third Man* (1939), for which Greene wrote both the original novella and the screenplay, is set in Vienna shortly after World War II while the city was still divided among the occupying forces. Rowe, the protagonist of *The Ministry of Fear* (1943), purchases a cake after which he has a mysterious visit by a man who tries to kill him. Rowe has suffered from mental instability in the past, and this latest experience—which involves a secretive fascist organization—causes a fresh internal crisis to match the exterior, physical one. *Our Man in Havana* (1958) is a parody of the form. A secret agent invents several subordinates in order to satisfy his superiors, making up the

supposed intelligence they are gathering. Most of Greene's thrillers have become motion pictures.

### ***The Ox-Bow Incident*** (1940)

#### **Walter Van Tilburg Clark**

American author Walter Van Tilburg Clark (1909–71) was not a prolific writer, producing only three novels and a handful of short stories during his career. *The Ox-Bow Incident* was his first and best-remembered and is one of the few western novels ever to receive serious attention from literary critics as well as its genre audience. It is quite likely that it was meant in part as a response to Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (1902), which treats frontier lynchings as a necessary evil.

The story opens with two drifters arriving at Bridger's Wells after having been cooped up together for the winter. They learn that there has been considerable cattle rustling in the area and everyone is touchy and subdued. A card game turns into a nasty fight, but the tension turns in another direction when word comes that a popular ranch hand was found murdered, apparently by the rustlers. As the men begin to organize a posse to pursue the killers, Osgood, a preacher, implores them to think before acting. Bartlett, a rancher, stirs them into a frenzy, however, and all chance at reasoned thinking is lost. The drifters join the posse, hoping that this will dispel any suspicion that they were involved with the murder, but one of them, the narrator, Croft, tries to make sure that Judge Tyler and the local sheriff will be apprised of what is happening.

The momentum shifts back and forth before they finally set out in pursuit. Darkness falls, and it begins to snow. They have a frightening encounter with a stage coach whose guard thinks they are outlaws and wounds Croft before realizing the truth. A short time later they surprise a young man and his two companions, a Mexican and an old man whose wits are scrambled, and refuse to believe their story that they bought the cattle legitimately and killed no one. The momentum is such that there is never any serious effort to determine whether or not they are actually guilty, and they are all hanged.

On their return trip the posse encounters the sheriff, who tells them the men were innocent and

that the supposedly dead man is still alive. Judge Tyler wants to arrest them all, but the sheriff refuses.

### **Critical Analysis**

Sometimes the result of an adventure is less than pleasant, even tragic. Clark's story of mob rule superseding justice was possibly a reaction to the rise of the Nazi party to power in Germany, and it is certainly an indictment of vigilante justice as practiced in the Old West. The similarity to the situation in Europe at the time is reinforced by the mutual distrust among the men, who have long suspected that the rustlers might be people they know rather than strangers and are perhaps more interested in finding a scapegoat than solving the mystery. More generally, it is a commentary on humankind as a whole, suggesting that the same kinds of atrocities that were perpetrated by the Nazis could and actually were enacted on a smaller scale even in the United States, and that the potential for more and even greater acts of oppression and injustice were possible.

Osgood tries to convince the men not to act precipitously, urging them to "act in a reasoned and legitimate manner, not as a lawless mob." Although he insists that justice is never achieved when people are reacting to strong feeling and without reflection, it is not clear that even he is convinced. "He talked with no more conviction than he walked." The others refuse to notify Judge Tyler and speak jeeringly about "justice," suggesting that it takes too long for the authorities to act, even charging that the leniency of the law is what attracted the rustlers to the area in the first place.

Bartlett's exhortations are typical of demagogues. He makes untenable assertions that appeal to the emotions rather than the minds of his audience. They are moved by his claims that their land and cattle will be taken next, even though none of them actually owns any tangible property. With Osgood routed, Davies tries to be the voice of reason, even asking Winder, one of the hotheads, to explain what he means by justice. His response is that "the rest of us" or "the straight ones" have to decide on a case-by-case basis without recourse to laws or courts. Davies traps Winder into contradicting himself and then presses his point, that those who participate in a lynching are

just as guilty as the murderers they execute. His progression to indicting government officials who have a similar disregard for the law has obvious parallels to the persecution of minorities in 1930s Germany. Davies's subsequent dissection of the motives of a lynching party—guilt, fear, the desire to conform to the group, unwillingness to change once a course of action is selected—is insightful and compelling.

Croft instinctively recognizes the crowd dynamics. Although the assembled men are casual friends or strangers, he can feel their animosity when they realize he is going to see Judge Tyler. He understands that the slightest wrong word from him or the judge will make him an active enemy who "might as well have raped all their sisters." He believes that the enthusiasm of the men is feigned, that most men are "more afraid of being thought physical cowards than moral ones." The complicity of everyone involved in this unlawful violence is reinforced by the author when he mentions that even their wives are caught up by the quest for blood, and one woman even joins the lynch party.

Tetley, a young man coerced by his father into participating, is troubled by the very idea of hunting another human being and believes that such an act reduces people to the worst of animal impulses and that the reasons invented for acting that way are even worse. "At least coyotes don't make excuses." He expands the analogy, asserting that unlike other animals, people do not just weed out the unfit, but choose the best, then isolate and destroy them. The human race is a giant pack, and each individual fears that the others will turn on him or her, which makes them more willing to prey on others to prove that they are among the wolves and not the rabbits. Martin, one of the condemned men, sums the situation up, correctly judging that the men do not even care if the prisoners are guilty. "You've lost something and somebody has to be punished; that's all you know." The sentiment is echoed in the next chapter when the men discover their error and immediately begin to blame one of their number for leading them on.

Another recurring motif is the need to keep up appearances. When the drifters first arrive, they buy a drink for Monty Smith, who is broke, without

forcing him to beg for it, and Smith postures before leaving to reassert his independence. An unattached woman was recently run out of town because her presence might appear to be inappropriate. Many of the men participate in the lynching

because they do not want to appear to be less hard than the mob's leaders. When Croft is wounded, he spurns an offer to return in the stagecoach, insisting that he is all right in order to avoid displaying weakness in front of the other men.

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## ***The Phantom of the Opera*** (1910)

### **Gaston Leroux**

Gaston Louis Alfred Leroux (1868–1927) was a French journalist and author. This was his most famous work, the basis for a number of movies, stage plays, and parodies over the years. Although his detective fiction is also highly regarded in France, most of it has not been translated into English. As a journalist, Leroux once covered an incident involving an opera house with hidden rooms, which experience almost certainly inspired this classic thriller.

The story opens with a frame that suggests that the incidents that follow all took place sometime previous, and the bulk of the story is supposedly documentation of evidence uncovered during a subsequent investigation. An enormous, labyrinthine opera house in Paris is plagued by repeated sightings of the Opera Ghost, a skeletal man in evening dress who never speaks but who is seen from time to time, and to whom is assigned responsibility for any accidents that occur within the building. The first man to have actually seen him is found dead, hanged, possibly by his own hand. One of the theater boxes has been set aside for the ghost, who communicates his wishes through one of the staff members. The new managers of the opera are skeptical but quickly discover that it is not wise to deny the ghost his prerogatives.

A second drama begins to unfold within the first. The lead singer at the opera is Carlotta, an egotistical woman who is infuriated when Christine, an understudy, fills in for her one night

and is a great success. Christine has attracted the romantic interest of Raoul, younger brother of Philippe, the Comte de Chagny, but unknown to him, she is being mentored in her singing by the Opera Ghost, whom she has never actually seen and who talks to her from within hidden passages. She thinks of him as the Angel of Music and fears that he will harm Raoul. Carlotta, meanwhile, has received letters threatening her if she does not step aside and allow Christine to perform. When she refuses, she is humiliated by the loss of her voice during a performance.

Raoul eventually learns that Christine has been abducted by the Opera Ghost, or phantom, whose real name is Erik. She is held captive for several days in the vast complex beneath the opera house, so large that it encompasses a lake, riding stables, and the chamber where Erik plays an organ and composes. Impulsively she un.masks him and sees his hideously deformed features, but he does finally release her to perform once more, although she is forced to promise to return afterward, a promise she does not intend to keep. When she balks, she is taken again, and this time Raoul is determined to use information he received from the mysterious Persian, an odd character who frequents the opera house, to track them down and rescue her. The Persian also reveals details of Erik's past, in Persia, where they were acquainted.

The two would-be heroes are captured by the phantom, but their lives are saved when Christine agrees to marry Erik. Her subsequent act of honest

affection finally pierces his madness, and he allows her to leave with Raoul, resigned to living the balance of his life in solitude. Readers also learn more details of his past; in contrast to the movie versions, Erik was born deformed and was not driven mad by a disfiguring accident.

### Critical Analysis

Although the phantom is superficially a menacing and dangerous character, he is a tragic figure, a sympathetic villain just like Frankenstein's tormented and abandoned monster. Even Christine, who has seen his true face, feels compassion for him despite her horror at his appearance and her fear that he intends her harm. The reader is led to consider him less harshly in the waning chapters about his tormented childhood and subsequent problems.

The story is revealed in several ways, parts of it epistolary, consisting of excerpts from letters and documents, part straight narrative, and in part by using multiple flashbacks and changes of viewpoint. The tone is variously journalistic, suspenseful, and humorous, and the climax is tragic as well as heroic. Even occasional footnotes heighten the sense of verisimilitude. Leroux provides a gentle foreshadowing of the mystery early in the story when the narrator asserts that in Paris "our lives are one masked ball" in which everyone hides their true emotions.

Several elements of the story are reminiscent of the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice. Orpheus went to the underworld to bring back his wife, Eurydice, charming the gods with his music and winning her freedom, although he looked back at the last moment in defiance of his instructions and condemned her to return forever. So, too, does Raoul descend into the depths of the opera house to rescue Christine from Erik, who is described at various times as looking, smelling, and feeling as though he were one of the dead. Christine saves Raoul by undermining Erik's resolve, and fortunately neither of them looks back when given the opportunity to leave.

Raoul's nightmarish journey into the bowels of the theater provides an exciting and atmospheric climax. Leroux employs something of a *deus ex machina* to get him there. The Persian, who has been mentioned only previously in passing, turns

out to know a great deal about Erik, as well as how to guide Raoul through the secret passages to reach the phantom's stronghold far below. Given his violent past and obvious madness, it is not entirely convincing that Erik is finally touched by his first experience of true affection, if not love, and relents.

*The Phantom of the Opera* may have been partially inspired by *Trilby* (1894) by George Du Maurier in which a hypnotic personality named Svengali turns a tone deaf woman into a prominent singer. At the time of its publication, Leroux claimed that the book was nonfiction, probably to help increase its sales. Susan Kay's novel *Phantom* (1990) deals primarily with Erik's life before the events in the Leroux novel.

### *Prester John* (1910) John Buchan

Scottish novelist, peer, and politician John Buchan (1875–1940) was the author of the Richard Hannay novels and several other adventure stories. This exciting account of a young man in Southern Africa is one of his earlier books and is based in part on his experiences while serving as secretary to the governor of the Cape Colony.

The protagonist is David Crawfurd, who as a youth in England spies upon a visiting African minister named John Laputa while he is performing some secretive arcane rite. Years later, en route to his first job in South Africa, he recognizes the same man among the ship's passengers. He also hears rumors that there is something strange going on in the area to which he has been sent, and to which Laputa is also bound, which may involve a secret diamond mine. His superior, Japp, is an unpleasant drunkard, but Crawfurd generally enjoys his new position, although he is startled to discover that his activities are being clandestinely watched by parties unknown.

During the course of his amateur explorations Crawfurd catches sight of an elderly African in a part of the countryside shunned by the local inhabitants. He also surprises Japp in the midst of a mysterious transaction involving uncut diamonds. Weeks pass, and he becomes convinced that some kind of native uprising is imminent, but his only communication from the outside world is a cryptic message

with no signature until the arrival of Captain Arcoll. Arcoll is a secret agent who has been trying to trap Laputa, and who reveals to Crawford the secret of Prester John.

At one time, according to Arcoll, Prester John ruled an empire in Ethiopia, which began to disintegrate and migrated farther south during the time of his descendants. Laputa has managed to convince the tribes that he is the direct descendant of Prester John, destined to create a new African empire and expel the European invaders. Crawford undertakes to spy on the conspirators, barely survives his first encounter, then is foolhardy enough to set out for the holy place where he believes the uprising will start.

He is taken prisoner but manages to escape, steal the necklace that gives Laputa his authority, and conceals it before he is recaptured. Although the authorities have detailed information about the disposition of Laputa's forces, the outcome of the initial battle is uncertain. Crawford trades the necklace to save his own life and manages to escape and carry important intelligence to Arcoll. Laputa and Henriques quarrel, mortally wounding each other, and Crawford arrives in time to be trapped in the dying Laputa's treasure house, from which he alone escapes.

### Critical Analysis

The Prester John legend dates from the 12th century. He was supposedly the descendant of one of the Three Wise Men who founded a lost Christian nation, either in India or in Ethiopia, in which were contained a number of wondrous objects, including a Fountain of Youth. Buchan uses that legend to add an extra level of intrigue to his story. Like many of his novels, the plot is helped along by several coincidences, including the encounters with Laputa and his theft of the man's horse, which is recognized by the guards when he approaches the rebellion's center. Crawford is unaccountably predisposed to be suspicious of the story's various villains, and he makes an implausible leap of intuition, connecting Laputa to the uprising with no evidence at all. Leaps of logic are a common flaw in Buchan's fiction.

The novel is reminiscent at times of the African adventure stories of H. Rider Haggard,

with great attention paid to descriptions of the physical environment. The final encounter between Crawford and Laputa is also an echo of the confrontation in the treasure room in *KING SOLOMON'S MINES* (1885). Like many novels from that period, the author occasionally reveals a patronizing attitude toward the Africans, although some of them are portrayed as intelligent and resourceful people, and Arcoll indicates that they had many legitimate grievances against the white settlers. Buchan characterizes the wish to restore traditional lifestyles in the region as a childish, poorly conceived notion since the European way of life is inherently superior, but readers never see enough of authentic local customs to make that judgment for themselves. There is a small contradiction because the author cites education as one of the advantages that will lead Africa into the future but elsewhere mentions that much of the trouble in the region is incited by educated Africans from North America who have returned to cause trouble. Laputa is described as a brilliant scholar and an excellent public speaker and in his own way a great man. "He would be a terrible enemy, but a just one." He is much more admirable than his white ally, Henriques, who is portrayed as the least honorable character in the novel. The concern about rebellions by native populations in the British Empire was reflected in many other adventure stories, including *KING OF THE KHYBER RIFLES* (1916) by TALBOT MUNDY and *KIM* (1901) by Rudyard Kipling.

An interesting detail is that Laputa is a devout Christian and invokes the Bible as he exhorts his followers to go to war. Nor is his cause completely unjust, although Crawford unfairly refers to it as "treason." Laputa makes a reasonable argument against the supposed advantages of domination by the Europeans and insists that a simpler life is superior and that the modern world has forgotten the meaning of Christianity, which he hopes to restore, because the "temples have grown tawdry and foul and must be cleansed." Laputa's rebellion is defeated largely through the unpublicized heroics of Crawford, who in turn credits his dog, Colin, who died protecting him from Henriques, allowing him to foil Laputa's plans and provide vital information to Arcoll.

**Preston, Douglas** (1956– )  
**and Child, Lincoln** (1957– )

Although both Preston and Child have produced novels separately, they have to date been much more successful working collaboratively, most of their work chronicling the adventures of Agent Pendergast of the FBI. All of the novels have been marketed as thrillers and contain overtly or covertly fantastical elements. Pendergast is a Holmesian character, brilliant but unpredictable, contemptuous of authority, and more interested in his own agenda than that of his superiors.

The writers' first collaboration was *Relic* (1995), which drew heavily on Preston's experiences working at the Museum of Natural History in New York City. A field researcher sends a mysterious, apparently empty crate back to the museum from South America, after which a string of brutal murders begin inside the museum. Pendergast is assigned to the case, an unconventional agent who has independent means, an iconoclastic attitude, and a habit of encountering the paranormal. The solution to the mystery in this case is a mutagenic plant that has transformed a human being into a hideous creature. The story is continued in *Reliquary* (1997), an even better novel in which the mutagenic drug is adopted by a cult of fanatics who make use of the vast and partially unknown labyrinth of tunnels beneath the city. *Relic* was filmed, but the screen version inexplicably dropped the character of Pendergast entirely.

Between these two high-power thrillers was the quieter but no less impressive *Mount Dragon* (1996). Scientists develop a virus that is supposed to counteract influenza, but the genetically altered cure proves even more deadly than the disease. As the stress mounts, their corporate employers demand results and profits, regardless of the cost. A subplot about hidden treasure was echoed in their next novel, *Riptide* (1997), set on an island off the coast of Maine. A famous pirate buried his treasure here, but guarded it with some very clever traps, not the least of which is the treasure itself. This one was based in part on actual events.

*Thunderhead* (1999) deals with the search for a lost Anasazi city in the American Southwest. A young woman follows clues left by her father and dodges mysterious parties who want her to fail, a

string of apparent accidents, and then a perilous flash flood before achieving her goal. *The Ice Limit* (2000) is more of a political thriller than any of the other collaborations. A research team financed by an obsessed millionaire attempts to clandestinely retrieve a meteorite from a Chilean island. Their efforts are hampered not only by the peculiar properties of the meteorite but also by the paranoia of an out-of-control Chilean naval officer.

Pendergast returned in *The Cabinet of Curiosities* (2002), which opens with the discovery of numerous murder victims in an old building, most of whom have had their spinal cord removed. That stimulates a new string of similar murders, with evidence suggesting that the killer has found the secret of immortality, but requires the lives of others to restore his own vigor. Pendergast would be featured in their next several novels, which also introduced his brilliant but ethereal ward and his evil twin brother, Diogenes, as well as bringing back characters from earlier books. A small Kansas town is the scene of several ritual killings in *Still Life with Crows* (2003), and elements of the traditional detective story are blended with a sometimes quite creepy adventure before Pendergast discovers who is responsible.

Pendergast's battle with his insane brother is the underlying conflict behind their next three novels. *Brimstone* (2004) opens with what appears to be a genuinely supernatural murder, although it is all cleverly explained later. Pendergast realizes that the first steps in a devious plan to destroy him have been set in motion. *Dance of Death* (2005) accelerates their battle when brother Diogenes begins murdering all of Pendergast's friends. Their monumental struggle comes to an end in *The Book of the Dead* (2006). Pendergast has been framed and imprisoned, and Diogenes plans to cause a major incident at the Museum of Natural History as his crowning achievement. The brothers finally meet in the flesh after many years of separation, and only one will survive. Pendergast returned most recently in *The Wheel of Darkness* (2007). He and his ward visit a Tibetan monastery, set out in pursuit of a sacred object stolen by a visitor, and discover that its mystical powers are authentic and terrifying.

In addition to their collaborative work, both writers have written adventure stories on their

own. Douglas Preston's *The Codex* (2004) sends a team into the Mayan jungle to search for a legendary book of medicinal secrets from ancient times, a prize highly valued by pharmaceutical companies. This was an above average jungle adventure story that Preston followed with the less successful *Tyrannosaur Canyon* (2005), which has various parties contending—sometimes with lethal force—for possession of an intact dinosaur skeleton. *Blasphemy* (2008) involves mysterious events surrounding the employment of a new supercollider that may unlock the secret of creation.

Lincoln Child's novels tend more toward science fiction. *Utopia* (2002) involves efforts by terrorists to extort money by seizing control of a technology-heavy amusement park of the near future. *Death Match* (2004) blends mystery with speculation as a highly computerized matchmaking system falls under suspicion when some of its clients begin committing suicide. Child's most recent novel, *Deep Storm* (2007), is the best of the three. A highly secret military installation under the sea is probing what appears to be a cache of alien artifacts, unaware that their efforts could destroy the world.

### Critical Analysis

Although it is a thankless task to predict which current writers will remain popular and which will fall into obscurity, it seems likely that Preston and Child, particularly in collaboration, will be remembered for their tense plots and meticulously researched backgrounds. Their excursions into obscure corners of history—as in their explanation of the evolution of museums in *The Cabinet of Curiosities*—never intrude into the story but provide often fascinating details that help advance the plot while providing a depth of setting and background unusual in thrillers. Although both writers have produced novels independently, they are at their best in the collaborations.

### *The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894)

#### Anthony Hope

Sir Anthony Hope Hawkins (1863–1933) used the shortened form of his name to write his fiction, the most famous of which is this novel set in the mythical European kingdom of Ruritania.

Subsequent novels set in similar fictional nations are often referred to as Ruritanian romances in acknowledgment of Hope's classic.

The story is narrated by Rudolf Rassengyll, who bears a strong physical resemblance to the heir to the throne of Ruritania, thanks to infidelity on the part of one of his ancestors. He travels to that country just before the new king is to be crowned and discovers that the people are divided in their loyalties between Rudolf the Fifth, who has spent most of his life outside Ruritania, and the duke of Strelsau, his half brother. The two men also share deep feelings about the same woman, Flavia. Prince Rudolf has recently shaved his beard and has not appeared in public, and Rudolf the tourist turns out to be almost his twin.

The duke sends the prince drugged wine to prevent him from attending the coronation, which would almost certainly lead to the duke ascending the throne in his place. Two advisers approach Rudolf the visitor with a daring plan to substitute him for the king temporarily, warning him that his life might be at risk if the duke remains committed to usurping the throne. The impersonation works, but during the interim the real prince, now king, has been discovered and imprisoned by the duke's men.

Rudolf is forced to return to the capital city and continue his impersonation, during the course of which he and the king's intended fall in love with each other, foreshadowing events to follow. The two sides are at an impasse. Rudolf cannot send a force to rescue the true king without revealing the impersonation; the duke cannot denounce the imposter without producing the original and therefore publicly acknowledging his role in the kidnapping. Rudolf also feels conflicting emotions because provoking things so that the duke kills his prisoner would help ensure that he would remain king of Ruritania. Nevertheless, he suggests a clandestine raid on the castle Zenda to effect a rescue.

Both sides maneuver prior to the final contest, and Rudolf is wounded by one of the duke's lieutenants, Rupert Hentzau, who later offers to betray the duke. Ultimately Rupert kills his benefactor, and in the midst of the confusion surrounding the incident the king is rescued and restored to the throne, and Rudolf leaves quietly so that the secret will never be known. Unlike most similar novels, duty is more

important than love, and Flavia marries the king rather than Rudolf.

### Critical Analysis

Hope's novel was meant as a pure entertainment with neither literary nor intentional political undercurrents. The author does, however, make clear his feelings about the duty of the individual to society. Rudolf, independently wealthy, has spent his life amusing himself and has felt no obligation to serve his fellows in any capacity, for which he is chided by his sister-in-law in the opening chapter. Hope also shares the attitude of his time about women, whom he characterizes as forgetful and untrustworthy in a crisis.

The novel expresses an obvious leaning toward legitimate succession. Prince Rudolf is a dissipated, weak, and irresponsible man whose rule over Ruritania would no doubt be less effective and thoughtful than that of the duke, but Hope makes it clear that the duke is villainous because of his plans to seize power illegitimately. Somewhat paradoxically, the residents of the older parts of the city of Strelsau support the duke, or change, and the newer areas support the prince, or tradition.

Hope later wrote a prequel to the novel, *The Heart of Princess Osra* (1896), which provides the historical context of Ruritania but is otherwise unremarkable. A sequel, *Rupert of Hentzau* (1898) has Rudolf returning to Ruritania to help Queen Flavia, who has had an embarrassing letter stolen by Rupert, one of the duke's allies in *The Prisoner of Zenda*. He dies after killing Rupert, as does King Rudolf, leaving the widowed Flavia to rule alone. Another similar but less interesting novel by Hope was *Sophy of Kravonia* (1906). Several movies have been based on the novel. *Royal Flash* (1970) by George MacDonald Fraser is a pastiche telling the "true" story. John Spurling's *After Zenda* (1995) is a sequel. Various other novels and movies have adapted part or all of the original story line, most notably *Double Star* (1956) by Robert A. Heinlein and the movie *Moon over Parador* (1988).

### pulp heroes

The novels of Charles Dickens, Alexandre Dumas, and many other classic writers were originally pub-

lished in serial form. The mass appeal of continuing stories has probably existed as long as literature itself. Even the Sultan knew why Scheherazade left her story incomplete each night, and the same principle is at work in many current television programs, which have abandoned the format of individual, self-contained episodes for one continuous narrative. Pulp fiction magazines rose to prominence late in the 19th and early in the 20th centuries, replacing the "penny dreadfuls" of the Victorian era. Pulp were distinguished by their colorful, often gaudy, and sometimes suggestive covers, and the cheap paper on which they were printed. The vast majority of them were devoted to melodramatic adventures. A few such as *Argosy*, which is usually considered the first pulp magazine, founded in 1896, published fiction from a variety of genres, but most of those that followed chose to specialize in detective stories, westerns, romances, war stories, secret agents, or other subject matter, which led to the categorization of fiction in genres much as we know it today. *Argosy's* circulation exceeded half a million copies, more than 10 times what a fiction magazine sells today, and some pulp titles sold as many as a million copies of a single issue. There were often recurring characters from one issue to the next, but specific characters were not the central focus.

During the 1930s and 1940s many of these magazines dealt with the need to secure a loyal audience in a slightly different fashion, although with paper shortages growing as the war progressed, most titles died very quickly. Instead of an extended story, they made use of a recurring character or characters, usually with his or her name as the title of the magazine, and with a complete "novel" in each issue. In almost every case a single byline was used for the entire series, although it was common for a house name to be used for two or more writers. The two most popular and longest-lasting titles were *Doc Savage Magazine* and *The Shadow*. Doc Savage was an adventurer who traveled around the world foiling villains with grandiose schemes. The novels were credited to the house pseudonym KENNETH ROBESON, who was usually Lester Dent. The SHADOW was the secret identity of Kent Allard, who generally fought more mundane criminals and who frequently impersonated Lamont

Cranston. Maxwell Grant was listed as the author of the Shadow stories, but Walter Gibson was primarily responsible for the series. Behind these two titles were many others, including *Secret Agent X* and *The Phantom Detective*, some of which only lasted for a handful of issues.

Detective pulps usually involved private eyes or amateur investigators, organized crime, several gun battles, a mysterious woman, and not much actual mystery or detection. After the Shadow, the Phantom Detective was the most popular of the pulp detectives; his adventures were written by a half dozen or more individuals under the house name Robert Wallace. The protagonist was a bored socialite who trained himself in the martial arts, built a laboratory in which he could analyze clues, and wore a mask while working a case. The stories were extremely formulaic, and the hero's scientific approach was generally laughable. Several of his adventures were reprinted in paperback during the 1960s, but they failed to find a new audience. The titles range from the relatively prosaic *The Silent Death* to the more suggestive *The Corpse Parade*. The Avenger had a more personal reason for fighting crime. The death of his family paralyzed his face for a time, after which he was able to manipulate the muscles at will to re-create the appearance of other people, a handy tool though clearly implausible. The Avenger novels were also credited to Kenneth Robeson. When the original series was reprinted in paperback during the 1970s, Ron Goulart added several new adventures under that same pen name. Other pulp detective heroes of note include the Black Bat, the Death Angel, and the Masked Detective.

There were two major military adventure series. *G-8 and His Battle Aces* ran for more than 100 issues, featuring such lurid titles as *Bombs from the Murder Wolves* and *Fangs of the Sky Leopard*. The setting was World War I, and most of the stories involved air battles. In addition to a variety of Japanese and German villains, some of them recurring, G-8 (whose name is never revealed) battles a number of supernatural creatures. Unlike most other pulp heroes, this series was written entirely by Robert J. Hogan. *Dusty Ayres and His Battle Birds* by Robert Sidney Bowen only lasted a few issues and had less colorful titles like *Crimson*

*Doom* and *Purple Tornado* but a more grandiose background. The premise was that a future war had erupted, everything outside North America was quickly conquered, and the main line of defense against the enemy was air combat. Bowen was more famous for his two series of novels for young boys—the adventures of Dave Dawson and of Red Randall. The Lone Eagle was a World War I pilot whose exploits continued during World War II. Other series were less memorable. The American Captain Combat enlisted in the RAF and fought the Germans during World War II. Captain Danger had similar adventures, but never earned his own magazine. Bill Barnes, Air Adventurer, survived a number of dangerous situations in a somewhat less adversarial setting.

Many of the action heroes from the pulp era were what today would be considered spies or secret agents in the mold of JAMES BOND, although their exploits often veered into science fiction with super weapons, global plots, and other forms of extreme danger. The SPIDER is one of the most typical of these adventurers, a suave socialite who dons a costume to combat evil. *Operator 5* was perhaps the most grandiose of these, written under the house name Curtis Steele. In his early adventures Operator 5 helped defend the United States from nefarious foreign plots and a few home-grown fanatical movements, but eventually even his efforts prove inadequate. The country is invaded and conquered, and the ensuing installments feature Operator 5 and his allies fighting a second war of independence. The separate adventures had such melodramatic titles as *The Death-Torch Terror*, *Servants of the Skull*, *Patriots' Death Battalion*, and *Winged Hordes of the Yellow Vulture*. There was more continuity from one installment to the next in the Operator 5 series than was true of most pulp hero titles. One of his close rivals was Secret Agent X, credited to another house name, Brant House, who similarly battled domestic and foreign enemies, including a self-proclaimed king of the United States and the menacing Purple Empire. The agent's actual name is never revealed. His adventures included *March of the Flame Marauders*, *Legions of the Death Master*, and *Blood Reign of the Dictator*, and recent titles in the series have been written by Stephen Payne.

A few villains got their own titles as well, some inspired by the success of SAX ROHMER's stories of Doctor Fu Manchu. *Doctor Yen Sin* and *The Mysterious Wu Fang* were both obvious imitations. *Doctor Death*, written by Harold Ward, was a more ambitious super-villain, although his magazine lasted only three issues. He raised an army of zombies to advance his agenda in *The Shriveling Murders* and elsewhere. Science fiction magazines remained general in focus throughout this period with the exception of *Captain Future*, whose adventures with his space rangers—mostly written by Edmond Hamilton—were the literary ancestors of *Star Trek*. The early stories are set within the solar system, but the character later traveled into interstellar space and back and forth in time. Westerns also avoided relying on one character, although Hopalong Cassidy enjoyed popularity, with some of his early adventures numbered among the first novels by LOUIS L'AMOUR. Pulp fiction magazines were also devoted to railroads, boxing, sports, and romance.

Although much of the writing was crude, a number of respected authors started in the pulps, including Dashiell Hammett, Robert A. Heinlein, C. S. FORESTER, John D. MacDonald, Tennessee Williams, H. P. Lovecraft, O'Henry, Harold Lamb, Ray Bradbury, ZANE GREY, and Rafael Sabatini. The 1994 film *Pulp Fiction* was in part an homage to that era, and numerous specialty publishers today reprint work from the pulp magazines or even create new fiction in the same tradition.

Of course many other recurring characters never had their own magazine, although many

made the transition to book form either as reprints or new adventures. The Tarzan and John Carter of Mars stories by EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS were immensely popular, leading to imitations by Otis Adelbert Kline, Ralph Milne Farley, and others. The Fu Manchu stories were part of a wider concern with the supposed "yellow menace." ROBERT E. HOWARD contributed a number of historical and fantasy heroes, the most famous of whom was Conan the Barbarian. Dashiell Hammett brought us the Continental Op, and Johnston McCulley chronicled the adventures of Zorro. Lesser known but interesting pulp heroes include the Domino Lady, a masked female who solved crimes and righted wrong, written as by Lars Anderson, and the Green Lama, created by Kendall Foster Crossen under the name Richard Foster as a rival to the Shadow, an unusual detective who was a practicing Buddhist. Seabury Quinn's Jules de Grandin stories were published primarily in those magazines specializing in weird and supernatural stories. Nick Carter, who first appeared in a story in 1886, was variously a detective and a spy.

The decline of the pulp fiction magazine during World War II was never reversed. Although the paperback market emerged in the 1950s, the public taste for that particular form of lurid fiction subsided. The market was always primarily male readers, and the slack was taken up increasingly by superhero comic books, which remain popular, and MEN'S ADVENTURE SERIES novels, which have been sporadically popular, although never approaching the dominance of the pulp magazines.



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### ***The Quiller Memorandum*** (1965)

**Adam Hall**

Adam Hall was one of several pseudonyms used by British writer Elleston Trevor (1920–1995), born Trevor Dudley-Smith, who also wrote novels as Warwick Scott, Caesar Smith, and others. *The Flight of the Phoenix* (1964), written as by Elleston Trevor, is one of his most satisfying adventure stories, but he is best known for this spy thriller, originally titled *The Berlin Memorandum*, which was followed by 18 sequels. It won the Edgar Allan Poe Award presented by the Mystery Writers of America and was made into a motion picture.

Quiller is a British agent who is about to wind up a six-month stint in Berlin when he is approached about replacing a murdered man on a mission to track down a Nazi war criminal named Zossen. Quiller has a particular aversion to this particular fugitive, so against his better judgment he accepts the assignment. He determines almost immediately that it would take far too long to locate Zossen in a conventional way, so he decides to let it be known that he is actively searching for him, hoping to lure the fugitive into attempting a preemptive strike.

His strategy works surprisingly quickly. A car tries to run him down, although another person present, Inga Lindt, suggests that she was the target because of her recent break from a secret postwar Nazi organization. Curious, Quiller pursues her acquaintance and discovers that she is suffering from deep-rooted guilt because she was a child living in Hitler's bunker at the end of the war and

had thought of the German leader as a god. Quiller becomes less certain that his plan is succeeding as intended, wondering if he has attracted the attention of the wrong party. He decides to make it even more obvious that he is on Zossen's trail by becoming publicly involved with the apprehension of three other war criminals. Almost immediately thereafter he is involved in an automobile chase that leaves at least one of the opposition dead, but is unable to learn who is after him.

Through mischance, he draws attention to an old friend who is murdered in front of him, after which he himself is drugged and abducted. Following an abortive attempt to escape, Quiller is given more drugs and questioned about his superiors. When that proves ineffective, he is released as part of an elaborate plan to lower his resistance, then recaptured while visiting Inga. They threaten to harm her if he continues to remain silent, but he forces them to leave by means of a not entirely convincing ruse.

Revelations come quickly in the closing chapters. A supposed defector within a neo-Nazi group describes plans among some prominent German officials to seize control of much of North Africa. When Quiller and Inga enter the group's headquarters, she is revealed as a double agent, although her allegiances may have changed more than once. The head of the conspiracy insists that he is unconcerned that Quiller has discovered the truth because their plan is scheduled to take place within the next few hours. Quiller is allowed to leave, but he knows that they want him to contact

his headquarters with the information so that they can learn its location. He also knows that the North African plot is a complete fabrication to cover their real intentions. An exciting finish follows, during which Quiller finally confronts, and kills, Zossen.

### Critical Analysis

The Quiller novels are a compromise between the exciting but not always believable action in the JAMES BOND novels and the more cerebral and realistic portrayal of espionage depicted in the works of John le Carré and others. Like the hero of the latter's *The SPY WHO CAME IN FROM THE COLD* (1963), Quiller is frequently at odds with his superiors, and in several instances he is either openly defiant of their wishes or quietly circumvents their orders.

Although Quiller is not described as a cruel or brutal man, Hall provides an interesting insight into the character when he refrains from rescuing an enemy agent who is caught in a burning car. The war of intrigue is in his view different from a conventional war where it is possible to have mercy on the enemy. Since the war of espionage is fought on an individual basis, there is no time or value to such niceties, or, as Quiller puts it, "We are not gentlemen." The reader receives a much more intimate look into the mind of Quiller than is true in most other spy series, a man driven by obsessions,

frustrated by the shortcomings of his own side, and frequently tortured by guilt about his mistakes and failures. At one point he also provides an interesting analysis of the limited usefulness of firearms in his profession.

Quiller's other assignments are varied. He tracks down an assassin in Bangkok in *The 9th Directive* (1966), uncovers a plot to sabotage aircraft in *The Striker Portfolio* (1968), and deals with double agents in *The Warsaw Document* (1971). He races against foreign agents to find a plane that crashed in the Sahara in *The Tango Briefing* (1973), duels with Chinese spies in *The Mandarin Cypher* (1975), and battles international terrorists in *The Kobra Manifesto* (1976). He becomes alienated from his own organization in *The Sinkiang Executive* (1978), but still comes up with the secrets about a new Soviet fighter plane, then tracks down a man who may have been brainwashed in *The Scorpion Signal* (1979). *The Peking Target* (1981) concerns a mission inside communist China and was the last Quiller novel for several years.

Hall resumed the series with *Quiller* (1985, also published as *Northlight*), in which he has to track down another defector, this time inside the Arctic Circle. The remaining novels became more formulaic and involved missions in Cambodia, India, Russia, Germany, and elsewhere. The final novel, *Quiller Balalaika* (1996) pits him against the Russian Mafia.

# R

## ***Raise the Titanic!* (1976) Clive Cussler**

Clive Cussler (1931– ) began his career writing nonfiction and switched to fiction with *The Mediterranean Capers* (1973), which introduced his larger-than-life hero, Dirk Pitt. Pitt is reminiscent of the PULP HEROES of the 1940s, a character whose inner life is largely opaque. In his first adventure Pitt outwits a group of drug smugglers in typical heroic fashion, but there was no obvious indication that he would return in a sequel. Cussler brought Pitt back two years later in *Iceberg* (1975), in which he became more of a JAMES BOND clone, investigating the mysterious murder of everyone aboard a yacht, part of a plot by a megalomaniacal millionaire who wants to rule the world. *Raise the Titanic!* was his third appearance.

The novel opens with a brief flashback to the sinking of the *Titanic* and the cryptic remarks made by one of the passengers about something held in the ship's vault, then switches to the present day. The president of the United States consults with a secret scientific organization about byzantium, a rare radioactive element found only in a remote part of Siberia. They have sent an agent to Novaya Zemlya, the only known source, but he has to be rescued by Dirk Pitt, who acts on his own initiative and with an almost preternatural awareness of the situation.

This is Pitt's only appearance in the first quarter of the novel, which is primarily concerned with the activities of two government officials, Donner and Seagram. They are investigating to determine who mined the rare mineral back in Siberia in the

year 1911 and what happened to it. They eventually discover that the earlier expedition was also a government mission and also highly secret, and that the byzantium sank with the *Titanic*. Their only recourse is to raise the wreck and salvage the secret cargo. The novel was written before the wreck of the *Titanic* was actually discovered, so there is a brief sequence in which Pitt and his crew search for and finally find the ship, which has been remarkably well preserved.

The Russians learn the truth and plan to interfere covertly, making use of two unnamed spies within Pitt's organization, NUMA, but their efforts are hampered by rivalries among themselves. A short time later one member of the crew is murdered, his death ineptly arranged to look like an accident. Pitt receives a warning that there are two moles within his staff, but is prohibited from taking effective steps to unmask them for reasons that are deliberately unclear. Then an accident maroons a work crew underwater, and Pitt decides to take a risky chance in order to bring both them and the *Titanic* to the surface ahead of schedule, as well as ahead of an unseasonal hurricane.

The Russians clandestinely board the ship, and Pitt is believed to have been killed, but obviously he survives, returns to the ship, and strikes back against the hijackers. Eventually the ship is retaken, and the Russian submarine that has been ordered to destroy it in that eventuality is cowed into backing down. The closing chapter indicates that the byzantium is being used to power a missile shield, a fact largely ignored in later Dirk Pitt adventures.

### Critical Analysis

Dirk Pitt is reminiscent of Doc Savage and other pulp heroes, prevailing in unlikely situations as much through luck as through brains and brawn. *Raise the Titanic!* and its sequels concentrate on fast-paced action and adventure, with minimal effort at plausibility. Byzanium, for example, is a scientific impossibility, suggesting that the author did no research before creating his miraculous element. The ability of a scientist to tell, based on a brief scouting of the area, that a teaspoonful of byzanium is all that remains in the mountain defies belief. Fortunately, the details of the setup are not essential to enjoyment of the central plot. That there is something of great military value aboard the sunken ship provides the necessary motivation, and the exact nature of the object is of only peripheral interest. Cussler makes use of several coincidences to advance the plot—Donner just happens to meet the nephew of one of the men suspected of being involved in the 1911 operation; a man who faked his own death is spotted by chance in England a few years later—but most of these are not critical story elements. Somewhat less defensible is Pitt's interview with the last surviving crew member from the *Titanic*, who just happens to have run into the man smuggling the byzanium moments before the ship sank and therefore has what proves to be crucial information.

The characters are oddly inconsistent at times. Seagram is a ruthless government agent who is offended when Pitt kills a guard and his dog to rescue their agent. Pitt works for a naval research organization but lacks even a layman's understanding of marine salvage law. The ease with which the Russian intelligence agency learns the details about the secret American project is inconsistent with the previous description of a plan so closely held that not even the CIA has a hint of its existence. Cussler includes jibes against various stereotypes, feminists, liberals, and most frequently militant Communists, but often exaggerates them to the point of satiric misfire. The author's discouraging conclusion, despite the happy ending, is that the "barbarians always won in the end," that violence and self-interest will always triumph over charity and pacifism. The closing chapters are less effective, as the author digresses from the plot to indict

a number of government policies he considers detrimental to the future of the economy and predicts that the government will be bankrupt within little more than a decade.

Dirk Pitt continues to be Cussler's most popular character. Many of his adventures feature artifacts from or discoveries pertaining to ancient civilizations, real or imaginary. He solves the mystery of an aircraft's disappearance in *Vixen 03* (1978), and battles British agents to recover a treaty that would allow the merger of the United States with Canada in the improbable *Night Probe!* (1981). A revolutionary submarine goes missing in *Pacific Vortex!* (1983), and a waterborne poison threatens the stability of the government in *Deep Six* (1984). *Cyclops* (1986) involves a runaway space satellite and a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro. A sunken Soviet submarine and another ambitious man with dreams of power provide the danger in *Treasure* (1988).

There are terrorists with nuclear weapons in *Dragon* (1990), a mysterious plague in Egypt in *Sahara* (1992), and more smugglers in *Inca Gold* (1994). *Shock Wave* (1995) involves acoustic weapons and another sinister plot. *Flood Tide* (1997) requires Pitt to rescue a family from a Chinese warlord, and *Atlantis Found* (1999) introduces a group who want to help along what they see as the inevitable destruction of the Earth. *Valhalla Rising* (2001) includes a nod to JULES VERNE when Pitt finds the wreck of the *Nautilus* from TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA (1869). *Trojan Odyssey* (2003) has Pitt reconstructing the "true" story of the voyage of Odysseus. He uncovers a secret involving miniature submarines from World War II in *Black Wind* (2004) and foils a plot to corner the world oil market in *Treasure of Khan* (2006), written in collaboration with Dirk Cussler. The author has also written a second, less popular series about Kurt Austin, whose characters overlap with the Dirk Pitt novels. The five novels in the Oregon Files series are also distantly related.

### *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895)

#### Stephen Crane

Although American writer Stephen Crane (1871–1900) died before his 30th birthday, he remains a significant figure in American literature based on

his first two novels and a handful of short stories. Crane was not the first novelist to set his story within the context of the American Civil War, but his account of one young soldier's initiation in battle was the first to win a major audience and both critical and popular acclaim.

Henry Fleming is a young man who has defied his mother to join the Union army. His dreams of glory fade into a haze of monotony after countless weeks of camping and drilling with never a shot fired and no sign of the enemy, and he has doubts about whether or not he will prove courageous under fire. Eventually the moment comes; a skirmish erupts near his unit, and his self-doubt grows even stronger. When an actual battle erupts, he temporarily overcomes his fear, fighting back mechanically, then panics and runs even though the rest of his unit stands fast.

Ashamed to return, he wanders through the forest and is further upset by the discovery of a decaying corpse. Eventually he joins a line of wounded even though he is uninjured, just to have a sense that he is moving purposefully. There he encounters a friend from his hometown, who dies a few minutes later. He tries to think of an excuse he could use in order to rejoin his unit, but is then caught up in another rush of retreating soldiers, one of whom strikes him in the head. Concussed, he wanders in a daze, then is taken in hand by another soldier who guides him back to his regiment. There they mistakenly interpret his wound as a bullet graze. He stands and fights the following day, and then takes part in a suicidal charge that accomplishes nothing with great loss of life. In the next clash, however, he acts courageously and distinguishes himself.

### **Critical Analysis**

Stephen Crane quickly established himself as a writer of the naturalist school, rejecting romanticism, by writing *The Red Badge of Courage*. Although he later served as a war correspondent, he had no first-hand experience of war when he wrote the novel, but his portrayal has been praised for its accurate description of conditions during a battle.

Unlike most writers of this period, Crane examined the psychology of his protagonist in great detail. The opening pages of the story re-create

those conflicting emotions common among enlisted soldiers—uncertainty about the future, disenchantment with the army's leadership, the entertainment of wild rumors about deployment and other matters, and the mix of excitement, images of heroism, and more realistic concerns about possible death or injury. For those untested in combat lies the fear that they will discover that they will display cowardice under fire.

The young protagonist has enlisted because of the aura of glory that surrounds the war and has found the reality to be a sharp contrast. He is meant to represent all young men who are caught up in the fervor of war, not because they feel any animosity toward the enemy but simply as a method of establishing one's own manhood. Fleming's uncertainty about his own courage is alleviated when he discovers that he is not alone in his self-doubt. When he is finally exposed to actual conflict, little more than a skirmish, his imagination turns familiar elements in the landscape into menacing shapes, and he feels more animosity toward the officers he serves than toward the enemy.

Crane made liberal use of metaphors in his descriptions. The black lines of the advancing army appear like snakes as they move across the landscape; the tents spring up like strange plants; the moon is a lantern hung in a treetop. Bullets cut foliage as if they were "a thousand axes, wee and invisible." The battle seems like the operation of an immense machine, and rows of cannon are "savage chiefs" who "argued with abrupt violence." The falling shells are like flowers "bursting into quick bloom." There are also dramatic contrasts in Henry's perception. While waiting for the enemy to emerge from a line of trees, he is reminded of his anticipation of a parade as a child. The closer his unit comes to battle, the more likely are its members to make jokes and appear happy. At times the soldiers seem like schoolchildren. There are frequent references to colors, the blue of the sky, the yellow of the daylight, the red of the campfires, the purple streaks of uniformed men walking in columns. Henry eventually carries the unit's flag, known as the "colors." War itself is "the red animal," and the title refers to the color of blood.

When battle actually erupts, Henry loses both his fear and his individuality. "He became not a

man but a member.” The act of leaving his unit is likened to amputation. The flow of wounded to the rear seems to him the loss of blood from the body of the army. Even then it is not the enemy he hates but the aura of battle itself. The dehumanizing effects of combat are reflected in Henry’s observation of the battlefield, which he sees as littered with “debris” instead of dead men. When he runs from an attack, then discovers that his unit held their line, he feels wronged rather than cowardly.

The bloody wounds of the other soldiers are, of course, their red badges of courage, which Henry wishes he had for himself. Death becomes an uncertain thing, no longer distinct from life. Henry feels that the corpses might rise and confront him with his cowardice, and later he has a vision of the soldiers sleeping around him as dead men. He decides to return to the front, alternating between finding reasons why that course is impossible and imagining himself back with his unit. Paradoxically, he hopes for a Union defeat so that he will not be alone, will in some way be vindicated for running away, and when he is finally reunited with his unit, one of the soldiers who stayed and fought lets him sleep in his blankets because Henry appears to have been wounded.

Henry feels vindicated because he was not found out. “He had performed his mistakes in the dark so he was still a man.” He even feels superior to some of those who stayed and fought, including Wilson, who was convinced that he was going to die, but did not. While others fled in terror, he believes that he retreated with dignity, eventually acclaiming himself as a hero, a conceit that collapses when he overhears a conversation that implies his entire unit is insignificant and undistinguished. Later, after the ill-fated charge, he and the other survivors feel as though they have lost their honor because they failed to overcome the enemy. Time and distance seem to change under the stress of battle, and the war itself is reduced to a “pitiless monotony of conflicts.” In the final phase of the battle Henry feels an almost religious compulsion to attack the enemy.

As the title suggests, the story is about courage. Henry’s unrealistic, romantic vision of courage is erased by his first taste of combat. He questions his own worth, questions the meaning of courage,

and begins to act in a more heroic fashion simply because he does not want to dishonor himself where others might bear witness. By the end of the story, despite the passage of only a few days, he has matured considerably and his courage is at last a conscious decision.

Crane wrote a short sequel, “The Veteran,” in which an aging Henry is killed trying to rescue two colts when a barn catches fire. There is no mention of which particular battle Henry lived through in the novel, but in the short story it is identified as the Battle of Chancellorsville.

### **Reilly, Matthew** (1974– )

Matthew Reilly is an Australian thriller writer who published his first novel at his own expense and by doing so caught the attention of a major publisher who bought his first best seller, *Ice Station* (1998). A drilling team in Antarctica unexpectedly strikes a metallic object, after which they are attacked by unknown creatures. Their companions investigate and become convinced that they have found a frozen spaceship and alien visitors, although the solution turns out to be more mundane, and so the novel is not, despite first appearances, science fiction. They call for help, and the American government sends a contingent of marines, but so do rival nations and a small-scale shooting war erupts before the belated discovery that it is a prototype aircraft from an earthquake-destroyed secret facility and not a spaceship after all.

To date Reilly has written three sequels to *Ice Station* featuring its larger-than-life hero, Shane Schofield. In the first, *Area 7* (2001), Schofield is apparently executed for treason, then secretly revived. He is allowed to see the inside of a secret American bio-weapons facility in which hardened criminals are experimented upon. Reilly then unveils a rather convoluted plot involving a conspiracy to assassinate the president, the theft of more than a dozen “plasma” weapons and the threat to use them on American cities, and a mysterious Chinese virus whose antibodies can be harvested from a particular child. All of this provides the window dressing for a series of gunfights between Schofield and the marines on one side and a crack group of professional mercenaries on the other.

*Scarecrow* (2003) involves a bounty placed on the heads of several people, including Schofield, who is involved in a perilous and unlikely mission in Siberia. He escapes that danger by commandeering a fighter plane, then picks up an ally, a bounty hunter whose job is to protect rather than kill him. The threat originates among a secret cabal of prominent businessmen who hope to precipitate a new world war and profit by the results. One of their number has an even more sinister plan, but Schofield destroys their operation and reveals their identities to the government, which proceeds to assassinate each of the villains. Schofield's most recent appearance was in the relatively short *Hell Island* (2005). A group of marines land on an island where a secretive experiment was being conducted and find themselves locked in battle with a group of gorillas whose intelligence has been enhanced and who are armed with modern weapons.

*Temple* (1999) involves the search for an ancient artifact that the American government has identified as being part of a revolutionary new weapons system. Efforts to recover it are hampered by the interference of a neo-Nazi group, and the result is a series of gun battles, chases, and escapes. Plenty of excitement with crocodiles and other dangers are added to the mix, but as is the case with his other novels, the characters are flat, and the central premise—a previously unknown element—is scientific nonsense.

*Seven Deadly Wonders* (2005, also published as *Seven Ancient Wonders*) introduced Jack West, who bears a strong resemblance to Shane Schofield except that he is Australian. Jack has a team of assistants in the manner of the Doc Savage series by KENNETH ROBESON, who are there primarily to trade quips and to allow the plot to diverge into separate adventures. In a story reminiscent of *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) by Dan Brown, but with much more violence, various groups search the world for the seven segments of an ancient artifact that, if united, will supposedly give their possessor extraordinary power. West returned in *The Six Sacred Stones* (2007), much of which takes place in China as a further search gets under way. This time the results of failure could be even worse, the destruction of all life on Earth.

Reilly's remaining novel, *Hover Car Racing* (2004), is a science fiction/sports/action story that was originally published online. The conflict involves two brothers who are learning to participate in hover car races when a series of mysterious incidents around the track suggests intentional villainy. The story is intended for young adults and appeared in book form in three installments as *Crash Course*, *Full Throttle*, and *Photo Finish*.

### Critical Analysis

Reilly's novels are noted for their nonstop action, usually violent, and comic book-style plots. The entire conflict in *Ice Station* is based on the implausible suggestion that the government would have forgotten that there was an abandoned installation at the site of the discovery, and the equally unlikely presence of so many spies and traitors within the small group of people stationed there. His characters often perform superhuman feats, like swimming under the ice in Antarctica to sabotage a submarine, and many of the plot twists rely on radical character changes, coincidences, or information withheld from the reader. These flaws have generally been forgiven by those who are more interested in fast-moving stories and heroic deeds than in realism or literary qualities and who are forgiving of contrived surprises. In general, Reilly's work resembles that of Clive Cussler or Stephen Coonts but with a more decided tilt toward military-style conflicts and often more fantastic themes.

### *The Reivers* (1962) William Faulkner

Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning American novelist William Faulkner (1897–1962) set most of his stories, like this one, in his native Mississippi. He is generally acknowledged as one of the most significant American writers and was noted for his deeply drawn characters. *The Reivers* was his last novel, somewhat lighter in tone than most of his work, a gentle, reflective adventure story, and it brought Faulkner his second Pulitzer Prize.

Lucius Priest is an 11-year-old boy living in a small town in Mississippi in 1905, a time when the automobile was a novelty, considered by some nothing more than a fad. The local mayor declares that motor vehicles will be barred from the town

streets, which makes Lucius's grandfather buy one just to establish his own prerogatives to do so, even though he has no use for innovation and intends to keep his new possession locked up permanently in a shed. Boon Hogganbeck, his poorly educated employee, becomes obsessed with the automobile from the moment he first sees it.

When all of the adults in the family are called away for several days to attend a funeral, Boon sees his chance to "borrow" the car. He decides to add an air of legitimacy by convincing Lucius to become his co-conspirator and labors for a while to come up with a convincing argument, unaware that Lucius is perfectly willing to embark upon an adventure, however forbidden it may technically have been. Their destination is to be Memphis, a considerable journey at the time, but first they have to construct an elaborate ruse to explain their disappearance, at least until they are out of the area. Before they have even left, Lucius is troubled by second thoughts about the necessity of lying and the possibility of more deceit to come. The lure of excitement will not be denied, however, and he sets aside his guilty feelings.

Shortly after setting out, they discover that they have a stowaway, the family servant, Ned. Their first adventure arises when they have to cross the mud holes leading to a bridge, which requires the rental of mules from a disreputable local entrepreneur, a kind of Charon who conveys them over Hell Creek. Lucius's second adventure is spending the night in what Boon says is a boardinghouse, although it is pretty clearly a bordello. As if that was not excitement enough, Ned trades the stolen automobile for an equally stolen racehorse, convinced that he can get the horse to run fast enough to win back their ride home. In order to do that, they have to elude the police and get the horse into a box car at the local rail yard. That evening Lucius has a fight with another boy and receives a knife cut on one hand.

More complications arise. The boy they have recruited to be their jockey is unable to ride, so Lucius finds himself drafted into the job, even though he can use only one hand because of his wound. Just when it seems that things could not possibly get worse, a constable shows up to arrest Ned for stealing the horse. Eventually the race is

held, and through a clever trick Ned wins by losing, having placed his bets accordingly. Lucius's grandfather shows up to reclaim his property, and everything is resolved reasonably satisfactorily for all concerned.

### Critical Analysis

Adventures are relative; one person's adventure is another person's humdrum. Faulkner's story of an exhilarating joy ride in the early days of the automobile would probably not ordinarily be listed as an adventure, but that is exactly what it is. Most tales of adventure do little more than sketch in the characters because it is what they do that is important rather than who they are. Faulkner was more interested in creating authentic, distinctive characters, and the opening chapters are deliberately slow-paced, designed to introduce us to Lucius and Boon rather than launch the adventure.

The novel is in many ways a retelling of the story of *ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN* (1884) by Mark Twain. A young boy runs away from home accompanied by an older black man who seems a fairly simple person but who is revealed to be more complex and more adult than previously expected. Both Huck Finn and Lucius find themselves in a confidence game conducted by shady characters—the title refers to trouble-makers, rogues, and thieves.

Faulkner demonstrates his usual insight into human psychology by having Lucius realize that even though he is a child and Boon an adult, he is probably the smarter of the two and he is essentially the one in charge. It is up to him to make the decision whether they take the automobile or not. After the first glow of excitement has passed, Lucius realizes that he has made a mistake, that people "should be prepared for experience . . . not bludgeoned unaware in the dark." He was learning "too much, too fast." Within the space of a few hours he stops being a child, although he is not yet quite an adult. He feels homesick and wants to go home, but realizes it is too late. "I knew too much, had seen too much." Having chosen to follow this path, he cannot turn and retrace his steps.

A number of complex moral issues are entangled in the story. The three main characters are guilty of theft almost from the outset. Boon is,

however, more ashamed of having lied than of having stolen because he intends to return the automobile. When Ned trades for the racehorse, his goal is to gain money to help his relatives rather than to profit himself and he is, after all, swindling thieves rather than honest people. Lucius, who has never been exposed to the seamy side of life, has confused thoughts about the prostitutes, appalled by their lifestyle on one hand, but later engages in a physical battle to defend their honor. When he is finally returned to his family, he is distraught, but learns that the experiences of the past few days are a part of him that can never be forgotten, and perhaps it is better that way.

*The Reivers* is in the end a very optimistic story with a happy ending. It provides a detailed, fascinating glimpse into a time in history when the automobile did not shape lives, although it was already beginning to show its influence. None of the characters is ever in any serious danger during the adventures, which are lighthearted and at times positively funny. Lucius does not find his impromptu education to be entirely pleasant, but he accepts that it is a necessary part of growing older.

### ***The Riddle of the Sands* (1903)**

#### **Erskine Childers**

Robert Erskine Childers (1872–1922) was an Irish nationalist and activist. He wrote this novel, often considered the first modern spy story despite the earlier publication of *KIM* (1901) by Rudyard Kipling, while recuperating from injuries received during the Second Boer War. The protagonist is Carruthers, a minor government functionary who accepts an invitation to go yachting off the coast of Europe with Arthur Davies, an old friend. He agrees to bring several items, some of which are perplexing, and arrives to discover that the yacht is so small that it is crowded with just two people aboard, although after a brief period of irritation, he begins to enjoy himself.

Other than a faint awkwardness, things proceed well for the first few days, the only mildly jarring note being the discovery of a page missing from the ship's log. They sail along the German coast and head toward the North Sea. Davies finally recounts his experiences with a German

named Dollmann, who apparently purposefully led Davies into a maze of sandbars that almost cost him his life and left the Englishman convinced that his new acquaintance was an Englishman only pretending to be German, probably because he was in the pay of that government. Although not entirely convinced, Carruthers agrees that the situation deserves a closer look. He is also suspicious that Davies is motivated at least in part by romantic feelings toward Dollmann's daughter.

They spend a considerable amount of time exploring the sandbars along the coast, meet the captain of a German gunboat, and repel a mysterious visitor who tries to sneak aboard one night while they are anchored. They also hear about a supposed salvage operation involving a sunken bulion ship, which they suspect may be the cover for something considerably more sinister. Dollmann's daughter appears briefly, after which her father's true identity is revealed—he is a former officer of the British navy.

Some clandestine investigation leads them to several discoveries. The salvage operation at the sunken ship is a cover for something else. Dollmann is not completely trusted by his associates. Carruthers and Davies are seen as a potential threat, but not an imminent one. Carruthers decides to stage an elaborate bluff to deflect suspicion, and he sets out to return to England and investigate Dollmann's background. Instead, he changes plans without telling anyone and travels overland through Germany to try to put the pieces of the puzzle together. He stows away aboard a ship and discovers the truth, that the Germans are quietly setting the stage and establishing the infrastructure that would allow a sudden, massive invasion of the British Isles. He rejoins Davies, and they offer to take Dollmann and his daughter back to England, but Dollmann commits suicide during the voyage.

#### **Critical Analysis**

*The Riddle of the Sands* was very influential on British military thinking at the time, in part because Childers had actually examined the area where the story takes place and established the feasibility of an invasion plan such as that described in the novel. The dire warning about the possibility of

war with Germany actually motivated the government to establish defensive positions to meet that contingency. It was one of many “future war” novels published in England during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but it differed in that it did not directly involve warfare but rather the shadowy preparations that precede open conflict. Like many novels of the time, it begins with a preface claiming that the events were true and that Childers had simply edited the manuscript rather than creating it out of his imagination.

Childers develops his suspense very slowly, deliberately, and with more subtle clues than have most spy novelists since his time. Some of the equipment Carruthers is requested to bring has no clear purpose until later in the story. Davies is affable, but slightly vague about his activities prior to Carruthers’s arrival. The ship itself is rather disreputable, and there seems no real reason for Carruthers to have been invited. Their interaction during their first few days together is slightly off, providing no specific clues but creating an atmosphere of uneasiness. Carruthers even addresses the reader directly at one point, explaining that however trivial these observations may have been, they would prove to be very important. Childers none too gently chides the British government for being short-sighted, underestimating the potential threat that a German naval presence might pose, particularly in the North Sea.

The story has a very deliberate pace, and the element of suspense is understated and builds very slowly. The method by which Dollmann’s true identity is revealed involves an unlikely coincidence, but it is not crucial to the plot. Childers made use of various devices that would become standards in later spy fiction, including the innocent who is drawn into intrigue unwillingly but who proves to be a talented amateur, as well as the verbal dueling between the two sides, neither of which is certain about the extent of their opponent’s knowledge. Espionage is, to a considerable degree, viewed as a game, and Carruthers openly admits that he likes his opponents—the engineer Bohme and the gunboat captain—as people and believes they feel similarly toward him. Only Dollmann is unmistakably a villain, and even he is partially redeemed in the closing chapters. Unlike most spy novels,

however, *The Riddle of the Sands* is designed so that the reader is unlikely to guess what is happening until the author reveals the secret near the end of the story, unraveling the seemingly unconnected clues in a manner reminiscent of the classic detective story. His novel was a direct influence on John Buchan and ERIC AMBLER and indirectly on many other British adventure story writers during the next several decades.

The details about sailing through the German and Dutch islands are colorful and convincing, based on the author’s own voyage through that area shortly before writing his story. The novel has been almost continuously in print since its first appearance. *The Shadow in the Sands* (1998) by Sam Llewellyn is a sequel involving another sailing trip in the same area.

***Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912) Zane Grey**  
ZANE GREY (1872–1939) was probably the most influential of all the early western novelists. His books established much of the unofficial code of the West and explored most of the major themes and plots that would become the core of western fiction, and he remains widely read to this day. This particular story, written early in his career, is his best-known book.

The setting is southern Utah in 1871, a time when an influx of non-Mormon settlers and a rise in the incidence of rustling has resulted in nervousness and resentment among the long-standing Mormon settlers. Jane Withersteen is one of the latter, but she sees no reason why the two sides cannot live together harmoniously, and since she owns the local water rights as well as a large ranch and several other houses, she is poised to be very influential in the nearby town of Cottonwoods. She has in particular incurred the enmity of Tull, an elder of the Mormon church, because of her affection for Venters, a ranch hand not of their faith. Tull hopes to marry Withersteen himself and gain control of her property, so he orders his followers to apprehend Venters, who is to be beaten and driven out of Utah.

The confrontation changes direction when a mysterious rider appears, dressed all in black, apparently a professional gunman. Lassiter has

had previous conflicts with the Mormons, and Tull is afraid of him. Adding to the growing tension is the presence of Oldring, head of a band of rustlers, who numbers among his followers a mysterious masked rider. We also learn that Lassiter is searching for a man who kidnapped a young woman—eventually identified as Lassiter’s younger sister—and subsequently treated her so badly that she died tragically. The same night that Lassiter rescues Venters, Withersteen’s hired hands disappear, and one of her herds is run off by rustlers, whom Venters suspects are cooperating with Tull. While searching for the missing cattle, Venters encounters the masked rider and shoots him, then discovers that he has wounded a young girl named Bess, whom he nurses back to health in a hidden cave after she pleads with him not to return her to the band of rustlers. Predictably, they fall in love with each other. She also reveals a new complication; the rustling is just a facade to conceal the fact that the men are actually mining gold in the canyons.

Withersteen is determined to reform Lassiter, and her tactics are sometimes less than forthright. She discovers that her kitchen help is spying on her and dismisses them. It is difficult to find new employees because of the pressure by Tull on the Mormon community to quietly ostracize her. Nevertheless, a few of the braver souls agree to help, but more complications ensue. Withersteen’s horses are stolen, then reclaimed by Venters. Jane agrees to raise a dying woman’s daughter, but not as a Mormon, which enrages the local bishop, who promptly kidnaps the child. Lassiter kills him while rescuing the girl, but it is now apparent that none of the four main characters can safely remain in Utah. Bess is revealed to be Lassiter’s niece just as they escape into a hidden valley, blocking the entrance to discourage pursuit.

### **Critical Analysis**

Grey was outraged by the polygamous practices of the early Mormons and what he saw as their subjugation of women. This animosity is crystallized in the character of Tull, who becomes a caricature. Grey is often at his best in the descriptive passages, which create portraits of the countryside that are vivid and memorable. Color is particularly impor-

tant and mentioned frequently; even the different herds of cattle are differentiated by the colors assigned to them by Withersteen. Grey’s dialogue is less polished and sometimes feels artificially archaic. Lassiter in particular is a western archetype, the weather-beaten man with eyes that betray an inner wisdom, an easy confidence in his abilities, old-fashioned manners, and a clear sense of right and wrong that transcends the law.

Lassiter makes a clear distinction between Oldring, who is an “honest thief,” and Tull, who pretends to be other than what he is. An ongoing moral struggle involves many of the characters. Lassiter wants to kill his enemies, and Withersteen is determined to prevent him from doing so, even when he correctly judges that they will not otherwise be convinced to drop their persecution. His depiction as an almost elemental force of justice rather than a real human being is emphasized by his short, sporadic appearances in the story, most of which follows Venters’s and Withersteen’s activities. The romance between Venters and Jane is doubly awkward since they are sharing a cave and hiding from the outside world, and their naiveté is not always convincing.

The romance between Lassiter and Withersteen is even more improbable. Although she has an aversion to killing and would conventionally be considered to hold the superior moral ground, she is forced ultimately to accept Lassiter’s viewpoint and the necessity for violence. The novel also suggests that under certain circumstances revenge is justified, and that under certain conditions the professional gunslinger had a beneficial effect in those areas where the normal rule of law was absent or distorted. This reflects the simplistic view of frontier justice depicted in *The VIRGINIAN* (1902) by Owen Wister.

Although the novel reflects actual historical conditions, Grey was not trying to provide a journalistically accurate portrayal of the Old West, but a romanticized one. Grey was much less linear than most western writers who followed, interweaving several distinct subplots rather than concentrating on one single source of conflict. While Grey may have been inspired in part by the novels of James Fenimore Cooper, it is more likely that he simply adapted the storytelling techniques of the popular

dime novels of his youth and blended them with a reasonably authentic Old Western setting.

*Rainbow Trail* (1915) is Grey's sequel, which reveals what happened to Lassiter, Withersteen, and their adopted daughter. It is even more explicit in its opposition to the practice of polygamy, which had long since been outlawed by the time Grey was writing.

### **Roberts, Kenneth** (1885–1957)

Kenneth Lewis Roberts was a journalist and novelist whose first three novels, all of which were set in Florida, are largely forgotten and long out of print. His first major work was *Arundel* (1930), a long novel about the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. The story focuses primarily on Benedict Arnold, at that time probably the most brilliant and charismatic military leader, and his expedition into Canada. Arnold is hampered by the limited duration of the enlistments of his men, shortages of material and money, and the squabbling of the Continental Congress, which was constantly involved in political maneuvering to elevate men from favored and more powerful colonies above others who had less influence or who, like Arnold, refused to cater to the whims of the political leadership. Despite the handicaps under which he labored, Arnold very nearly achieved his goals and might have done so if promised support had been provided in a timely manner. His subsequent defense against the British advance into New York State is described in *Rabble in Arms*. Along with *NORTHWEST PASSAGE* the two novels about Arnold would prove to be Roberts's most memorable work.

Roberts's second historical novel was less ambitious. *The Lively Lady* (1931) is set during the War of 1812. An American sea captain who is inclined to be sympathetic to the English changes his attitude when he is impressed into service by the British navy. He escapes and becomes captain of a privateer, preying on British merchant shipping until, unfortunately, he is captured again and imprisoned in Dartmoor under considerably less than humane conditions. This comparatively short novel ends with reprisals against the prisoners following the end of the war.

*Rabble in Arms* (1933) returned to the era of the American Revolution and the story of Benedict Arnold. Arnold is charged with defending New York State from a British army based in Canada, so he builds a makeshift fleet at the foot of Lake Champlain. Although outgunned and eventually routed, his efforts force the invaders to delay long enough that the season changes, and so they put off plans until the following spring, which proved to be much too late. Also covered is the Battle of Saratoga and the death of Jennie McCrea, an atrocity that proved to be a rallying point for the rebels. The poor treatment of Arnold by his superiors and the Congress becomes even worse, and the reader is likely to feel some sympathy for his subsequent change of heart and defection to the British.

*Captain Caution* (1934) is, like *The Lively Lady*, a story of privateering during the War of 1812. At the outbreak of the war Daniel Martin is captured when his ship is overtaken by a British warship, then sent to Europe and imprisonment. This causes his separation from the woman he loves, and they are not reconciled and reunited until very late in the novel. Although it superficially resembles his other fiction, *Captain Caution* is comparatively short and lacks the fascinating historical detail that makes his other work so rewarding, although it is a fairly exciting adventure story.

*Northwest Passage* (1937) is undoubtedly his best-known novel. The story involves the operations of Rogers' Rangers during the French and Indian War, his successes and eventual elevation by the British government, his obsession with finding the Northwest Passage—a water route to the Pacific—and his subsequent downfall due to political chicanery reminiscent of events surrounding the career of Benedict Arnold. It is the only one of Roberts's novels to have become a memorable motion picture.

*Oliver Wiswell* (1940) follows the adventures of a British loyalist during the Revolution, evicted from his home early in the conflict. It chronicles his life until he immigrates to Canada in 1783. Wiswell is witness to several major events and battles from the latter part of the war, including Benedict Arnold's campaign for the British. The story presents a contrasting viewpoint to the usual depictions of this era. Wiswell and the other loyalists are

victims rather than villains and are badly treated because they object to the rebellion. Because of the disruption and dislocation, the protagonist experiences a series of violent encounters that only reinforce his conviction that the revolution was unwise and unjustified.

Roberts's last two novels were somewhat less interesting. *Lydia Bailey* (1947) is set between the Revolution and the War of 1812. A New Englander falls under the influence of a villainous woman, runs afoul of the Alien and Sedition Act, is imprisoned, released, and travels to Haiti in search of a missing girl, arriving just in time to get caught up in Toussaint Louverture's rebellion. His last and shortest, novel was *Boon Island* (1955). This story of a shipwreck and the marooning of several people on a deserted island off the coast of New England is based on an actual event. Some editions of the novel include accounts of the incident, which was controversial at the time, by other writers.

During the 1950s Roberts became interested in dowsing, the supposed psychic ability to find water, and he wrote three nonfiction books on the subject. *The Kenneth Roberts Reader* (2002) consists primarily of excerpts from the novels.

### Critical Analysis

Roberts is probably the most highly regarded American historical novelist of all time, certainly of the revolutionary period. His conscious effort to discard the myths and half-truths that developed over time in order to present a complex and certainly more historically accurate picture of the upheavals that led to the founding of the United States gave his work a very different tone from those of other writers covering the same period. His attention to detail is impressive, and Roberts manages to convey a great deal of background information without ever interrupting his narrative. His novels have been out of print sporadically, but most of them have been reissued regularly.

### Robeson, Kenneth

"Kenneth Robeson" was a house pseudonym under which byline Lester Dent, William G. Bogart, Will Murray, Evelyn Coulson, Howard A. Davis, Lawrence Donovan, Ron Goulart, Alan Hathaway,

and W. Ryerson Johnson were all to write novels, although Dent was responsible for the vast majority. Although the name was used by multiple authors for more than one series, it is most closely associated with the Doc Savage stories, originally published in *Doc Savage Magazine*, which lasted from 1933 to 1949, publishing 181 novel-length adventures. All but about 20 of these were written by Lester Dent (1904–1959), who also created the character and wrote the first novel in the series, *The Man of Bronze* (1933). Dent was a prolific writer for the pulp magazines who had started selling stories in the early 1920s and continued until shortly before his death in 1959.

The publishers of *The Shadow* magazine wanted a series about a hero who was specifically raised to fight crime, and they gave Dent the job of creating the character. He responded with *The Man of Bronze*, which introduced Clark "Doc" Savage, who was simultaneously an adventurer, a doctor, a scientist, a musician, and an expert in other specialties. Savage had been trained mentally and physically to outthink and outperform any potential antagonist. He was also fabulously wealthy, lived in a penthouse, and had a team of friends to assist him in his adventures.

His companions were known as the Fabulous Five. Monk Mayfair, chemist, looked vaguely like a Neanderthal, carried his pet pig with him, and provided much of the comic relief. Johnny Littlejohn, archaeologist, was a bit of a dandy who was also a source of some of the jokes. Renny Renwick, engineer, was noted mostly for his muscle; Long Tom Roberts, another engineer, was his physical opposite, although always handy in a scrap. Ham Brooks, lawyer, was prone to playing practical jokes. Each was described as being prominent in his respective field, although Doc was always even more brilliant. Several of these companions drifted away in the later volumes. The only other recurring character was Patricia Savage, Doc's younger sister, who becomes involved in several of the adventures.

Following the death of Doc's father, he and his friends travel to the Mayan jungles, where they find a lost tribe, defeat a masked villain, and win the devotion of the natives whom Savage agrees to protect. In return they provide him with enough gold to make him independently wealthy, setting the stage

for his continuing adventures. Doc's interest in their princess is perhaps the closest to a romantic element in any of his adventures, which were peculiarly empty of even the slightest hint of sexuality. Most of the subsequent novels fell into a fairly predictable formula, with masked villains, exotic locales, lost cities, clever new inventions, and apparently magical or supernatural events, which later turn out to have perfectly rational explanations.

A number of inventions and incidents are scattered through the series that suggest science fiction, including dinosaurs in *The Land of Terror*, and in one case an ambiguous villain who might actually be an incarnation of Satan, but these were exceptions to the general rule. The stories were about fast-paced, even violent action, although Savage eventually became oddly fastidious about killing anyone and eventually switched to "mercy bullets" to safeguard even his enemies. In the earlier novels it was not uncommon for Doc to kill as many as a dozen of his enemies in hand-to-hand combat. Some of Savage's inventions later became reality, such as night vision goggles and answering machines. He wore an early version of Batman's utility belt and retreated to the Arctic to his Fortress of Solitude, anticipating Superman. In the early adventures Savage defeated individuals and organizations bent on world domination; later in the series this was scaled back, and there tended to be less ambitious adventures, although crime detection was usually secondary to the action sequences.

There are far too many titles to summarize here, but a few mark significant points in the series. *Pirate of the Pacific* is the first to involve an international conspiracy, efforts by a warlord to overthrow the government of the Philippines and establish himself as ruler of the islands. *The Sargasso Ogre*, sometimes cited as one of the best of Doc's adventures, involves an organization of modern-day pirates. There is another lost world in *The Phantom City*. Patricia Savage was introduced in *Brand of the Werewolf*, which does not involve a werewolf, and returns in *Fear Cay* and several others. *The King Maker* adopts the Graustarkian formula. It is set in a mythical Balkan country and involves the struggle for control of the throne.

*The Sea Magician* has one of the most interesting plots, a plan by a gang of villains to exploit old

legends and use them to scare people away from their operation. There are also the first signs of Doc's repudiation of unnecessary violence. *The Annihilist* gives the first close look at the Crime College, set up by Doc to train more crime fighters. Doc faces his first apparently supernatural foe in *The Mystic Mullah*. *The Spook Legion*, which involves invisibility, has some of the best of the generally childish comedy scenes. *Dust of Death* introduces the last recurring character, Chemistry, an ape who gets adopted as a pet and interacts frequently with Monk's pet pig, Habeas, but it is otherwise a minor title.

*The Fantastic Island* appears to have been heavily influenced by Richard Connell's "The MOST DANGEROUS GAME." One of the best in the series is *Mystery Under the Sea*, partly set in a drowned city. *The Seven Agate Devils* is distinguished as one of the very worst in the series, involving several obvious impossibilities such as physically throwing one's voice to another location. *Haunted Ocean* is an attempt to retell JULES VERNE's *Master of the World*. In this case the monomaniacal idealist intends to impose peace by use of a device that renders electricity inoperable. *Resurrection Day* has both the strangest plot and the most genuinely funny comedy sketches. There is a fairly good mystery in *The Terror in the Navy*, a plot to destroy America's battleships.

By 1937 the formula had become obvious, and the same plot devices—lost cities, criminals armed with technological breakthroughs, weird cults—were recurring regularly. It is likely that Dent was running out of ready ideas, and the few other writers who had contributed partial or complete manuscripts were generally even less inventive. Doc's character and outlook began to change in subtle ways. In *The Sea Angel* he suggests that criminal tendencies are the result of physical imperfections, "crime glands," and that villainy can therefore be cured. This coincided with a dramatic drop in the body count, although the action remained fast-paced and dangerous. *The Mountain Monster* appears to be a spoof of pulp adventures in general. Dent began softening the characters in *The Submarine Mystery*, turning Doc into less of a superhuman hero. *Fortress of Solitude* provides the first close look at Doc's retreat and features the only recurrence of a villain, John Sunlight.

Dent was finding it increasingly difficult to be fresh and interesting by 1939. *The Freckled Shark* is notable because Doc is conspicuously absent during most of the book, before one of the characters throws off his disguise and readers realize he has been there all along. From this point forward the stories were considerably less inventive and toward the end much slower paced. Wild adventure was displaced by deduction and investigation. The villains were less ambitious, less imaginative, and more easily thwarted, which probably explains why the readership dropped and the magazine folded in 1949. During the 1990s several new Doc Savage novels were written by Will Murray, using the Robeson pseudonym, based on notes left by Lester Dent. The best of these were *Python Isle* (1991) and *The Forgotten Realm* (1993).

Crudely written as they may be, the Doc Savage stories were undeniably popular, and only the SHADOW by Maxwell Grant had a longer and more distinguished career. The series saw incarnations as radio shows, comic books, and a movie, *The Man of Bronze* (1979). Writer Philip Jose Farmer credits the Doc Savage stories as a major influence on his own work, and in addition to having written an original story in the series, *Escape from Loki* (1991), he also wrote a fictional biography, *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life* (1973).

The Kenneth Robeson name was used again for the Avenger series, whose protagonist bears several similarities to Doc Savage, although his opponents are much more mundane. Richard Benson's family died at the hands of criminals and the shock affected the muscles in his face, making it possible for him to reshape his features and impersonate anyone he cares to. He battles a variety of criminals with the assistance of a group of friends who resemble the Fabulous Five, with the emphasis on gunfights and chases rather than detection. The original series ran from 1939 to 1942, but the series was revived for several new adventures under the Robeson name during the 1970s, which were actually written by Ron Goulart.

### Critical Analysis

The Doc Savage novels were written for pulp magazines by writers who penned as many as four novels per month. Under those circumstances there was

clearly insufficient time or motivation to do more than superficial revising and editing, and much of the material is essentially first draft. These writers likely thought of themselves as craftsmen rather than artists, if they thought about their roles at all. Additionally, they were working to a specific formula and length. Each issue of *Doc Savage Magazine* was the same size, and the story had to be cropped or puffed up to fit. Since potential readers frequently made their decisions to buy based on a quick perusal of the first few pages, the action had to start quickly and be sustained throughout. The hero always had to win in the end, and the characterization—what there was of it—needed to be only reasonably consistent from one issue to the next.

In order to ensure continuity, Lester Dent reviewed and revised most of the installments that he did not personally write. Although the use of a single author as overall series editor simplified things, there were counterbalancing problems. Some authors began to run out of ideas quickly and recycled old ones, which was not crucial with many pulp magazines that lasted only a year or so. *Doc Savage Magazine* enjoyed considerable longevity, however, and it became clear long before the end that Dent had exhausted his imagination.

The characters are no more than sketches, the plots hastily assembled, creaky, and often implausible, the settings more frequently suggested than described, and the prose at its best clunky, awkward, even ungrammatical. Despite all of these shortcomings, Doc Savage was only surpassed in popularity by the Shadow, and almost 200 of his adventures remained popular enough to be reprinted in book form during the 1960s through the 1980s. Many authors have cited them as an early influence on their own work, and there have been several pastiches, most notably by Will Murray and Philip José Farmer. Perhaps what separated Doc Savage from his peers is that he evolved over time, becoming more humane, and that he consistently symbolized what should be the best in humanity—a drive for justice and freedom and an unrelenting hostility to evil. The Avenger was never as popular a character, but as was the case with Doc Savage, the entire run of stories from the original magazine later appeared in book form, which is not true of most other PULP HEROES, not even the Shadow.

## Robin Hood

There are numerous accounts of the adventures of Robin Hood, who was a legendary figure akin to King Arthur, his existence first noted in medieval England. The story originally referred to a band of actual outlaws, which would explain the recurring theme of animosity toward the sheriff of Nottingham. Robin Hood is referred to in two of Shakespeare's plays and appears as a minor character in Sir Walter Scott's *IVANHOE* (1819). The popularity of the character led to his mention in works by John Keats and Alfred Lord Tennyson, among others. Robin Hood and his followers, or Merry Men, were reputed to live in Sherwood Forest, where they preyed upon the rich and undeserving. This is reflected in the oldest known written reference to Robin Hood, from the 14th century, but the various versions of his career that circulated during the next two centuries often contradicted one another. These accounts were often less admiring of Robin's character, and the idea that he shared his stolen wealth with the poor did not show up until much later. Will Scarlet and Little John do appear in some of the early ballads, but their distinct stories were also a later development.

Originally a commoner, Robin Hood became Robin of Lockesley, a downcast nobleman, during the 16th century. Maid Marian also began to appear in the story, although she was not the only woman to whom he was linked. The latter part of his career also began to be fixed in time to the period when Richard the Lionheart was fighting in the Crusades. More elaborations became part of the canon during the 17th century, including the addition of Alan-a-Dale, the minstrel. Robin's active opposition to Prince John was not a significant factor until relatively recently.

Howard Pyle (1853–1911) gave Robin Hood's story its most familiar form in *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883), which became a children's classic and has remained in print continuously since its first publication. Two television series and most of the several movies have been based on his version of the legend, the most noted exception being *Robin and Marian* (1976), in which all the characters have become middle-aged. Robin is only 18 years old when he first gets into trouble while en route to an archery contest, and the ruler is King

Henry, not Prince John as is usually the case in film versions. Robin kills a deer in violation of the law, is accosted by a group of foresters, and kills one of them before escaping into Sherwood Forest. There he attracts a number of other outlaws, forming his band, the most prominent member of whom is Little John, who defeats Robin in a fight with quarterstaves. Shortly thereafter, they participate in another archery match, this time in disguise, which they win handily.

Using another disguise, Robin tricks his nemesis—the sheriff of Nottingham—into joining him in his camp. The sheriff is rather gullible and is similarly tricked into the same situation more than once. Robin, on the other hand, is bested by several members of his own band at various times including Little John, Friar Tuck, Midge, and Will Scarlet, but is always a good sport about it. At times he also falls prey to the wiles of others, including a group of crafty beggars. Friar Tuck joins the band after officiating at Will Scarlet's wedding, one of the few domestic incidents in the novel.

Robin's status improves, and he is even called by the queen to visit the royal court, where he and some of his followers win another set of contests. A local clergyman stirs up resentment against Robin, who escapes the king's men after being warned by the queen, and he makes use of his gift for disguise to return to the safety of Sherwood Forest. Guy of Gisbourne appears as the most menacing of the sheriff's henchman, a crude murderer and bounty hunter whom Robin outshoots and kills fairly quickly in Pyle's version, although he has been given more prominence elsewhere. Prince John rises to power in Richard the Lionheart's absence and has a short but villainous reign. Richard returns in disguise and is accosted by Robin and his men, who proclaim their loyalty when they discover his true identity. Having heard the truth of the situation, Richard pardons all of the outlaws, and Robin is proclaimed Earl of Huntington. Unfortunately, the switch to social acceptance fails to take. He returns to Sherwood Forest to lead his reconstituted band, but the king sends an army against him. The sheriff of Nottingham dies in the battle, and Robin seeks medical aid for himself, but is betrayed, captured, and finally dies.

Pyle's version of the story is extremely episodic, with the various characters having adventures either jointly or separately, and some portions were independently published in magazine form before the book appeared. It has never been out of print since and has become the standard against which other retellings and extensions are measured. The quests of the various characters are often meant to resolve wagers or are whimsical acts, and there is an element of humor in almost every episode, despite the occasional violent death. Although Robin was always generous to those who needed help, he is not as overt in "robbing the rich to give to the poor" as is Zorro, for example. There is a strong similarity between Robin and his Merry Men and King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Both groups have an exaggerated sense of personal honor and a rough but loyal camaraderie based on mutual respect. They are also loyal to the throne and excuse their outlawry as an injustice or as a protest against unjust acts by the king or his servants. Howard Pyle was a Quaker, so it is not surprising that he also had a rather jaundiced attitude toward prominent religious figures. Only the humble Friar Tuck is given dispensation.

Will Scarlet is given different names in the ballads that preceded Pyle's version, and he actually splits the character into two separate identities in his version, naming one of them Will Stutely. Little John is for a time one of the sheriff's minions, but his tenure is very brief and ends with him returning to Robin's band. Alan-a-Dale is a wandering minstrel who is sometimes confused with Will Scarlet in the original ballads. Friar Tuck is barely mentioned in the legends, but Pyle promoted him to a major character and created the memorable scene in which he and Robin match wits in an effort to convince each other to act as beast of burden in crossing a river. Other members of the band are Arthur a Bland, Gaffer Swanthold, and Much (sometimes Midge) the Miller's Son. Maid Marian's part in the story varies from significant to minor, depending on the version.

A number of authors including Roger Lancelyn Greene have retold, added to, or recast the legend of Robin Hood. Thomas Love Peacock wrote an early spoof, *Maid Marian*, as early as 1822. Parke Godwin presented Robin as defending Saxon

England from the Norman Conquest in *Sherwood* (1991) and *Robin and the King* (1993, also published as *Return to Nottingham: A Novel*). Jennifer Roberson has written two novels with mild romantic overtones concerning Robin Hood's relationship with Maid Marian, *Lady of the Forest* (1992) and *Lady of Sherwood* (2000). The first of these is a prequel to the familiar legends, explaining how the various characters came together for their famous series of adventures. In the second the death of King Richard leads to renewed difficulties with the sheriff of Nottingham. *Maid Marian* (2005) by Elsa Watson is told from the title character's point of view. Nancy Springer has written a number of books for younger readers about Robin Hood's daughter, Rowan. Trystam Kith turns the legend on its head, presenting Robin as the villain and the sheriff as the hero in *A Cold Summer's Night* (2004) and *A Bright Winter Sun* (2004). Howard Pyle is also the author of an exciting story of a young man's training as a knight, *Men of Iron* (1891).

### **Robinson Crusoe** (1719) **Daniel Defoe**

British journalist Daniel Defoe (1659–1731), born Daniel Foe, was one of the pioneers of the novel, and *Robinson Crusoe* is often cited as the first novel written in English. It was immensely popular when it first appeared, running through multiple editions in a very short period and has remained popular ever since.

Robinson Crusoe is the third son of a middle-class English family who disobeys his parents and runs away to sea in his quest to see the world. He has second thoughts almost immediately when his ship is caught in a squall and he gets very seasick, but calm seas restore his resolve. A second storm sinks the ship, although he survives to reach shore. His next voyage is more successful, but he is captured by pirates during the third, and serves as a slave for two years. Eventually he escapes, has some adventures on the coast of Africa, is rescued and taken to Brazil, where he buys a small plantation.

Although he is moderately successful, Crusoe becomes impatient with the pace of his advancement and defies Providence once again. He agrees to sail to Africa to procure slaves, but the ship runs into more storms and grounds on a reef. Only

Crusoe survives to reach the island, but the next morning he discovers that the foundering ship is still afloat and manages to reach it and transport a raft full of supplies to shore. Defoe then provides a detailed account of Crusoe's efforts to secure his provisions, fashion a shelter for himself, and scout the island for sources of meat and freshwater. He names his new home the Island of Despair, although he admits to himself that he is lucky to be alive at all.

Crusoe builds himself a home adjacent to a cave, disguised to prevent its discovery if unfriendly visitors show up. His early adventures include the collapse of part of his cave, an earthquake, a hurricane, and a debilitating illness. He becomes much more religious in the aftermath, reading the Bible regularly. For some reason almost a year passes before he first begins to explore the rest of the island, and almost four years before he decides to try building a boat. By the end of the second year, he realizes that he is happier than at any time previous in his life.

During his sixth year on the island he finishes building a small sailboat, realizes it is not adequate to get him to the mainland, but uses it to conduct an inspection of the island's perimeter. One day he finds a human footprint on the beach and is consumed by panic, spending much of the next two years fortifying his home against an unseen and obviously absent enemy. His anxiety proves to be justified, however, because his next indication of outsiders comes when he finds the site of a recent cannibalistic feast, but he does not actually see another human being until his 23rd year on the island.

The cannibals return on several occasions during the next few years. Eventually Crusoe decides to attack one party and free their prisoners, but only succeeds in rescuing one. His new companion, whom he calls Friday, first appears almost two-thirds of the way through the novel. Crusoe establishes a clear master-servant relationship, and Friday proves to be a skillful and hardworking assistant who is eventually converted to Christianity. Together they defeat another party of savages and rescue their prisoners, one of whom is Friday's father. Crusoe's liberation from the island comes in the form of an English ship in the throes of a mutiny. The deposed

captain is to be left on the island pending rescue, while Crusoe becomes temporary captain, finally escaping the island after 35 years of exile. His final adventures include a battle with a pack of wolves.

### Critical Analysis

The early chapters are sharply critical of the ambitions of youth. Crusoe ignores the admonitions of both his parents and later from the captain of his first ship, all of whom warn him that he has chosen a dangerous path to follow. He himself characterizes his acts as foolish and asserts that he was swayed by an "evil influence." Even when he is enjoying relatively good fortune, Crusoe describes his situation as less than ideal. While living on his own plantation, for example, he feels as solitary as if he had been lost on a deserted island.

In fact, it is his constant dissatisfaction that leads him to trouble. Unhappy with his home life, even though it is quite comfortable, he goes to sea. Unhappy with the solitude and security of his plantation, he decides to travel again. His resulting misfortune leads to his conclusion that he had been "born to be my own destroyer," that he was in one sense the author of his own bad luck. Crusoe is inconsistent in his interpretation of events, refusing at one point to accept that his experiences are random and insisting that they are directed by a greater intelligence than he, perhaps as punishment for his prideful ambition and his disobedience to his parents. He concludes that there must be a purpose in his being the sole survivor from the sunken ship. "Why were not they saved and you lost? Why are you singled out?" Although he claims to have had "very few notions of religion," he interprets the growth of barley from some discarded husks as a sign of God's intervention on his behalf. Despite this conclusion, he admits that he never bothered to keep track of Sundays and rarely prayed. After his illness, however, he contradicts himself again and says that he never once thought that his bad luck was a punishment for past sins.

Defoe was to some extent inventing the novel as he wrote it. He makes use of what would later become a major literary shortcut. The foundered ship is an example of what is sometimes referred to as the "little black bag," a source of convenient

solutions to problems the protagonist must overcome. The ship sinks promptly only hours after he removes the last of the useful stores aboard. There are repetitious sections, particularly in Crusoe's various bouts of religious fervor. To some extent Crusoe's experiences reflect the rise of civilization. He starts as a cave dweller who lives by hunting, but eventually teaches himself carpentry, pottery, agriculture, animal husbandry, and other skills. Crusoe's reaction to the cannibals is interesting given Defoe's Puritan leanings. Although the castaway considers cannibalism and murder as sinful, he recognizes that the savages may themselves be unaware of their transgression and may be sinning through ignorance, a consideration that makes him feel less inclined to kill them.

Although Robinson Crusoe is a name familiar to a very wide audience, it is the minor character Friday whose name has become synonymous with the indispensable servant, either a "Man Friday" or a "Woman Friday." The conversations between the two while Crusoe is undertaking his religious conversion provide an excuse for some barbed criticism of organized religion and the tendency of priesthoods to use secret rites to protect their power base, and he has Friday ask some difficult questions about Christian beliefs in general to which Crusoe has no ready answer.

The novel is written as though it was an actual account of a true story, a mechanism that was common in many early novels and which persists to the modern day. Defoe may in fact have partially based his story on the experiences of real shipwreck victims. The novel almost certainly influenced *GULLIVER'S TRAVELS* (1726) by Jonathan Swift, and has inspired several imitations, and sequels, including *SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON* (1812) by Johann David Wyss, *The Mysterious Island* (1875) by JULES VERNE, and even the movie *Cast Away* (2000). Although they are little known, Defoe wrote two sequels, *Farther Adventures* (1719) and *Serious Reflections* (1720), as well as several other novels, the only one of which remains popular is *Moll Flanders* (1722). *Captain Singleton* (1721) is also an adventure story. J. M. Coetzee provides a variation of Crusoe's story in *Foe* (1986). Some abridged editions have deleted the final passages describing Crusoe's adventures after leaving the island.

### Rohmer, Sax (1883–1959)

Sax Rohmer was the pseudonym of Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward, a British thriller writer whose most famous creation was Dr. Fu Manchu, a brilliant Oriental criminal mastermind, head of the sinister international organization, the Si-Fan, and arch-enemy of Sir Denis Nayland-Smith and his friend, Dr. Petrie. Rohmer sold his first story in 1903 and was a very popular writer during the 1920s and 1930s. He continued to sell fiction regularly until shortly before his death, although his early years were his most productive period. His major accomplishment was the creation of Fu Manchu, but many of his other novels—often with Oriental overtones—remain popular, and several of them are superior adventure stories. Fu Manchu was a personification of the "yellow peril" fear common in the early 20th century, born of concern that Asian immigrants would arrive in such numbers that they would swamp the country, later incorporating the concept of the supposed inscrutability of the Asian mind.

Fu Manchu's underlying purpose in all of the novels is to become the secret master of the world, although in his earliest adventures the implication is that he is working at the behest of others. *The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu* (1913) is an episodic novel in which Sir Denis and Petrie thwart a series of assassination plots aimed at prominent political figures. *The Return of Fu Manchu* (1916) follows the same pattern except that Fu Manchu is now more specifically targeting his two main tormentors. *The Hand of Fu Manchu* (1917) completed the original trilogy, ending with the apparent death of Fu Manchu. It seems likely that Rohmer intended this to be the last appearance of the character, but like Sherlock Holmes, Fu Manchu seemed to have taken on a life of his own.

Other than a veiled reference in *The Golden Scorpion* (1919) Rohmer abandoned Fu Manchu for more than a decade, during which period he wrote several other adventure stories. The closest in tone was *Brood of the Witch Queen* (1918), whose villainous protagonist bears more than a slight resemblance to Fu Manchu, although he uses supernatural powers to further his ends rather than legions of obedient dacoits and poisonous serpents. There is also a similar character in the occult adventure novel *The Yellow Claw* (1915). *The Quest*

of the *Sacred Slipper* (1919) also involves magic and a thrilling plot involving various parties seeking to possess the slipper of Mohammed. *The Green Eye of Bast* (1920) starts off as a detective story, but soon erupts into furious action as the protagonist discovers the existence of a race of subhuman creatures living secretly.

Rohmer brought his archcriminal back in *The Daughter of Fu Manchu* (1931), although he has little more than a cameo appearance. Instead, Sir Denis and Petrie battle Fu Manchu's daughter in a series of encounters that contain some of the elements of the earlier books, but which were more skillfully written and more integrated as a single story. Fu Manchu appears in the closing chapters to rein in his daughter, who has been acting without authorization. *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932) is an even more unified novel, which slightly recasts the title character. His goal is to establish himself as the leader of a charismatic Eastern religious group and use that position to spread his influence through the world. Although he has not abandoned his nefarious and subtle intrigues and assassination plots, they are more refined, and his antagonists must become more resourceful to counter his moves. This novel set the tone for those that followed, the first being *The Bride of Fu Manchu* (1933). The plot is quite convoluted as Petrie's daughter supposedly died as an infant but she was actually kidnapped by Fu Manchu's minions, raised as a slave, and is destined to be his bride. This is the most fantastic book in the series, with Fu Manchu using deliberately mutated animals to help him spread a bioengineered plague, a concept considerably ahead of its time.

There is more super-scientific wizardry in *The Trail of Fu Manchu* (1934), which follows Fu Manchu's efforts to expand his secret base in England, but it is one of the weakest books in the series, repeating situations from earlier stories. His plans grow more ambitious in *President Fu Manchu* (1936). Using a handpicked and mentally conditioned puppet candidate, the evil mastermind attempts to secretly seize control of the American government in order to turn the country into a dictatorship under his clandestine rule. *The Drums of Fu Manchu* (1939) is a reversion to the cat-and-mouse style episodes of the original trilogy. Fu

Manchu plans a new series of assassinations, and Sir Denis counters them, although not always successfully. A revolutionary new kind of submarine threatens to alter the balance of power in *The Island of Fu Manchu* (1941). The Caribbean setting and secret base almost certainly influenced Ian Fleming when he was writing the JAMES BOND adventure *Dr. No* (1958). Rohmer may have grown weary of the character again because there was a considerable gap before *Shadow of Fu Manchu* (1948), which again flirted with the supernatural. This time Sir Denis has to overcome not only super-scientific weapons but also a small army of apparent zombies, which the author makes some effort to rationalize.

Rohmer started a new series with *Sins of Sumuru* (1950, also published as *Nude in Mink*). Sumuru was a somewhat less ambitious, female version of Fu Manchu, who directed a criminal organization but with less far reaching goals than the Si-Fan. She returned in *Sumuru* (1951, also published as *Slaves of Sumuru*), *The Fire Goddess* (1952, also published as *Virgin in Flames*), *Return of Sumuru* (1954, also published as *Sand and Satin*), and *Sinister Madonna* (1956). Her archenemy was a Scotland Yard inspector who followed her all over the world to foil whatever scheme she was currently hatching. Although these five novels all have plots similar to the Fu Manchu novels, Sumuru never attained the same stature as a supervillain and the stories, though full of adventure, feel comparatively flat.

After nearly a decade Rohmer revived the sinister mastermind again for two more novels, *Re-Enter Fu Manchu* (1957) and *Emperor Fu Manchu* (1959). The former dropped the hints of occultism and presented a straightforward plot in which Fu Manchu seeks to steal an atomic weapon and use it to threaten world governments. In sharp contrast the latter is a variation of *Shadow of Fu Manchu*, with an army of revived dead men bent on world conquest. A handful of short stories were posthumously collected as *The Wrath of Fu Manchu* (1973).

There have been numerous movies and a short-lived television show based on the Fu Manchu series. Rohmer's assistant, Cay Van Ash, has written two pastiches, *Ten Years Beyond Baker Street* (1984) and *The Fires of Fu Manchu* (1987).

The first pits Fu Manchu against Sherlock Holmes, while the second is more loyal to the original series, sending Sir Denis and Petrie to Egypt to thwart another fiendish plot. There have also been films based on the Sumuru series, and more than a dozen silent films from the 1920s were based on Rohmer's short fiction.

### Critical Analysis

The popularity of the Fu Manchu novels has overshadowed Rohmer's other adventure stories, some of which are actually much better written, particularly *Quest for the Sacred Slipper* and *The Green Eyes of Bast*. Rohmer's super-villain has become an iconic figure like Dracula or Frankenstein's Monster, familiar to people who may not have read any of the original stories. There is also a considerable difference in structure as well as in quality between the original three books and those that appeared later.

In many ways the original Fu Manchu trilogy was a product of the pulp era. Oriental villains were not uncommon, although they were generally subordinated to Occidentals. The growing distrust of Asian immigrants helped to foster a distrust that was exacerbated by stories of lost Chinese civilizations and the supposed mysteries of the Orient, which often verged on or actually were supernatural in nature. This element of the fantastic is more prevalent in Rohmer's non-Fu Manchu novels. Fu Manchu was more likely to resort to super-science, and indeed several in the series are technically science fiction.

The pulp tradition consisted of episodic adventures that could be expanded or contracted to meet specific word-length requirements. Rohmer's early novels are very much in that form, almost as though a series of short stories with recurring characters had been cobbled together into a single, jerky narrative. By 1931 Rohmer had written several novels that were structured as a single story, and he had refined his talents considerably, deepening his characterizations, making a greater effort to illustrate motivation, and even dropping the clear-cut dichotomy between good and evil. It is true that Fu Manchu reins in his daughter because she disobeyed him rather than because he believes she acted badly, but there is clearly affection and respect between the two of them, and it is

difficult to demonize a character and at the same time describe the human side.

The popularity of Fu Manchu and, to a lesser extent Sumuru, may have been a financial boon to Rohmer and at the same time a literary bane. Most of the novels he wrote after 1930 involved one or the other character, and they were all variations of the same story. His occasional freestanding novels before that time were diverse, original, and at least two of them—*The Green Eyes of Bast* and *The Golden Scorpion*—are considered classics of occult adventure. Only a handful of short stories displayed the same brilliance once he had committed himself to the Fu Manchu series. Success often traps a writer into a career of repetition, and one can only wonder how much more significant Rohmer might have been had he not chosen to revive Fu Manchu when he did.

### Rollins, James (1961– )

James Rollins is the primary pen name used by Jim Czajkowski, a veterinarian turned full-time writer who is also the author of five fantasy novels under the name James Clemens. The Rollins name was used for his first thriller, *Subterranean* (1999) and has appeared on one novel each year since. Rollins frequently makes use of fantastic elements, and several of his novels could also be considered science fiction. The author cites Doc Savage as an influence on his storytelling, and his plots bear strong resemblances to the comic book-style action of that PULP HERO, although updated and certainly better written.

*Subterranean* was an inventive rehabilitation of the lost world story. Because there are no longer great unexplored areas in which to set them, the lost world novel has fallen out of fashion. Rollins resorted to a device used by JULES VERNE, EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS, and others by setting his lost civilization beneath the surface of the Earth. In this case, the entrance to the underground world is hidden under the ice of Antarctica until a varied team of explorers and military personnel penetrate, finding remnants of an ancient civilization as well as dangerous creatures thought to be extinct. Rollins, who is himself a spelunker, brings an air of authenticity to the climbing sequences, and does a good

job of suggesting the claustrophobic atmosphere of the underground world.

*Excavation* (2000) is also a lost world variation. The discovery of an anachronistic mummy high in the Andes leads to a series of revelations, more time spent in dark caves, a conspiracy that threatens the lives of the researchers, and the discovery that the local residents have been concealing the existence of a form of technology not otherwise known on Earth. The drift toward science fiction became stronger in this and peaked in his next novel, *Deep Fathom* (2001). The protagonist is the operator of an oceangoing exploratory vessel. When an outbreak of solar flares triggers a string of catastrophes on Earth, the president's plane is lost at sea and his is one of several ships sent to search the site. One of the upheavals has raised a part of the Pacific seabed, revealing the ruins of yet another ancient civilization, but this discovery might be overshadowed by growing international tensions and the possibility of a nuclear war.

*Amazonia* (2002) returned to the lost world theme. A government agent stumbles out of the jungle and dies, and the autopsy reveals that he has regrown a severed arm, which predictably excites considerable attention. The local people warn against investigating, however, convinced that the man was enslaved by a mysterious, magical tribe. The race is between an American expedition and a second one financed by a foreign pharmaceutical firm and led by a psychopath. Adding to the urgency is the revelation that the body shipped home carried an unknown infectious disease that is rapidly spreading through the population. The novel evokes some of the same atmosphere of wonder about the primitive world as is found in the best of H. Rider Haggard.

The last of Rollins's quasi-lost world adventures was *Ice Hunt* (2003). The setting is the Arctic, where Russian and American military units are conducting a secret battle for control of an abandoned base that was experimenting with suspended animation. Their efforts are complicated by the discovery of a species of killer whale living in the region, which is capable of leaving the water and moving across solid surfaces. There is also an obsessed Russian officer who wants to explode a nuclear weapon, melt the Arctic ice, and flood

major portions of the world. The novel introduced Delta Force, a semi-official government agency that uses military force in clandestine situations. Delta Force was replaced by the even more clandestine Sigma, which would be a recurring element in Rollins's novels from this point forward.

*Sandstorm* (2004) was undoubtedly influenced in part by *The DA VINCI CODE* (2003) by Dan Brown. It opens with an explosion in a private museum whose significance is apparent to a variety of secretive government agencies across the world, including Sigma, although not to the reader. The story quickly evolves into a race to discover the location of a legendary lost city somewhere in Oman, reportedly a place that holds the secret of a new technology, a recycled theme from Rollins's earlier novels. A highly organized and well-financed organization is on the same trail and has no scruples about eliminating the competition. A number of strong female characters are all rather flat versions of each other. In fact, virtually every named individual in the novel is a strong, competent person, underscoring the often unrealistic action sequences. Rollins raised the level of interhuman violence considerably with this novel and has maintained that strong element ever since.

*Map of Bones* (2005) is in much the same vein. The bones of the Three Wise Men are stolen from the Roman Catholic Church by a murderous secret society that believes that it is time to initiate Armageddon and end the world. It is not clear why the United States would be investigating a crime committed in Germany, but Sigma Force is soon working in conjunction with Vatican officials to ferret out the truth. *Black Order* (2006) has another secret group bent on world domination, a Nazi organization that survived in secret after World War II. The Nazis have developed a method of artificially altering and accelerating evolutionary trends, with which they hope to breed a new and superior Aryan race. The plot is much less linear than usual, with several characters following their own story lines for most of the book, the threads all drawn together at the end.

Rollins's most recent novel is *The Judas Strain* (2007), which follows the same pattern, perhaps a bit too closely. The Guild has emerged as the counterpoint to Sigma, but this time there is a schism in

that organization because their latest plan threatens the entire world. An ancient, perhaps unstoppable plague has surfaced, and elements in the Guild want to turn it into a weapon. The plot dips into implausibility this time, and the early sequences involving the hijacking of a ship are remarkably less than convincing. The usual roller coaster ride of chases, gun battles, captures, and escapes follows. Rollins's next novel, *The Last Oracle*, whose title suggests a similar emphasis, is scheduled for release in 2008.

### **Critical Analysis**

Rollins's novels are not, and are not meant to be, realistic. They are free-ranging adventure stories full of improbable events, a great deal of action, considerable violence, and lightly drawn characters.

The early books occasionally made small errors of fact—confusion about military ranks or weaponry—but the plots themselves are consistent and entertaining. His work bears some resemblance to that of Clive Cussler, but with considerably more imagination and smoother prose. The use of speculative science is closer to that employed by DOUGLAS PRESTON AND LINCOLN CHILD. The plots are quite similar from book to book, and he uses several devices repeatedly, including the spy among the good guys. Although his settings are well drawn, exotic, and convincing, his characters are stereotyped, and it is sometimes difficult to tell them apart. Rollins's greatest strength is his imaginative powers, his effort to provide sound scientific bases for his speculations, and his devotion to keeping the story moving at all times.

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## **Scaramouche** (1921) **Rafael Sabatini**

Although *Scaramouche* was not the first novel by British/Italian writer Rafael Sabatini (1875–1950), it was the one that gained him an international reputation, sparked interest in his earlier adventure stories, and assured him a long and successful career. The title is the name of a famous fictional clown and is also an ironic reference to the protagonist's career. Sabatini would later write a sequel, *Scaramouche the Kingmaker* (1931), but it was decidedly inferior and has become a collector's item.

In prerevolutionary France Andre-Louis Moreau was born out of wedlock, but he is supported by the Lord of Gavrillac, who is assumed by the population at large to be his unacknowledged father. Moreau is a fop, uninterested in matters of state, pampered and protected, though he has a quick mind. His closest friend, Philippe, is almost exactly the opposite, concerned about the treatment of peasants by the aristocracy, dedicated to his fellow man, but perhaps not as bright as he might have been. He requests Andre's company in his current mission to seek redress for the killing of a local man, and Andre agrees out of a spirit of friendship rather than any sense of shared outrage. The chief villain is M. de la Tour d'Azyr, a nobleman who seeks the hand of Gavrillac's niece, Aline. Annoyed by Philippe's rhetoric, d'Azyr deliberately provokes a duel and kills him in front of Moreau. Moreau's subsequent attempts to bring d'Azyr to justice cause him more trouble than they do the marquis.

Frustrated, Moreau addresses a meeting of Philippe's former friends and followers, exhorting

them not to let his memory or his dream die. He becomes the local delegate to a meeting in Nantes, which aims to force concessions on the nobility and improve the standing of the lower classes. Predictably, the authorities take out a warrant for his arrest, and he is forced to go into hiding. He encounters a group of traveling entertainers, among whom is a clown figure known as Scaramouche. After Moreau helps them during an encounter with the local authorities, they offer to let him travel as part of their company under the name Parvissimus. He earns his keep by rewriting their material to appeal to a broader audience, then becomes an actor himself after being blackmailed by the leader of the troupe when the original Scaramouche has an accident and is temporarily unable to perform. His stage fright is so extreme that his antics enthrall the audience.

Before long, Moreau is virtually the manager of the company, which has become so successful that they are in great demand, even among the nobility. He also becomes engaged to Climene, the daughter of the leader of the group, Binet, and begins to take fencing lessons, still determined to avenge his fallen friend. When he is approached to serve as a representative in the new government assembly, he declines even though he is no longer a fugitive, his political fervor having died away during the interim. His rage seems to have abated, but it is rekindled when d'Azyr seduces Climene. Enraged, Moreau provokes a riot in the theater and is forced to go into hiding once again. This time he goes to Paris, finds employment as a fencing teacher, and

studies under a renowned master until he secretly becomes his superior.

This leads to attempts to recruit him to serve as a counterweight to the nobles, who have been systematically challenging representatives of the common people to duels in which the latter are left dead or incapacitated. He resists until he learns that his old enemy, d'Azyr, is the leader of the faction carrying out these thinly veiled assassinations. Moreau then agrees to take a seat in the assembly and proceeds to seriously wound a number of aristocrats who challenge him to duels on the flimsiest of pretexts. Eventually the stage is set for the final confrontation, a duel between Moreau and d'Azyr. The duel ends with d'Azyr wounded, though not fatally, which turns out to be fortunate, for when the Terror seizes control of France, Moreau discovers that his longtime enemy is actually his father, and he is compelled by circumstances to help him escape his enemies.

### Critical Analysis

Stylistically, this was Sabatini's most impressive work, filled with sparkling dialogue, much of it darkly humorous, as well as a thorough understanding of the conflicting political philosophies of the time. His characters are archetypal, but he provides most of them with distinguishing characteristics that make them more vivid and believable. The plot is economical, logical, and fast-paced without seeming rushed.

Although Moreau replies to his friend's criticisms of the state with cynicism, he is actually more grounded in reality than is Philippe. He recognizes that humans are imperfect and that a simple change in the form of government will not necessarily perfect or even improve the balance of justice. "You must change man, not systems." Moreau views the political turmoil as a struggle between the merchant class and the aristocracy, with the bulk of the population as mere tools employed by both sides. Despite his attempt to seem unconcerned with class issues, he is outraged when it appears that the woman he loves will marry d'Azyr simply because he has been born to the aristocracy.

Sabatini makes no secret of his dislike for the aristocracy, which makes this an interesting contrast to *The SCARLET PIMPERNEL* (1905) by

Baroness Orczy, which takes a much more sympathetic stance. Even Gavrilac, who is at heart a good man, is out of touch with the real world and set in his ways, uninterested in change. "I have never known anything but trouble to come out of learning." He characterizes Moreau's plan to seek redress for Philippe's murder as a quest on the order of Don Quixote's. Moreau is equally angry with himself. On the first occasion when he dresses as Scaramouche, he remarks that "it is the first time in my life that I look what I am." He recognizes that to a great extent he was playing the clown all along with his mocking cynicism about the world, and he begins to perceive more clearly the inequities of class distinctions. When Aline discovers him with the actors and expresses her disdain for their profession, Moreau contrasts the honorable actions of his fiancé with her avowed intention to marry d'Azyr solely to gain position. He offends her by judging her morality to be inferior to that of the actress, although in time he will learn that Climene is even more willing to trade honor for favor, and it is Aline who finally turns down the chance to become the wife of a powerful man.

Moreau is similar to the hero of Sabatini's *CAPTAIN BLOOD* (1922) in that he strives to remain neutral but is forced by unpleasant personal experiences to assume an antagonistic role. Only when the injustice touches someone close to him, Philippe, is he stirred to reconsider his attitude toward the status quo and modify his actions. He ultimately decides that it "is much better to be wicked than stupid," that acting in ignorance is far more likely to be destructive than acting intelligently in one's own self-interest. In due course his analysis of the situation proves to be accurate. In response to the admitted excesses of the nobles, some of the revolutionaries resort to equally questionable tactics. Moreau is told that "patriotism has no scruples" but decides to retain his own.

The marquis d'Azyr and Moreau serve as each other's nemesis, despite being father and son. They are in direct conflict over the murder of Philippe, the seduction of Climene, and the courtship of Aline, as well as being political opponents. They clash again in the theater and then during a riot in Paris, each threatening the other with exposure—Moreau for his official crimes and d'Azyr

for his unofficial ones. As much as they hate each other, there is also a degree of respect. Moreau is forced to admit that the marquis never speaks untruthfully and lives in accordance with his own code of honor, while d’Azyr respects Moreau’s oratorical and political skills. When d’Azyr discovers that Moreau meant to marry Climene, he is shaken and insists that there is “a singular fatality at work between that man and me.” In their final confrontation they even begin to understand if not accept each other’s deeply held convictions.

### ***The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905)**

#### **Baroness Orczy**

This was the first of several novels written by the Baroness Emmuska Orczy (1865–1947), a British writer of Hungarian origin, chronicling the adventures of the Scarlet Pimpernel or his relatives. The story first appeared as a play in 1903 and was so popular that the author expanded it into a novel. A member of the European aristocracy herself, Orczy was far more forgiving of the French aristocrats than were many of her contemporaries, including Rafael Sabatini whose *SCARAMOUCHE* (1921) suggests they brought upon themselves the excesses of the Terror during the French Revolution.

The story opens with Paris an armed camp and the former aristocracy in hiding, trying to flee the city in various disguises. Rumor has it that many of them are being smuggled out of the country by a band of sympathetic Englishmen led by a mysterious figure who signs his communications with a picture of a scarlet pimpernel, a flower found in England. His true identity is Sir Percy Blakeney, an Englishman who is horrified by the excesses of the revolution, although his double life is not revealed immediately. He is generally believed to be “hopelessly stupid” by everyone, including his wife. Blakeney’s French wife, Marguerite, who has no suspicion of her husband’s secret life, is suspected of having betrayed at least one aristocrat to the mob, although the circumstances were such that she was not responsible for his death. Sir Percy is not aware of the mitigating circumstances, and for much of the novel the two are estranged.

Marguerite is clandestinely approached by a French official named Chauvelin, who wants her

to use her position in English society to ferret out the secret of the Scarlet Pimpernel’s real identity, unaware that she actually admires him. She initially refuses, but his flunkies capture two of the Pimpernel’s men as well as a letter that exposes her brother as a traitor to the revolution, a fact used to pressure her to do his bidding. Eventually she agrees to help identify the Pimpernel and intercepts a note regarding his activities, but circumstances prevent Chauvelin from taking advantage of the situation. She realizes that Percy is the Scarlet Pimpernel only after she has been coerced into betraying him to his enemies.

Determined to save her husband, Marguerite approaches his friends for help. Percy has gone to France and may be walking into a trap. The most exciting sequences come in the last several chapters as Chauvelin attempts to capture Sir Percy, who outwits him and rescues another hard-pressed aristocrat and reconciles with his wife after discovering that she has followed him to the Continent, determined to warn him of his danger. Marguerite’s brother is also removed from jeopardy.

#### **Critical Analysis**

Sir Percy, the Scarlet Pimpernel, is the ancestor of the modern superhero, not because he has superhuman powers—although they sometimes seem so—but because he was the first significant fictional character to have a secret identity. He is certainly one of the major inspirations for Johnston McCulley’s Zorro.

That his wife is completely unaware not only of his secret life but of his considerable intelligence is a bit difficult to accept since he courted and married her before launching his career as the Pimpernel and therefore had no real reason to conceal his abilities. The author makes no secret of where her sympathies lie, and the first few pages of the novel are colored by her sarcastic statement that obviously the aristocrats of that day were responsible for the sins of their ancestors. Some of those who watch the executions are described as being undisturbed when they are spattered by blood, and they often take locks of hair from the beheaded victims. The revolutionaries are “savage, brutalized creatures,” and most of the beleaguered nobility are guilty of only a single sin, “their aristocratic name.”

Many of the best sequences in the novel involve the courtly manners affected by the nobility, particularly the way in which Chauvelin is treated politely at Lord Grenville's ball despite his unpopularity. The emphasis on propriety and appearances, ameliorated by subtle evidence of the actual feelings of the other guests, is clever and convincing. The relationship between Percy and Marguerite is also well drawn, although the rift in their feelings toward each other is somewhat artificial. Although Orczy made some effort to be historically accurate, she was willing to alter things to suit her literary purposes. Chauvelin, for example, was a real person, but his career was quite different from the one described here.

Orczy wrote many other novels about the adventures of Sir Percy and his relatives, including a prequel, several of them quite good, although they are all currently out of print. He appears briefly in *I Will Repay* (1904), plotting to rescue Marie Antoinette, and is the center of a new plot to trick him into returning to France, where he will be executed in *The Elusive Pimpernel* (1908). He tries to set free more members of the French royal family in *Eldorado* (1913). The *Laughing Cavalier* (1914) is about one of Sir Percy's ancestors, who returns in *The First Sir Percy* (1921). *Pimpernel and Rosemary* (1924) concerns one of his descendants, and *Lord Tony's Wife* (1917) follows the adventures of some of his friends. The Pimpernel himself returns in *The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel* (1922), *Sir Percy Hits Back* (1927), *The Way of the Scarlet Pimpernel* (1933), *Sir Percy Leads the Band* (1936), and *Mam'zelle Guillotine* (1940). *The Scarlet Pimpernel Looks at the World* (1933), although related, is not part of the series. Some of Orczy's other novels are also adventures, but they have fallen into obscurity.

### science fiction adventures

Until the 1920s science fiction was not considered a separate genre or category of fiction, although some of the novels published by authors such as H. G. Wells, JULES VERNE, and George Griffiths were called "scientific romances." It was not until the rise of the pulp magazines, particularly those edited by Hugo Gernsback, began to define science fic-

tion, or "scientifiction," as a separate field during the 1920s, mixing reprints of the refined stories of H. G. Wells with barely literate original work. Some historians of the genre blame Gernsback for what they characterize as the ghettoization of the field, although given the way books are marketed, it is more appropriate to hold him guilty only of hastening the inevitable. Despite the low pay rates to authors, the science fiction pulps began attracting a better caliber of writer during the 1930s and 1940s, and the popularity of the paperback original starting in the 1950s completed the separation of the field as a distinct genre.

Although an oversimplification, it is fair to say that early science fiction followed two parallel courses. H. G. Wells wrote adventure stories, but there was always another level of meaning, usually either social satire or cautionary warnings, as in *The Time Machine* (1895). French writer Jules Verne wrote a wide variety of adventure novels, and although he is best remembered for his science fiction, his primary concern was always the adventure itself. Wells might write about a trip to the Moon, as in *The First Men in the Moon* (1901), but he used the story as a vehicle to criticize inflexible societal mores and the human tendency toward violence. When Verne tackled the same subject in *From the Earth to the Moon* (1869), he was only interested in the exciting events his characters experience. This dichotomy continues to this day, although the lines of demarcation are not nearly so distinct as they once were. While almost every subgenre of science fiction includes adventure stories, not all stories in any of the categories are limited to that one purpose. This discussion will concentrate on those meant primarily to be entertaining stories of people experiencing extraordinary events and physical exploits.

The type of story most people immediately identify with science fiction is the space adventure, often referred to as "space opera" because of superficial resemblances to the plots of some westerns. There have been literally hundreds of space operas published as tie-ins to the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* media franchises, but these are for the most part decidedly inferior to mainstream space adventures. The earliest examples can be found among the works of Edward E. Smith, Edmond Hamilton, and

John W. Campbell Jr., usually crudely written voyages beyond the solar system where the protagonist encounters and outwits not very plausible aliens who may be confined to a single planet or arranged as an empire spanning multiple star systems. As the field began to mature in the 1950s, most authors chose to chronicle events on a small scale and more realistically. Writers including Gordon R. Dickson, Andre Norton, John Brunner, Alan Dean Foster, and Murray Leinster told stories of the exploration of strange new worlds, encounters with alien cultures, and the dangers of space travel that were much more plausible than had their predecessors. The galactic empires of the past were still around, but they were usually portrayed as ineffective, peripheral, or in a state of decay as in the Dominic Flandry stories by Poul Anderson or the Dune series by Frank Herbert. More recent examples of writers working in this tradition are Alastair Reynolds, Julie E. Czerneda, C. J. Cherryh, Peter Hamilton, and occasionally Dan Simmons.

Overlapping with space opera is military science fiction. During the late 19th century future war novels enjoyed considerable popularity, particularly in Europe, but the fad wore off when a real world war turned fiction into reality. There are still some future war novels being written, mostly as men's adventure fiction, by writers as diverse as Tom Clancy, Dale Brown, Keith Douglass, James Rouch, Harold Coyle, and many others, but these are not generally included in military science fiction, which is almost always set in outer space or on another planet. The first novel in this subgenre was *Star Guard* (1955) by Andre Norton, but it was not until Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959) that authors were stimulated to imitate or respond. Gordon R. Dickson and Joe Haldeman were among the first, but Jerry Pournelle soon set the benchmark for the military science fiction that followed. Among those who work in this tradition the most noteworthy are David Drake, Lois McMaster Bujold, John Dalmás, William C. Dietz, David Feintuch, Roland Green, John Henry, David Weber, and Timothy Zahn.

While these stories all displace the character through space, another branch of science fiction deals with travel through time. In some cases, these are voyages to the future, but the vast majority of

time travel stories involve journeys to the past, to the age of dinosaurs or to some pivotal moment of human history. The adventure often involves a malfunction that prevents the protagonist from returning, as in *No Enemy But Time* (1982) by Michael Bishop or *Timeline* (2000) by Michael Crichton, but more commonly follows the pattern of traditional historical novels, particularly since pivotal moments frequently involve periods of violence. A subset of these are what is known as "Changewar" novels after a series written by Fritz Leiber. Changewar stories pit two or more individuals or groups against one another, usually one trying to alter the course of history and the other attempting to protect the status quo. Notable stories of this type include the Time Patrol series by Poul Anderson, the Time Institute novels by Sean Dalton, the Timewars books by Simon Hawke, and *The End of Eternity* (1955) by Isaac Asimov.

Although less popular, some authors set their adventures in parallel worlds, that is, a world more or less the same as our own that exists in another plane of reality and which may be accessible from our own universe. These sometimes resemble alternate history stories as described below. Among these are *The Hemingway Hoax* (1990) by Joe Haldeman, the Lost Regiment series by William R. Forstchen, *Wildside* (1996) by Stephen Gould, *Altermities* (1989) by Michael Kube-McDowell, and many of the novels written by Keith Laumer and H. Beam Piper.

As mentioned, alternate history is currently a very popular part of science fiction. Many of these novels are not primarily adventure stories, concentrating instead on speculations about what might have happened if a single event or multiple events had turned out differently. Harry Turtledove and S. M. Stirling are probably the two most popular writers of alternate history adventures, but good examples also include the Conrad Stargard series by Leo Frankowski, the Brion Bayard novels by Keith Laumer, the North American Confederation series by L. Neil Smith, Michael Moorcock's *Gloriana* (1978), Stephen Baxter's *Anti-Ice* (1993), and most of the work of Eric Flint.

Another large category is the disaster novel. The most common cause of the disaster is a nuclear war, following which civilization collapses partly or

completely. Many of these are described in MEN'S ADVENTURE SERIES. Among the most popular of the postapocalyptic novels are *Malevil* (1973) by Robert Merle, *Tomorrow!* (1954) by Philip Wylie, *The Long Tomorrow* (1955) by Leigh Brackett, *Re-Birth* (1955, also published as *The Chrysalids*) by John Wyndham, *Cloud Walker* (1973) by Edmund Cooper, *Davy* (1964) by Edgar Pangborn, *The Postman* (1985) by David Brin, and the Sos series by Piers Anthony. The second-largest subject of disaster novels is plagues, pandemics that ravage the world. Many of these are scientific detective stories rather than adventures, but prominent exceptions include *No Blade of Grass* (1957) by John Christopher, *The Jupiter Plague* (1982) by Harry Harrison, *The White Plague* (1982) by Frank Herbert, *Stinger* (1998) by Nancy Kress, and *Journal of the Plague Years* (1995) by Norman Spinrad. Michael Crichton's *The Andromeda Strain* (1969) and *The Satan Bug* (1962) by ALISTAIR MacLEAN are both novels about successful efforts to prevent a plague from spreading.

Other adventure novels involving major disasters have drawn on a wide variety of catastrophes. Super hurricanes threaten civilization in *Mother of Storms* (1994) by John Barnes, and an unprecedented snow storm endangers the West Coast in *The Great Los Angeles Blizzard* (1977) by Thom Racina. The human race is subjected to a planet-wide drought in *The Burning World* (1964), sun-spots in *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961) by Barry Wells, famine in *Your Sins and Mine* (1955) by Taylor Caldwell, and floods in *The Drowned World* (1962) by J. G. Ballard. A new ice age spreads across much of the globe in *The Long Winter* (1962) by John Christopher; meteors destroy most of civilization in *Lucifer's Hammer* (1977) by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle; a devastating earthquake reduces much of North America to rubble in *The Rift* (1999) by Walter Jon Williams; and all life on the planet is slowly crystallizing in *The Crystal World* (1966) by J. G. Ballard. David Brin even suggests that a black hole might engulf everyone in *Earth* (1990). Ecological disaster is also a popular theme, but most novels dealing with this subject—most notably several by Kim Stanley Robinson—are meant to be serious and cautionary and involve adventure only peripherally. An

exception to this rule is *Blind Waves* (2000) by Stephen Gould.

The traditional story of alien invasion was perhaps not so much adventure as a variety of horror. The portrayal of aliens as monsters has long since gone out of style in written science fiction, and invaders of Earth today are more likely to be soldiers barely distinguishable from humans except in appearance. The alien monster from outer space owes its existence to *The War of the Worlds* (1898) by H. G. Wells, and several writers have used that device as the focus of tales of adventure, including *The Body Snatchers* (1954) by Jack Finney, *The Puppet Masters* (1951) by Robert A. Heinlein, *The Mind Thing* (1961) by Fredric Brown, and *Out of the Deep*s (1953, also published as *The Kraken Wakes*) by John Wyndham. More recently the monstrous alien has been revived by several popular horror writers, including Stephen King in *The Tommyknockers* (1987) and Robert McCammon in *Stinger* (1987). Dean R. Koontz used an alien but terrestrial monster in *Phantoms* (1983), as did Jeffrey Konvitz in *Monster* (1982), Murray Leinster in *The Monster from Earth's End* (1959), and Peter Benchley in *Creature* (1994, also published as *White Shark*).

More common today are aliens who are essentially human beings in another guise, launching a military conquest as in *Footfall* (1961) by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, *Deathday* (2001) by William C. Dietz, Harry Harrison's *Invasion: Earth* (1982), or Harry Turtledove's Colonization series. Sometimes the invasion takes a different form, by altering Earth's ecology in David Gerrold's *Chtorr* series, by corrupting the dream process in John Lymington's *The Sleep Eaters* (1963), or by turning human technological and social attributes against society as in *When They Come from Space* (1982) by Mark Clifton or *The Monitors* (1966) by Keith Laumer. Robert Silverberg suggests in *The Alien Years* (1998) that they might not even notice the human race at all.

One final subcategory of science fiction is the lost world novel. This was a very popular form until the Earth became so thoroughly explored that it was no longer possible to credibly place lost civilizations in obscure and unmapped places. Some of the classic lost world adventures include KING

SOLOMON'S MINES (1885) and ALLAN QUATERMAIN (1887), both by H. Rider Haggard, *The Lost World* (1912) by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Moon Pool* (1919) by A. Merritt, *Marching Sands* (1920) by Harold Lamb, *The Greatest Adventure* (1929) by John Taine, *LOST HORIZON* (1933) by James Hilton, and *Uncharted Seas* (1965, also published as *The Lost Continent*) by DENNIS WHEATLEY. There are also numerous lost worlds sprinkled through the novels of EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS. Thriller writer JAMES ROLLINS wrote several novels using modified lost world settings during the late 1990s.

Many other science fiction themes have been used for adventure stories, including stories of intrigue in domed or undersea cities, the use of various extrasensory powers like telepathy or teleportation in the course of an adventure, the effects of marvelous new inventions like robots or invisibility, or dystopian futures in which a repressive government rules the world. More commonly these involve solving a mystery or dealing with the effects of superhuman powers or totalitarian governments on individuals, with the adventure as only a peripheral element. Science fiction is, however, largely a literature of action and excitement and is filled with dangerous journeys and extraordinary experiences.

### ***The Sea-Hawk* (1915) Rafael Sabatini**

Author Rafael Sabatini (1875–1950) was half Italian and half British, but wrote exclusively in English. This swashbuckling adventure story set shortly after the defeat of the Spanish Armada is one of the best of his early novels. The basis for a faithful silent movie, a 1940 film of the same title, originally planned as a remake, used an entirely different story line and has nothing to do with Sabatini's novel.

The story opens by introducing Sir Oliver Tressilian, a retired privateer and sea captain who is in love with Rosamund Godolphin and who lives with his younger brother, Lionel. Rosamund's guardian is Sir John Killigrew, who, along with Rosamund's brother, Peter, despises the Tressilians and objects to the proposed marriage. Sir Oliver nearly kills Sir John in a duel, but swears not to harm Peter because of his love for his sister. Unfortunately, Lionel and

Peter quarrel in secret, and the latter is fatally wounded. Since there were no witnesses to their fight and it followed Peter's very public taunting of Sir Oliver, the older brother is the obvious suspect. When Rosamund refuses to accept his denial, it comes as a particularly heavy blow.

Worse is to follow. Lionel, motivated by fear of exposure and the lure of his brother's fortune, arranges to have Sir Oliver abducted to be sold to Barbary pirates as a slave. Fortunately for Sir Oliver, the captain agrees to take him back to England in return for a further payment, but unfortunately they are attacked by a Spanish warship only moments later. Sir Oliver spends six months as a galley slave, during which time he renounces Christianity and becomes close friends with a fellow slave, a Muslim. His situation improves when the Spanish ship is attacked and taken by Muslim pirates.

Calling himself Sakr-el-Bahr, which means Hawk of the Sea, Sir Oliver becomes a respected member of the pirate band and rapidly climbs through the ranks until he is essentially the commander of the entire Algerian fleet. After five years away from his true home, he learns that Rosamund is engaged to marry his brother and, enraged at the injustice, takes his ship to England secretly and abducts both of them. Back in Algiers, the wife of his benefactor, the Basha, is busily trying to turn her husband against his converted lieutenant, whom she sees as a rival to her son as natural successor to his father. Since established law says that all captives must be put up for sale to the highest bidder, she forces Sir Oliver to offer Rosamund and Lionel at auction.

The situation worsens when the Basha becomes interested in purchasing Rosamund for himself, but he is outbid by Sir Oliver, who takes advantage of a technicality. Enraged, the Basha decides to abrogate the law and seize Rosamund by force. He is outwitted again when the two declare themselves married in his presence, which has the force of law. Sir Oliver's luck deserts him when he tries to smuggle Rosamund back to Europe because his plan is discovered by the Basha. They are both aboard the same vessel at the time, and the crew appears evenly divided in their loyalties, leading to an uneasy balance of power. When an English ship traps them near shore, Sir Oliver frees his brother to carry

a secret message to them, then plays a bold trick to ensure the freedom of himself and Rosamund. Lionel finally makes a deathbed confession.

### Critical Analysis

Sabatini chose to use a casual narrative style for this novel, with occasional comments directly addressed to the reader. His prose is not as smoothly polished as it would be in later books, nor is the dialogue as crisp and witty, but his ability to plot and pace an exciting story was already evident. The three-way confrontation between Sir Oliver, Lionel, and Rosamund, in which the truth is finally revealed, is particularly dramatic and well constructed. As is the case with many of Sabatini's heroes, Sir Oliver's misfortunes are not of his own making and result from false charges, just as they did in *CAPTAIN BLOOD* (1922) and *The BLACK SWAN* (1932). Dialogue is used to emphasize the difference between cultures. Although the scenes involving only European characters involve straightforward prose, the dialogue of the Basha and his countrymen is much more formal and artificial.

The character whom we come to know best is, surprisingly, Lionel, whose inner thoughts are described in great detail. He is torn between loyalty to his brother and fear for his own safety, and he appreciates Sir Oliver's generosity and self-sacrifice while being lured by the financial advantages to be gained if Sir Oliver should be removed from the scene. At times he considers himself justified in his acts, and at other times he recognizes that he is a coward and a villain, though potentially a wealthy one. "If he must suffer for his villainy, at least there would be compensations."

By contrast, his brother is a less complex character, driven by honor and a sense of duty, never troubled by weakness or self-doubt. Nor does Sir Oliver hold many strong philosophical opinions. He accepts conversion to Catholicism when captured by the Spanish and embraces Islam when taken by the Muslims, not because he believes in its correctness but because it is opposed to Christianity, which he considers fatally corrupted.

The climax relies in part upon coincidence, the happy presence of Sir John Killigrew's ship at just the right moment to provide Sir Oliver a means

to effect their escape. The coincidence is a minor one, however, as any unfriendly ship would have accomplished much the same purpose. More seriously straining credulity is the handy presence of the captain who abducted Sir Oliver as a prisoner aboard the ship where he is ultimately tried and vindicated, a dramatic but somewhat implausible twist of fate.

### *The Searchers* (1954) Alan Le May

American writer Alan Le May, whose name appeared in slightly different form on his novels, also wrote screenplays, including his later *The Unforgiven* (1957), and he worked on the films *Blackbeard the Pirate* and *Reap the Wild Wind*. Le May was an authority on the history of the American frontier, and he incorporated that background into most of his fiction. He published relatively few novels in his career, mostly in the western genre, but like Walter Van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1940) he was using that form to address more serious issues of prejudice, personal loyalty, and a sense of duty. This is the best of his novels, a story of revenge that addresses the question of whether people are more interested in revenge or justice.

The story opens with the massacre of Henry Edwards and most of his family, ranchers living in an isolated part of western Texas, by a party of Comanche warriors who carry away the family's two daughters. The protagonists are Amos Edwards, Henry's brother, and Martin Pauley, a young man raised by the Edwards family after his own parents were killed by Comanches when he was two years old. Initially they are part of a group of men who pursue the raiding party, hoping to rescue the girls and punish their captives. They fight a brief battle the following day, after which half their party cannot proceed.

The three remaining men separate briefly in order to pick up a lost trail, after which Amos is unusually subdued, although another day passes before he admits that he found and buried the older of the two captive girls, leaving only Debbie to be accounted for. The third man is killed in another skirmish, and when the war party splits up, the two protagonists follow one group at random, knowing that eventually they will come together again. The

pursuit lasts for weeks, and they are bogged down by a snow storm, during which they finally lose the trail. Months pass as they travel through frontier outposts, searching for information that might identify which band of Comanches were responsible and where they might presently be. After a full year passes, Amos tries to continue the pursuit by himself, but Martin insists on going with him, now fearful that the older man has lost interest in the rescue and seeks only revenge.

Surviving a violent encounter with three would-be thieves, the two men follow up on rumors that the captive is with the band led by Chief Scar, but are initially unable to discover his whereabouts. They also perceive a dangerous new development. After more than a year of muted response to atrocities committed by the Comanches and others, the authorities are finally beginning to stir. It can only be a matter of time until a major military effort is launched, which will make continuing the search for the young Edwards girl nearly impossible. Even as they close in on Chief Scar, his band is attacked and partially wiped out by cavalry, although this raid does provide proof that Debbie is, or was, with this particular group.

Just as they have finally decided that their quest is pointless, word comes that someone has actually seen Debbie, and that Chief Scar is now known as Yellow Buckle. They locate his encampment and enter his hut disguised, poorly, as traders where they see Debbie dressed as a squaw and discover that she has been promised as bride to another chief and that there is no chance of buying her freedom. Even worse, she now identifies with the tribe, believes they rescued her from the real raiders, and she refuses to cooperate with her clandestine rescuers. Desperate, Martin convinces a contingent of Texas Raiders to attack. The village is wiped out, Amos is killed, and Martin later finds Debbie, who became convinced of the truth after being told an ingenious lie by Amos. She and Martin decide to return to the ranch, which she now owns, presumably eventually as husband and wife.

### **Critical Analysis**

The relevant historical background is thoroughly researched and laid out in the opening chapter. Although the Texas Rangers had driven the

Comanches and Kiowas out of much of Texas, the Civil War disrupted their operations, and the western Texan ranchers found themselves undefended as the 1860s came to an end. Le May also provides several interesting glimpses into the Comanche culture, particularly the dramatic changes in individual social behavior between times of peace and times of war.

Le May uses subtle characterization not usually found in western fiction. The embitterment of Amos and the slow evolution of Martin's feelings are handled skillfully, more through suggestion than outright declaration. Early in the pursuit Amos recognizes his own sense of guilt for not having been around to help fight off the raiders but concludes that "a man has to learn to forgive himself," and even suggests that everything is preordained. The difference in motivation between the two men grows increasingly obvious. Martin recognizes that Amos is driven by the need for revenge and not by the plight of the remaining captive, who is so young that she will probably be adopted into the tribe. There is a brief humorous episode in which Martin inadvertently buys himself a Comanche wife. The contrast between the two men becomes even more apparent when Amos attempts to beat the woman to discourage her from following them and Martin intervenes.

Martin is troubled at times by dreams and phantom memories of the massacre of his own family, which he did not witness directly, and there is a hint of mysticism as well. He twice encounters stunted, leafless trees that suggest dead men, and on one occasion a Comanche medicine man describes these visions as though he had plucked the image from Martin's mind. He also has diffident feelings toward Laurie, a neighbor of the Edwards, who clearly has her eye on him despite seeing him only at great intervals and for short visits. Neither he nor Amos demonstrate any interest in other human companionship, although for Amos it is a choice and for Martin simply a necessity. It would require him to abandon the search and leave Debbie's fate unknown. Laurie opens his eyes to the truth about Amos, that he will almost certainly want to kill Debbie rather than let her live after being taken by the Comanches. Although Martin appears to feel less

animosity, once he sees how Debbie's outlook has been altered, he reacts by saying: "I want them dead. All of them."

Le May was familiar with the wave of child abductions committed by various tribes during this period, as well as the psychology of the captives. Women might well have children while captive, and they did not always welcome being rescued. Even young males often identified more with the tribe than with their real families. This is also the basis of the Thunder Moon stories by MAX BRAND.

*The Searchers* is actually an expansion of a shorter piece titled "The Avenging Texans," which appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. The story was also the basis of the classic 1956 movie starring John Wayne, which cast Amos—renamed Ethan—as a much more bigoted character with an ingrained hatred for all Indians.

### ***The Sea Wolf* (1904) Jack London**

One of the first American writers to support himself by means of his literary endeavors was Jack London (1876–1916), author of several classic novels, including this one, which he wrote while living in Germany. London's life was itself an adventure. He covered the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War, and the Mexican Rebellion as a correspondent, ran for mayor of Oakland, prospected for gold, hunted seals, worked as a seaman, was jailed for vagrancy, and owned a cattle ranch. Many of his 50 or so books were adventure stories, including the classic *CALL OF THE WILD* (1903). Much of *The Sea Wolf* was based on his own experiences.

The story is narrated by a Humphrey Van Weyden, who in the opening chapter is lost at sea following the collision of two vessels. He is rescued by the ship commanded by Wolf Larsen, a powerfully built man with a short temper. Larsen is short-handed and impresses Van Weyden into service as his cabin boy for their forthcoming seal hunting expedition. As the days pass, the newcomer discovers that it is not a happy ship, and his own situation becomes increasingly unpleasant despite his discovery that Larsen is an intelligent, self-educated man who uses him as a sounding board for his philosophical speculations. Several of the crew members are engaged in deadly feuds;

there are fights with knives and guns and Larsen savagely beats Johnson, one of the hunters, for daring to criticize him. Van Weyden is threatened by the cook until he obtains a knife and makes it clear he will defend himself. The violence begins to escalate dramatically as they draw nearer to the hunting grounds.

The situation continues to deteriorate. The first mate is murdered, but Larsen survives an attempt on his own life. Some of the crew attempt to escape in a small boat, which Larsen tracks down. He taunts the men, then abandons them to their fate, knowing it is unlikely they will survive to reach land. The cook is dangled over the side of the ship and loses a foot to a shark. They also survive a major storm and pick up survivors from a sunken passenger vessel, including a young woman, Maud Brewster, who adds a new element of uncertainty to the equation.

The climax begins when they run into Larsen's brother, improbably named Death Larsen, who is captain of a larger ship engaged in the same business. When Death's hunters take advantage of their situation to reduce the number of pelts taken by Wolf's crew, he plots a violent attack on their boats the following day, killing and wounding several and taking them prisoner.

Van Weyden becomes infatuated with Brewster, and when Larsen attempts to assault her, only to be laid low by the latest in a series of severe headaches, he convinces her to join him in a small boat and make their escape to Japan. Unfortunately, he is not as experienced a sailor as he thought, nor are the winds favorable, and they drift lost for many days. Eventually they end up on a small, uninhabited island where, after several more weeks, Larsen's ship drifts ashore with only its captain still aboard. The rest of the crew were hired away by his brother.

Larsen has also gone blind and is determined to die in his disabled ship. To that end, he sabotages efforts by the other two to make repairs. Van Weyden is well armed but cannot bring himself to shoot a helpless man. They struggle against each other until another attack disables Larsen and they are able to imprison him, but before he dies he tries once again to kill them all. At the last, they are able to put to sea and are rescued.

### Critical Analysis

The novel's primary theme is the conflict between materialism and idealism. Even though Van Weyden and Larsen can intellectually appreciate each other's viewpoints, they are emotionally unable to accept them. At one point Larsen even suggests that reason itself is unreliable and only raw, instinctive emotion can be trusted. There is also criticism of capitalist society and the suggestion that even the upper class is damaged by its structure because the privileged minority are isolated from reality. Larsen is sometimes described as a more realistic version of Captain Ahab from *MOBY-DICK* (1851) by Herman Melville, but Ahab is sustained by his obsessions and is destroyed by outside forces, while Larsen has no object to strive for and is consumed by his own energy.

Wolves and other canines are frequent figures in London's work, so it is not surprising that Larsen would be called "Wolf," a reflection of what is described as his innate animal nature and resiliency. At other times he is described as a leopard or beast. Although rough and prone to violence, Van Weyden acknowledges almost immediately that he detected no sign of evil in the man. He is simply a force of nature to be reckoned with. Surprisingly, London characterizes the sea as a more hostile entity. The ocean for London was not the disinterested, dangerous, but neutral environment of Stephen Crane's "The OPEN BOAT" but instead "the cruelty of the sea, its relentlessness and awfulness, rushed upon me." Life itself is "cheap and tawdry," "bestly and inarticulate," and "soulless." Van Weyden is not impressed by the other members of the crew. "Intellectually they were children, inhabiting the physical forms of men." His attitude and circumstances are reminiscent of the initial prejudices of the young protagonist of Rudyard Kipling's *CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS* (1897).

London was a socialist, and he used capitalist references as metaphors. Larsen is indifferent to the fate and well-being of his crew, each of whom he sees as merely a "cipher in the arithmetic of commerce." The callousness and cruelty of the men were due to the control of their lives by "industrial organization." For Larsen the world is a brutal, Darwinian jungle where man judges and is judged in terms of profit and loss. Refusing to believe

in the immortality of the soul, Larsen admits to being a hedonist and an egotist. He challenges Van Weyden to put a dollar value to the life of a seaman who nearly falls to his death and suggests that since human life is infinitely replaceable, it has no intrinsic value at all.

Larsen is a highly intelligent, utterly selfish man who believes that Darwinian selection is the most important principle of human existence and who, like London himself, subscribes to the concept of the superman as described by the philosopher Nietzsche. Larsen is not the only character who is compared to an animal. Everyone aboard the ship is defined by their animal aspects. When Van Weyden and the cook face off in a confrontation, the former observes that "a pair of beasts is what we were."

When Larsen viciously attacks Johnson, one of the seal hunters, his actions appear grossly evil, but London follows immediately with an almost identical beating inflicted on the cook by another man, Leach, who has been portrayed sympathetically, thereby supporting the author's contention that for all his apparent inhumanity, Larsen is simply an accurate reflection of what people actually are or want to be. London's admiration for him is further emphasized when Van Weyden sees him as having a halo and later as appearing godlike. It is ironic that Larsen's final days are spent trapped in his still powerful but increasingly unresponsive body.

London stretches credulity through his use of coincidence. Having by chance rescued Van Weyden, Larsen is also on hand to rescue Maud Brewster after a similar mishap, and she turns out to be a writer whom Van Weyden has reviewed, and she remembers what he had written about her. A short time later they encounter Wolf's brother's ship, also by happenstance. Perhaps the least credible part of the plot is the arrival of Larsen's drifting ship on the same tiny island where the two fugitives have been stranded. The romantic developments between Van Weyden and Brewster, and Larsen's apparent interest in her, are not as well handled. Their description is awkward and forced, and the propitious advent of a debilitating headache at a critical moment continues the string of coincidences.

London was often called "Wolf" by his friends and named his home Wolf House, suggesting that

he identified more than usually with his turbulent and controversial character. He wrote a similar novel, *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* (1914), which also involves a solitary woman aboard an unhappy ship, this one engaged in a voyage around Cape Horn, although the woman is the captain's daughter. An ambitious and ruthless mate takes advantage of the poor quality of the current crew to stage a mutiny.

### ***The Secret Agent* (1907) Joseph Conrad**

The author of such classic adventures stories as *LORD JIM* (1900) and *HEART OF DARKNESS* (1899) was born in Poland as Józef Teodor Konrad Nałęcz-Korzeniowski (1857–1924) and later become a naturalized British citizen. *The Secret Agent* was inspired by the activities of a group of anarchists during the late 19th century, specifically a failed attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory in 1894, sometimes referred to as the first attack of international terrorism ever to take place in England. Conrad later characterized the event as “an absurd cruelty” because the bomber was mortally wounded by a bomb that would have done no significant damage in a cause that seemed to have no goal. Investigators were never able to determine just what precisely had been planned or by whom, which allowed Conrad to use his imagination to fill in the details.

Mr. Verloc and his wife run a slightly unsavory shop in London, but he is in fact an agent working for an unspecified foreign power, probably Russia, whose embassy wishes for purposes of its own to stir up the London police. The Verlocs live with the wife's mother and her brother, Steve, whose limited mental capacity is a source of some discomfort to Verloc. He is also an avowed anarchist who nevertheless relies on payments for his surreptitious activities, which have been placed in jeopardy following the arrival of his new contact, Mr. Vladimir. Vladimir wishes Verloc to arrange an actual violent attack on some institution within England that will alarm everyone and has chosen the Greenwich Observatory as the symbol of science that most perfectly fits the target profile.

Verloc considers the potential of his anarchist friends and decides that they will not serve his purposes, that they are more interesting in talk-

ing than in acting. Sometime later, the abortive explosion kills a man near the observatory. Verloc's associates believe that he was the one who died, but it was actually Steve, his brother-in-law, who was talked into carrying the bomb. Chief Inspector Heat, a solid but unimaginative police officer, finds it difficult to deal with anarchists because they lack the predictability of more common criminals. Heat suspects the complicity of another anarchist, Michaelis, but his plans to arrest the man are not welcomed by his superior, who for personal reasons would prefer that Michaelis not be bothered. Conflicting with this theory, however, is an address label that suggests the dead bomber was connected to Verloc, who has been his private police informant for several years.

The story regresses through time to show how Verloc's wife urged him to take her brother with him on his periodic walks around the city, and this gave him the idea of using the boy to place the bomb. Unfortunately, Steve falls and sets it off prematurely, killing himself. When the police come to question Verloc, he admits the truth, unaware that his wife is eavesdropping. She confronts him afterward and stabs him to death. Determined to flee herself, she convinces one of the other anarchists to accompany her, but he steals her money instead and she commits suicide.

### **Critical Analysis**

*The Secret Agent* is the only book by Conrad to be set in London. The author employed unorthodox narrative methods in the novel, including jumps back and forth in time and a cast of atypical characters, perhaps suggesting a kind of literary anarchy to mirror the political one being portrayed. The novel was mildly controversial when it first appeared, criticized by readers who thought that he had stooped to write about squalid activities that were undeserving of attention. Conrad refused to disavow the book and took pains to defend it for more than a decade after its first appearance. It was only later that it became accepted as one of his most significant novels. Although the plot is filled with tragedy—accidental death, murder, and suicide—the tone is often darkly humorous, particularly in the descriptions of the various anarchists and their pointless, sometimes delusional pursuits.

Verloc's immediate motivation is fear of loss of his stipend from his employers as well as a realization of the truth of the charge that his anarchism is more style than substance, that the society he belongs to is prone to posturing rather than doing anything concrete in advancement of its professed cause. He is also appalled by Vladimir's ignorance of and inconsistent attitude toward the revolutionary movement. Vladimir believes that the most effective incidents would be directed at scientific establishments because science has supplanted both politics and religion in the public consciousness. The choice of an observatory is meant to illustrate the "ferocious imbecility" of the revolutionaries and that there is no target safe from attack.

The various observations about the attitude of the anarchists and their employers is surprisingly similar to that of contemporary terrorists. One of them remarks that England "is absurd with its sentimental regard for individual liberty." Another spends his entire life with his body wired to explode because, he is convinced, this is the only thing that prevents him from being arrested. In fact, the authorities are barely aware of his existence. When Verloc convenes his anarchist friends, they are represented as self-deluded and obsessive. One of them believes that it is so self-evident that capitalism is by its very nature doomed that it is "no use doing anything" to hasten its demise. Conrad asserts that most revolutionaries "are the enemies of discipline and fatigue," that is, they dislike following orders or performing physical labor, and that this is at the root of their aversion to society rather than profound moral principles or any intent to benefit humanity. One even observes that revolutionaries are "slaves of the social convention," that despite their assertions to the contrary they pattern their very existence in response to the capitalist society in which they live.

Beneath the ironic humor of the novel is a veiled indictment of contemporary British society. Conrad disapproved of the move toward industrialization and the rising prominence of science and technology, which he thought belittled the human part of civilization. The novel is filled with contradictions—anarchists who are appalled by crime, a highly placed police official who wishes to protect a paroled criminal for personal reasons, an elderly

woman who decides to demonstrate her love for her children by leaving them to live in a charitable institution after falsely representing her financial position in order to qualify. Conrad contends that the true protagonist of the novel is Winnie, Verloc's wife, because she is the one who experiences loss, exacts revenge, and suffers the consequences. Appraisals of her character are divided, but Conrad clearly meant through her to indict the passive, cloistered life that Victorian women were compelled to endure. After killing her husband, she seems to realize for the first time that she has no friends, that everyone she interacted with socially was a connection of her husband's.

Verloc is a contradictory character. Despite his professed devotion to anarchy, he is married and keeps a pornography shop, and evidence suggests that he has no deep political opinions at all and has little use for his anarchist associates. They are simply the cover that legitimizes his usefulness as a spy to his foreign employers. He clearly thinks little of his associates and refuses to believe that any of them could be a useful ally in an actual campaign of terrorism, despite their brave talk. His marriage is loveless, and in fact he and his wife never communicate on any meaningful level until the moment when she murders him.

Conrad cites two novels by H. G. Wells in his dedication. *Love and Mr. Lewisham* (1900) is about a Londoner who becomes caught up in the socialist movement and deludes himself with spiritualism. *Kipps* (1905) is about a man from the lower classes who suddenly finds himself wealthy. Both novels deal with the pressures of societal conformity in Victorian England, and both undoubtedly helped inspire *The Secret Agent*. Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed* (1872) was also a likely influence with its portrayal of radical political groups and their disruptive effect on society. Several biblical references include writing on the wall and "flesh is grass." After the murder Winnie reminds one of the anarchists of a serpent. There are also allusions to the *Aeneid* of Vergil, *The ODYSSEY* of Homer, and other classical writing.

Alfred Hitchcock's 1936 film *Sabotage* is based in large part on this novel. Conrad's short story "The Informer" includes among its characters an anarchist who may be the same "Professor" as in

the novel. Conrad also adapted his story as a stage play. Another of his novels, *Under Western Eyes* (1911), also deals with the activities of secretive political groups and revolutionaries.

### ***The Secret Sharer* (1907) Joseph Conrad**

Polish born writer Teodor Józef Konrad Nałęcz-Korzeniowski (1857–1924) spent most of his adult life in Great Britain, where he wrote and eventually changed his name legally to Joseph Conrad. Although much of his fiction involves exotic settings and elements of high adventure, his heroes were generally far less perfect than most of their counterparts in adventure fiction, and the novels are more concerned with the psychological conflict than the physical, although both elements are present. Conrad had spent considerable time at sea and drew heavily on those experiences in his novels and novellas. He also shared Stephen Crane's vision of nature as being indifferent to humans as expressed in the latter's short story "The OPEN BOAT."

The novella is told from the point of view of a nameless sea captain, newly appointed and unfamiliar with both his ship and his crew. While it is anchored and waiting for a favorable wind, another ship, the *Sephora*, is sighted similarly becalmed not far off. During the night a naked man named Leggatt swims over from the *Sephora* and explains that he was imprisoned on that ship because he killed another man in a fight and that he has escaped. The narrator, for reasons never specified, takes the fugitive aboard and hides him in his own cabin, concealing his presence from the crew, and then from the captain of the *Sephora*, who suspects Leggatt may have sought refuge there since the nearest land is too distant for him to have reached safely by swimming. The fugitive and the captain are astonishingly alike, and a bond forms between them in the days that follow, until the captain risks his ship to drop him off close to an inhabited island.

### **Critical Analysis**

Early in the narrative the captain wonders if he has the capacity to live up to "that ideal concept of one's own personality every man sets up for himself secretly," and this may well be at least part

of the explanation for the ambiguities that follow. Since he sees Leggatt as his "double," a term he uses repeatedly, it seems likely that he is judging his troublesome guest as a kind of extension of himself. Had he been older and more experienced, he would never have been so uncertain of his own abilities and would have been quicker to decide the fugitive's fate. "It is only the young who are ever confronted by such clear issues."

The parallels are too numerous to ignore the fact that Leggatt is the captain's doppelgänger, an exterior manifestation of himself. He arrives naked, so the captain loans him a set of sleeping garments identical to the ones he himself is wearing. They share similar backgrounds, though the captain is slightly older. Leggatt follows the captain "like my double," and when he climbs into the bunk in the captain's cabin, it was "as though I were myself inside that sleeping suit." The captain considers himself one of the "two strangers on the ship" and notes that the two of them "must have looked exactly the same" to a casual observer. His identification with Leggatt is so strong that at times he feels as if his mind is "in two places at once." The strange behavior of the captain makes him as much an object of suspicion by his crew as Leggatt was aboard the *Sephora*.

This "secret partnership" continues for several days. The captain realizes that he is "not wholly alone" in his command. He feels that a part of himself has become detached, or that he is now in two places at once and even finds himself adopting some of Leggatt's habits. Leggatt has also begun to react strangely, and insists that it "would never do for me to come to life again." He asserts that the captain's presence at the precise moment necessary to save his life may have been the fulfillment of some exterior purpose. The sense that Leggatt is something almost other than human is imparted by Conrad's choice of words. At one point he is compared to a ghost, and later "like something against nature, inhuman." The captain thinks of him as his "second self" and toward the end he has moments of confused identity. Never once does Leggatt speak in his "natural voice."

Conrad does not explain their relationship, and the ambiguity is certainly intentional. Even the title has multiple meanings. The two men

have shared the secret of the murder and subsequent escape, and they secretly share the captain's cabin. The story has been interpreted in a variety of ways, including a comparison of Leggatt to Cain. Leggatt is clearly meant as a reflection of the nameless captain, perhaps representing his more assertive and self-confident nature. Until the perilous passage close to the island, whose purpose is solely to facilitate Leggatt's escape, the captain had been unsure of his ability and his authority, both of which solidify after the successful maneuver. Some interpretations have concluded that Leggatt drowned, and that only his ghost comes aboard, explaining the ease with which he escapes detection, but there seems to be no support for that in the text.

Several elements in the story are based on Conrad's personal experiences and an actual murder case aboard a commercial ship. The story suggests that the separation between authority and the criminal is not always clear-cut, and that to some degree authority is responsible for crimes when it places people in situations where violence is inevitable. The captain excuses the murder because if the circumstances had been reversed, he might have done the same thing.

### **series novels for younger readers**

There are several advantages to publishing books in open-ended series, regardless of the age group. For the publisher it provides a hook that will generate sales for subsequent volumes that might not have done as well if they had been published independently. For the writer it provides an existing world and characters and streamlines the process of extending the story into additional adventures. For the reader it generally promises a known item, a setting or characters that are appealing and likely to be equally entertaining in a further adventure. The potential disadvantage is that in many cases, particularly for younger readers, these titles have been written anonymously and by more than one individual, which often results in disparities in style, as well as occasional plot contradictions.

The series novel for younger readers became a major publishing phenomenon early in the 20th century and has remained popular to a varying

degree ever since. All genres were covered, including mysteries, science fiction, jungle adventures, humor, low-key or domestic adventure, war, and westerns. The first major success story was the well-organized Stratemeyer Syndicate, started by Edward Stratemeyer, who noted the popularity of the Horatio Alger stories and recognized the existence of a large and untapped market for children's literature. His original vision was continued by his descendants and copied by many others. Although Stratemeyer wrote many of the early books himself, he was soon devising outlines and hiring ghost writers, having created a variety of house pseudonyms for the various series so that they could be continued indefinitely by a succession or mix of writers. Among the best known series created by the syndicate are the Hardy Boys, the Bobbsey Twins, Nancy Drew, Honey Bunch and Norman, Tom Swift, and the Rover Boys, most of which were either constantly in print or frequently reprinted.

The adventures of the Hardy Boys began in 1927 and has been extended to more than 400 titles, including some books outside the main series. The credited author of the series is Franklin W. Dixon, although Leslie McFarlane wrote most of the first several novels, and he established the characters of Frank and Joe Hardy and their friends. Although the earlier titles have been reissued several times, they were often rewritten, sometimes completely, to update situations and language, so there are sometimes considerable variations from one edition to the next. The brothers live in the mythical town of Bayport, where they solve crimes, mixing detection and overt action. Their female counterpart was Nancy Drew, whose series started in 1930. The first several Nancy Drew novels were written by Mildred Benson, but the pseudonym Carolyn Keene was maintained throughout. Drew is a strong-minded teenager who lives with her widower father and solves crimes similar to those that faced the Hardy Boys, although her physical adventures are not as taxing. The series lasted for more than 200 titles. Both of these series have resulted in television shows, and there were several full-length motion pictures based on Nancy Drew during the 1940s.

Tom Swift has gone through more transformations than most of his rivals. The original series

began in 1910, as by Victor Appleton, and the main writer was Howard Garis. Tom is a brilliant young inventor who comes up with a new discovery for each volume, which usually prove key to solving whatever puzzle is involved. The series ended early in the 1940s but was revived in 1954 with Tom now an adult running his own business and his son, Tom Junior, creating the marvelous inventions. The author's name was changed to Victor Appleton II. The series became more obviously science fiction at this point, with spaceships, aliens, robots, and similar devices, but the basic plots are very similar. There was another gap between 1971 and 1984, after which Tom returned in a short series set almost entirely in outer space. A fourth rendition appeared in the 1990s with a similar context, but with somewhat more attention paid to scientific accuracy. There has been a total of just over 100 Tom Swift adventures.

The Bobbsey Twins appeared as by Laura Lee Hope between 1904 and 1979. The twins experience several mild adventures and investigate not particularly dangerous mysteries, but their adventures are not nearly as serious as those in the Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew, and they were targeted at a slightly younger readership. The Laura Lee Hope name was used again for the Blythe Girls series, about three disadvantaged teenagers struggling to survive and remain together. The somewhat similar Honey Bunch and Norman books, packaged as by Helen Louise Thorndyke, began with Honey Bunch alone in the 1920s, adding Norman in the 1950s. Bomba the Jungle Boy ran from 1926 to 1938 under the name Roy Rockwood, which was also used for several unrelated science fiction novels. Bomba was inspired by the Tarzan books of EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS. The first 10 books were set in South America, with Bomba—a white youth raised in the wild—having various adventures involving unruly natives and dangerous animals. The second half of the series was set in Africa. Bomba was also featured in several movies. The Rover Boys, as by Arthur Winfield, ran from 1900 to 1926 and, although not as successful as some of the later series, they helped to establish the pattern and techniques that were used in the later titles.

Most of the remaining series from the syndicate lasted for only a few years. The Christopher

Cool books are spy stories. The Dana Girls are teenage orphans living in a boarding school, while Don Sturdy is a more conventional boy who has various adventures in different parts of the world. The Happy Hollisters are a family of private detectives. Kay Tracey is a Nancy Drew imitation. The Motor Boys have adventures involving power boats and other inventions, but these are not as fantastic as Tom Swift. Ted Scott is a young pilot, and the X Bar X Boys live in the Old West. Other syndicate series include Dave Fearless, the Girls of Central High, Outdoor Chums, Pee-Wee Harris, and the Railroad Boys.

Although the Stratemeyer Syndicate dominated this market for many years, they did have competition. The Ruth Fielding series, appearing as by Alice B. Emerson, began in 1913 and is important primarily because it anticipated and probably influenced the Nancy Drew books. The Beverly Gray series by Clair Blank consisted of 26 books published between 1934 and 1955. The title character is a young reporter who stumbles into a series of mysteries and adventures. A very similar character, Penny Parker, another reporter, appeared in a series written by Mildred Wirt.

Cherry Ames is a student nurse introduced in 1943, originally by Helen Wells, later by Julie Campbell Tatham. Her nursing assignments take her to a wide variety of locations where she is involved in a variety of mysterious situations. The Sue Barton novels by Helen Dore Boylston are often compared to Cherry Ames, although Barton rarely solves mysteries. Tatham had also created the Trixie Belden mystery series, although most of these titles were written by others under a common pseudonym, and she wrote some of the adventures of Vicki Barr, an airline stewardess. The Connie Blair series was written by Betty Cavanna under the name Betty Allen. Blair is a model who solves mysteries in her spare time. The Judy Bolton novels by Margaret Sutton also have their protagonist solving mysteries, but unlike most of the other teenage heroines, the character actually ages from one book to the next, in a career that extended from 1932 to 1967, and she married before the last book appeared. Carolyn Wells, who wrote detective novels for adults most of her life, published two separate series early in her career, the Marjorie and Patty books.

Other mystery series aimed specifically at girls include those featuring Doris Force, Arden Blake, Melody Lane, and the Girl Scout Mysteries. The Peggy Lane series was about a young actress, Sally Baxter was another reporter, Kit Hunter was an equestrian, Shirley Flight a stewardess, and Sara Gay was a model. More recent manifestations of this type of ongoing adventure include, most notably, the Sweet Valley High series and the Susan Sand mystery series. Cherie Bennett's Sunset Island novels also involve very low-key adventures as well as a touch of romance, as do the Satin Slippers books by Elizabeth Bernard. Lauren Brooke's Heartland novels usually involve horses and riding, as do the Saddle Club and Pine Hollow series by Bonnie Bryant. Others include the A-List series by Zoey Dean.

Many other sets of novels were targeted at young male readers. Most of these bore plots similar to those found in the pulp magazines for adults, though without the sly sexual hints, and it is therefore not surprising that many of the same writers were involved. The Three Investigators, written primarily by Robert Arthur, were ingenious and well-written mysteries somewhat similar to the Hardy Boys. Others included the Biff Brewster books by Andy Adams—a pseudonym for several authors, including Walter Gibson, who also wrote the bulk of the SHADOW novels—and the adventures of Tufty Bean, Ken Holt, Tom Quest, Steve Knight, and Trigger Berg. The Yankee Flier novels are set during the war, as are the Dave Dawson and Red Randall series, both written entirely by Robert Sidney Bowen. Chip Hilton's adventures involve sporting events.

The Tom Swift series also had imitators. The best of these are the six Lucky Starr novels written by Isaac Asimov as Paul French, which are rigorously accurate in their science, each volume exploring another part of the solar system. Less impressive but also entertaining are the Rick Brant adventures, as by John Blaine, which range from marvelous inventions and rocketships to less fantastic adventures in the jungle. The Tom Corbett novels by the pseudonymous Carey Rockwell are set in the 24th century. Donald Wollheim's Mike Mars series are a less imaginative but also scientifically accurate series involving the early days of space exploration, as is

the Young Astronauts sequence by various writers under the name Rick North. Other similar titles include the Dig Allen books by Joseph Greene, three separate series by Patrick Moore featuring Scott Saunders, Bruce Talbot, and Robin North, the Chris Godfrey books by Hugh Walters, the Star Stormers series by Nicholas Fisk, and the Tiger Clinton books by W. E. Johns. Lloyd Alexander's Vesper Holt stories are particularly worthwhile. More recent series are the Last of the Jedi novels by Jude Watson and the Young Jedi Knights stories by Kevin J. Anderson and Rebecca Moesta, both based on the *Star Wars* movies, and the Jack Sparrow adventures by Rob Kidd and Jean-Paul Orpinas, based on the *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Katherine Applegate's Animorphs novels are technically science fiction, but the science is so inaccurate that it is arguably magic. Marilyn Kaye's Replica novels are above average, as are the Roswell books by Melinda Metz, which were loosely the basis for the short-lived television program.

In recent years the science fiction series for younger readers has largely been supplanted by fantasy. The Harry Potter books are the most obvious example, although they possibly should be excluded because they have always had an intended end point. The earliest and most famous of these is the Oz series, originally created by L. Frank Baum, continued after his death by Ruth Plumly Thompson and others. Other fantasy series that are relatively open-ended include the Spiderwick Chronicles by Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black, the Lemony Snicket books, the Edge Chronicles by Paul Stewart and Chris Riddell, the Secrets of Dripping Fang adventures by Dan Greenburg, the Redwall novels by Brian Jacques, the Young Wizard books by Diane Duane, the Guardians of Ga'hoole by Kathryn Lasky, the Pendragon series by D. J. MacHale, and the Secrets of Droon books by Tony Abbott. John Bellairs wrote two series, one about Johnny Dixon and another about Chubby Lewis, which were briefly extended by Brad Strickland following Bellairs's death. Eoin Colfer's Artemis Fowl novels also mix fantasy and science fiction elements.

Supernatural novels with recurring characters for younger readers have been only intermittently successful. Two television shows led to short-lived series for young adults, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

and *Charmed*, but neither ultimately outlasted the demise of the program. R. L. Stine's *Goosebumps* and *Fear Street* novels were published as a series, as was Christopher Pike's *Spooksville*, but most of the titles did not have common characters, and other than superficially the books were generally unrelated. L. J. Smith's young adult vampire novels actually consist of several interrelated series. The Darren Shan vampire series—written by “Darren Shan”—is similar but darker in tone. Christopher Golden's *Body of Evidence* and Isobel Bird's *Circle of Three* witchcraft novels are also notable.

The popularity of fiction of younger readers is largely a product of word-of-mouth recommendations and tends to experience sharp rises and falls in popularity. A widely popular series one year might be almost completely forgotten the next, and a new movie or other events might result in a sudden shift in readers' preferences. It is therefore difficult to predict with any accuracy which of the more recent offerings will prove to have lasting popularity.

## The Shadow

The character known as the Shadow was created in 1931 by pulp writer Walter Gibson for the magazine of the same name to capitalize on the popularity of a radio announcer known as the Shadow who performed for the *Detective Story Hour*. The magazine appeared twice a month and contained a complete novel in each issue, beginning with *The Living Shadow*, which appeared as by Maxwell Grant, the house name that would be used for all of the subsequent novels, the vast majority of which were also written by Gibson. The creation of the suspenseful Orson Welles radio program boosted its popularity, and the series ran for 325 issues, each containing a complete novel, and in the years following the Shadow appeared in comic books, motion pictures, television shows, and elsewhere. The radio show also provided one of the most famous taglines of all times. “Who knows what evil lurks in the heart of men? The Shadow knows!”

The Shadow was in some ways the typical gentleman adventurer of the period, sharing some qualities with the *LONE WOLF* books by Louis Joseph Vance, the *Saint* novels by LESLIE CHARTERIS, or the *Bulldog Drummond* stories by

Herman Cyril McNeile. Although he fought crime, the Shadow did not work within the conventional framework of the law and was frequently at odds with the police. There was never any real explanation for his choice of lifestyles, no “origin” story, and very little was ever revealed about his life prior to becoming the Shadow other than his original name. Later in his career the Shadow boasted “the power to cloud men's minds” and become virtually invisible, although this was not a frequently used element in the novels.

Although not revealed until the series reached its seventh year of publication, the Shadow's original name was Kent Allard, revealed in *The Shadow Unmasks* (1937). For various reasons he faked his own death and reappeared, sometimes impersonating Lamont Cranston, a wealthy dilettante whom no one would suspect of being the Shadow. He was not in fact Cranston, though he used his cover identity more frequently than any of his other alter egos. Nor did he work alone; he had a rather large network of allies and informants to help him. Margo Lane, his romantic interest in the radio shows, did not appear in the novels. The Shadow's enemies included mundane criminals and international spies, as well as a dozen or so recurring enemies. Along with Doc Savage, he was one of the main precursors of such comic book superheroes as Batman and Daredevil. Although he occasionally battled mad scientists and foreign spies, the Shadow was usually battling conventional mobsters or highly competent amateur criminals.

The Shadow's introduction in *The Living Shadow* pits him against a crime lord operating out of Chinatown, which would be a frequent setting for future novels in the series. He saves Harry Vincent, a man intent upon suicide, and convinces him to help infiltrate the criminal organization. Vincent eventually gets caught, though is subsequently rescued. There is a murder and a jewel theft, after which the two ringleaders are revealed to be a lawyer and a professional crook who is only disguising himself as Chinese. The Shadow's own ability to disguise himself is evident on several occasions. Vincent and some of the minor characters would return in future novels. There is little description of the title character except that he wears a cloak, a slouch hat, and has a mysterious

laugh. The author, Walter Gibson, wrote the first 112 novels in the series, and most of the 200 that followed. The other occasional authors include Walter Tinsley, Bruce Elliott, and on one occasion Lester Dent, who wrote most of the Doc Savage novels as KENNETH ROBESON.

The Shadow disguises himself as Lamont Cranston for the first time in the second novel, *Eyes of the Shadow* (1931), but he plays a relatively small part in the novel. The main character is Bruce Duncan, who has to solve a complex mystery. A variety of death traps must be overcome before the solution is discovered, and only after the introduction of more recurring characters and added emphasis on the Shadow's ability to mimic other people after only a few moments of preparation. This would later be described as partly hypnosis. The real Lamont Cranston appears in *The Shadow Laughs* (1931) and comes to an arrangement whereby the Shadow can impersonate him when he is out of the country. More details emerge about the radio show the Shadow apparently uses to frighten off criminals and convey secret messages to his allies. *The Red Menace* (1931) expands his field of operations to include foreign spies.

More of the details of the Shadow's organization are revealed in *The Death Tower* (1932), and *The Black Master* (1932) discloses that he has "no face of his own," thereby facilitating his ability to disguise himself. *The Blackmail Ring* (1932) was the first adventure of the Shadow to take place outside the United States. He uses a special set of suction cups to scale the sides of buildings in *The Crime Cult* (1932), which would become one of his familiar tools, and readers first see the Shadow's hidden sanctum in *The Five Chameleons* (1932). *The Romanoff Jewels* (1932) reveals the secret of the Shadow's ring, which contains a jewel that changes color, and *Murder Trail* (1933) discloses that he served as a spy during World War I. *The Black Hush* (1933) was one of the few that featured futuristic technology. By the third year of the magazine, the plot devices had become very familiar—messages in disappearing ink, ingenious death traps, multiple violent deaths usually in gun battles, secret organizations, perilous climbs up and down the sides of buildings, and women rescued in the nick of time. Gibson wrote 20,000 words per week or more for

nearly four years chronicling the Shadow's adventures and establishing his abilities and his extensive list of allies.

*Partners of Peril* (1936) was the first Shadow novel written by Theodore Tinsley, the 113th in the series. Unlike Gibson, Tinsley inserted mildly suggestive sexual references into this and his later episodes. Gibson almost invariably avoided any violence directed toward female characters, but Tinsley was perfectly willing to have them shot or knocked unconscious. Tinsley was a somewhat more exciting writer, but his plots were rarely as well thought out and occasionally contained glaring errors. His 27th and last Shadow novel was *The Golden Doom* (1943). Lester Dent's only contribution was *The Golden Vulture* (1938), which had languished unpublished for several years and was rewritten by Gibson. Bruce Elliott wrote all of the Shadow novels from the summer of 1946 until late 1948, but the magazine was already beginning to lose circulation by then and there were only 15 issues. He debuted with *The Blackest Mail* (1946), which varies in many of the details from the character created by Gibson. The Shadow fails to appear even in a cameo in some of the subsequent adventures, and *Reign of Terror* (1948) was Elliott's last title in the series. These are generally considered the least worthwhile installments. The publishers lured Walter Gibson back in an effort to save the failing magazine, but there were only five more issues, ending with *Whispering Eyes* (1949), which is mostly about hypnotism.

The novels are typical of the hastily written pulps fiction of the 1930s and 1940s, with sometimes crude prose, minimal characterization, and an emphasis on violent action and mystery. Although Gibson did become more proficient at his craft, he also became increasingly repetitive in the later novels, although for many years that did not appear to discourage his audience. The Shadow was the longest surviving pulp hero, easily outdistancing Doc Savage, the Spider, Secret Agent X, Operator 5, the Phantom Detective, and his other competitors, probably in part because of the popularity of the radio series. Among the most popular of the stories not previously mentioned are *Fingers of Death* (1933), *The Silent Death* (1933), and *Zemba* (1935). The paper shortage during

World War II, the publisher's decision to replace Gibson with Bruce Elliott, who demonstrated little interest in the character, and shifts in public tastes were the ultimate causes of the magazine's demise. The radio show lasted a few years longer, but television changed the market, and it too, faded away. About three dozen of the original pulp novels have been reprinted in paperback, but the vast majority remain unavailable, although there are numerous fansites on the Internet devoted to the series.

During the 1960s mystery writer Denys Lynds adopted the Maxwell Grant name for several new Shadow novels following *The Return of the Shadow* (1963), a new adventure by Walter Gibson. Lynds updated the character and included a variety of technological wonders including a moon rocket, but the anachronistic figure did not work very well in this new context. *Shadow Beware* (1965) and *Mark of the Shadow* (1966) were the two best in the new series. Gibson also wrote two Shadow short stories, "Riddle of the Rangoon Ruby" (1979) and "Blackmail Bay" (1980). James Luceno novelized the lackluster movie *The Shadow* in 1994.

### **Slade, Michael** (1947– )

Michael Slade is the pen name used primarily by Canadian lawyer and writer Jay Clarke, in collaboration variously with four other writers, including most frequently his daughter, Rebecca. All of the Slade novels have been set in the same loosely organized series involving the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, specifically a subset known as Special X, which concentrates on serial killers, with characters shared among the novels in differing combinations. The series is difficult to classify and has been shelved among mysteries, horror, and general fiction. Although the books incorporate elements of the police procedural, they almost always involve a substantial amount of physical adventure as well as psychological suspense and often grotesque and horrifying events. Almost all of them have an international setting, and there are usually extensive references or even flashbacks to historical events, which are usually fascinating in their own right.

The Slade name first appeared with *Headhunter* (1984), which mixes the story of the search for a

contemporary serial killer and several exciting incidents that took place during the early days of the mounted police. It established a recurring pattern in which killers were motivated by events that took place much earlier in their lives or, in several cases, even before they were born. The past is always present, and it is impossible to escape the consequences of acts performed by one's ancestors. *Ghoul* (1987), which was even more successful and is probably the best of the Slade novels, involves several apparently separate crimes, including a bombing spree and another serial killer, all connected through a bizarre group of rock musicians. The murders are inspired in part by the work of horror writer H. P. Lovecraft, and the solution involves a sophisticated understanding of human psychology. *Cutthroat* (1992) also has an international setting as the members of Special X investigate a series of murders that may have been ordered by an international criminal organization based in Hong Kong, which is extending its hidden empire into Canada. Special X would become the gathering point for the various recurring characters as the series progressed.

*Ripper* (1994) is a more conventional murder mystery in which the villain is a modern-day version of Jack the Ripper, and who has extended hallucinatory sessions in which he relives adventures during the Victorian era. He is one of the most interesting of the villains the Special X defeats. *Evil Eye* (1996, also published as *Zombie*) continued to mix detection and adventure, with several flashbacks that recount events that took place during the Zulu Wars. It is not immediately clear what relevance they have to a modern-day crime spree, but the chain of cause and effect is slowly revealed. *Primal Scream* (1998, also published as *Shrink*) is set in large part in the wilderness region of western Canada and involves an elaborate plot for revenge against a highly placed police official. Slade has no compunctions about killing or maiming recurring characters, and the closing chapters of this novel are particularly fast-paced and suspenseful. More pure adventure makes the mystery secondary. In many of the books that followed Slade revealed the identity of the villain quite early in order to concentrate on this element rather than the details of the investigation.

*Burnt Bones* (1999) introduced Mephisto, a criminally insane mastermind who would become a recurring villain. His first appearance consists largely of an elaborate chess match between himself and the police, including adventures on a remote island where some of the investigators are lured into a deadly game of death. *Hangman* (2000) is a more conventional detective story and one of the weaker books in the series, but it was followed by the much better *Death's Door* (2001), which includes a stolen mummy, mutilated bodies, and another trip through history. *Bed of Nails* (2003) brings back the Ripper, institutionalized but still capable of causing trouble in the outside world and still experiencing possibly hallucinatory visions of a previous life in which he stalked the streets of London. His machinations lead investigators to visit the Cook Islands, where they discover that cannibalism is still secretly practiced. Slade's most fantastic novel was *Swastika* (2005), which interweaves a modern-day criminal investigation with an exciting adventure set during the final days of World War II in Europe. A secret Nazi research facility created a superweapon that was spirited away to avoid its loss to the Allies, and someone has found a way to perfect it in contemporary Canada. Slade's most recent novel, *Kamikaze* (2006) is more mystery than adventure, but includes some exciting flashbacks to World War II and the fall of Hong Kong. A new novel, *Crucified*, has been announced for late 2008.

### Critical Analysis

The Special X series appeals to a broad audience because of its cross category reach, although the intensity of the action and the sometimes extreme images of violence alienate some readers. *Swastika* is sometimes referred to as science fiction, and *Ghoul* is recognized as a horror novel recommended by the Horror Writers Association. All of the novels contain elements of the traditional detective story and the modern police procedural, and all involve some degree of physical adventure. The investigators themselves are almost always in jeopardy. Slade has established himself in a niche that straddles multiple genres, and while that is often a liability for a midlist writer, these books seem to find their audience without difficulty no matter how they are classified.

### Smith, Wilbur (1933– )

Wilbur Smith was born in Zambia, then Northern Rhodesia, and although he currently lives in England, most of his novels are still set in Africa. In addition to his adventure fiction Smith is also the author of the Ballantyne series of four novels, which are concerned with the political and social changes in Africa since the colonial period. His two other series are primarily adventure stories, the Courtney novels, which follow the history of a family from the time of the Zulu wars to the near present, and a second set of four novels, which take place in or refer to events in ancient Egypt.

The Courtney series started with *When the Lion Feeds* (1964), the story of twin brothers living in the time of the wars with the Zulu, who travel through the jungle and face difficulties before one of them is killed by a wild animal. The surviving brother fights in the Boer War in *The Sound of Thunder* (1966) and is eventually killed by his own son in *A Sparrow Falls* (1977). Courtney's illegitimate son undergoes adventures during World War I in *The Burning Shore* (1985). Other family members overcome obstacles during the formation of the Union of South Africa in *Power of the Sword* (1986), which is in part a story of espionage, culminating in the rise of trade unions and a challenge to white supremacy. This latter struggle continues with a plot to overthrow the government in *Rage* (1987). *Golden Fox* (1990) is another spy story, this one involving a clandestine plan to develop nuclear weapons. *A Time to Die* (1989) is the most exciting among those in the series set in the 20th century, with a woman held captive by rebels in Zimbabwe, a cache of stolen missiles, and a race against time to recover them.

The four most recent books in the Courtney saga revert further back in time. *Birds of Prey* (1997) is set during the war between the English and the Dutch. The protagonist is captured, escapes, and eventually becomes a privateer. *Monsoon* (1999) takes place a few years later, with its hero battling corsairs in the Mediterranean, being captured and sold into slavery, then adopted by a local ruler and finally escaping. It is reminiscent of the novels of Rafael Sabatini. *Blue Horizon* (2003) is uneven, a prolonged chase sequence followed by a revenge quest. *Triumph of the Sun* (2005), the most recent

novel in the series, is set during the siege of Khartoum late in the 19th century.

The Egyptian series opened with *River God* (1993), one of Smith's most popular novels. The plot is very complex, involving palace intrigues and rivalries as well as the apprehension of a group of bandits secretly led by a member of the Egyptian aristocracy and the growing military threat of the Hyksos invaders. One of the protagonists is captured by Ethiopians, escapes, survives a flood, and finally reaches safety. *Warlock* (2001) takes place a generation later and is more involved with court politics than high adventure, although a civil war enlivens the closing chapters. The protagonist has genuine magical powers, which are even more evident in *The Quest* (2007), in which he travels into unknown lands to find out what force has been used to dry up the Nile and inflict plagues on Egypt. The story is a considerable departure from the realism of Smith's earlier novels. *The Seventh Scroll* (1997), only peripherally related, is set in the present day and involves efforts to locate the tomb of one of the characters from the previous books, an effort hindered by the paramilitary force commanded by a rival.

Smith's remaining novels are not parts of series. *Dark of the Sun* (1965) is an early potboiler about mercenaries battling for control of the Congo. *Shout at the Devil* (1968) was much better, a story set in East Africa during the early days of World War I. The death of a child provokes a man into a one-man war against the German navy. *Gold Mine* (1970, also published as *Gold*) is an adventure set in the gold mines of South Africa and involves a scheme to manipulate the precious metals market. *The Diamond Hunters* (1971) is somewhat similar, involving the search for the source of some valuable diamonds, despite considerable violence orchestrated by the protagonist's rivals.

*The Sunbird* (1972) is one of his best novels, although it has an unusual structure. The first part is a mild adventure set at an archaeological site in Botswana, while the second is a flashback through time to when the site was a populated city. The three main characters from the first part are possibly reincarnations of three characters from the earlier era. *Eagle in the Sky* (1974) ranges from Africa to the Mideast and involves terrorists and

the resolution of a long-standing enmity, but is less engaging than most of Smith's other fiction. *The Eye of the Tiger* (1975) is another of his most impressive novels, the story of a man operating a charter boat who becomes involved with three mysterious men who have a secretive, sinister purpose for employing him.

*Cry Wolf* (1976) takes place during the period leading up to Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia. *Hungry As the Sea* (1978) follows the adventures of a professional salvage company that reclaims foundering ships and that manages a perilous rescue near Antarctica. *Wild Justice* (1979, also published as *The Delta Decision*) anticipates Tom Clancy's work in that the international antiterrorist force described therein is very similar to the latter's Rainbow Six novels. Murder and the quest for revenge against a treacherous group of smugglers in Africa is the focus of *Elephant Song* (1991).

### Critical Analysis

Smith is a highly competent writer equally at ease with contemporary or historical settings, whose work is almost always set in Africa or the Middle East. His attention to historical detail is nicely matched with adventurous, action-filled plots. The Courtney series bears some resemblance to the Savage family novels of John Masters in their portrayal of a family filled with controversial figures who are involved in several pivotal incidents in world history. The diversity of subject matter both in time and theme keeps his work fresh and interesting.

### The Spider

The Spider was the hero featured in the pulp adventure magazine of the same name, which published 118 novels between 1933 and 1943. The Spider, known as the Master of Men, was a violent hero designed to compete with the SHADOW. The house pseudonym used for all of the stories except the first two was Grant Stockbridge. The first two titles were written by R. T. M. Scott, who was replaced by veteran writer Norvell Page. Page was responsible for most of the remaining novels. Although four other writers were also used, their work is generally considered inferior. One additional novel was written by Donald Cormack, published in paperback

in 1979 with all the names changed because of copyright problems, republished in its restored form in 1996.

The Spider was in real life Richard Wentworth, a wealthy dilettante who fought crime and eventually far more powerful enemies. He was conceived as a vigilante with resources not available to the police and able to operate outside the restrictions placed upon them by the law. Originally he wore nondescript clothing, but Page added a cloak and mask and also toughened up the character of his assistant, Ram Singh. When the Spider became the star of two Columbia motion picture serials, he wore only a mask to conceal his true identity. He only began to don a disguise with *Citadel of Hell* (1934), complete with fangs. This was one of the most violent pulp series, with much more action than the relatively quiet Shadow, more akin to Operator 5 or Secret Agent X. The Spider often branded the criminals he bested with his distinctive symbol as a form of punishment.

Over the course of the series, several recurring characters were added, including Nita Van Sloan, an unusually assertive female character for the pulps and theoretically the protagonist's future wife; the local police commissioner, who had increasingly ambivalent feelings about the Spider's activities; as well as Wentworth's chauffeur and his butler, both of whom were occasionally impressed into service. The Spider was armed with the usual array of firearms plus a sword cane and a special coil of strong rope that was compared to spider silk. Otherwise there was no real rationale for his name. His most interesting recurring villain was, appropriately enough, the Fly. Wentworth and his friends were frequently captured, tortured, wounded, and on the verge of death, but always managed to survive and return to full health.

The first novel was *The Spider Strikes* (1933), in which Wentworth outwits a man who plans to use poison gas in an attack on Wall Street. *Wings of the Black Death* (1933) was the first title by Norvell Page. The Spider is still considered a criminal by the authorities, but he saves the city from a plague anyway. By the fifth installment, *Empire of Doom* (1934), the Spider was taking on more ambitious opponents, in this case battling a man determined to seize control of New York City. Mobs of people

whose minds were affected by mysterious substances cause chaos in *The Mad Horde* (1934), and plagues, mind control, and poison gases would prove to be the favored weapons of criminal masterminds throughout most of the next few dozen novels. On several occasions his allies were turned against him in some fashion, although they always redeemed themselves by the end of the story.

Like the Shadow, many of the Spider's adventures were set in part in Chinatown, and many of the villains were Chinese, less sophisticated variations of the Fu Manchu novels by SAX ROHMER. Some of the Spider's villains seemed to have almost supernatural powers, although there was usually an attempt to rationalize them. By 1940 he was saving the entire country rather than just New York in *The Spider and His Hobo Army* (1940) and elsewhere. Some of the later novels in the series reduce the Spider to almost a subsidiary character, concentrating on his associates as in *The Spider and the Man from Hell* (1943). During the war years traitors and foreign agents often supplanted criminals and megalomaniacs as chief villains. In the very last issue, *When Satan Came to Town* (1943), Wentworth foils a plot by fascists to seize control of Washington.

Some of the Spider's adventures were particularly lurid and carried suggestive titles like *Hordes of the Red Butcher*, *Machine Guns Over the White House*, and *The Volunteer Corpse Brigade*. In *Death Reign of the Vampire King* (1935) the city is menaced by a plague of vampire bats directed by an evil mastermind. In *Master of the Flaming Horde* (1937) the weapon is incendiary and leads to vivid descriptions of charred bodies. There was also a great deal of super-science including death rays in *Legions of the Accursed Night* (1938) and robots in *Satan's Murder Machines* (1939).

The novels were usually crudely written—not surprising given the short interval between issues—filled with implausible situations, and often opened with a violent sequence and continued to the end with no serious break in the action. They were also very formulaic. Page seemed to run out of fresh ideas very early and returned to poisons, plagues, and elaborate extortion rackets and megalomaniacs over and over again. Despite these shortcomings, the magazine had a large readership and succumbed to the paper shortages during World War

It rather than a loss of its market. A few titles were reprinted in paperback during the 1960s and again in the 1970s, but with limited success, and fewer than a dozen had appeared in book form by the end of the 1990s. Interest in the Spider has grown in recent years, and collectors' edition reprints and electronic copies are available of many of the novels in the series, as well as collections of new short fiction. The character has also been adapted to graphic novel format.

***The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963)  
John le Carré**

Spy and suspense novelist John le Carré is actually David John Moore Cornwell (1931– ), who worked for some years in the foreign service and who served as a spy until his cover was blown by Kim Philby. Le Carré's first novel was *Call for the Dead* (1961), but he became more widely read after the publication of this gritty, complex cold war thriller, which shares some of the same characters. The novel won the Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America as best novel, the Golden Dagger from the British Crime Writers, and more recently *Publishers Weekly* cited it as the best spy novel ever. The author has written more than 20 novels, most of them in the same genre and many of them best sellers.

Alec Leamas is a British intelligence agent working in Germany during the height of the cold war. He waits at the Berlin Wall for Karl, one of his operatives, whose cover has recently been blown and who is believed to be planning a desperate crossing to the western sector. The entire network administered by Leamas has been destroyed thanks to the brilliant counterespionage effort led by Hans-Dieter Mundt in East Germany. Leamas is told that he is to take part in a clandestine effort to discredit and eliminate Mundt.

The first step is to make it appear that Leamas is wavering in his patriotism, which involves an elaborate pretense that he is angry about his treatment by the agency, followed by his leaving their employ, drinking heavily, and taking public assistance. Eventually he gets a job at a library where he meets Liz Gold, an English Communist, and becomes her lover. After assaulting a grocer and

servicing a short jail sentence, Leamas is approached by a man representing himself as William Ashe, a casual acquaintance from years before. Leamas is quite certain that there was no such person but pretends to be taken in. He is eventually approached more directly then passed up the pipeline to a man who interrogates him in great detail about his career. Slowly, Leamas begins providing false information designed to suggest that large payments were being made clandestinely to someone inside East Germany.

Leamas is branded a traitor in England, forcing him to accompany his interrogator to East Berlin. There he finally meets Fiedler, the Jewish second in command to Mundt, who is also an ardent anti-Semite. Leamas's mission is, ostensibly, to provide Fiedler with manufactured evidence that will enable him to undercut his superior. Reversals come quickly. Fiedler and Leamas are arrested by Mundt's men, but the following day Fiedler is free and Mundt is the one under suspicion. They all appear before a tribunal where Fiedler makes his case.

Leamas realizes the truth during the course of the trial, particularly after Liz Gold testifies, having been brought there by Mundt's agents. She confirms that Leamas's bills were paid by a colleague after his departure and provides further information to undermine his story. This leads Leamas to the conclusion that the two of them were part of an elaborate double cross, that it is Fiedler whom he has been intending to ruin from the outset in order to protect Mundt, who really is a British spy. Mundt arranges for Leamas and Gold to escape, although it may have been another ruse because they are both killed trying to climb over the Wall, perhaps at Mundt's instigation in order to eliminate two of the few people who know the truth.

**Critical Analysis**

One of the reasons that the novel had such a significant effect was its depiction of the espionage establishments of both the East and West as essentially operating with the same lack of ethics or respect for human rights. It was a sharp contrast to the JAMES BOND novels in which, despite occasional lapses by Bond, the intent of British Intelligence is to support professed moral values in action as well as word. Bond is a flatly rendered, comic

book-style character as opposed to Alec Leamas, who has doubts, personality flaws, and mixed motives. Bond may engage in sex, but only Leamas could realistically fall in love. The downbeat ending caught most readers by surprise, and some were outraged that good did not ultimately triumph over evil. "Intelligence work has one moral law—it is justified by results." Fiedler echoes this sentiment when he describes the operation to extract Leamas from England. "It satisfied the only requirement of our profession—it worked." Initially Leamas seems perfectly suited to this vocation because he is utilitarian in every way, even to the clothing he wears. It is only toward the end that his disillusionment becomes apparent.

Leamas's superior, Control, has a ready rationale. He asserts that the single ethic of their agency is that they will always act defensively, not aggressively, although the secret campaign is very definitely aggressive in nature. He also admits that they do "wicked things" and that, since the war, the methods of both sides "have become much the same." Fiedler and Leamas have a substantial conversation on the same subject. Fiedler cannot understand why the covert operatives of the West can engage in activities that cost the lives of innocent bystanders since it seems to contradict their avowed Christian morality. For his own part he has no such qualms, feeling that the few individuals must be sacrificed for the benefit of the larger whole.

The opening establishes the unsavory nature of espionage regardless of the nationality of the people involved. Leamas reflects that spies are by their very nature furtive, dishonest people. "You teach them to cheat, to cover their tracks, and they cheat you as well." When Leamas learns that Karl has told his lover many details about his organization, he vows never to trust even his own agents in the future. Spying becomes a game in its own right, divorced from the acknowledged goals of any of the governments involved. The next hint that the two sides have become indistinguishable comes during the revelation to Leamas that Karl's girlfriend was murdered. Even his interrogator is uncertain which side killed her to prevent her from revealing information she may not even have possessed. At the tribunal Fiedler asserts that the British deliberately sacrificed Karl and their other agents in order to

protect and enhance Mundt's reputation, a charge that appears later to be entirely accurate. Leamas finally characterizes the whole operation as "foul," but "it's paid off, and that's the only rule." Gold is the voice of conscience, insisting that the operation is a perversion of justice, but Leamas counters with her own party's philosophy, that it is expedient and necessary to choose society over the individual, although he contradicts himself to a degree by giving his own life in a vain attempt to save her.

Further evidence of this blurring of the lines of demarcation follows quickly. Leamas is publicly branded a traitor in England, which was not part of the original plan, at least insofar as he knows. Did Control expose him to lend credence to his story, or did the East Germans do so to force him to become more dependent upon them? The most obvious proof of the disparity between morality and effectiveness is the revelation that it is Fiedler, the relatively humane and unprejudiced official, who is the target of the plot, not the brutal, repressive, and racist Mundt, who is secretly spying for the West.

### Stewart, Mary (1916– )

British writer Mary Stewart is one of the major names in romantic suspense, a subgenre that she almost invented with a succession of 10 best-selling novels during the 1950s and 1960s. Her work contributed to the rise of the gothic romance novel, a field quickly overrun by inferior talents, but which also boasted excellent writers such as Phyllis Whitney, Victoria Holt, Dorothy Eden, and Virginia Coffman. Stewart's output of fiction dropped off dramatically during the 1970s, and the latter part of her career has been dominated by a major series of ARTHURIAN ADVENTURES, children's books, with only occasional suspense novels.

Stewart made her debut with *Madam, Will You Talk?* (1955), in which a widow and her artist friend arrive in France for a vacation. When she encounters a young boy with a tragic past, her curiosity leads to involvement in a murder and a romance. Somewhat reminiscent of the suspense novels of Helen MacInnes, the plot mixes elements of the traditional mystery with a more overt and active adventure, including an exciting car chase. It was extremely popular, and Stewart followed

with *Wildfire at Midnight* (1956). The protagonist is divorced rather than widowed, but is otherwise in very much the same mold. She travels to the Isle of Skye, where yet another killer is lying in wait, a madman who kills in imitation of pagan rites, a suspense story that ranges over the wild countryside in a manner reminiscent at times of John Buchan. The element of suspense is much more noticeable—the killer delights in teasing his potential victims in advance. It was even more successful than her first novel, and more typical of the ones that immediately followed.

*Thunder on the Right* (1957) is set in the French Pyrenees. The protagonist has come to visit an old friend who is about to enter a convent, only to discover that she has apparently died in an automobile accident. Unlike the heroines of the first two novels, Jenny is a young, inexperienced woman lacking in self-confidence. There are inconsistencies in the official story of her friend's death, which she impulsively investigates and risks her life to discover the truth about what is really happening at the convent. *Nine Coaches Waiting* (1958) owes some of its inspiration to novels of the Brontë sisters. Linda Martin is an English governess who takes a position at a chateau in France, but who begins to suspect that something very wrong is happening behind the scenes. She is simultaneously drawn to and repelled by a young man in the house, and she begins to suspect that someone is plotting a murder.

In *My Brother Michael* (1959) Camilla Haven is vacationing in Greece when she impulsively takes advantage of a case of mistaken identity and becomes involved with a man who has come to that country to visit his brother's grave. Together they discover that there is a mystery surrounding the brother's death and a secret hidden in the mountains, which is sought after by someone who is willing to commit further murders to ensure that no one else finds it first. *The Ivy Tree* (1961) describes the adventures of a Canadian tourist who is visiting England when she is mistaken for a woman who has been missing and presumed dead for several years. She is enticed into impersonating her double in order to secure an inheritance, but the situation is more complicated, and dangerous, than she realizes. The plot is initially reminiscent of Josephine Tey's classic mystery *Brat Farrar* (1949), but with

a more exciting plot. It is one of Stewart's most intricately constructed stories, with each character harboring concealed motives.

*The Moon-Spinners* (1962) is the only one of Stewart's novels to have been made into a motion picture. Another vacationing woman, this time on the island of Crete, follows an unusual bird while out walking and stumbles into the hiding place of an Englishman who is not at all happy to be discovered. A jewel theft, murder, and an exciting final confrontation in a windmill follow in what is probably the most famous of Stewart's novels, although not necessarily her best. Another typical Stewart protagonist is visiting Corfu in *This Rough Magic* (1964) when she learns that a prominent theater personality is staying nearby. She becomes determined to meet him despite warnings that he is deeply troubled of late, but it takes the discovery of a dead smuggler and other events to make her realize what danger she is in.

*Airs Above the Ground* (1965) takes place in Austria. Protagonist Vanessa March is married, but she has come to Austria searching for her errant husband, who may have run off with another woman. There is a mysterious castle, international intrigue, and one Stewart's better chase sequences. The author also manages to fit some interesting background about the famed Lippizaner horses into the story. *The Gabriel Hounds* (1967) would be her last romantic suspense novel for almost 10 years. Christy Mansel impulsively decides to visit a mysterious aunt who lives in a sprawling estate in Lebanon. Her unannounced arrival is met with obvious displeasure by her aunt, one of the most eccentric and fascinating of all Stewart's characters. There are secrets lying beneath the surface and danger for anyone who looks too deeply. Unfortunately, like most of Stewart's protagonists, Christy decides to indulge her curiosity.

*The Wind off the Small Isles* (1968) has many of the characteristics of Stewart's suspense fiction—the exotic setting, the curious, assertive young woman, the charming but vaguely mysterious man—but it is a story of relationships with neither suspense nor adventure. During the early 1970s she wrote three children's books, but more significantly published *The Crystal Cave* (1970) and *The Hollow Hills* (1973), the first two volumes

of her retelling of the story of King Arthur and Camelot. The first volume chronicles the early life of Merlin, who would rise to become Arthur's chief adviser, and the second covers the period from the birth of Arthur until he assumes the throne.

Stewart subsequently added three additional books to the saga. *The Last Enchantment* (1979) covers the period of Arthur's reign, told primarily from Merlin's point of view. Although originally labeled a trilogy, Stewart continued to extend the story. *The Wicked Day* (1983) tells the story of Mordred, Arthur's illegitimate son, who grows to manhood with an abiding resentment for his father. Stewart's treatment is considerably more sympathetic to Mordred than is customary. Merlin, the dominant character in the first three titles, does not appear in this or the final volume. The last in the series was *The Prince and the Pilgrim* (1995) in which a nobleman is seduced by the magic of Morgan le Fay into attempting to steal the Holy Grail, although most of the story is about his initial encounter with and growing romantic feelings toward a young woman. Most of the characters are drawn from the legend as recorded by Sir Thomas Malory.

Stewart returned to romantic suspense with *Touch Not the Cat* (1976). The novel has an interesting premise in that the protagonist has a vague telepathic link with a man whom she instinctively loves, but it is not strong enough for her to identify who he is. She suspects him to be one of three men in her life, but her efforts to solve the puzzle are complicated by the mysterious death of her father and a dawning realization that someone—another of the threesome—is planning to kill her. Although many of the usual Stewart elements are present, the fantastic element gives the novel a very different atmosphere. Another decade would pass before her next, *Thornyhold* (1987), which also contains elements of fantasy. As a child the protagonist enjoyed visits with her godmother, who had genuine psychic powers. As an adult she inherits the woman's cottage, where she finds herself enmeshed in a sinister web of intrigue and dark magic. Unlike most of Stewart's earlier protagonists, Gilly Ramsey is comparatively passive and uncertain of herself, although she adapts to the situation when required.

Stewart's most recent two novels appeared during the 1990s. *The Stormy Petrel* (1991) superficially

resembles her earlier novels. A writer travels to Scotland for peace and quiet, but two men intrude on her life, men whose contradictory accounts of themselves stir her curiosity. Despite the suspenseful opening, there is no serious danger involved, and the mystery is peacefully resolved after only the mildest of adventures. The novel seems more concerned with descriptions of the local landscape and wildlife than with the characters. In *Rose Cottage* (1997) Kate Herrick visits her grandmother's house to retrieve some closely guarded documents only to discover that they have been stolen. Her attempts to investigate the loss are complicated by reports by the villagers of strange, even occult phenomena in the vicinity of the cottage.

### **Critical Analysis**

Although Stewart largely abandoned suspense novels after 1970, her work in that field has remained popular, and almost all of her books are currently in print. She is adept at creating idiosyncratic characters and mixes ingenious plots with a superior gift for developing suspense and an air of mystery. Of particular note are her settings, quite varied but always lushly and effectively described. Almost all of her suspense novels are written in the first person, and everything generally happens within a matter of a few days. Although there is a hint of romance in all of her novels, it never dominates the story, and her protagonists are level-headed and sensible about their emotional lives rather than caught up in the thrill of the moment. Her Arthurian stories are also highly regarded.

### **superheroes**

Although many of the pulp magazines of the 1930s and 1940s featured characters who might be considered superheroes, they are most prominently found in comic books and graphic novels. The superhero differs from characters like the Scarlet Pimpernel or ROBIN HOOD in that he has one or more abilities that are unknown to real human beings. The earliest comic book superhero of note was Superman, who first appeared in 1938. Superman was created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, who are believed to have been inspired in part by Philip Wylie's novel *Gladiator* (1930), in which a man with extraordinary

physical abilities discovers that his life has no meaning because he has not found love. The popularity of Superman led to the creation of many others in similar molds, including Batman, the Flash, Green Lantern, and Wonder Woman.

Although most pulp magazines succumbed to paper shortages and other problems during or shortly after World War II, comic books generally survived, even prospered. DC Comics dominated this field until the 1960s, when Marvel Comics began introducing characters such as Spider-Man, Thor, and the Fantastic Four. These two companies have dominated the superhero genre in graphic form ever since, although there have been many popular characters from less prominent publishers. A comprehensive summary of the comic book superhero could—in fact has—generated several books all by themselves.

By and large, science fiction writers treat the superhero very differently than do comic book writers. Much more attention is paid to explaining the source and limitations of the unusual powers. Genetic manipulation or mutation are the most common explanations. Characters might develop telepathy, enhanced intelligence, or acquire some other talent, but scientifically questionable changes like superstrength, superspeed, shape changing, or the ability to fly are rare. Some comic book superheroes are actually normal people making use of extraordinary technology, such as Iron Man or Batman, and that is more likely to accommodate itself to science fiction. The enhanced soldiers of Timothy Zahn's *Cobra* and *Blackcollar* series or similar ones in which humans have mechanical augmentations to make them more effective are essentially stories of superheroes.

The majority of true superhero novels are, predictably, tie-ins to the comic books. There have, however, been a few exceptions, the most notable of which is the *Wild Card* series, edited by George R. R. Martin. Most of the titles were collections of short stories by different authors, all using the same setting or shared universe, an alternate version of the world in which an alien virus infected much of the Earth's population in 1946. The virus caused unpredictable mutations that mostly manifested themselves as superpowers. The few who were able to make use of their new talents to fight evil became

known as Aces, and their villainous counterparts were Jokers. Those with minor powers came to be known as Deuces. Despite the comic book veneer, the treatment was very realistic, and not every story had a happy ending. Also, since it was an alternate version of history, the authors could play with the careers of actual people, such as having Fidel Castro become a major league baseball player.

Fifteen titles in the *Wild Cards* series were published between 1987 and 1995, with two additional volumes the following decade, and three new titles recently announced. Two of the additional volumes were full-length novels, one each by Melinda Snodgrass and John J. Miller, but the others have been short story collections with contributions by Roger Zelazny, Lewis Shiner, Walter Jon Williams, Pat Cadigan, and others. These latter were described by the editor as "mosaic novels" because there was one underlying story line and overlapping characters. The short-lived *Rising Stars* series by Arthur Byron Cover is somewhat similar.

One other notable novel is *Count Geiger's Blues* (1992) by Michael Bishop. This complex novel is a subtle spoof of the form in which a nondescript newspaper editor is exposed to toxic waste and develops superpowers. He decides to use his new talents to fight evil, but has great difficulty figuring out just how to go about it, and most of his challenges are pretty minor—a mugging, convincing bar patrons to be more respectful of women, and so on.

Most other superhero novels are derived from comic books, games, or movies, and the vast majority are relatively minor work. Several of the exceptions have involved Batman, perhaps because he is more clearly a human being and is often portrayed as a troubled man, haunted by his past and unsure of his identity. Craig Shaw Gardner, who novelized the first two Tim Burton-directed Batman movies, also penned *The Batman Murders* (1990), which gave readers more insight into the mind of its protagonist than they could find in the comic books. Andrew Vachss used Batman's troubled childhood as a method of discussing child abuse in his *Batman: The Ultimate Evil* (1995). Joe Lansdale's *Captured by the Engines* (1991), John Shirley's *Dead White* (2006), and Alexander Irvine's *Inferno* (2007) are also worthwhile.

Superman has not fared as well in book form despite having recruited respected author William Kotzwinkle to write the novelization of *Superman III* (1983). The Man of Steel was also the subject of what was probably the first superhero novelization in *Superman* (1942) by George Lowther. Elliot S. Maggin provided a retelling of Superman's early career in *Last Son of Krypton* (1978) and an interesting later adventure in *Kingdom Come* (1998). Roger Stern's *The Death and Life of Superman* (1993) is another retelling of his life story, conforming to more recent changes in the comic book chronology. Also of interest is *It's Superman* (2006) by Tom De Haven, which recounts the story of his transition from Smallville to Metropolis. There have also been a number of novels drawing on the *Smallville* television program, the best of which is *Hauntings* (2003) by Nancy Holder.

Novels using the Marvel universe characters, particularly the X-Men and Spider-Man, have been much more numerous. Other Marvel characters to make the transition to book form include Captain America, the Fantastic Four, the Avengers, Daredevil, the Hulk, and the Silver Surfer. Among the authors involved are Christopher Golden, Diane Duane, Michael Jan Friedman, Dean Wesley Smith, and Peter David. They vary considerably in quality and are all comparatively minor compared to other works by the same author. A few novels about superheroes from comics not produced by DC or Marvel exist, but none have been notably successful. The best of these include those featuring the Phantom or, more recently, Hellboy from Dark Horse Comics. Comic book superheroes generally fare much better in the transfer to the screen as movies and television programs than they do to straight text adventure stories. This is undoubtedly in large part due to the visual appeal of both.

### ***Swiss Family Robinson*** (1812)

#### **Johann Davis Wyss**

Among the many novels inspired by Daniel Defoe's *ROBINSON CRUSOE* (1719) was this classic by Swiss writer Johann David Wyss (1743–1818). Wyss was a clergyman who wrote the story for his children, intending to use it to teach them the virtues of self-reliance and other moral lessons. It was not

published in book form until his son, Johann Rudolf Wyss, edited it into a single coherent narrative.

The family is not in fact named Robinson; the title is a reference to the Defoe novel. They are shipwrecked in the opening chapter, both parents and four children, all boys, after being deserted by the crew. The ship itself, though no longer seaworthy, founders virtually intact conveniently near the beach. The pattern of the novel is evident quite early when one of the children asks if God will help them and is told that God prefers that they find ways to help themselves. Each separate incident or challenge is a device allowing the author to provide a particular moral lesson, and often to impart a short lecture on natural history as well.

The family is able to salvage a good store of provisions, including two dogs and a variety of domesticated animals, tools and clothing, as well as a tent, firearms, a small boat, and other conveniences. The island itself is well suited for human habitation, with a wide variety of edible plants and animals. They search for more survivors without success, then set about building themselves a home in the shelter of an oversized tree, chase off a shark, and improvise the few items that they were unable to retrieve from the ship. Then they set about learning to hunt more efficiently, make improvements to their home, build and work a small farm, recover a larger boat from the wreck to facilitate exploration of the seashore, and discover new sources of food. They study a stranded whale, chase off and eventually kill an oversized boa constrictor, and later a bear. Their explorations include a cave of crystals, the jungle and forest, and the sea immediately surrounding the island.

Time is telescoped in the closing chapters, and the story leaps forward 10 years. The oldest son is finally given permission to make his own decisions and goes on a voyage of exploration beyond anything the family had tried before. He spots a campfire and meets another castaway, Edward Montrose, whom he brings back to meet his family. Still another castaway appears later, then an English ship searching for the most recent arrival on the island. Two of the sons decide to leave on the ship and recruit new immigrants for their tiny community from Europe, while the rest of the family remains in what they now think of as their home.

### Critical Analysis

Despite the adventurous premise, *Swiss Family Robinson* does not hold up as well as most other classic children's stories. The novel consists of a long series of separate episodes, each discretely designed to illustrate one moral point or another—patience, diligence in one's work, respect for parental authority, cooperation with others, and so forth. That was clearly the author's intention, and events are contrived to provide the opportunity for each lesson, and to support his contention that they will lead to happy results. The narrator justifies his account toward the end by saying that he hoped "young people who read this record of our lives and adventures should learn from it how admirably suited is the peaceful, industrious, and pious life."

In many cases the underlying message has no serious effect on the story as a tale of adventure, but on other occasions their didactic nature slows the narrative and feels artificial, as is the case when the father expounds upon the principle of the lever even as the ship is on the verge of sinking beneath them. The situations themselves vary from interesting and amusing to artlessly contrived. None of the family members is ever in any serious danger, and the only hint of conflict other than a very brief battle with some troublesome apes comes in the closing chapters. The children never quarrel seriously and are invariably obedient and helpful to their parents, who in turn are never short-tempered or discouraged.

The story shares the same literary shortcut as Defoe's novel in that they are able to salvage so much material from the ship that their situation is more like a planned move to a remote, uninhab-

ited location than an actual tragic shipwreck. The children all speak in very similar patterns and are virtually interchangeable, while the mother has very little personality. The dialogue itself is highly formal and feels artificial. The father, who narrates the story, is invariably calm, thoughtful, reverent, and on top of the situation, which results in very little actual tension. He is also familiar with the mechanics of manufacturing gunpowder, knowledgeable about plant life in the area, and possesses other information that proves conveniently useful. Some of his observations and judgments are puzzling, however, such as his lecture on ants, which concludes that the ant "is not in itself an attractive insect." Wyss includes a number of brief lectures about the natural world, but in order to do so he introduces an implausible variety of animal life to the small island, including buffalo, rats, eels, bears, various snakes, apes, kangaroos, penguins, lions, hyenas, ostriches, turkeys, seals, and jackals, to name a few.

A longer version under the title *The New Swiss Family Robinson* includes additional material by another author. In fact, there is considerable variation among editions, often with material added by other writers. The original book ended with no hint of other castaways or rescuers, and there were later several different versions of their discovery by outsiders. The novel is often cited as the tenuous inspiration for the television program *Lost in Space*. JULES VERNE wrote two rather similar novels, *In Search of the Castaways* (1868) and *The Mysterious Island* (1875), both of which also provide considerable detail about natural history, but much more entertainingly. Verne also wrote a direct sequel to the Wyss novel, *Second Fatherland* (1900).

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## ***A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) Charles Dickens**

Acclaimed as the greatest writer of the Victorian era, Charles Dickens (1812–70) did not specifically write adventure fiction, although there are elements of adventure in several of his novels, including in particular *Oliver Twist* (1838) and *Great Expectations* (1861). The one exception to that rule is this account of the experiences of several English and French characters during the French Revolution, which opens and closes with two of the most memorable quotes from all of his fiction—“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. . .” and Sydney Carton’s final statement that his sacrifice is “a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done. . .”

The story opens as Lucie Manette discovers that she is not an orphan after all, that her father has been located in France. He had recently been released from a French prison, but his mind was so badly shaken by what has happened to him that he has trouble accepting his new situation. Lucie and her companions take him to England and spend five years nursing him back to health. At the end of that period they attend the trial of Charles Darnay, who has been accused of treason, specifically that he acted as an agent for the king of France. Since Darnay is a friend of the family, they are overjoyed when he is rightly acquitted, which happens in large part only because the witnesses cannot distinguish between him and one of the lawyers, Sydney Carton. Carton gets drunk and tells Darnay that he dislikes him; both men are romantically interested in Lucie. Darnay eventually prevails, and

Carton, though still enslaved to the dissolute life he acknowledges is responsible for most of his difficulties, resolves to become the bridegroom’s friend.

Dickens then reveals that Darnay is the nephew of the Marquis, one of the more repressive French aristocrats. During a visit to France to renounce his family heritage, Darnay is present in the house when the Marquis is stabbed to death in his bedroom by an unknown assailant, later identified as the father of a child whose death the Marquis caused. The reader is also introduced to the Defarges, a married couple. Mr. Defarge, a tavern keeper, is secretly the leader of a revolutionary group, while Mrs. Defarge records the names of condemned aristocrats in a code formed by her knitting. Her hatred of the aristocracy is indiscriminate, so it comes as no surprise when Darnay is added to her list, despite being innocent except by birth.

Darnay reveals his true identity to Dr. Manette, who is badly affected and suffers a relapse while the couple are off on their honeymoon, but he recovers before they return, his lapse covered up by friends of the family. The newlyweds are happy during the next few years, and it seems likely that their earlier misadventures will not be repeated. Unfortunately, the situation begins to reach a critical point in France, and in 1789 the pot finally boils over. The rebels storm the Bastille, the hated prison where Manette was held, and evidence is found suggesting that Darnay’s family was responsible for his incarceration.

Darnay is lured back to France by a letter purporting to be from a trusted family servant who

claims to have been unjustly imprisoned and who pleads with Darnay to return and clear the servant's name. Darnay complies and is taken prisoner by the revolutionaries, but is acquitted at his first trial due to the intervention of Dr. Manette and others. Unfortunately, the Defarges help to fabricate a second case, and this time Darnay is found guilty and condemned. His friends then discover that a British spy has become a minor official in the new government, and they blackmail him into assisting them. Carton overhears Madame Defarge and discovers that she has a grudge against the Darnay family and intends that they should all die. Fearing for the safety of Lucie and her daughter, Carton urges them to leave France at the earliest opportunity.

The climax involves Carton's final visit to Darnay's prison cell. He intends to take the condemned man's place, and when Darnay balks, Carton drugs him and has him taken to safety along with the others. Madame Defarge shows up just in time to prevent the escape but is thwarted when Lucie's governess and companion physically restrains her. During their struggle Madame Defarge is killed, and Carton's impersonation succeeds as planned.

### Critical Analysis

*A Tale of Two Cities* is one of the most highly regarded works of a man considered one of the greatest novelists of all time. Unlike most adventure stories, the story spans a period of several years. As with Dickens's other novels, it is filled with background detail, a large number of characters, and a plot is comparatively slow in developing.

Dickens wastes no time, however, in expressing his contempt for the conditions under which the peasants of France were forced to live, describing in detail one incident in which they drink spilled wine from a muddy road. The aristocracy is portrayed as corrupt and cruel, so out of touch with the people they rule that even their executioner dresses in lace and white silk stockings. When a child is run down and killed by the carriage bearing the Marquis, he is more concerned about the fate of his horses than of the child. Dickens is almost as critical of British society of that period, particularly the judicial system, which he satirizes at considerable length, lauding the efficiency of inflicting the death penalty

for minor crimes so as not to leave any details to be accounted for, and describing the whipping post as "humanizing and softening to behold in action." The overall attitude of the court is summarized as "whatever is, is right." Dickens clearly disapproved of the French aristocracy, but he was just as appalled by the excesses of the revolutionaries and the injustices that inevitably result from mob violence.

Darnay is an enlightened aristocrat, that is, he feels not only the injustice of the current system but suspects that it cannot long endure. He has an interesting discussion with his uncle in which he describes the French social system as being based on "fear and slavery" where his uncle sees "involuntary homage" and a tradition that will last for generations to come. He asserts that "repression is the only lasting philosophy," but even as he speaks, the father of the dead child is waiting for his moment of vengeance. The Marquis's last expression is as much disbelief as fear.

Madame Defarge is a personification of the three Fates—Clotho, who spins the thread, Lachesis, who measures it, and most of all Atropos, who cuts the threads, thereby choosing the manner of an individual's death. Her knitting records the coded names of those for whom the guillotine is presumed to be their destiny. When she and her husband discover that Lucie Manette is engaged to marry a member of a French aristocratic family, Monsieur Defarge hopes that Darnay will never return to France once the rebellion starts. His wife, however, insists that destiny is a predetermined road and no one can know where it will lead them.

Resurrection from the dead is a significant theme. Several characters refer to Manette's release from prison as his having been "recalled to life." Carton has his life restored metaphorically, first by his love for Lucie and later, paradoxically, by his willingness to give up his own life for another. One of the other characters is a "resurrection man" who sells human bodies to medical students. And eventually a saner society will rise from the ashes of the French Revolution.

The unlikely hero of the novel is certainly Sydney Carton, who, despite his unsavory lifestyle, rises to the occasion and redeems himself by his self-sacrifice to save Darnay. Because the novel was originally published as a serial, there are

numerous rises and falls in the action so that each installment would end with a hook that would draw the reader back for the next installment. Dickens's characters are often exaggerated, and the Marquis in particular is more caricature than person, but the Defarges and Carton are quite convincingly portrayed.

### ***They Came to Cordura* (1958)**

#### **Glendon Swarthout**

American writer Glendon Swarthout (1918–92) was a journalist and teacher who had been writing for several years before this, his second novel, became first a best seller and then the basis for a major motion picture. It enabled Swarthout to turn to writing full time, and he produced another 14 novels and numerous short stories, including popular titles such as *Where the Boys Are* (1960), *Bless the Beasts and Children* (1970), and *The Shootist* (1975), most of which were not adventure stories.

The story takes place in 1916 after a raid into New Mexico by the bandit forces of Francisco “Pancho” Villa forced President Woodrow Wilson to act. He ordered what would prove to be a relatively successful military expedition into Mexico, led by General John Pershing, which included the last cavalry charge by American soldiers. Although Villa escaped capture, his forces were routed and scattered and the main purpose of the operation was achieved. Swarthout's novel is almost entirely fictional, but the historical setting is accurate.

The protagonist is Major Thorn, who has been authorized to temporarily reassign soldiers who are to be recommended for Congressional Medals of Honor, to ensure that they will live long enough to be decorated. As the story opens, Pershing has just learned that a large party of the enemy have taken refuge on a ranch owned by an American expatriate, Adelaide Geary, daughter of a disgraced senator. Major Thorn and one of the men he has singled out, Hetherington, are following a column of troops that engages the enemy on Geary's farm, their commander having arranged them in a formation inappropriate to the situation. Poor intelligence about the terrain further hinders them, but they win a victory of sorts, routing the Mexicans after losing men and horses unnecessarily.

After the battle Thorn, whose past display of cowardice is alluded to but not described until much later, finds himself leading a party consisting of five potential heroes and Adelaide Geary, now a prisoner, on a cross-country trek to the town of Cordura. The charges against Geary are clearly unsupportable, but Thorn follows his orders and refuses to release her. The party is not a happy one, with considerable tension between Geary and the soldiers. Thorn is also somewhat dismayed at the characters of some of his heroes, who prove to be variously vindictive, petty, treacherous, and mean-spirited. They will be tested again, however, because they are ambushed by a band of Mexican bandits and trapped in a box canyon.

Despite the growing pressure from the others, Thorn refuses to act precipitately, and eventually he gives their horses to the Mexicans under the correct assumption that this will satisfy them, leaving the party to proceed in peace, although on foot. He is also aware that at least two of the men know about his previous cowardice, and that Geary would give them up to the Mexicans without hesitation if the opportunity presented itself. Their trek is further complicated when one of the men falls ill and must be carried. Thorn is forced to relieve the men of their weapons after they attempt to rape Geary, after which one of them, Chawk, attempts to kill the officer. Thorn remains determined that they will all reach their destination alive, even if it costs him his own life, which it eventually does.

#### **Critical Analysis**

For his setting Swarthout chose a pivotal time in the history of warfare. The mounted cavalry was already obsolete, although not everyone realized it yet. “What General Sheridan started, General Motors is going to finish.” He also selected one of the more insidiously treacherous landscapes in North America, the flat plains of Chihuahua, riddled with arroyos, subject to sandstorms, extreme shifts of temperature, and other violent weather.

Swarthout's novel examines the meanings of courage and cowardice and the perceptions of both by third parties. In the opening chapter General Pershing justifies the special treatment of soldiers who have major combat awards pending because he believes that there is no way for the United States

to remain aloof from the war in Europe and that the country needs heroes if it is going to support American involvement. Pershing is also portrayed as believing that it is advisable to provide optimistic assessments of their situation even when he personally believes otherwise, in order to bolster the public's sense of confidence in their own security and the efficiency of the armed forces.

The author employs irony and contradiction in several places. Hetherington, who has memorized the entire Old Testament of the Bible, has lost his faith, although he seems to regain it, paradoxically, during the act of killing the enemy. When the battle is imminent, "in the midst of men each man found himself alone." Thorn is troubled by contradictions in the men when he interviews them. One is clearly self-centered and egotistical, but the same man almost sacrificed himself to avoid having to order his men to attack a strong position. Another insists that he was never afraid, but the chin strap of his helmet is bitten through. Thorn is forced to accept that bravery can be found in shiftless, untrustworthy, and vicious men, which conflicts with his belief that courage is one of the highest aspirations of humanity. He is also startled when one of the men, Lieutenant Fowler, requests that he not be recommended for the award because the early recognition could have an adverse effect on his career, a sentiment eventually echoed by all of the enlisted men for a variety of reasons. Thorn, who throughout has feared exposure of his cowardice to the men, discovers that he feels better once the knowledge has become general.

Thorn, whose job is to see that there is proper recognition for acts of bravery, cannot himself understand what causes a man to display courage. He even speculates that it may be an inherited characteristic and asks the unit's doctor if there might be some physiological basis. During his interviews with the award candidates he asks them about their feelings while they were performing heroically, and he is frustrated by their failure to answer usefully, then discouraged when he realizes that for one at least, the only motivation was the desire to kill.

Thorn is so uncertain of his own moral strength that he wonders if he would have had even enough courage to object to the poorly conceived attack

at Geary's farm. In the waning chapters his obsession with preserving what he sees as courageous men—no matter how flawed they might be otherwise—verges on the irrational when he even places limits on his own right to defend himself against their attacks. It is Geary who tells him bluntly that the men he calls heroes are contemptible at best and that his determination to see that they are rewarded is a form of personal atonement for his own past failure.

Swarthout's depiction of the Mexican bandits is ambiguous. They are soldiers who were fighting what they saw as a corrupt government, but the pretense that they are a revolutionary army is shattered, and they become simply outlaws. This ambiguity can also be found in *The Treasure of Sierra Madre* (1927) by B. Traven, wherein the borderline between bandit and patriot is similarly unclear.

### ***The Thirty-Nine Steps* (1915) John Buchan**

This was the first adventure of Richard Hannay, whom Scottish novelist John Buchan (1875–1940) would bring back for three additional adventures, of which the best is *Greenmantle* (1916). Hannay has made his fortune in South Africa and has returned to the British Isles, only to find himself bored to distraction by cities and high society. He is considering a return to Africa when he is approached by a frightened American named Scudder, who indicates his life is in jeopardy thanks to his discovery of an international conspiracy to assassinate a visiting Greek politician. Scudder is killed soon thereafter, and through a bit of convoluted plotting Hannay realizes that he must stay out of sight for nearly two weeks, avoiding both the mysterious organization of anarchists and the police, the latter of whom will assume he killed Scudder. He can then reappear in time to give warning of the assassination.

Taking great precautions, Hannay disguises himself and takes the train to Scotland, jumping off in a remote area and avoiding detection by the pilot of a small airplane, which he believes to be a tool of the conspirators. They find him anyway, but he steals their car, and more important, he deciphers Scudder's coded notes and discovers that Scudder was not telling the complete truth either. Nor does he understand the cryptic reference to 39 steps.

The chase continues by car, bicycle, and foot. He is almost caught by a search party, which surrounds him briefly, but gets away by means of another subterfuge. At least one of his escapes is managed by a rather unbelievable coincidence. One of the few people Hannay has met since his return to England just happens to drive up the right lonely road and just happens to pull over near Hannay to light a cigarette at a critical moment.

His luck does not hold out, however. By another unbelievable coincidence Hannay takes refuge in the house owned by the leader of the opposition. He escapes, thanks to yet another coincidence, and then uses his wits to finally reach the authorities, barely in the nick of time. By further happenstance, he is present when an imposter walks off with crucial military secrets, but is not quick enough to capture him. The various military and political figures then defer to his judgment when he draws fresh conclusions from the coded notebook, and he is ultimately able to prevent the German spies from smuggling the information out of the country.

### Critical Analysis

The setup for this classic chase story is rather contrived. Hannay cannot go to the police immediately because if news of the assassination plot gets out too early the visit will be canceled, which will somehow result in the same political goals the anarchists hope to accomplish by killing him. As a stranger in England Hannay has no allies to turn to and must fend for himself. The conspirators also allow him a head start, which seems inconsistent with their efficiency elsewhere. Reflecting the prejudices of the times, the author suggests initially that the anarchists are led by Jewish interests hoping to provoke a war with Russia. Buchan has often been criticized for these and similar remarks, although he was actively involved in defending the Jewish minority during the 1930s.

The novel features several colorful characters with unusual outlooks. An innkeeper who helps Hannay believes “everything out of the common. The only thing to distrust is the normal.” That proves to be useful advice. He next encounters a politician who, on the spur of the moment, invites him to speak at a rally, and then a hungover road worker who lets him take his place, effectively

disguising himself from his pursuers. Each of these characters is exaggerated to the point of caricature, perhaps necessarily given the short passages during which they need to be introduced and then left behind. The story proceeds from scene to scene, and danger to danger, very quickly, the sparse prose emphasizing the breakneck pace of the action. The two completely implausible coincidences that punctuate Hannay’s flight are certainly dramatic, but detract from the novel’s realism. At the climax the alacrity with which the authorities allow Hannay to take charge of the counterespionage operation, even to the extent of directing the disposition of the police, is certainly similarly dramatic but is hardly realistic.

By the standards of modern stories of ESPIONAGE, *The Thirty-Nine Steps* is extremely naïve, overly contrived, and the concluding mystery is solved by introducing information not previously revealed to the reader. The mysterious message presents a puzzle similar to those in *The DA VINCI CODE* (2003) by Dan Brown, but with a far less clever solution. The modern spy novel was, however, still in its infancy. Erskine Childers’s *The RIDDLE OF THE SANDS* (1904) was certainly a significant influence on Buchan. Where Childers theorized that a future European war was inevitable, Buchan had the advantage of hindsight, since the war had already begun when he chronicled Hannay’s first adventure. All three film versions of the novel were equally exciting, and considerably more plausible. Hannay is also the protagonist in *Mr. Standfast* (1919) and *The Three Hostages* (1924), and is a minor character in *The Courts of the Morning* (1929).

### *The Three Musketeers* (1844)

#### Alexandre Dumas

This is certainly the best known of the several adventure novels by French writer Alexandre Dumas (1802–70). It introduced D’Artagnan and his musketeer friends, Porthos, Athos, and Aramis. The story was based in part on the actual memoirs of a French musketeer named D’Artagnan. Like many novels from this period it was originally published as a serial, which means that it is filled with episodic adventures and cliff-hangers.

The story is set early in the 17th century, during the reign of the famously weak King Louis XIII. D'Artagnan is en route to Paris to join the musketeers, bearing a letter of introduction that is taken from him during a confrontation with a mysterious French aristocrat. D'Artagnan continues to the city and is eventually placed where he can be trained, but within a few minutes and on separate occasions he offends and is challenged to duel with each of the three men who will become his closest friends. The first duel is under way when they are interrupted by soldiers reporting to Cardinal Richelieu, who attempt to arrest them for illegal dueling. The four best the larger force, and the animosity among them is quickly forgotten.

D'Artagnan rents a room, hires a servant, and in due course rescues Constance Bonacieux, his landlord's wife, from agents of Richelieu. Constance is a servant of the queen, Anne of Austria, who is unhappy with her political marriage and is having an affair with a British officer. Richelieu hopes to pressure Constance into helping his cause. When the queen gives her lover a set of jewels presented to her by the king, Richelieu learns of it and decides to publicly embarrass her to further weaken the king's stature. He uses one of his agents, Milady de Winter, to steal two of the jewels from the Englishman, which she does just before D'Artagnan arrives following a perilous trip to England to recover them. In the course of that journey he makes an enemy of the Comte de Wardes, whose papers he steals in order to leave France. When D'Artagnan apprises the English lord of the situation, a pair of duplicates is quickly manufactured and D'Artagnan returns to France.

Richelieu's plans are derailed, but he accepts his defeat gracefully and moves on to his next ploy. He is less forgiving when D'Artagnan refuses to join his guards rather than the king's musketeers, and responds by kidnapping Constance for the second time, although she is eventually saved through the queen's intervention. Unable to locate her, D'Artagnan strikes up a friendship with the Count de Winter, although he knows that the man's sister-in-law is working for Richelieu. Despite these forewarnings of her character, he is nearly seduced and only recovers his senses when he discovers proof that she is actually in love with the Comte

de Wardes. He impersonates de Wardes in order to discover her true allegiance and learns as well that she is not only a convicted felon, but the disgraced wife of Athos, who was presumed dead.

Athos acquires proof that the comtesse de Winter has been asked by Richelieu to murder the queen's English lover in order to forestall his efforts to bring the war with France to an end. They send a message that results in her apprehension and imprisonment, but she seduces her jailer and convinces him to carry out the assassination. She then gets revenge on D'Artagnan by fatally poisoning Constance, but is subsequently captured, tried, and executed by a party that includes D'Artagnan and Athos. There is one more confrontation with Richelieu, who decides that he would be best served by ignoring the death of his late accomplice. The three musketeers decide to leave the army, but D'Artagnan becomes a commissioned officer.

### **Critical Analysis**

Because the novel was originally published in installments, the author did not have the luxury of spending significant time on the background of his characters but was forced to move rapidly forward with the story. As a consequence readers can infer little about the history of the various characters except where it is important to the story line, as is the case with Athos's marriage to the current comtesse de Winter.

Dumas compares D'Artagnan to Don Quixote in the opening chapter because the young man has, in his own way, just as distorted a view of the world as does the delusional Spanish knight errant, and is just as likely to look for an insult where none was intended. In this coming-of-age story, D'Artagnan's innocence and narrow view of the world are almost childlike until he has some experience of Paris, and it is the evolution of his character that is central to the story.

Dumas describes a complex political situation, the balance of power between the weak king and the ambitious and powerful cardinal, their inability to resolve their differences or even acknowledge them, the careful path followed by those caught in the middle, and the differences between public pronouncements and private sentiments. When de Treville scolds the foursome for fighting the

duke's men, it is for public consumption, but when they are alone, he congratulates them, as does the supposedly outraged King Louis. The characterizations are generally quite well done, and the musketeers are all clearly differentiated from one another. The dialogue is also much lighter and wittier than in some of the later novels, in part because Dumas was paid by the line rather than by the word, so that short, choppy exchanges worked to his advantage financially. As was the case with most of his novels, Dumas employed an uncredited collaborator who probably did outlines and portions of the initial draft, and in fact there was eventually an unsuccessful lawsuit by the co-author of *The Three Musketeers*, who claimed that he was primarily responsible.

In order to justify D'Artagnan's love for another man's wife, Dumas deliberately assassinates the character of her husband, who not only gives way to pressure from Richelieu but is in fact vocally disloyal to the queen. There are no questionable allegiances in the novel. We know from the outset who supports the queen, and by extension the king, and who is loyal to the usurping Cardinal Richelieu. Dumas's later novels feature more ambiguous characters whose motives might be tangled and who also might regret the decisions they are forced to make. There is no such uncertainty in *The Three Musketeers*, however. Richelieu and the Comtesse de Winter are among the most fascinating fictional villains of all time, and there is little to redeem them except for their audacious evilness.

The novel features a large number of coincidences, starting with D'Artagnan's simultaneous confrontation with all three of his future companions, his happenstance rental of lodgings from Constance's husband, arranged so that he can overhear certain pivotal conversations, continuing with the providential meeting with de Wardes that allows him to successfully impersonate the man in the presence of his lover, and culminating with the discovery that Milady de Winter is the long-lost wife of Athos. In the waning chapters she also just happens to go into hiding in the same monastery where Constance has been sent by the queen. D'Artagnan's impersonation of de Wardes in de Winter's poorly lit quarters does not seem likely to have succeeded. In a more serious novel these

would be fatal flaws, but Dumas deliberately chose a kind of fairy-tale approach in which such unlikely occurrences seem matter of fact.

Dumas works some interesting observations into the novel. When Aramis feels thwarted in romantic love, he decides to embark on a religious vocation, which he promptly disavows when his romance appears to be restored. Although the treatment is light, almost comical, the substitution of religion for romantic love was an acceptable course of action at the time, and no one would have believed Aramis to be any less devoted to God just because he chose religion as a consolation.

The adventures of D'Artagnan and his companions were continued in later novels, although their ultimate fate was a tragic one. The sequels are *Twenty Years After* (1845) and *The Vicomte de Bragelonne* (1847), the latter of which is so long that it is usually published in three volumes as *The Vicomte de Bragelonne, Louise de la Valliere*, and *The MAN IN THE IRON MASK. The Son of Porthos* (1883), although published under the Dumas name, is probably by another writer.

### ***The Time Machine* (1895) H. G. Wells**

Acknowledged as one of the fathers of science fiction, British writer Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) produced a number of scientific romances as well as nonfiction and more serious novels about contemporary society. This novella is still the most famous story about time travel ever written

The story opens at a dinner party given by the unnamed time traveler, at which he expounds briefly on the nature of time as the fourth dimension and announces that he has constructed a machine that will allow a man to journey backward and forward through time as well as space. He demonstrates with a small model, which his guests all consider a clever trick, and invites them to return a week later. They do so, and the time traveler makes a dramatic entrance, disheveled and in obvious distress. He has been gone only hours in real time, but has experienced eight days of adventure in the future, the details of which he describes to his guests.

After being enraptured by his initial flight through time, the traveler finally decides to stop and

finds himself in a garden, not far from an immense stone statue, in the year 802,701. Although briefly overcome by a sense of dread, he is reassured during his first contact with the Eloi, beautifully formed humans much smaller than those of today, living in a community within the garden where they live on a diet composed entirely of fruits. Shortly after arriving, however, he begins to notice signs of decay—poorly maintained buildings and a general dirtiness that suggests a society in decline. He also notices that the sexes are not as clearly differentiated and assumes that in an age when violence and danger are no longer factors, the need for specialized gender traits may have disappeared.

The time machine disappears mysteriously, and the traveler rightly concludes that it has been taken inside a nearby bronze building by parties unknown. He is unsuccessful in his attempts to gain entry, so he sets out to learn more about his environment. His most significant discovery is a system of wells scattered about the landscape, from which he can faintly hear the sounds of machinery buried deep underground. There are no signs of cemeteries or other arrangements for the dead, and there are neither aged nor infirm people among the population. Nor is there any sign of manufacturing, which makes the origin of their clothing and other items something of a mystery.

After he saves a young woman, Weena, from drowning, he finds himself with a devoted companion, and from her he learns that the Eloi are terrified of darkness. There is no immediate explanation, but he catches glimpses of white apelike creatures on two occasions, although he cannot discern their nature. Eventually he concludes that they are a second branch of humanity, descendants of the working class who were forced to spend increasing amounts of time underground, but he mistakenly assumes that it is the Eloi who are the masters of the world.

Descending one of the wells, the traveler encounters the Morlocks from close at hand and barely escapes alive. Only then does he realize the underground dwellers are the masters of the world, not the Eloi. After spending a day exploring a crumbling museum, the traveler is attacked during the darkness by a party of Morlocks. He escapes thanks to a runaway campfire that sets

the forest on fire, but Weena is gone, either taken by the Morlocks or lost in the fire. The Morlocks then open the gates concealing the time machine to lure him inside, but he escapes into the distant future before they can capture him. There he encounters giant crabs and glimpses other forms of life, but no trace of humanity. He returns to tell his story, which no one believes, then sets out on a second expedition and is never seen nor heard from again.

### Critical Analysis

*The Time Machine* is quite short, a novella rather than a novel, and was a reworking of ideas Wells originally used in a short story, “The Chronic Argonauts” (1888). The protagonist is never named, perhaps to signify that he is representative of all of humanity and that the warning he receives during his travels is one that everyone needs to recognize.

The opening sequence is narrated by an equally anonymous participant, who then repeats the time traveler’s story after his return. Wells probably used the double narrator because of the time traveler’s eventual mysterious disappearance. The traveler experiences a sense of exhilaration during his initial journey forward, anticipating a visit to what he assumes will be a far greater civilization than the one he has left behind, proof of the steady progress of humanity toward some glorious destiny. This is designed to raise the reader’s expectations so that the revelation of humanity’s decadence will come as an even greater shock.

Wells interpolates the future based on the idea of Darwinian selection. The Eloi and the Morlocks were Wells’s interpretation of the future of two diverging strains—the privileged elite and the working class. Although the Morlocks are physically the more repugnant, both branches of humanity are equally monstrous. One group has become a hideous race of underground dwellers who prey upon the others in a form of quasi-cannibalism, while the others are immature, thoughtless creatures who have abandoned all hope of progress and live in a perpetual hedonistic haze, blind to the dangers around them. Neither the Eloi or the Morlocks feel strong emotional attachments, and both appear content to maintain the

status quo forever, although clearly the decline is still under way. Wells, who was an outspoken socialist, was suggesting that the disparity between the two classes in the contemporary world could, if taken to its inevitable conclusion, destroy all feelings of humanity.

At one point the traveler notes the absence of individual homes and speculates that some form of communism has been carried to its ultimate end, but it is in fact capitalism that has evolved into this future society. Wells is suggesting that when allowed to proceed without restraint, communism and capitalism are equally impractical. Through his protagonist he speculates on further consequences of specialized societal evolution. If humanity were to progress to the point where all hardships were eliminated—disease, poverty, bad weather, warfare—would the result be something like the Eloi, who were weak, defenseless, and without purpose? Is it the opposition people overcome that defines who they are? "We are kept keen on the grindstone of pain and necessity." He concludes that human intellect has committed suicide, destroyed by its own success. "There is no intelligence where there is no change and no need of change."

Various thematic interpretations are possible in addition to those already mentioned, including the disparity between pastoral and industrial societies and the duality of the human personality, which in this case splits like Jekyll and Hyde into two distinct fragments. A portion of the original serialization was left out when the story first appeared in book form and has been published separately under various titles, including "The Grey Man," "The Missing Pages," and "The Final Man." It is the account of the traveler's stop long after the time of the Eloi and Morlocks, where he discovers humanity has devolved into a lower life-form and sees what appears to be a giant centipede. This section has been restored in some recent editions. At least one version has been published in book form with a new ending, added by an unknown author, in which the time traveler encounters another future society. Several sequels by other writers include *The Return of the Time Machine* (1946) by Egon Friedell, *Morlock Night* by K. W. Jeter (1979), and *The Time Ships* (1995) by Stephen Baxter.

### "To Build a Fire" (1908) Jack London

Although he died at the age of 40, Jack London (1876–1916) left behind a significant body of fiction and is regarded as one of the most important of early American novelists. London led a varied and exciting life, and among his early experiences was participation in the Klondike gold rush, which inspired several of his works, including this, his most famous short story. It first appeared in 1902, but the version with which readers are most familiar is the massively revised version, which first appeared in 1908.

In the earlier version, Tom Vincent is traveling alone through the Klondike during the worst part of winter, a 30-mile trek on a well-marked route. Although he is used to the cold, it seems unusually severe, and although he is not initially alarmed by this observation, he becomes more aware of his surroundings. His real danger begins when he inadvertently falls through a thin layer of ice into a pool of water, only a foot deep and not enough to drown him, but enough to soak his boots and feet thoroughly. The probability of frostbite forces him to stop in order to build a fire and dry his feet, but what should have been a simple task proves more difficult than expected.

Building the fire requires him to remove his bulky mittens, which increases the chance of frostbite. He manages to get his first fire started, but a tree limb shifts and snow cascades down, quenching it. Methodically he sets about rebuilding it, but his hands are so cold that he loses his next match, and his shaking hands make igniting the next even more difficult. His fingers stiffen and foil him repeatedly, so he resorts to running to a nearby camp, hoping to find help, but discovers that it has been deserted. In desperation he manages to start a fire at last, although he burns his hands badly in the process. He recovers and finishes his journey, having learned never to travel through the wilderness alone.

In the revised and more familiar version the protagonist is never named, but the plot is very much the same. The major change is that he is accompanied by a dog this time, also unnamed. The traveler has more warning signs of the seriousness of the freeze, which numbs his hands so quickly that he cannot use them more than a few seconds outside his mittens. He begins to feel some

alarm, but successfully builds a fire that restores his self-confidence. His distance from and contempt for the natural world is emphasized when readers are told that there is no affection between him and the dog, that he treats it as a slave or piece of property rather than a living being.

The accident occurs in much the same way as in the original version. Soaked to the knees, he knows that a new fire is necessary to warm and dry his boots and trousers. An expanded account of the original sequence follows—frozen fingers unable to manipulate the matches to rekindle a new fire after the first is buried under fallen snow. The man decides to kill the dog and warm his hands in its body, but the animal suspects something is wrong and will not let him approach. Panic sets in, followed by flight, and eventually resignation. Unlike Tom Vincent, the nameless protagonist this time does not escape the fate he has brought upon himself.

### Critical Analysis

Sometimes a very routine situation can be turned into an adventure. Vincent and his nameless successor are confident of their ability to make the 30-mile trek alone because the natural world does not frighten them. Like the protagonist of “LEININGEN VERSUS THE ANTS,” they believe that nature has been provided for the use of humanity. “He was its master . . . He was a man, a master of things.” The author promptly proves to the reader that this confidence is illusory, that man is just as subject to the whims of nature as is any other living creature.

London dropped the character’s name for the 1908 revision, possibly to underscore his universality. He is representative of all of humankind, convinced of superiority but deluded by belief in the conquest of the natural world. The contrast between the prose styles in the two versions is dramatic. The original version is written with sparse description, short sentences and paragraphs, the bare bones of a narrative. The revision contains rich imagery and metaphorical language. It also shows a good deal more about the character. It is his first winter in the Yukon, and he is a plodding, unimaginative man. “He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances.”

The author is more explicit about his theme, pointing out that his protagonist has no concept of human frailty and has lost his natural instincts for survival. While the dog recognizes that the weather is too dangerous to be out in the open, the man is completely unaware of the threat. The survival instincts still possessed by lower animals are illustrated again when the dog senses that the man means to kill him and keeps his distance. Readers are also provided with much more insight into the man’s mental processes, his growing detachment from reality and from his own body. While the earlier story ends with the protagonist fortuitously saving himself by a final desperate effort, the nameless character in the revision is doomed by his own pride and foolishness, having learned his lesson far too late to benefit from it.

While some critics contend that it is panic and loss of control that is responsible for his death, it seems more likely that London was indicting human pride, the artificial distancing from the natural world, and the character’s refusal to pay heed to the advice of more experienced men who had warned him not to travel alone. Ignorance seems to be the chief villain, rather than lack of self-control.

### *Treasure Island* (1883)

#### Robert Louis Stevenson

This is the best-known of the several adventure novels by Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94), whose work was long dismissed as fiction for children and who has only recently been recognized as a talented novelist. *Treasure Island*, set sometime during the 18th century, provided the basis for several motion pictures. The character of Long John Silver briefly had his own television series, and a chain of seafood restaurants was named for him. The novel was originally serialized under the title *The Sea Cook, or Treasure Island*.

Young Jim Hawkins is the son of the owners of the Admiral Benbow Inn, where a mysterious and unpleasant stranger known only as the captain takes rooms and pays Jim to keep his eyes out for a sailor with a wooden leg. The captain regales other visitors with stories of piracy and adventure on the Spanish Main. Weeks pass before another man,

Black Dog, arrives and confronts the captain, which results in a brief fight and Black Dog's escape. The captain, whose name is Billy Bones, has a stroke, partially recovers, then dies after a blind beggar named Pew comes looking for him. Jim and his mother flee when a band of buccaneers led by Pew arrives, and Jim is by chance wearing the captain's coat in which is concealed a treasure map, which is the only reason that the intruders fail to find what they were looking for. They are frightened off by a band of horsemen, one of whom accidentally runs down and kills Pew.

Jim finds the map, which includes directions to the location of the treasure trove of Captain Flint, a famous privateer. Jim takes it to Squire Trelawney, who recognizes what it is and organizes an expedition to recover the treasure, with Jim as cabin boy. Unfortunately, Trelawney is neither capable of keeping a secret nor of judging men well, because he employs a one-legged tavern keeper named Long John Silver to select a crew for him.

Captain Smollett, who commands their ship, is unhappy with the arrangements and almost resigns. The crew seems to know too much about where they are going, and the arrangements for the armaments and quartering are unusual. Once they are under way, the first mate proves unreliable and frequently drunk until one night when he mysteriously disappears, believed to have fallen overboard. Long John has come along as the ship's cook. Jim then receives the first hint of treachery when he overhears Long John talking to some of the crew members about his past as a pirate and his present intention to seize control of the ship. Jim warns the others, but since they are seven against 19, they decide to conceal their knowledge for the time being.

They arrive at Treasure Island, actually Skeleton Island, without further incident. The crew is sent ashore to relax for the day, and Jim goes with them. There he witnesses the murder of one loyal crew member and learns of the death of a second. Fleeing the scene, he runs into Ben Gunn, who has been marooned alone on the island for the previous three years and who knows Long John Silver.

Trelawney and the other loyal members of the crew subdue the few mutineers who remained aboard the ship and begin transporting weapons

and supplies to a blockhouse on the island, a small fortress apparently built by pirates. They are discovered in the act, and gunfire is exchanged, with losses on both sides. Although they make efforts to secure their position, another attack by the pirates leaves them with dead and wounded, their situation desperate. They also learn that Ben Gunn has struck a blow and killed one of their enemies, an act Long John Silver assumes was done by one of their party.

Jim sneaks off to find Ben Gunn's small boat and then slips out after dark, intending to cut the anchor chain on their ship, hoping it might run aground and strand the pirates. Through a series of intermixed mishaps and good luck, Jim finds himself aboard the ship after the two watchmen have a drunken fight that leaves one of them dying and the other severely wounded. He appoints himself acting captain and manages to avoid wrecking the ship, then escapes a vicious attack by the surviving pirate and kills him in self-defense. After securing the ship in a hidden cove, he returns to the blockhouse, but finds it occupied by the six remaining pirates, who take him prisoner.

Long John is having difficulty maintaining his control over the others. He claims to have taken a liking to Jim and attempts to recruit him to his side in order to keep the others in line. There is no sign of Jim's friends, but he is told that they are alive and elsewhere on the island. The other pirates depose Long John as their captain, but when he produces the treasure map, somehow extracted from Trelawney, they defer to him again, though grudgingly. They are ambushed at the site of the treasure, which Gunn had found and moved earlier, and the last of them runs off to be left behind when Jim and the others load the treasure aboard their ship and return to England. Long John accompanies them partway, but jumps ship at one of the ports where they stop and is never heard of again.

### Critical Analysis

Many of the story devices associated with pirates—treasure maps, buried loot, wooden legs, talking birds, and others—were created in or popularized by Stevenson's novel. Although published as a serial, and apparently begun without a specific climax in mind, the story holds together quite well and is

considerably less episodic than might have been the case. The foreshadowing by which Long John Silver is suspected from the very outset—since Billy Bones feared a man with a wooden leg—adds to the suspense. Jim’s belief that Silver could not possibly have been a buccaneer, even after he sees him with one of the men who broke into the inn, is not entirely convincing. Not even the man’s parrot, named after the very pirate whose treasure they are seeking, causes him to be suspicious.

Although his choices always have good results, Jim frequently makes dubious decisions. He impulsively goes ashore with the pirates without checking with Trelawney, although that provides the opportunity for him to meet Ben Gunn. Later he leaves his post while defending the compound, then climbs over the wall and runs off to find Gunn’s boat without telling anyone. He uses his own judgment to try to cut the anchor rope and then adopts an even riskier plan to eavesdrop on the pirates who are still aboard. He also benefits from coincidence. The drifting ship happens to cross his path just when he needs to escape the small boat that is now foundering, and when he manages to get aboard, he discovers that the two watchmen have conveniently fought and incapacitated each other.

Long John Silver is in some ways an admirable rogue, but he is at heart a treacherous killer, and his actions to help Jim in the closing chapters are clearly meant to serve his own self-interest rather than an indication of any sense of honor or genuine affection for the boy. This makes Dr. Livesey’s statement that he will do his best to save him from being hanged as a pirate dubiously credible, since the doctor clearly knows the truth. Jim himself observes that his loyalties would shift immediately if the situation changed to favor further outrages. He was, however, one of the most complex villains to have been created in adventure fiction at the time, and many critics commented on his ambiguous moral stances. One might also question the motives of Squire Trelawney and the others, who were equally determined to enrich themselves with stolen property. Paradoxically, once they reach Treasure Island, money proves to be the least valuable of their possessions. Ben Gunn, who has spent weeks or months moving the treasure, has not had a single benefit from it, and,

once returned to England, he disposes of his share within a few days. Hawkins may have learned his lesson, however, because in the closing pages he refers to more treasure still remaining on the island and vows that nothing would induce him to return and claim it.

Although Jim Hawkins is the narrator of most of the story, the middle section of the book has an awkward shift in narrators from Jim to Dr. Livesey so that Stevenson can write a direct account of their escape from the ship. The usual construction at the time would have been for the doctor to relate his adventures to Jim later, after they were reunited.

*Treasure Island* is both a coming-of-age and a quest story. The story is filled with familiar phrases, including “shiver me timbers” and references to the “dead man’s chest” and has undoubtedly been the single most influence on the modern perception of pirates in books and films. Captain Flint was completely fictional, as were his exploits, but many of the other references to famous pirates are historically accurate. Although Stevenson never provides an actual date for the story, it likely occurred between 1757 and 1760. Several sequels or related novels by other authors include *The Adventures of Ben Gunn* (1956) by R. F. Delderfield, *Back to Treasure Island* (1935) by H. A. Calahan, and *Flint’s Story* (1972) by Leonard Wibberley. A. D. Howden Smith wrote a prequel, *Porto Bello Gold* (1924).

### ***The Treasure of Sierra Madre* (1927)**

#### **B. Traven**

B. Traven was the name used by the author of more than a dozen novels published during the 1920s and early 1930s, of which this is the most famous. Numerous theories about the author’s true identity deepen a mystery that has been complicated by the fact that most of his work was published in German before it appeared in English, and because the author lived for several years in Mexico, although he is believed to have been from the United States originally. The most likely theory is that he was an American writer named Berick Traven Torsvan, who moved to Mexico for reasons of his own. Whether the original manuscripts were written in German or English has never been determined.

Dobbs, one of the three protagonists, is a destitute American expatriate living in Mexico. Although he is perfectly willing to work, there are no jobs available and he is reduced to begging in the street. He and another man try to find employment in the oil fields, experience some light adventure, and return after discovering that there is no work available there either. Dobbs then finds a temporary job setting up an oil camp for a dishonest entrepreneur named McCormick, but only receives his pay after threatening the man's life.

Dobbs next encounters an old prospector who regales him with the story of the Green Mountain Mine, a lost gold mine originally dug by the Aztecs and believed to be cursed. According to his story, a group of men relocated the mine comparatively recently, but had a falling-out even before they had begun to dig up the gold, resulting in several deaths. One man, Harry Tilton, eventually left with his share, but the others were all killed by the local Indians. The lone survivor was pressured into leading another expedition 30 years later, but he was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to locate the ruins.

Inspired, Dobbs and another man named Curtin raise the money to help finance the prospector for another expedition. They do eventually find a reasonable lode of gold, but both newcomers are appalled by the amount of work that is necessary to extract it from the soil. The prospector also seems paranoid about the possibility that someone will steal their claim, but they defer to him because of his experience. The paranoia spreads rapidly among them, and when Dobbs is rescued after a cave-in, he irrationally begins to question their motives since the other two would have been able to split his share if he had died. Their quarreling increases steadily, then begins to ebb when they decide to remain only for a few weeks more before returning to sell their gold.

Their plans are disrupted by the arrival of a stranger named Lacaud, another American, who correctly sees through their cover story and knows they are mining gold. He believes there is a much richer vein than the one they have been working and convinces them to remain a week as his partners pending proof of his theory. The same day they spot a group of bandits headed toward their

campsite, probably intending to steal their guns and ammunition. The main story is suspended for some time to outline the history of these particular bandits and how the government deals with outlaws.

The bandits arrive at the camp, but the four men have prepared defensive positions in a trench and beat off the initial attack. Despite their efforts, it appears that they only have hours to live when a government force shows up just in time to chase off the bandits. The three original partners then set about disassembling their mine workings so that they cannot be detected, while Lacaud searches for what he is convinced is a major strike in the area. Their near escape confirms their intention to leave. Along the way the prospector helps a sick boy and is compelled against his will to remain in the village so that the father can show his gratitude. He agrees to let the others continue, with their promise that they will deposit the proceeds from his share in a bank under his name.

Curtin and Dobbs begin to quarrel, and it escalates to the point where they realize that only one of them will survive the journey. Eventually Dobbs shoots Curtin, but he is unable to locate the body the following morning and begins to doubt whether he was actually dead. Despite hallucinations and morbid fears, Dobbs manages to get the train of burros to the outskirts of the town they had been hoping to reach, only to be killed himself by three thieves who waylay him on the road. Since it is dark, the thieves believe the bags of gold dust are mining samples and discard them. The thieves are themselves trapped when they try to sell the burros and equipment and a local official becomes suspicious. Curtin survived after all and is reunited with his remaining partner, and they discover that the loss of their fortune is not so great a tragedy as it might have been.

Several of Traven's other novels involve some degree of adventure. In *The Death Ship* (1926) a young sailor realizes that the decrepit ship on which he is serving is more valuable to its owners if it sinks than if it remains afloat, a device HAMMOND INNES would use again in *The WRECK OF THE MARY DEARE* (1959). *March to the Monteria* (1933) and *The Rebellion of the Hanged* (1936) are both part of Traven's Jungle series, which is set

amid the turmoil of Mexico's political and social struggles during the early 20th century. The best of his short stories were collected in *The Night Visitor and Other Stories* (1966).

### Critical Analysis

Traven was strongly influenced by Marxist philosophy, hinted at in the opening chapter and more openly expressed as the novel progresses. The digressions into social commentary are occasionally intrusive but generally short. Dobbs is destitute and without prospect, and the omniscient narrator uses his plight to comment sardonically on the claim that any man can find a job if he really wants one, as well as pointing out that in order to acquire money in a capitalist society, one needs to have some to start with. The critique of capitalism is then illustrated further by a lengthy description of the squalid hotel where Dobbs spends the night—which pitilessly exploits the poorly paid workers who live in crowded, unsanitary shacks adjacent to the main building—and a description of the current boom-and-bust oil industry, whose ramifications make valuable property worthless and vice versa in a matter of days. Traven's sympathy for the working class is reflected in his discussion of the hotel's long-term residents, who have developed a strict and efficient code of conduct among themselves.

When Dobbs reaches oil country, he sees further evidence of the wastefulness of the capitalist system. Oil is deliberately being spilled because its scarcity means that the price will rise, and the spillage has polluted the ground just as fumes from the oil fields have poisoned the air. Nor does he confine his criticism to large-scale capitalists. McCormick, a small-time contractor who pretends to feel great empathy for his employees, withholds their pay and exploits them ruthlessly. When the old prospector is talking about gold, he asserts that it undermines the reasoning powers, that a man with gold always wants to accumulate a little more, even if he already has more than he could possibly use. Gold is, in this context, representative of all wealth and reflects Traven's view that wealth inevitably corrupts. Even Tilton, who was content with a relatively small share from the lost mine, ultimately

suffers torture and the loss of his property because of that same gold. What wealth fails to corrupt, it destroys in other ways.

Dobbs and his companions begin to change as soon as they find the gold. For the first time they have property that might be stolen from them. The sense of camaraderie they felt for their fellows when they were poor is replaced by concern about the security of what they own, and "their proletarian brethren were now enemies." More important, they had "reached the first step by which man becomes the slave of his property." The corrupting power of wealth is underscored again when the author observes that "gold is oftener bathed in human blood than hot suds." Later, using the voice of a local chieftain, "gold makes no one happy." After providing a lurid account of the robbery of a train by murderous bandits, the author relates that many relatives of the victims went insane or committed suicide because while they could deal with a natural disaster, death as a by-product of material gain brings out the worst in people, even the victims.

Nor does Traven spare other institutions. He compares the bandits to the government and concludes that there is little to distinguish between them and that sometimes the same individuals can be found among both groups. The Roman Catholic Church has, in his view, been more interested in material gain in the Americas than in saving souls, and the bandits in fact claim to serve Christ, although they lack a clear understanding of who he is. Corporate officers he characterizes as blatant, though clever thieves. The story is shaped to support Traven's anticapitalistic convictions, but the case is sometimes overstated.

### Treece, Henry (1911–1966)

Although British writer Henry Treece was also a noted poet, he is now remembered almost entirely for his historical novels. His first noteworthy adventure story was *The Savage Warriors* (1952, also published as *The Dark Island*), which takes place during the Roman occupation of the British Isles, a period of history to which he returned several times. The story involves the conflict between one contingent of the Roman garrison and the local tribes of Celts,

whom Treece depicts as cruel, violent, and uncivilized, though he acknowledges their courage and martial skills. He would explore this period further in *Legions of the Eagle* (1954) and elsewhere, in some cases toning down the details to make his stories acceptable for younger readers. *The Invaders* (1956, also published as *The Golden Strangers*) considers an earlier invasion showing battles between the native Celts and Viking warriors who initially plundered the coast but later sought to extend their control into the interior.

*The Great Captains* (1956) is an unusual quasi-ARTHURIAN ADVENTURE set in ancient Britain. Treece was attempting to create a plausible historical situation that could have given rise to the legend of King Arthur and Camelot, although his characters have different names and the events are dramatically different. *The Pagan Queen* (1958, also published as *Red Queen, White Queen*) describes the rule of Queen Boudicca, a historical figure who became legendary for leading the fight against the Roman invaders. Her uprising cost the lives of more than 70,000 Romans and their sympathizers, and her rebellion was suppressed only with great difficulty. In Treece's story a particular Roman is chosen to assassinate her but is swayed from his path when he falls in love with a Celtic woman. This was the best of his early novels.

Treece diverged from his usual subject matter to write a sequel to Defoe's classic, *ROBINSON CRUSOE* (1719), but *The Return of Robinson Crusoe* (1958) is not one of his better works. He also wrote two Viking trilogies for younger readers, the first consisting of *Viking's Dawn* (1955), *The Road to Miklagard* (1957), and *Viking's Sunset* (1960), and the second *Hounds of the King* (1955), *Man With a Sword* (1962) and *The Last of the Vikings* (1964, also published as *The Last Viking*), the final volume of which takes place at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. *The Master of Badger's Hall* (1959) was set during the Regency period. A professional boxer becomes romantically involved with a woman of noble birth during the reign of King George III, with uncomfortable consequences for them both. Several other novels were set in later historical periods, including *The Bombard* (1959) and *Wickham and the Armada* (1959), but Treece did not seem as comfortable with the settings when he moved away from the ancient world.

Treece expanded his field of interest to southern Europe in *Jason* (1961), another realistic interpretation of a famous legend. *The Amber Princess* (1963), one of his most popular works, also takes place in ancient Greece. The Trojan War has just ended, and the survivors are readjusting to a rather altered world. The story focuses primarily on Electra, her exposure to the intrigues and corruption that plagued the kingdom of Mycenae, and the eventual downfall of that kingdom. *The Eagle King* (1964, also published as *Oedipus*) takes place in Homeric Greece. It is structured as a blend of a great quest and a coming-of-age story, with an unlikely man from humble origins aspiring to become a great warrior. The story is based on the legend of Oedipus and his obsession with his mother.

*The Burning of Njal* (1964) is another Viking story targeted at a younger audience. Set during the 11th century, it centers on the tension and conflict caused by the introduction of Christianity, which resulted in the severing of old bonds of loyalty and the eruption of bloody feuds between families. *Splintered Sword* (1965) is very similar, the story of a young Viking man who matures when he runs off to fight in a war. *The Green Man* (1966) is Treece's best-known novel, which marked his return to British history, this time during the 6th century. The tensions between the druids and the Christians have begun to drive wedges into the previously homogeneous culture. Treece hints at the possibility that druidic powers drew on genuine magic, and the novel is sometimes considered a fantasy, although he provides ambiguous explanations and his intention is unclear. His last few novels were relatively minor.

### Critical Analysis

Henry Treece's historical novels—like those of Harold Lamb—are historically accurate and avoid romanticizing the past. The cultures he describes in his adult novels are primitive, violent, corrupt, and unforgiving of weakness. Although this commentary is muted in the young adult fiction, he was otherwise historically accurate when writing for either audience. Although most of his fiction is currently out of print, several of the novels are minor classics, including *The Pagan Queen*, *The Amber Princess*, and *The Green Man*.

## true-life adventures

Although this book is about fictional adventures, it is appropriate to mention that some of the most thrilling and well-written adventure stories are true accounts, particularly those written by the same people who experienced them. These are tales of explorers, professional soldiers, scientists, and others whose exciting exploits have an added thrill because they really happened. Thousands of books by other authors recount the adventures of real people, but the ones mentioned below were written entirely or at least in part by the people who actually experienced them.

Many such books consist of journals kept by explorers, scientists, or adventurers, which have often become a part of the historical record. President Thomas Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis and William Clark on an expedition to explore the western half of North America early in the 19th century, and the journals kept by both men have been in print continuously since their original publication. Similarly Francis Parkman wrote accounts of his experiences in the American Northwest during the 1840s and published them as *The Oregon Trail* (1847). During the 18th century Captain James Cook explored the South Pacific, discovered Australia, and visited various other islands. His journals were published and have remained popular ever since. Jacques Cartier's journals of his exploration of the coast of Canada are also available. Richard Henry Dana spent two years at sea on a voyage around Cape Horn, during which he kept a detailed diary that eventually became the basis of a book, *Two Years before the Mast* (1840). His account was an influence on Herman Melville's novel *White-Jacket* (1850) and is one of the classic descriptions of life at sea during the 19th century.

Eyewitness accounts of battles and tales of survival in extreme conditions during a war have resulted in such a large number of excellent true adventure stories, it is possible to suggest only a few here. Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall, authors of *MUTINY ON THE BOUNTY* (1932), met while they were serving as pilots in the Lafayette Escadrille for France during World War I and wrote an account of their experiences titled *Falcons of France* (1929). William Bligh, the captain removed

from his position on the *Bounty*, wrote his own memoirs, which were published in 1790.

Among the many memoirs by individuals who fought in World War II is *The Raft* (1942) by Robert Trumbull, which recounts the author's experiences drifting on a raft in the Pacific with two other men for more than a month before they were rescued. Among the most famous is *God Is My Co-Pilot* (1943) by Robert Lee Scott Jr, which deals with the air war in the Pacific, as does *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (1943) by Ted W. Lawson. There were also accounts of that battle by Japanese pilots who survived the war, including *Samurai* (1957) by Saburo Sakai and *Kamikaze!* (1957) by Yasuo Kuwahara and Gordon T. Allred. British writer Robert J. Crisp wrote two excellent accounts of his service in North Africa fighting Rommel, *Brazen Chariots* (1960) and *The Gods Were Neutral* (1961).

Some autobiographies are, because of their subject matter, stories of adventure as well as historical accounts. John Masters, who wrote *NIGHTRUNNERS OF BENGAL* (1951) and other exciting tales of British India, served there as an officer while a young man and retells many of his adventures in *Bugles and A Tiger* (1955). Robert Ruark reminisces about his life as a big game hunter in Africa in *Horn of the Hunter* (1953) as does Ernest Hemingway in *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935). Linda Greenlaw describes her surprisingly exciting life as captain of a boat that specialized in hunting swordfish in *The Hungry Ocean* (1999).

Not all true-life adventures are connected with historical events. Thor Heyerdahl was a Norwegian scientist whose most famous book is *Kon-Tiki* (1950). Heyerdahl believed that it was possible for the inhabitants of South America to have sailed to Polynesia and proved his point by constructing a raft using techniques appropriate to that era and successfully making a voyage to Tuamotu. The book is an account of the experiences of the men on the raft. His later *Aku-Aku, the Secret of Easter Island* (1958) is more sedate but includes some exciting accounts of explorations of underground chambers. Sir Edmund Hillary, who led the first expedition to climb Mount Everest, wrote two accounts of his adventures, *High Adventure* and *View from the Summit*. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *NIGHT FLIGHT* (1931), was a pioneer aviator himself and

wrote an exciting retelling of his adventures flying in Africa and South America in *Wind, Sand, and Stars* (1939). Charles Lindbergh wrote an account of the first New York to Paris flight in *We* (1927) and later in *The Spirit of St. Louis* (1953).

Not all adventures involve physical danger. In *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (1962) John Steinbeck describes his experiences driving back and forth across the country, accompanied only by his dog. Peter S. Beagle wrote a similar account in *I See by My Outfit* (1965), substituting a motorcycle for Steinbeck's camper. Adventure is, after all, in the eye and thoughts of the reader.

### ***Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*** (1870) Jules Verne

The story of Captain Nemo and his submarine, the *Nautilus*, is one of the best-known novel of French writer JULES VERNE (1828–1905), who is considered one of the “fathers” of science fiction, although the majority of his work was straightforward adventure and involved science only peripherally, if at all. The idea of a single brilliant man waging a private war against the people who make war possible was one he would use again in *Robur the Conqueror* (1886). He would also bring Nemo back for a brief appearance in *The Mysterious Island* (1885).

The story opens with a series of reports of a strange creature sighted in the Atlantic Ocean, which causes considerable alarm aboard passing ships. Professor Pierre Arronax, a French academic, believes the phenomenon to be some species of previously unknown variety of the narwhal or similar fish and accepts an offer to accompany an American naval expedition to track down and kill the creature. Another member of the company is Ned Land, a Canadian harpooner whose skills it is hoped will prove useful. After a lengthy search they encounter the mysterious beast and attack it, but their ship is disabled in the encounter, and Land, Arronax, and the latter's servant are left adrift until they are rescued by the crew of the *Nautilus*, an elaborate submersible vessel commanded by Captain Nemo. They are given the freedom of the ship, but cautioned that they will be held prisoner indefinitely to prevent them from providing information about the vessel's existence to the outside world.

After receiving a tour of the ship, Arronax is invited to don a deep-sea suit and take a walk on the bed of the ocean. The prisoners are also allowed to hunt meat on a remote part of New Guinea, where they are attacked and chased back to the *Nautilus*. When the natives try to board the ship, they are repelled by electric charges passed through the hull. A short time later Arronax and his companions are confined to quarters and drugged for a brief period with no explanation, after which Arronax discovers that one member of the crew has somehow received a fatal head wound.

They face additional minor adventures, during one of which Land saves Nemo from a shark. They pass into the Mediterranean, using an otherwise unknown tunnel beneath the Suez, observe an undersea eruption, and later find themselves walking among the ruins of sunken Atlantis and visiting the open sea at the South Pole after a perilous journey under the ice. Land proposes that they attempt to escape, but Arronax is not so certain that he wishes to leave. He eventually is talked into making the attempt, but their initial effort is thwarted by chance, and instead they are taken to Nemo's secret base and mining camp inside an extinct volcano.

They survive a pitched battle with a giant squid and witness another encounter with a warship, after which Nemo becomes deeply depressed and apparently drives the *Nautilus* deliberately into a monstrous whirlpool near Norway. The three prisoners escape in the nick of time, and the submarine is, presumably, destroyed although readers of *The Mysterious Island* find out that this was not the case.

#### **Critical Analysis**

Although Verne believed in the rule of law and recognized that Nemo's methods are wrong, he clearly was in sympathy with Nemo's revulsion toward some aspects of modern civilization. During his first meeting with the rescued men Nemo is accused by Arronax of behaving in an uncivilized manner, a charge that he freely admits, expressing his disdain for the laws of nations and insisting that they do not apply to him. Verne is in fact so fond of Nemo that he brought him back briefly in *The Mysterious Island* (1875) and created an airborne version of

the same character in *Robur the Conqueror* (1886). There is also a murderous submarine commander in *For the Flag* (1896), although he is much less admirable a character. At the same time Verne realized that a creature like Nemo would not be tolerated in the modern world, that sooner or later he would bring about his own downfall, tragic as that might be. The origins of Nemo and his crew are never explained. They speak among themselves in a language that none of the involuntary passengers can recognize, and they never speak of their past. Nemo relishes life under the sea because he is beyond the reach of what he considers the arbitrary laws of man.

Nemo's disdain is reinforced on more than one occasion, notably when the landing party is assaulted by savages in New Guinea. Nemo professes to see no difference between their savagery and that of so-called civilized men. As if to illustrate his point, he is careful to rebuff the attack of the savages without doing any serious injury to the raiding party. He is inconsistent in this regard, however, as he shows no hesitation in attacking warships from time to time, with the same or even less justification. Nemo attempts to differentiate between bellicose and suppressed peoples, but his arguments are transparently self-serving. There are other contradictions as well. He keeps the three men as prisoners aboard the *Nautilus* so that they cannot reveal to the world the existence of the submersible, but when he attacked their ship, he left its crew alive, and in the closing chapters it is evident that there

has not been any secret for some time. Since Nemo has never revealed his true name or origin, or that of any of his crew, there is no good reason for him to act as he has done, except as a convenient plot device. His policy of attacking warships also contradicts his contention that he no longer has anything to do with the surface world.

The name *Nemo* is Latin for "no man," which is appropriate given the captain's desire to separate himself from the human race. The author also uses Nemo as a proxy through whom he presents great chunks of maritime lore in the form of lectures to his passengers. Although Verne often meant his books to be instructive as well as entertaining, the digressions occasionally drain some of the narrative suspense out of his work, particularly in this case. He also resorts to coincidence in order to bring his main characters together. The chance that Arronax would happen to have been invited aboard the specific ship that encounters the *Nautilus*, and that they would find it only on the very last day of their mission, strains credulity, but not critically. Nemo sometimes contradicts himself or makes statements that are clearly false. He claims to have utterly cut himself off from the world, but he is still dependent upon it for certain supplies. Had he truly wished to avoid the outside world, he would not have allowed his ship to be so frequently sighted, nor would he have bothered to attack military vessels. These small flaws aside, this remains one of the all-time classic adventures, as well as Verne's most inventive and satisfying novel.

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**“The Valley of Spiders”** (1903) **H. G. Wells**  
British writer Herbert George Wells (1866–1946) wrote two distinct bodies of fiction during his career, sedate novels of contemporary England and speculative adventure stories. He is best remembered for his scientific romances and is considered along with JULES VERNE as one of the “fathers” of modern science fiction. Most of his shorter fiction speculated about the future of science and technology, but occasionally he wrote a straightforward adventure like this one.

“The Valley of Spiders” opens with three men riding in pursuit of another party. Readers never learn the names of anyone in either party or much about their backgrounds, except that two of the pursuers are servants of the third, a domineering man who considers himself a superior being. Their quarry includes a half-caste woman with an injured foot, though later it appears that the arrogant man is infatuated with her and that she has chosen to flee rather than submit to him. Where the story takes place is not revealed, although not encountering any signs of civilization for days suggests Africa or South America. The threesome pauses on the lip of an enormous, wooded valley, then descends, following the poorly concealed trail left by the group they are chasing. None of them is disturbed when they notice that the valley is unnaturally still, like “a painted scene.” The reader, however, is quickly provided with additional clues that something is wrong. There is no breeze at first and a “somber veil of haze” obscures their vision.

Eventually a wind rises, blowing in their faces, and their second warning that something is wrong is the appearance of a wild dog, which runs directly toward them and passes without pausing, entirely ignoring their threatening posture. The horses suddenly become uneasy as well, and the men catch glimpses of other animals in the distance, always in full flight. A few minutes later they catch their first sight of large, white balls of indeterminate nature, blown by the wind in the distance. The first of them pass near by, resembling balls of cobweb, and finally the men begin to sense something is seriously wrong. Their leader, however, is still furious that the woman has spurned his advances and demands that they press onward.

When the first of the fibrous masses reaches their party, they discover that it consists of a kind of web, a container in which hordes of large spiders are concealed and transported. They turn to run at last, but in their confusion there is a collision, and one of their number is unhorsed. Before they can save him, he is overwhelmed by the clinging fibers and fatally bitten by several of the spiders. The other two make a perfunctory effort to come to his rescue, but it is too late and they flee in panic instead. The leader loses his horse and shelters in a ravine until the worst has passed, after which his servant returns. Ashamed of his cowardice, he kills the other man on a pretense to protect his secret. He tries to justify himself later and takes some solace in thinking that the party they pursued must certainly have perished, only to receive evidence at the last that they escaped.

### Critical Analysis

Wells's fiction was frequently colored by his deeply held socialist views, particularly late in his career. He saw society as needlessly artificial and out of touch with the natural world, grossly materialistic and disproportionately dependent on technology and wealth. Wells embedded serious messages in almost all of his fiction, either cautioning against class divisions in *The TIME MACHINE* (1895), the excesses of science in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), the corrupting nature of power in *The Invisible Man* (1897), the stupidity of war in *The War in the Air* (1908), or suggesting how humanity should reshape society more equitably and logically in *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899). It was rare for him to write a story purely for its entertainment value.

The message in "The Valley of the Spiders" is that humans are too quick to assume their superiority to nature, that people ignore the world around them at their peril. This is illustrated not only by the vulnerability of the three men to the spiders but also during an incident in which one of the fleeing men chooses to interfere with the leap his horse is about to make, upsetting their balance. Had he deferred to his mount, he might have successfully outrun the spiders, as did his servant. Wells was not the only writer to make this point. The protagonist of Jack London's "TO BUILD A FIRE" (1902) is contemptuous of the threat of cold weather, and it kills him. In Carl Stephenson's "LEININGEN VERSUS THE ANTS" (1938), a plantation owner refuses to believe that his preparations are not adequate to stave off an army of ants, and that misjudgment nearly kills him as well. From Hemingway's *The OLD MAN AND THE SEA* (1951) to Peter Benchley's *JAWS* (1974), writers have repeatedly maintained that pride usually precedes a fall, sometimes a disastrous one, and that humans are a part of the natural world and not its master.

Nor was this Wells's only story in which human supremacy over nature is called into question. In "The Sea Raiders," an unknown sea creature appears off the coast of England, occasionally attacking people along the shoreline. Dr. Moreau's attempts to master the creation of new forms of life also has disastrous consequences. The Martians in *The War of the Worlds* are defeated not by the efforts of human armies and science but by

nature itself, attacked by a disease against which the invaders have no resistance. Humanity is at the mercy of nature, suggests Wells, surviving only through its tolerance.

### Verne, Jules (1828–1905)

French writer Jules Verne, who was heavily influenced early by Alexandre Dumas, made his literary debut with *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863). Although most of his best-known novels are packaged as science fiction today, they were considered by the author and his readers as just variations of standard adventure stories, of which Verne wrote a good many, with a particular fascination for fantastic journeys. Verne wrote more than 50 novels, although only a fraction of these are well known in the United States. Several were published posthumously, and some were rewritten by Verne's son.

*Five Weeks in a Balloon* incorporates many of the devices that Verne would use repeatedly during his career, most obviously travel by balloon, in this case by a group of people who wish to explore the interior of Africa, which was at the time Verne was writing largely unknown to outsiders. They also hope to discover the source of the Nile River. During their journey the explorers have to accomplish a daring rescue, fend off an attack, and survive a long period becalmed in a desert. The plot is not particularly sophisticated, often relying on coincidences and luck to save the protagonists. As was the case with most of Verne's more famous novels, it was turned into a movie not entirely faithful to its source material.

The following year saw publication of one of Verne's most famous novels, *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864). A group of explorers follow a cryptically marked trail into a volcano that provides access to a vast warren of underground caverns. There they discover a lost world inhabited by primitive humans and prehistoric creatures, a vast lake, and other wonders before finally escaping once more to the surface. Like many of Verne's novels, frequent pauses in the action allow one character or another to launch into a scientific lecture.

Verne turned his imagination in the opposite direction for *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865, also published as *The American Gun Club*). Members

of the Baltimore Gun Club become involved in a bet that can be resolved only by building a gigantic cannon with which to fire a manned capsule to the Moon. Most of the story takes place before the launch, and the end is a cliff-hanger that is resolved in the sequel, *Around the Moon* (1870), in which the three astronauts fail to land on the Moon but successfully return to Earth. The two are often published jointly as *From the Earth to the Moon and a Trip Around It*. In the rivalry between Jules Verne and H. G. Wells about the reasoning used in their respective scientific romances, Verne contended that his method of sending men to the Moon was entirely plausible, but that the antigravity shield of Cavorite that Wells used in *First Men in the Moon* (1901) was pure fantasy. In fact the principles of inertia prove that the passengers would have been killed instantly.

*The Journeys and Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (1866) recounts the story of an expedition to the North Pole. A mutiny threatens to end the mission prematurely, but the explorers escape, reach the pole, and manage to survive despite attacks by bears and bad weather. Although they are eventually rescued, Hatteras is found to be insane. Shipwrecks and castaways are another recurring theme in Verne's novels, appearing again in *In Search of the Castaways* (1867). A shipwrecked party puts a message in a bottle, which results in the formation of a privately financed expedition to locate them. The would-be rescuers have to overcome a traitorous informant before reaching their destination. Their subsequent adventures include capture by the Maori of New Zealand before they finally, almost by chance, find the survivors of the shipwreck and rescue them.

Verne's next novel was his *TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA* (1870). The story of Captain Nemo and his futuristic submarine is one of the most famous in all of literature. Verne did not actually invent the idea of submarines since submersibles were used during the American Civil War, and in fact he named the *Nautilus* after an early prototype built by Robert Fulton. *The Fur Country* (1873) is one of Verne's most underrated novels. A group of explorers are engaged in building an outpost in northern Canada when, after several minor adventures, they are caught in an

earthquake that leaves them shaken and disoriented. During the next few days they observe a number of odd phenomenon that they are unable to explain until they realize that they are situated on a gigantic iceberg that has broken loose and is drifting out into the ocean.

*AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS* (1873) repeats the fabulous bet device first used in *From the Earth to the Moon*. Phileas Fogg must circumnavigate the globe within the time allowed, using a variety of different means of transportation, hampered by the unwanted attentions of a misguided police officer and other troubles. *The Mysterious Island* (1875) is a sequel to both *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* and *In Search of the Castaways*. Another balloon flight takes a group of men from the Civil War-torn United States to a remote island where they eventually find another marooned man, defend themselves from pirates, and survive other dangers, although eventually it is revealed that this is the secret retreat of Captain Nemo, who has intervened to help them.

*Michael Strogoff* (1876) is a historical adventure. The title character is carrying messages for the tsar of Russia when he is captured by Mongol tribesmen from whom, after several escapades, he eventually escapes. *Off on a Comet* (1877, also published as *Hector Servadac*) is the scientifically impossible story of a comet that grazes the Earth, carrying off a few dozen people who form a temporary society before it returns, allowing them to escape. Verne's original version ended with them all dying. *The Begum's Fortune* (1879) is an even less satisfactory book in which a Frenchman and a German share an enormous inheritance, after which each attempts to build a Utopian society—in Oregon for some reason—with the resulting, inevitable, violent conflict between the two. *The Steam House* (1879, which sometimes appears in two volumes as *The Demon of Cawnpore* and *Tigers and Traitors*) features a steam-driven mechanical elephant that pulls an elaborate series of modules like train cars across India, fending off bandits, misfits, tigers, and other enemies.

*Eight Hundred Leagues on the Amazon* (1881) presents a different form of transportation, a giant raft. *Robur the Conqueror* (1886, also published as *The Clipper in the Clouds*) and its sequel, *Master*

of the World (1904) present an airborne version of Captain Nemo. With his revolutionary airship Robur intends to bring an end to war by dropping bombs on armies and fortresses. His fate is much the same as that of Nemo, foiled by escaped prisoners who interfere with his operation. *The Purchase of the North Pole* (1889) continues the story begun in *From the Earth to the Moon*, except that this time the Gun Club members want to change the Earth by melting some of the polar ice and using the water to irrigate deserts. Their grandiose and idealistic plans may have sounded plausible at the time, but the result would have been massive ecological damage.

*Carpathian Castle* (1892) is as close as Verne ever came to writing a gothic mystery. A traveler visits a castle in Carpathia and has experiences apparently supernatural that are eventually explained rationally. *Propellor Island* (1895) is set in the future on a gigantic ship that is virtually an island in itself. *For the Flag* (1896, also published as *Facing the Flag*) concerns a man who has invented a superweapon but cannot convince any government that it will work. He is judged insane but eventually is kidnapped by the leader of a sophisticated band of pirates who have more imagination, and even fewer scruples, than government officials. *The Sphinx of the Ice Fields* (1897) is an adventure in Antarctica and is a sequel to *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838) by Edgar Allan Poe. Verne also wrote a sequel to *SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON* (1812) by Johann David Wyss, titled *Second Fatherland* (1900). *The Village in the Treetops* (1901) is a jungle adventure with some peripheral commentary on Darwinism, a lost race of ape men, and other plot twists.

Several of Verne's novels were published after his death. *The Lighthouse at the End of the World* (1905) is a story of piracy and survival under harsh conditions but is inferior to most of his other work. *The Hunt for the Meteor* (1908, also published as *The Chase of the Golden Meteor*) involves the rivalry between two scientists for credit in discovering a new meteor, which is due to hit the Earth. Although there are some elements of adventure, it was primarily a satire on ambition. *The Barsac Mission* (1919) has also appeared in two volumes as *Into the Niger Bend* and *The City in the Sahara*.

A group of scientists venture into unknown Africa for a series of adventures initially in the style of H. Rider Haggard. They find a hidden civilization that uses an advanced technology unknown to the outside world. Verne's speculation about the future of science, while sometimes grossly inaccurate, was always imaginative.

### Critical Analysis

Until recently, Verne was considered a writer of entertainment with no particular literary merit, but more recent translations have suggested that his talents have been long underrated. Many of the early translations of his work are inferior, probably because he was at the time considered a children's author. Although many of Verne's lesser known works have been almost impossible to find for many years, and some had never been translated into English, renewed academic interest has brought several of them back into print, while others have been freshly translated.

### *The Virginian* (1902) Owen Wister

Western writer Owen Wister (1860–1938) was a friend of Theodore Roosevelt and dedicated this, his best book, to the former president. The novel, which is actually a collection of shorter, interrelated pieces, is often cited as the first book to make use of the cowboy as protagonist, but there were actually a good number of earlier dime novels set in the Old West. It was, however, the first "serious" novel of its type. The setting is 1890s Wyoming during the time of the Johnson County War, fought primarily between large and small ranchers over rustling and other issues. The Virginian is a ranch hand who gets caught in the middle of the conflict and who sides with the large ranchers. Although he is the main character, the narrator has the adventure. For the Virginian what happens is simply a normal part of his life and environment.

The story opens with the narrator meeting the Virginian in Medicine Bow, observing his masterly demeanor, and witnessing his clever maneuvering to fleece another man out of his prior claim on one of the rare beds in town. The Virginian has been sent by Judge Henry to escort him on the final leg of his journey. Along the way readers are introduced

to the various concerns of that time and place, considerably less melodramatic at first than would be the case in later western fiction. Considerable thought is given to the selection of a school-teacher, the management of hens, a local rancher is shunned for mistreating his stock, and the narrator learns how the local people deal with the absence of goods and services found in more “civilized” parts. He also observes that virtually everyone is known by a nickname, and he becomes the Tenderfoot, patiently watched over by the Virginian to ensure he comes to no harm.

The main plot begins to develop from two events, a rise in the incidence of cattle rustling and the Virginian mysteriously ending his friendship with Steve, a foreman working for Judge Henry. Wister gradually develops the more melodramatic plot, however, spending several chapters on the Virginian’s romance with Molly, an awkward blend of formality and informality. He is promoted over the other men, leading to some tension, which he handles adroitly.

Eventually the battle with rustling takes center stage. The Virginian becomes one of the leaders of the men who track down and summarily hang offenders, and he is unruffled even when one of his former friends is to be the next victim. He, and the author, accept these acts as examples of necessary frontier justice in a time and place where conventional law was either corrupt or ineffective. The Virginian is wounded by Indians, nursed back to health, and marries Molly. There is a climactic gun battle, and everyone who should live happily ever after does so.

### Critical Analysis

Unlike most subsequent western fiction, *The Virginian* is narrated in the first person, by a newcomer to the West, and has the texture of a Victorian novel rather than the plain prose of authors such as ZANE GREY and Ernest Haycox. The title character is meant to represent a type of person rather than a unique individual, and for that reason he is referred to as “the Virginian” or “the trustworthy man” rather than by a proper name. He speaks the most famous line in the novel, the thinly veiled warning: “When you call me that, smile.”

One of the earliest observations that the protagonist makes upon arriving is that words have different meanings in the West than in the East. Medicine Bow is considered a town in Wyoming, but he considers it an outpost at best. “Dropping in” takes on an entirely different connotation when ranches are so widely separated that it might take a day or more to travel from one to another. Similarly, courting traditions that make sense in New York are inappropriate in the western context, where there are few social events and often long gaps between visits.

Wister believed in an innate human quality that made some people gentlemen, a distinct class superior to the majority. He did not believe that this was a question of bloodlines but rather a random element such that even a man with an unremarkable background and poor prospects could prove to be a superior being. The narrator states that thousands “are born with the chance to master the graces of the type.” This is reinforced by various aspects of the Virginian’s character, particularly his attitude toward literature. Although he was a poor student as a child, he has a deep respect for books as an adult. We are later told that “equality is a great big bluff” and that superior people will inevitably rise to the top. Those who fail might blame their circumstances on bad luck or the ill will of others, but it is their innate qualities that ultimately determine their fate. Wister contends that America consists of two classes of people: “the quality and the equality.” In his view the Declaration of Independence established the inequality of man because it prevented the rise of an arbitrary aristocracy that could consist of superior and inferior types through accidents of birth. The motto of a true democracy, says Wister, should be “let the best man win.” As long as you “treat men as your brothers” they will acknowledge your superiority, if you deserve that acknowledgment.

The Virginian becomes the advocate of the author’s views on a number of subjects. He questions the variety of Christian churches, suggesting that there can only be one kind of “good people” and suggesting that many churchmen are frauds, or at best incompetent. As such, he becomes more archetype than person, and in fact most of the characterizations are either flat or caricatures.

Molly is presented as almost annoyingly coy and uncertain of her own motives.

Wister mixes romantic images with decidedly realistic ones. *The Virginian* is a larger-than-life character, but the description of the sanitary conditions and primitive sleeping arrangements are much more realistic. Many of the tropes of the modern western can be found here—the tense card game, tall stories, frontier justice, the shootout, and awkward love affairs. Moments of light humor crop up as in the discussion of the edibility of frog legs, but the overall tone is serious.

The novel's characterization of the conflict in Wyoming is one-sided and at odds with historical facts. Wister clearly took the part of the large ranchers, ignoring their precipitation of the conflict by barring small ranchers from public land, the murder of several men on the pretense that they were rustlers, and that both parties shared responsibility for the violence. Walter van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox-Bow Incident* (1940), while not specifically referring to the historical incident, serves as a pointed rebuttal to events in *The Virginian*.

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## ***Watership Down* (1972) Richard Adams**

The depiction of animals as intelligent, purposeful creatures has generally been limited to children's fiction, such as *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) by Kenneth Grahame and the more recent Redwall series by Brian Jacques, or for satirical purposes as in *Animal Farm* (1945) by George Orwell. English writer Richard Adams (1920– ) surprised everyone by producing what is essentially an epic quest adventure whose characters are all animals, rabbits in fact, in a novel intended for an adult audience. Adams did not simply create human characters with the physical attributes of animals; he made an effort to incorporate the actual behavior and social life of real rabbits into the story.

The novel takes the form of an epic quest, which begins when one of the rabbits in a large warren has a vision of the imminent destruction of their home. Although the leaders of the community are reluctant to accept the validity of that prediction, a handful set out to search for a new homeland, led by one of their number named Hazel. They eventually settle on a hill called Watership Down and subsequently discover that the vision was accurate, that humans destroyed their original home and scattered their friends and family. Since only male rabbits have reached Watership Down, they contact another warren, hoping to recruit some females, but the rival warren is ruled by General Woundwort, a tyrant who refuses to allow any of his subjects to leave.

Eventually they are able to help several female rabbits escape, and it appears that the new war-

ren will be self-sustaining, but Woundwort is furious and organizes his army for an attack on Watership Down's upstarts. A battle follows in which Woundwort is eventually outwitted by his enemies and defeated. The closing chapters reveal that he has gone insane.

### **Critical Analysis**

The novel had its genesis in a series of separate stories that Adams told to his children before he wrote the full-length version. Although there are occasional episodes that could almost stand alone, the novel is quite unified and only occasionally strays from the main plot. Adams provides details of rabbit lore to give the story a unique feel; for example he indicates that rabbits can only count to four and plays on their limited ability at problem solving and dealing with mechanical devices. There is a surprising amount of differentiation among the characters, particularly given the large number of them, and although this is generally a superimposition of human traits, there is an underlying structure that enables the reader to accept them as rabbits despite their humanlike intelligence. There are a few other animal characters as well, but they are all cast in minor roles. Adams's creation of a rabbit-based mythology provides an additional level of realism.

Several of his later novels, particularly *Shardik* (1974), *The Plague Dogs* (1977), and *The Girl in the Swing* (1980), are noteworthy, but none enjoyed the tremendous success of his first book, perhaps because he never again hit upon such an unusual

premise. A sequel, *Tales from Watership Down* (1996), is a collection of stories set in the same world as his first novel. Some of these take place after the events in the novel, while others are general background material.

Aside from the influence of the novel itself, *Watership Down* has prompted a number of other writers to explore similar possibilities with other animals. One of the most interesting of these is *Duncton Wood* (1980) by William Horwood, which was followed by five sequels, ending with *Duncton Stone* (1996). Horwood adopted some of the same techniques Adams did, applying them to a community of moles. They have human intelligence and a peculiar religion related to the standing stones found in various places in Great Britain. There was an eight-year gap between the first and second novels, but the others followed regularly thereafter, although none of them ever attained the stature of *Watership Down*.

*The Book of the Dun Cow* (1978) by Walter Wangerin Jr. transformed all of the animals on a farm into intelligent creatures and created a society for them, not nearly as well grounded in actual animal behavior. The author added a sequel, *The Book of Sorrows*, in 1985. A similar story involving cats is *Tailchaser's Song* (1985) by Tad Williams, in which a single cat sets out on a quest to discover the fate of missing friends. Like Adams, Williams created a detailed system of myth and legends for his feline characters.

Garry Kilworth has made use of a variety of animals in similar fashion. *Frost Dancers: A Story of Hares* (1992) is the story of a rabbit who must adjust to a new environment. *House of Tribes* (1995) is about a community of mice. *The Foxes of First Dark* (1990) tells the story of a vixen adjusting to the loss of her mate, and *Midnight's Sun: A Story of Wolves* (1990) does the same for a wolf accompanying a man across a frozen wasteland. Kilworth is also the author of the Welkin Weasel series, which began with *Thunder Oak* (1997) and has been extended to six volumes, ending with *Heastward Ho!* (2003). Writing as Gabriel King, M. John Harrison and Jane Johnson have written heroic quest stories involving cats, including *The Wild Road* (1997) and *The Golden Cat* (1998). *One for Sorrow, Two for Joy* (2002) by Clive Woodall describes warfare

between two species of intelligent birds. Although there is clearly a limited audience for this kind of adventure story, particularly among adult readers, their capacity to examine human frailties projected onto a rather different context contributes to their periodic popularity.

### **Wheatley, Dennis** (1897–1977)

Although his reputation has dimmed during the years since his death, British writer Dennis Wheatley was a prolific and extremely popular writer of thrillers, both in contemporary and historical settings, adventure novels, stories of espionage, and occasional detective stories. Many of his novels are parts of series, including the Gregory Sallust books set during World War II, the Julian Day spy novels, a sequence set against the backdrop of the French Revolution featuring Roger Brook, and a series of occult adventures involving the Duke du Richleau and his friends.

Wheatley's first novel, *The Forbidden Territory* (1933) introduced the Duke de Richleau, who travels into Soviet Russia to rescue an old friend who was caught and imprisoned while searching for a treasure lost during the communist takeover. It was an immediate success and became an early Alfred Hitchcock film, *Forbidden Territory* (1939). Wheatley promptly followed up with the less successful *Such Power Is Dangerous* (1933), in which a group of financiers plot to take over the world. Gregory Sallust made his debut in *Black August* (1934), a story of nationwide panic and high adventure during the 1930s. Sallust was featured in six more novels during the 1940s, none of which are among Wheatley's best work. Wheatley had, however, firmly established himself as one of the most popular writers in Great Britain.

*The Devil Rides Out* (1934) proved to be the most popular of his early novels. The Duke de Richleau returns to help rescue two people who are about to be sacrificed by a satanic cult. With some genuine supernatural content, the bulk of the story is an exciting duel of wits between the duke and the leader of the cult. *The Eunuch of Stamboul* (1935) is a spy thriller in which a British agent foils a plot to destabilize the government of Turkey. *They Found Atlantis* (1936) involves a search for the sunken

continent, with intrigues and excitement as the party dives beneath the ocean in search of clues. *Uncharted Seas* (1938, also published as *The Lost Continent*) is an interesting variation of the lost world novel. In this instance a ship gets caught in a floating island of seaweed and discovers that other ships have been trapped there over the centuries and that a peculiar culture has arisen. It is reminiscent of some of the best work of William Hope Hodgson, who wrote several stories about the supposed Sargasso Sea.

*Sixty Days to Live* (1939) takes place before and after a comet hits the Earth. Various characters struggle to survive amid the panic that precedes the strike and the chaos that follows. The Duke de Richleau has another adventure in *Three Inquisitive People* (1940), which like its immediate predecessor in the series, *The Golden Spaniard* (1938), is more mystery than adventure, but it is chronologically the first in the series. *Strange Conflict* (1941) is a World War II ESPIONAGE story with an original twist. The duke discovers that the Germans are acquiring information about convoy schedules through supernatural means. Wheatley wrote several other novels set during World War II, the most interesting of which was *The Man Who Missed the War* (1945), in which two people are shipwrecked and face adventures in Africa and Antarctica before being rescued.

Wheatley began a series of 12 spy novels set during the period surrounding the French Revolution with *The Launching of Roger Brook* (1947). In his first adventure Brook seeks information about the military plans of France a few years before the fall of the aristocracy. Brook returned in *The Shadow of Tyburn Tree* (1948), this time sent to Russia to ferret out the secrets of the tsar's military and political plans. Brook returned in 10 more adventures, ending with *Desperate Measures* (1974) set during the Napoleonic Era.

*The Haunting of Toby Jugg* (1948) is an odd story that draws a connection between the psychological effects that plagued soldiers after World War II and occult powers. *The Star of Ill Omen* (1952) was an uncharacteristic excursion into science fiction—the discovery of a flying saucer and the struggle to gain control of its technology. *To the Devil—a Daughter!* (1953) was another Duke

de Richleau occult novel, and probably Wheatley's single best book. It was thematically very similar to *The Devil Rides Out*, with the duke and his friends facing many adventures in their efforts to rescue a young child who has fallen under the influence of devil worshippers.

*The Island Where Time Stands Still* (1954) is another Gregory Sallust novel and a low-key lost world adventure. He is shipwrecked and finds himself on a remote island that has been colonized by refugees from ancient China who have preserved their old way of life and who do not intend to allow him to leave and tell the world of their traditional way of living, adamant that he should not leave and tell the outside world of their presence. *The Ka of Gifford Hillary* (1956) is the most interesting if not the best written of Wheatley's occult novels. The title character is murdered and returns in the form of a disembodied spirit to solve the mystery of his own death. *The Satanist* (1960) resembles the Duke de Richleau novels, the plot involving devil worship, but in this case the danger lies with an ex-Nazi who hopes to use the power of Lucifer to create a Fourth Reich. The link between Nazis and Satanism is restated in one of the later Gregory Sallust novels, *They Used Dark Forces* (1964), but paradoxically Sallust, the hero, attempts to use the power of evil to destroy the Nazi regime during the final days of World War II.

Wheatley may have felt at this point in his career that he needed to insert occult or magical elements into his work on a regular basis. *Unholy Crusade* (1967) is an otherwise routine adventure story set at an archaeological site in Mexico, but the protagonist has a unique talent for actually experiencing the past, which is nothing short of magical. *Gateway to Hell* (1970), the last of the Duke de Richleau stories, has the band of friends searching for a man who absconded with a large amount of money, only to discover that he has fallen under the influence of supernatural forces. One of the last Roger Brook novels, *The Irish Witch* (1973), deals with the Hellfire Club and a mysterious woman who may actually be communing with the devil. There are also hints of the occult in *The White Witch of the South Seas* (1968), *The Devil and All His Works* (1971), and *The Strange Story of Linda Lee* (1972), but Wheatley's last several novels failed

to live up to the quality of his earlier works, and they are generally unknown and unavailable today.

Wheatley also wrote a short series of contemporary spy novels featuring Julian Day—*The Quest of Julian Day* (1939), *The Sword of Fate* (1941), and *Bill for the Use of a Body* (1964)—but they were not up to his usual level of quality. Several of his books were made into motion pictures.

### Critical Analysis

Wheatley was an accomplished thriller writer whose work, while sometimes formulaic, was almost always entertaining, and he remained popular throughout his career. Like many authors his reputation began to decline following his death, and most of his novels have long since gone out of print, although there have been occasional flurries of reprints. Wheatley was a product of his time, and clear prejudices of class and race occur in several of the novels, which may explain why his work is so infrequently reissued. He will probably be best remembered for his better occult novels, some of which are considered minor classics in the field. He also edited a line of occult adventures for a British publisher that brought several dozen obscure novels back into print.

### *The White Company* (1891)

#### Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Scottish author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) is best known for his creation of Sherlock Holmes and for his first Professor Challenger novel, *The Lost World* (1912). He was also the author of this classic 14th-century adventure novel set during the time of the Hundred Years War between England and France and based very loosely on actual historical events and personages. Doyle wrote this novel after the creation of Sherlock Holmes, and it was quite popular, though later considered a book for younger readers and inferior to his major work.

The novel opens with the comical expulsion of a novice named Hordle John from the abbey at Beaulieu after his conviction on insignificant charges of sinfulness. He is followed more peacefully by young Alleyne Edrickson, who has come of age and ended his term as a ward of the abbey

and now seeks to explore the outside world. He is a classic innocent, disturbed by rough language and manners, totally unprepared for what he finds, which begins with an attack by thieves and their subsequent summary execution by the local bailiff. Alleyne encounters Hordle John at a tavern without knowing that he is a former novice, and Samkin Aylward, a professional soldier who convinces John to join him in the White Company, commanded by Sir Nigel Loring. Sir Nigel is an unlikely hero, ungainly, balding, with a patch over one eye, but he knows how to command men and win battles. Alleyne joins them, intending only to remain for a portion of their journey, and they enjoy minor adventures along their way.

Alleyne parts company with them at last and goes to introduce himself to the brother he has never met. En route, he encounters a ruffian assaulting a young woman and comes to her rescue, only to discover that her assailant is his own brother, a coarse, belligerent man who immediately reveals that he has nothing but contempt for his brother and would rather kill than greet him. Alleyne and the woman escape, but his future is now even more uncertain than before. He is reunited with his two friends and is offered the chance to travel with the White Company as its clerk and, lacking any other prospect, he agrees, soon becoming squire to Sir Nigel. The organizing and equipping of the force is a protracted affair, however, and months pass after the men are sent to France before Sir Nigel and the rest can follow.

En route across the English Channel, the travelers are attacked by enemy ships, but they prevail in the battle. Upon arriving, however, they discover that the White Company has already acquired a reputation for their undisciplined pillaging of friends as well as enemies. Alleyne, meanwhile, finds himself fighting a duel and acquiring a new friend as a consequence, as well as being disturbed by his growing attraction toward Sir Nigel's daughter, despite his conviction that he is not worthy of her attention.

Sir Nigel takes charge of the men, and a tourney is held in which they can display their prowess. Just as it is ending, a mysterious French knight shows up and asks to be allowed to compete, departing afterward without ever identifying himself. This mystery lurks in the background as Alleyne and his friends

undergo a number of wild adventures—chases and escapes—during which the young man is trained to use a sword, becomes involved in a murder, and survives a brief and exciting siege. The company is eventually disbanded, and Alleyne returns to England, much changed, and now a suitable suppliant for the hand of Sir Nigel's daughter.

### Critical Analysis

Doyle uses Alleyne's naiveté to justify lectures and homilies on a variety of subjects. When he stops at the inn and observes his fellow travelers, he is cautioned that "it is the small men and not the great who hold their noses in the air." He also learns that to the common people, the church is just as repressive as the lay government, is in general almost indistinguishable from it. Nor are his companions properly respectful, as he sees it, of the king, ridiculing him because he speaks French rather than English. When they encounter a group of flagellants, Alleyne is impressed at their self-sacrifice until John points out that their self-abuse is in itself a sign of sinful pride.

Doyle used an archaic, formal style for the dialogue that sounds artificial to the modern ear. He had researched the era in advance and includes a variety of historical references while being careful to avoid anachronisms. The detail he provides about the difficulties—financial and otherwise—in outfitting a unit to serve overseas is particularly interesting. Aylward's open admiration for the courage and skills of the enemy reflect the time when warfare was thought of in terms of individual effort, tests of skill and manhood that almost coincidentally advanced matters of state. Doyle also manages to poke fun at the French national character, suggesting that they are a "quiet folk" who are more easily controlled by an aristocracy than could ever be true in England. He provides similar characterizations for the Dutch and Spanish. Doyle also stresses those issues that dictated behavior among the nobility—keeping one's promises, protecting individual and family honor, displaying courage in the face of danger, and a commitment to religion, if not necessarily to particular clergymen. When the French knight appears to compete in the English tourney, he is treated with great respect by the men who are in fact his avowed enemies.

The novel is also a coming-of-age story. Alleyne has led a sheltered life during his first 20 years, and the descriptions of the outside world provided to him by the monks are, he discovers, simplistic and incomplete. Although some of the evils they warned him against are present, there are counterbalancing benefits. He was still young enough to "form new conclusions and outgrow old ones." His exposure to young women, particularly Sir Nigel's daughter, Maude, is also unsettling because he had previously been taught that women were invariably a source of evil temptation.

*The White Company* also has something of a fairy-tale quality, underscored by the emphasis on the code of chivalry. Alleyne's maturation, success, and eventual return to court the lady he loves are almost forgone conclusions. Even the villains are honorable persons, and the war is approached almost as a game rather than a tragic waste of lives. The French knight brings a note of realism, bitterly describing the devastation the war has brought to the formerly peaceful French countryside.

Doyle later wrote a prequel, *Sir Nigel* (1906), which tells the story of the title character's youth. There are occasional inconsistencies between the two novels. *The White Company* was extremely popular when it appeared, outselling *A TALE OF TWO CITIES* (1859) by Charles Dickens. Doyle considered it his best single piece of fiction.

### *The Wizard of Oz* (1900) L. Frank Baum

American writer Lyman Frank Baum (1856–1919) wrote a total of 55 novels under various names, most of them for children, including 14 stories set in Oz, starting with this, his most famous book. The Oz stories were among the earliest books to suggest that girls might have rousing adventures as well as boys. They were so consistently popular that other writers began adding to the series following Baum's death.

The story opens in a remote part of Kansas. Dorothy is a young girl living with her aunt and uncle, and her dog, Toto. Dorothy and Toto are carried off with their house by a cyclone and dropped into Oz, crushing the Wicked Witch of the East and freeing the Munchkins. The Good Witch of the North gives Dorothy the enchanted

shoes worn by the dead woman. Dorothy wants to go home, so she is advised to follow the yellow brick road to the Emerald City, where she can consult the Great Wizard.

Along the way she picks up three companions. The Scarecrow laments the fact that he has no brains, the Tin Woodman wants a heart, and the Cowardly Lion wants to be brave. Each of them provides the story of his life, and they all proceed together. Their subsequent adventures threaten to split the party, but they overcome obstacles thanks to the intervention of others. A stork helps the Scarecrow when he is marooned in the middle of the river, and an army of mice rescue the Cowardly Lion from a field of deadly, soporific poppies.

When they finally see the Wizard, he tells each of them that he will only grant their wish when the Wicked Witch of the West is dead. The Wicked Witch responds by sending hordes of wolves, crows, and bees against the travelers, all of which fail. Finally she calls the winged monkeys, whom she has the ability to command only one more time. They smash the Tin Woodman, scatter the Scarecrow, and carry Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion to the witch's castle. Shortly afterward, Dorothy throws a bucket of water on the witch, not realizing that this will destroy her and thereby accomplish the Great Wizard's request. The Winkies, now free of her rule, help recover and repair the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow. Dorothy then commands the flying monkeys to carry them back to the Emerald City, learning their history in the process.

They discover the wizard is a fraud, but he provides them with tokens of what they wish for and they are satisfied. Then he tells Dorothy that they will build a hot-air balloon to get across the desert so that she can go home, but he accidentally leaves without her. She and her friends travel again, this time to the land of the south, where some of the people are made of porcelain and others can extend their necks to unusual proportions. After some mild adventures, they find Glinda, the Good Witch of the South, who tells her that the magical shoes she took from the Wicked Witch of the East can take her home.

Four years after the publication of *The Wizard of Oz*, Baum produced a sequel, *The Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904), this time with a young boy, Tip,

as its hero. Once again he created some wonderful characters, including Jack Pumpkinhead and the Sawhorse, describing their adventures as all of Oz is plunged into war. This would prove to be the best of the sequels, although Baum continued to add to the series for the remainder of his life. *Ozma of Oz* (1907) brought back Dorothy, although most of the story does not take place in Oz, nor does it in *Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz* (1908). *The Road to Oz* (1909) recounts Dorothy's fourth visit. *The Emerald City of Oz* (1910) was intended to bring the series to a close, with Dorothy and her aunt and uncle all taken to the Emerald City, but three years later Baum returned to his best-known world with *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* (1913), in which Ojo the Munchkin boy visits various parts of Oz in order to retrieve the components of a magical brew.

*Tik-Tok of Oz* (1914) recounts another attempt to conquer all of Oz. *The Scarecrow of Oz* (1915) is the best of the later books; the Scarecrow is involved in a plan to unseat a cruel ruler. *Rinkitink in Oz* (1916) is the weakest in the series. Dorothy and her friends search for a missing Ozma in *The Lost Princess of Oz* (1917), and the Tin Woodman is finally reunited with the woman he loves in *The Tin Woodman of Oz* (1918). Baum's last two Oz books were published posthumously. *The Magic of Oz* (1919) was an obvious commentary on World War I, recounting yet another war in Oz, and *Glinda of Oz* (1920) explored more distant lands in a straightforward quest story. Baum wrote several other children's fantasies that are occasionally reprinted, but it is clearly the Oz books that most appealed to his readers.

### Critical Analysis

Baum felt that the traditional fairy tale for children had become increasingly irrelevant, that stories about fairies and ogres and dragons were more "historical" than anything else, and that the embedded moral lessons were better conveyed through education than through entertainment. He did not originally plan to write a sequel to *The Wizard of Oz*, but popular demand wore down his resistance.

Baum draws a startling contrast between Oz and the real world through the use of colors. Kansas is described as bleached of color, gray and monotonous, and Uncle Henry and Aunt Em seem

to be drained of life and color themselves. Dorothy is the exception because of Toto, “who saved her from becoming as gray as her other surroundings.” Although the movie places Oz “over the rainbow,” Baum suggested it was elsewhere on Earth, an isolated place surrounded by impassible deserts. Despite its attractiveness, Dorothy is determined to leave as soon as possible because “there’s no place like home.”

Early hints establish that Dorothy’s three companions already possess the qualities they hope to obtain. The heartless Tin Man is grief-stricken when he steps on a beetle, insisting that because he has no heart, he must be particularly careful to avoid being cruel. The supposedly brainless Scarecrow realizes the Tin Woodman’s mouth has rusted shut because of his tears. The Cowardly Lion proposes that he leap across a dangerous chasm that blocks their way, carrying each of them on his back. As their quest continues, there is further evidence to the same effect.

The simplicity and inventive imagination in *The Wizard of Oz* struck an obvious chord with both children and their parents. After Baum’s death the demand for fresh adventures was satisfied to some degree by other writers, the most prominent of whom was Ruth Plumly Thompson (1891–1976) who wrote 20 novels in the series, introducing many new characters as well as chronicling further adventures of those created by Baum, including the Cowardly Lion, Ojo, Jack Pumpkinhead, and the Gnome King. Thompson’s characters were quite imaginative, but her plots were limited and repetitive.

Thompson’s first Oz book was *The Royal Book of Oz* (1921), which originally appeared as by Baum. The Scarecrow discovers that he is a reincarnation of a human prince. *Kabumpo of Oz* (1922) introduced a suitor for Princess Ozma. Among Thompson’s best books are *Grandpa in Oz* (1924), *The Gnome King of Oz* (1927), *Pirates in Oz* (1931), and *The Silver Princess in Oz* (1938). *Captain Salt in Oz* (1936), despite the title, is the only one in the series that is not set even partly within Oz. Thompson wrote *Yankee in Oz* in 1959, but it was not published until 1972.

John R. Neill, who had illustrated most of the previous Oz books, wrote one of his own in 1940.

*The Wonder City of Oz* was rewritten in part by one of Neill’s editors and is, not surprisingly, uneven in tone and quality. Neill tried again with *Scalawagons of Oz* (1941), which featured intelligent flying automobiles, then with his best Oz novel, *Lucky Bucky in Oz* (1942). He had written a fourth, *The Runaway in Oz*, but died before it was published. It did not appear in book form until 1995.

The next two in the series, which ignored the previous additions and reverted to Baum’s original story lines, were written by Jack Snow—*The Magical Mimics in Oz* (1946) and *The Shaggy Man of Oz* (1949). *The Hidden Valley of Oz* (1951) was written by Rachel R. Cosgrove, and *Merry Go Round in Oz* (1963) by Eloise Jarvis McGraw and her daughter Lauren McGraw Wagner. The two later wrote a second Oz book for a different publisher, and Eloise McGraw added a third by herself.

In addition to the titles listed above, which are the “official” Oz books, many others have appeared from a variety of writers. Among the more interesting and best written of these are six by Donald Abbott, including *How the Wizard Came to Oz* (1991), *Mister Tinker in Oz* (1985) by James Howe, *The Giant Garden of Oz* (1993) by Eric Shanower, *The Glass Cat of Oz* (1995) by David Hulan, and *Visitors from Oz* (1998) by Martin Gardner. Perhaps the most unusual of the Oz books are *A Barnstormer in Oz* (1982) by Philip Jose Farmer, whose hero is the son of Dorothy Gale; *The Emerald Burrito of Oz* (2000) by John Skipp and Mark Levinthal, wherein a permanent portal between the real world and Oz is opened in a contemporary setting; and *Bloodstained Oz* (2006) by James A. Moore and Christopher Golden, which is a dark fantasy involving monstrous creatures, including vampires who take over the magical kingdom. *Return to Oz* (1985) by Joan D. Vinge is a novelization of the MGM screenplay, which was based in large part on Baum’s early novels.

### ***The Wreck of the Mary Deare* (1959)**

#### **Hammond Innes**

This maritime adventure story is probably the best known of the 30 novels by British writer HAMMOND INNES (1914–98). Mystery at sea is a common theme in adventure fiction because comparative-

ly little is known about what lies beneath the water that cover two-thirds of the planet. While some authors concentrate on the hidden dangers beneath the surface, as in Peter Benchley's *JAWS* (1974), others like Innes were more interested in its ability to conceal clandestine activities by people with sinister motives.

The novel opens with an action sequence, setting the pace for the rest of the story. John Sands, the narrator, and three other men on a sailboat in the English Channel are nearly run down by a mysterious freighter named the *Mary Deare*, which fails to respond to their warning lights. One of the men insists that there was no one on the bridge and that the freighter was out of control. The next day they encounter the ship again, apparently abandoned now, and Sands goes aboard despite an imminent storm. He finds evidence of a fire, no longer burning, but nothing to justify the abandonment of the ship. One man is still aboard, Gideon Patch, who refuses to be evacuated even in the face of the storm. The question becomes academic, however, when Sands discovers the seas are too rough for him to return to his own ship.

The freighter is drifting toward a reef, where it will certainly be torn apart. The radio room has been destroyed by fire, and no distress call can be sent. Sands tries to restart the boiler and pumps, but Patch, who has been behaving mysteriously throughout, seems resigned to letting the ship sink. Eventually he hints that the owners had meant for the ship to be lost and describes how he was attacked and left unconscious to die when it was supposed to break up and sink. Sands finally convinces him to make an effort, and they restart the engines, hoping to get just enough power to avoid the reef. They have only limited success, but Patch is able to ground the ship on the reef, protecting them from the gale, at least temporarily.

They leave in a small boat and are rescued. Patch learns that the crew of the *Mary Deare* claim that he ordered them off the ship. Further mystery involves the death of its previous captain, Taggart, whose adult daughter has come to find out what happened to him. Patch confronts the surviving crew, who support an obvious thug named Higgins, insisting that Patch ordered the abandonment. Patch never tells the authorities that the *Mary*

*Deare* is stranded, not sunk, and he tries unsuccessfully to convince Sands to help him examine the ship clandestinely so that he can prove that it was deliberately sabotaged. Although Sands balks, he realizes that if he tells the whole truth at the inquiry it will undercut Patch's credibility, so he refrains from revealing that the ship is still accessible.

The inquiry is interrupted when a passing fisherman spots the *Mary Deare*. Patch has disappeared and is facing possible criminal charges, but he shows up the next night on Sands's sailboat. He convinces Sands to take him to the ship before the evidence can be destroyed, but they are followed by another powered boat commanded by Higgins. With a collision at sea, the two ships are either disabled or left sinking, leading to the final confrontation and exposure of the fraud.

### Critical Analysis

The author adroitly mixes high adventure and mystery right from the outset. The near collision, the perilous boarding of the foundering ship, and the subsequent attempts to prevent it from sinking are fast-paced and suspenseful, but underlying the overt action is a growing sense of deliberate menace. Why was the ship abandoned? Why was Patch left aboard? And why is he initially unwilling to take even rudimentary steps to save the ship?

Innes reveals details at regular intervals, leading the reader to suspect the broad outlines of what really happened, but withholds a few surprises until the end. One of the owners was on the ship, but was reportedly lost overboard somehow prior to the fire. The ship was supposed to be carrying valuable, heavily insured aircraft engines, but she rendezvoused with another ship early in the voyage, and the latter ship, from the same firm, has subsequently disappeared into Communist-controlled China. The insurance company has heard rumors that the only cargo on the ship consisted of cotton and suspects fraud. Patch clearly understands the nature of the conspiracy, but Sands is slower to realize the truth, which seems at odds with his otherwise obvious intelligence. The plot becomes a bit contrived because it seems more logical for Patch to have alerted the authorities to the truth so that the grounded ship could be examined and the truth

revealed rather than insisting on doing so himself. The explanation—that the body of the man he accidentally killed is still aboard—is unconvincing since no one knew he was responsible.

Sands is a typical Innes protagonist, a man who might not always adhere to the letter of the law, but who tries to live his life in an honorable fashion. He is troubled when he agrees to conceal, at least for a time, the fact that the *Mary Deare* did not sink, and even more so when he feels compelled to turn down Patch's request to take him out to the wreck. When he finally casts his lot with Patch, he resents the necessity and becomes angry. Innes's heroes are often reluctant ones, trapped by circumstances or by their own misjudgment into situations they might otherwise have avoided but determined to

live up to their responsibilities once they are committed to a course of action.

Like many writers, Innes refers to the sea as though it were a living being. One of the men on the sailboat remarks that while he likes being at sea, "it's not a creature I want to take liberties with." The sea is capable of a "raging fury" and appears to Sands during a storm as an angry giant. During the inquiry Patch similarly speaks of the ship as though it was also alive; he "somehow invested the *Mary Deare* with personality."

The 1959 film version was adapted for the screen by fellow thriller writer ERIC AMBLER. The plot may have been inspired in part by a somewhat similar account of an improperly abandoned ship in *LORD JIM* (1900) by Joseph Conrad.

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*For Special Services* (1982)  
*Icebreaker* (1983)  
*Role of Honour* (1984)  
*Nobody Lives for Ever* (1986)  
*No Deals, Mr. Bond* (1987)  
*Scorpius* (1988)  
*Win, Lose or Die* (1989)  
*Licence to Kill* (1989)  
*Brokenclaw* (1990)  
*The Man from Barbarossa* (1991)  
*Death Is Forever* (1992)  
*Never Send Flowers* (1993)  
*SeaFire* (1994)  
*GoldenEye* (1995)  
*COLD* (1996, also published as *Cold Fall*)

#### **GARFIELD, BRIAN**

*Death Wish* (1972)  
*Relentless* (1972)  
*The Romanov Succession* (1972)  
*Kolchak's Gold* (1973)

*Tripwire* (1973)  
*The Threepersons Hunt* (1974)  
*Hopscotch* (1975)  
*Death Sentence* (1975)  
*Recoil* (1977)  
*Fear in a Handful of Dust* (1979)  
*The Paladin* (1980)

#### **GOLDING, WILLIAM**

*Lord of the Flies* (1954)

#### **GOLDMAN, WILLIAM**

*The Princess Bride* (1973)  
*Marathon Man* (1974)  
*Control* (1982)

**GRANT, MAXWELL** (There are over 300 novels in this series, most of which have never seen separate book publication. Those listed below have all appeared in book form.)

*The Living Shadow* (1931)  
*The Eyes of the Shadow* (1931)  
*The Shadow Laughs* (1931)  
*The Red Menace* (1931)  
*Gangdom's Doom* (1931)  
*The Death Tower* (1932)  
*The Silent Seven* (1932)  
*The Black Master* (1932)  
*Mobsmen on the Spot* (1932)  
*Hands in the Dark* (1932)  
*Double Z* (1932)  
*The Crime Cult* (1932)  
*Hidden Death* (1932)  
*Green Eyes* (1932)  
*The Ghost Makers* (1932)  
*The Romanoff Jewels* (1932)  
*Kings of Crime* (1932)  
*Shadowed Millions* (1933)  
*The Creeping Death* (1933)  
*The Shadow's Shadow* (1933)  
*Fingers of Death* (1933)  
*Murder Trail* (1933)  
*The Silent Death* (1933)  
*The Death Giver* (1933)  
*The Grove of Doom* (1933)  
*Mox* (1933)  
*Gray Fist* (1934)  
*The Wealth Seeker* (1934)

*Charg, Monster* (1934)  
*Zemba* (1935)  
*Return of the Shadow* (1963)  
*The Shadow Strikes* (1964)  
*The Shadow's Revenge* (1965)  
*Shadow Beware* (1965)  
*Cry Shadow* (1965)  
*Mark of the Shadow* (1966)  
*Night of the Shadow* (1966)  
*Shadow—Go Mad!* (1966)  
*Destination Moon* (1967)

**GRAVES, ROBERT**

*I, Claudius* (1934)  
*Count Belisarius* (1938)  
*Hercules My Shipmate* (1944, also published as *The Golden Fleece*)  
*Watch the Northwind Rise* (1949, also published as *Seven Days in New Crete*)

**GREENE, GRAHAM**

*Orient Express* (1932, also published as *The Stamboul Train*)  
*A Gun for Sale* (1936, also published as *This Gun for Hire*)  
*The Confidential Agent* (1939)  
*The Ministry of Fear* (1943)  
*The Third Man* (1949)  
*Our Man in Havana* (1958)

**GREY, ZANE** (Many of Grey's novels did not appear in book form until after his death.)

*The Last of the Plainsmen* (1908)  
*The Young Forester* (1910)  
*The Heritage of the Desert* (1910)  
*The Young Lion Hunter* (1911)  
*Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912)  
*Ken Ward in the Jungle* (1912)  
*Desert Gold* (1913)  
*The Light of Western Stars* (1914)  
*The Lone Star Ranger* (1915, also published as *Rangers of the Lone Star*)  
*The Rainbow Trail* (1915)  
*The Border Legion* (1916)  
*The UP Trail* (1918)  
*The Man of the Forest* (1920)  
*The Mysterious Rider* (1921)  
*To the Last Man* (1921, an abridged version of *Tonto Basin*)  
*The Day of the Beast* (1922)

*Tales of Lonely Trails* (1922)  
*Wanderer of the Wasteland* (1923)  
*Call of the Canyon* (1924)  
*The Thundering Herd* (1925)  
*Under the Tonto Rim* (1926)  
*Wild Horse Mesa* (1928)  
*Fighting Caravans* (1929)  
*Sunset Pass* (1931)  
*Arizona Ames* (1932)  
*Robber's Roost* (1932)  
*Wyoming* (1932)  
*The Code of the West* (1934)  
*Thunder Mountain* (1935)  
*The Lost Wagon Train* (1936)  
*West of the Pecos* (1937)  
*Raiders of Spanish Peaks* (1938)  
*Knights of the Range* (1939)  
*Twin Sombreros* (1940)  
*Stairs of Sand* (1943)  
*The Wilderness Trek* (1944)  
*Shadow on the Trail* (1946)  
*Valley of Wild Horses* (1947)  
*Rogue River Feud* (1948)  
*The Deer Stalker* (1949)  
*The Dude Ranger* (1951)  
*Captives of the Desert* (1952)  
*Lost Pueblo* (1954)  
*Black Mesa* (1955)  
*Stranger from the Tonto* (1956)  
*Fugitive Trail* (1957)  
*Arizona Clan* (1958)  
*Tonto Basin* (2004, the restored version of *To the Last Man*)

**HAGGARD, H. RIDER**

*King Solomon's Mines* (1885)  
*She* (1887)  
*Allan Quatermain* (1897)  
*Allan's Wife* (1899)  
*Eric Brighteyes* (1991)  
*The People of the Mist* (1994)  
*Ayesha* (1905)  
*Allan and the Holy Flower* (1915)  
*The Ancient Allan* (1920)  
*She and Allan* (1921)

**HALL, ADAM**

*The Quiller Memorandum* (1965, also published as *The Berlin Memorandum*)  
*The 9th Directive* (1966)

*The Striker Portfolio* (1968)  
*The Warsaw Document* (1971)  
*The Tango Briefing* (1973)  
*The Mandarin Cypher* (1975)  
*The Kobra Manifesto* (1976)  
*The Sinkiang Executive* (1978)  
*The Scorpion Signal* (1979)  
*The Peking Target* (1981)  
*Northlight* (1985, also published as *Quiller*)  
*Quiller's Run* (1988)  
*Quiller KGB* (1989)  
*Quiller Barracuda* (1990)  
*Quiller Solitaire* (1992)  
*Quiller Meridian* (1993)  
*Quiller Salamander* (1994)  
*Quiller Balalaika* (1996)

### HAMILTON, DONALD

*Assassins Have Starry Eyes* (1956, also published as  
*Assignment: Murder*)  
*Death of a Citizen* (1960)  
*The Wrecking Crew* (1960)  
*The Removers* (1961)  
*The Silencers* (1962)  
*Murderers' Row* (1962)  
*The Ambushers* (1963)  
*The Shadows* (1964)  
*The Ravagers* (1964)  
*The Devastators* (1965)  
*The Betrayers* (1966)  
*The Menacers* (1968)  
*The Interlopers* (1969)  
*The Poisoners* (1971)  
*The Intriguers* (1972)  
*The Intimidators* (1974)  
*The Terminators* (1975)  
*The Retaliators* (1976)  
*The Terrorizers* (1977)  
*The Revengers* (1982)  
*The Annihilators* (1983)  
*The Infiltrators* (1984)  
*The Detonators* (1985)  
*The Vanishers* (1986)  
*The Demolishers* (1987)  
*The Frighteners* (1989)  
*The Threateners* (1992)  
*The Damagers* (1993)

### HEMINGWAY, ERNEST

*The Old Man and the Sea* (1952)

### HIGGINS, JACK

*Sad Wind from the Sea* (1959, as Harry Patterson)  
*Cry of the Hunter* (1960, as Harry Patterson)  
*The Thousand Faces of Night* (1961, as Harry  
Patterson)  
*The Bormann Testament* (1962, also published as *The  
Testament of Caspar Schultz*)  
*Comes the Dark Stranger* (1962, as Harry Patterson)  
*Hell Is Too Crowded* (1962, as Harry Patterson)  
*Year of the Tiger* (1963)  
*The Dark Side of the Island* (1963, as Harry  
Patterson)  
*Pay the Devil* (1963, as Harry Patterson)  
*Seven Pillars to Hell* (1963, as Hugh Marlowe.  
Revised as *Sheba*, 1995)  
*Thunder at Noon* (1964, as Harry Patterson. Revised  
as *Dillinger*, 1983)  
*Passage by Night* (1964, as Hugh Marlowe)  
*A Phoenix in Blood* (1964, as Harry Patterson)  
*Wrath of the Lion* (1964, as Harry Patterson)  
*The Keys of Hell* (1965)  
*The Graveyard Shift* (1965, as Harry Patterson)  
*Midnight Never Comes* (1966)  
*A Candle for the Dead* (1966, as Hugh Marlowe, also  
published as *The Violent Enemy*)  
*The Iron Tiger* (1966, as Harry Patterson)  
*Brought in Dead* (1967, as Harry Patterson)  
*The Dark Side of the Street* (1967)  
*Hell Is Always Today* (1968, as Harry Patterson)  
*A Fine Night for Dying* (1969)  
*In the Hour Before Midnight* (1969, also published as  
*The Sicilian Heritage*)  
*A Game for Heroes* (1970, as James Graham)  
*Night Judgment at Sinos* (1970)  
*The Last Place God Made* (1971)  
*Toll for the Brave* (1971, as Harry Patterson)  
*The Wrath of God* (1971, as James Graham)  
*The Savage Day* (1972)  
*The Khufra Run* (1972, as James Graham)  
*A Prayer for the Dying* (1973)  
*The Run to Morning* (1974, as James Graham, also  
published as *Bloody Passage*)  
*The Eagle Has Landed* (1975)  
*Storm Warning* (1976)  
*The Valhalla Exchange* (1976)  
*Day of Judgment* (1978)  
*To Catch a King* (1979, as Harry Patterson, also pub-  
lished as *The Judas Gate*)  
*Solo* (1980, also published as *The Cretan Lover*)  
*Luciano's Luck* (1981)

*Touch the Devil* (1982)  
*Exocet* (1983)  
*Confessional* (1985)  
*The Eagle Has Flown* (1985)  
*Night of the Fox* (1986)  
*A Season in Hell* (1988)  
*Cold Harbour* (1989)  
*Eye of the Storm* (1992, also published as *Midnight Man*)  
*Thunder Point* (1993)  
*On Dangerous Ground* (1994)  
*Angel of Death* (1995)  
*Drink with the Devil* (1996)  
*The President's Daughter* (1997)  
*The White House Connection* (1998)  
*Flight of Eagles* (1998)  
*Day of Reckoning* (2000)  
*Edge of Danger* (2001)  
*Midnight Runner* (2002)  
*Bad Company* (2003)  
*Dark Justice* (2004)  
*Without Mercy* (2005)  
*The Killing Ground* (2007)

**HILTON, JAMES**

*Lost Horizon* (1933)

**HOPE, ANTHONY**

*The Prisoner of Zenda* (1894)  
*Rupert of Hentzau* (1898)

**HOWARD, ROBERT E.**

*The Vultures of Whapeton* (1973)  
*The Sowers of Thunder* (1973)  
*The Adventures of Dennis Dorgan* (1974)  
*A Gent from Bear Creek* (1975)  
*The Iron Man* (1976)  
*Black Vulmea's Vengeance* (1976)  
*The Witch of the Indies* (1977)  
*The Last Ride* (1978)  
*Son of the White Wolf* (1978)  
*The Swords of Shahrazar* (1978)  
*The Road of Azrael* (1980)  
*The She Devil* (1983)  
*The Conan Chronicles* (2000)  
*Bran Mak Morn: The Last King* (2001)  
*Waterfront Fists* (2003)  
*The Savage Tales of Solomon Kane* (2004)  
*The Black Stranger* (2005)  
*Boxing Stories* (2005)

*The Lord of Samarcand* (2005)  
*The End of the Trail* (2005)  
*Wings in the Night* (2005)

**HUDSON, W. H.**

*Green Mansions* (1904)

**HUGHES, RICHARD**

*A High Wind in Jamaica* (1929, also published as *The Innocent Voyage*)

**INNES, HAMMOND**

*The Doppelgänger* (1937)  
*Air Disaster* (1937)  
*Sabotage Broadcast* (1938)  
*All Roads Lead to Friday* (1939)  
*Wreckers Must Breathe* (1940, also published as *Trapped*)  
*The Trojan Horse* (1940)  
*Attack Alarm* (1941)  
*Dead and Alive* (1946)  
*Killer Mine* (1947)  
*The Lonely Skier* (1947, also published as *Fire in the Snow*)  
*The Blue Ice* (1948)  
*Maddon's Rock* (1948, also published as *Gale Warning*)  
*The White South* (1949, also published as *The Survivors*)  
*The Angry Mountain* (1950)  
*Air Bridge* (1951)  
*Campbell's Kingdom* (1952)  
*The Strange Land* (1954, also published as *The Naked Land*)  
*The Wreck of the Mary Deare* (1956)  
*The Land God Gave to Cain* (1958)  
*The Doomed Oasis* (1960)  
*Atlantic Fury* (1962)  
*The Strode Venturer* (1965)  
*Levkas Man* (1971)  
*Golden Soak* (1973)  
*North Star* (1975)  
*The Big Footprints* (1977)  
*The Last Voyage* (1978)  
*Solomon's Seal* (1980)  
*The Black Tide* (1982)  
*High Stand* (1985)  
*Medusa* (1988)  
*Isvik* (1991)

*Target Antarctica* (1993)

*Delta Connection* (1996)

**JENKINS, GEOFFREY**

*A Twist of Sand* (1959)

*The Watering Place of Good Peace* (1960)

*A Grue of Ice* (1962, also published as *The Disappearing Island*)

*The River of Diamonds* (1964)

*Hunter Killer* (1966)

*Scend of the Sea* (1971, also published as *The Hollow Sea*)

*A Cleft of Stars* (1973)

*A Bridge of Magpies* (1974)

*South Trap* (1979)

*A Ravel of Waters* (1981)

*The Unripe Gold* (1983)

*Fireprint* (1984)

*In Harm's Way* (1986)

*Hold Down a Shadow* (1989)

*A Hive of Dead Men* (1991)

*A Daystar of Fear* (1993)

**KIPLING, RUDYARD**

*The Jungle Book* (1894)

*The Second Jungle Book* (1895)

*Captains Courageous* (1897)

*Kim* (1901)

**L'AMOUR, LOUIS**

*Westward the Tide* (1950)

*The Riders of Red Rock* (1951)

*The Rustlers of West Fork* (1951)

*The Trail to Seven Pines* (1952)

*Trouble Shooter* (1952)

*Hondo* (1953)

*Showdown at Yellow Butte* (1953)

*Crossfire Trail* (1954)

*Utah Blaine* (1954)

*Kilkenny* (1954)

*Guns of the Timberlands* (1955)

*Heller with a Gun* (1955)

*To Tame a Land* (1955)

*The Burning Hills* (1956)

*Silver Canyon* (1956)

*Sitka* (1957)

*Last Stand at Papago Wells* (1957)

*The Tall Stranger* (1957)

*Radigan* (1958)

*The First Fast Draw* (1959)

*Taggart* (1959)

*Flint* (1960)

*The Day Breakers* (1960)

*Sackett* (1961)

*Shalako* (1962)

*Killoe* (1962)

*High Lonesome* (1962)

*Lando* (1962)

*How the West Was Won* (1962)

*Fallon* (1963)

*Catlow* (1963)

*Dark Canyon* (1963)

*Mojave Crossing* (1964)

*Hanging Woman Creek* (1964)

*Kiowa Trail* (1964)

*The High Graders* (1965)

*The Sackett Brand* (1965)

*The Key-Lock Man* (1965)

*The Broken Gun* (1966)

*Kid Rodelo* (1966)

*Mustang Man* (1966)

*Kilrone* (1966)

*The Sky-Liners* (1967)

*Matagorda* (1967)

*Down the Long Hills* (1968)

*Chancy* (1968)

*Brionne* (1968)

*The Empty Land* (1969)

*The Lonely Men* (1969)

*Conagher* (1969)

*The Man Called Noon* (1970)

*Galloway* (1970)

*Reilly's Luck* (1970)

*North to the Rails* (1971)

*Under the Sweetwater Rim* (1971)

*Tucker* (1971)

*Callaghan* (1972)

*Ride the Dark Trail* (1972)

*Treasure Mountain* (1972)

*The Ferguson Rifle* (1973)

*The Man from Skibbereen* (1973)

*The Quick and the Dead* (1973)

*Over the Dry Side* (1976)

*The Rider of Lost Creek* (1976)

*Where the Long Grass Blows* (1976)

*Westward the Tide* (1977)

*To the Far Blue Mountains* (1977)

*Borden Chandry* (1977)

*The Mountain Valley War* (1978)  
*Fair Blows the Wind* (1978)  
*The Proving Trail* (1979)  
*The Iron Marshal* (1979)  
*Bendigo Shafter* (1979)  
*The Strong Shall Live* (1980)  
*Yondering* (1980)  
*The Warrior's Path* (1980)  
*Lonely on the Mountain* (1980)  
*Comstock Lode* (1981)  
*Milo Talon* (1981)  
*Buckskin Run* (1981)  
*The Cherokee Trail* (1982)  
*The Shadow Riders* (1982)  
*Bowdrie* (1983)  
*The Lonesome Gods* (1983)  
*Ride the River* (1983)  
*The Hills of Homicide* (1983)  
*Law of the Desert Born* (1983)  
*Son of a Wanted Man* (1984)  
*The Walking Drum* (1984)  
*Frontier* (1984)  
*Bowdrie's Law* (1984)  
*Jubal Sackett* (1985)  
*Passin' Through* (1985)  
*Dutchman's Flatt* (1986)  
*Riding for the Brand* (1986)  
*Last of the Breed* (1986)  
*The Rider of the Ruby Hills* (1986)  
*The Trail to Crazy Man* (1986)  
*Night Over the Solomons* (1986)  
*West from Singapore* (1987)  
*The Haunted Mesa* (1987)  
*Lonigan* (1988)  
*Long Ride Home* (1989)  
*The Outlaws of Mesquite* (1990)  
*The Rustlers of West Fork* (1991)  
*Trail to Seven Pines* (1992)  
*The Riders of High Rock* (1993)  
*Trouble Shooter* (1994)  
*Valley of the Sun* (1995)  
*West of Dodge* (1996)  
*End of the Drive* (1997)  
*Monument Rock* (1998)  
*Beyond the Great Snow Mountains* (1999)

**LE CARRÉ, JOHN**

*Call for the Dead* (1961)  
*A Murder of Quality* (1962)

*The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (1963)  
*The Looking-Glass War* (1965)  
*A Small Town in Germany* (1968)  
*Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (1974)  
*Smiley's People* (1979)  
*A Perfect Spy* (1986)  
*The Russia House* (1989)

**LEMAY, ALAN**

*Painted Ponies* (1927)  
*Thunder in the Dust* (1953)  
*The Searchers* (1954)  
*Cattle Kingdom* (1955)  
*The Unforgiven* (1957)  
*Gunsight Trail* (1959)

**LONDON, JACK**

*The Call of the Wild* (1903)  
*The Sea-Wolf* (1904)  
*White Fang* (1906)  
*The Mutiny of the Elsinore* (1914)  
*The Assassination Bureau, Ltd* (1963, completed by Robert Fish)

**LOWNDES, MRS. BELLOC**

*The Lodger* (1913)

**LUDLUM, ROBERT**

*The Scarlatti Inheritance* (1971)  
*The Osterman Weekend* (1972)  
*The Matlock Paper* (1973)  
*Trevayne* (1973, as by Jonathan Ryder)  
*The Cry of the Halidon* (1974, as by Jonathan Ryder)  
*The Rhinemann Exchange* (1974)  
*The Road to Gandolfo* (1975, as by Michael Shepard)  
*The Gemini Contenders* (1976)  
*The Chancellor Manuscript* (1977)  
*The Holcroft Covenant* (1978)  
*The Matarese Circle* (1979)  
*The Bourne Identity* (1980)  
*The Parsifal Mosaic* (1982)  
*The Aquitaine Progression* (1984)  
*The Bourne Supremacy* (1986)  
*The Icarus Agenda* (1988)  
*The Bourne Ultimatum* (1990)  
*The Road to Omaha* (1992)  
*The Scorpio Illusion* (1993)  
*The Apocalypse Watch* (1995)  
*The Matarese Countdown* (1997)

*The Prometheus Deception* (2000)

*The Sigma Protocol* (2001)

**MACLEAN, ALISTAIR**

*H.M.S. Ulysses* (1955)

*The Guns of Navarone* (1957)

*South by Java Head* (1957)

*The Secret Ways* (1959, also published as *The Last Frontier*)

*Night Without End* (1959)

*Fear Is the Key* (1961)

*The Black Shrike* (1961, also published as *The Dark Crusader*)

*The Golden Rendezvous* (1962)

*The Satan Bug* (1962)

*Ice Station Zebra* (1963)

*When Eight Bells Toll* (1966)

*Where Eagles Dare* (1967)

*Force 10 from Navarone* (1968)

*Puppet on a Chain* (1969)

*Caravan to Vaccares* (1970)

*Bear Island* (1971)

*This Way to Dusty Death* (1973)

*Breakheart Pass* (1974)

*Circus* (1975)

*The Golden Gate* (1976)

*Seawitch* (1977)

*Goodbye California* (1978)

*Athabasca* (1980)

*River of Death* (1981)

*Partisans* (1982)

*Floodgate* (1983)

*San Andreas* (1984)

*Santorini* (1986)

**MAILER, NORMAN**

*The Naked and the Dead* (1948)

**MARQUAND, JOHN P.**

*Ming Yellow* (1935)

*Your Turn, Mr. Moto* (1935, also published as *Mr. Moto Takes a Hand*)

*Thank You, Mr. Moto* (1936)

*Think Fast, Mr. Moto* (1937)

*Mr. Moto Is So Sorry* (1938)

*Last Laugh, Mr. Moto* (1942, also published as *Mercator Island*)

*Right You Are, Mr. Moto* (1957, also published as *The Last of Mr. Moto* and as *Rendezvous in Tokyo*)

**MASTERS, JOHN**

*Nightrunners of Bengal* (1951)

*The Deceivers* (1952)

*The Lotus and the Wind* (1953)

*Bhowani Junction* (1954)

*Coromandel!* (1955)

*Far, Far the Mountain Peak* (1957)

*To the Coral Strand* (1962)

**MCCULLEY, JOHNSTON**

*The Mark of Zorro* (1924)

*The Sign of Zorro* (1941)

**MELVILLE, HERMAN**

*Moby-Dick* (1851)

*Billy Budd* (1924)

**MONSARRAT, NICHOLAS**

*H.M.S. Marlborough Will Enter Harbor* (1949)

*The Cruel Sea* (1951)

*Three Corvettes* (1953)

*The Ship That Died of Shame* (1959)

*The Nylon Pirates* (1960)

**MORRELL, DAVID**

*First Blood* (1972)

*Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985)

*Creepers* (2005)

*Scavenger* (2007)

**MUNDY, TALBOT**

*King of the Khyber Rifles* (1916)

*The Eye of Zeitoon* (1920)

*The Nine Unknown* (1923)

*Caves of Terror* (1924)

*Om: The Secret of Ahbor Valley* (1924)

*Tros of Samothrace* (1925)

*The Devil's Guard* (1926, also published as *Ramsden*)

*Jimgrim* (1930, also published as *Jimgrim Sahib*)

*The Black Light* (1930)

*Full Moon* (1935)

*The Purple Pirate* (1935)

*Old Ugly Face* (1939)

**NORDHOFF, CHARLES AND HALL, JAMES NORMAN**

*Falcons of France* (1929)

*Mutiny on the Bounty* (1932)

*Men Against the Sea* (1934)

*Pitcairn's Island* (1936)

**O'BRIAN, PATRICK**

- The Golden Ocean* (1956)  
*The Unknown Shore* (1959)  
*Master and Commander* (1969)  
*Post Captain* (1972)  
*HMS Surprise* (1973)  
*The Mauritius Command* (1977)  
*Desolation Island* (1978)  
*The Fortune of War* (1979)  
*The Surgeon's Mate* (1980)  
*The Ionian Mission* (1981)  
*Treason's Harbour* (1983)  
*The Far Side of the World* (1984)  
*The Reverse of the Medal* (1986)  
*The Letter of Marque* (1988)  
*The Thirteen-Gun Salute* (1989)  
*The Nutmeg of Consolation* (1991)  
*The Truelove* (1992, also published as *Clarissa Oakes*)  
*The Wine-Dark Sea* (1993)  
*The Commodore* (1994)  
*The Yellow Admiral* (1996)  
*The Hundred Days* (1998)  
*Blue at the Mizzen* (1999)  
*The Final Unfinished Voyage of Jack Aubrey* (2004, also published as 21)

**O'DONNELL, PETER**

- Modesty Blaise* (1965)  
*Sabre-Tooth* (1966)  
*I, Lucifer* (1967)  
*A Taste for Death* (1969)  
*The Impossible Virgin* (1971)  
*Pieces of Modesty* (1972)  
*The Silver Mistress* (1973)  
*Last Day in Limbo* (1976)  
*Dragon's Claw* (1978)  
*The Xanadu Talisman* (1981)  
*The Night of Morningstar* (1982)  
*Dead Man's Handle* (1985)  
*Cobra Trap* (1996)

**ORCZY, BARONESS EMMA**

- The Emperor's Candlesticks* (1899)  
*The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1905)  
*I Will Repay* (1906)  
*The Elusive Pimpernel* (1908)  
*Eldorado* (1913)  
*The Laughing Cavalier* (1914)  
*Lord Tony's Wife* (1917)

- The First Sir Percy* (1921)  
*The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel* (1922)  
*Pimpernel and Rosemary* (1924)  
*The Honorable Jim* (1924)  
*Sir Percy Hits Back* (1927)  
*A Child of the Revolution* (1932)  
*The Scarlet Pimpernel Looks at the World* (1933)  
*The Way of the Scarlet Pimpernel* (1933)  
*Sir Percy Leads the Band* (1936)  
*Mam'zelle Guillotine* (1940)

**PRESTON, DOUGLAS AND CHILD, LINCOLN**

- Relic* (1995)  
*Mount Dragon* (1996)  
*Reliquary* (1997)  
*Riptide* (1998)  
*Thunderhead* (1999)  
*The Ice Limit* (2000)  
*The Cabinet of Curiosities* (2002)  
*Still Life with Crows* (2003)  
*Brimstone* (2004)  
*Dance of Death* (2005)  
*The Book of the Dead* (2006)  
*The Wheel of Darkness* (2007)

**BY LINCOLN CHILD ALONE**

- Utopia* (2002)  
*Death Match* (2004)  
*Deep Storm* (2007)

**BY DOUGLAS PRESTON ALONE**

- The Codex* (2004)  
*Tyrannosaur Canyon* (2005)  
*Blasphemy* (2008)

**PYLE, HOWARD**

- The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883)  
*Men of Iron* (1891)

**REILLY, MATTHEW**

- Contest* (1996)  
*Ice Station* (1998)  
*Temple* (1999)  
*Area 7* (2001)  
*Scarecrow* (2003)  
*Hover Car Racer* (2004)  
*Hell Island* (2005)  
*Seven Ancient Wonders* (2005, also published as *Seven Deadly Wonders*)  
*The Six Sacred Stones* (2007)

**REMARQUE, ERICH MARIA**

*All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929)

**RENAULT, MARY**

*The Last of the Wine* (1956)

*The King Must Die* (1958)

*The Bull from the Sea* (1962)

*The Mask of Apollo* (1966)

*Fire from Heaven* (1969)

*The Persian Boy* (1972)

*Funeral Games* (1981)

**ROBERTS, KENNETH**

*Arundel* (1930)

*The Lively Lady* (1931)

*Rabble in Arms* (1933)

*Captain Caution* (1934)

*Northwest Passage* (1937)

*Oliver Wiswell* (1940)

*Lydia Bailey* (1947)

*Boon Island* (1955)

**ROBESON, KENNETH** (Although the Doc Savage novels were originally published in magazines during the 1930s and 1940s, they were first published in book form starting in the 1960s. The dates shown below are for the original publication, not the first book edition.)

*The Man of Bronze* (1933)

*The Land of Terror* (1933)

*Quest of the Spider* (1933)

*The Polar Treasure* (1933)

*Pirate of the Pacific* (1933)

*The Red Skull* (1933)

*The Lost Oasis* (1933)

*The Sargasso Ogre* (1933)

*The Czar of Fear* (1933)

*The Phantom City* (1933)

*Brand of the Werewolf* (1934)

*The Man Who Shook the Earth* (1934)

*Meteor Menace* (1934)

*The Monsters* (1934)

*The Mystery of the Snow* (1934)

*The King Maker* (1934)

*The Thousand-Headed Man* (1934)

*The Squeaking Goblin* (1934)

*Fear Cay* (1934)

*Death in Silver* (1934)

*The Sea Magician* (1934)

*The Annihilist* (1934)

*The Mystic Mullah* (1935)

*Red Snow* (1935)

*Land of Always-Night* (1935)

*The Spook Legion* (1935)

*The Secret in the Sky* (1935)

*The Roar Devil* (1935)

*Quest of Qui* (1935)

*Spook Hole* (1935)

*The Majii* (1935)

*Dust of Death* (1935)

*Murder Melody* (1935)

*The Fantastic Island* (1935)

*Murder Mirage* (1936)

*Mystery Under the Sea* (1936)

*The Metal Master* (1936)

*The Men Who Smiled No More* (1936)

*The Seven Agate Devils* (1936)

*Haunted Ocean* (1936)

*The Black Spot* (1936)

*The Midas Man* (1936)

*Cold Death* (1936)

*The South Pole Terror* (1936)

*Resurrection Day* (1936)

*The Vanisher* (1936)

*Land of Long Ju Ju* (1937)

*The Derrick Devil* (1937)

*The Mental Wizard* (1937) (1937)

*The Terror in the Navy* (1937)

*Mad Eyes* (1937)

*The Land of Fear* (1937)

*He Could Stop the World* (1937)

*Ost* (1937, also published as *The Magic City*)

*The Feathered Octopus* (1937)

*Repel* (1937)

*The Sea Angel* (1937)

*The Golden Peril* (1937)

*The Living Fire Menace* (1938)

*The Mountain Monster* (1938)

*Devil on the Moon* (1938)

*The Pirate's Ghost* (1938)

*The Motion Menace* (1938)

*The Submarine Mystery* (1938)

*The Giggling Ghosts* (1938)

*The Munitions Master* (1938)

*The Red Terrors* (1938)

*Fortress of Solitude* (1938)

*The Green Death* (1938)

*The Devil Genghis* (1938)

*Mad Mesa* (1939)

*The Yellow Cloud* (1939)

- The Freckled Shark* (1939)  
*World's Fair Goblin* (1939)  
*The Gold Ogre* (1939)  
*The Flaming Falcons* (1939)  
*Merchants of Disaster* (1939)  
*The Crimson Serpent* (1939)  
*Poison Island* (1939)  
*The Stone Man* (1939)  
*Hex* (1939)  
*The Dagger in the Sky* (1939)  
*The Other World* (1940)  
*The Angry Ghost* (1940)  
*The Spotted Men* (1940)  
*The Evil Gnome* (1940)  
*The Boss of Terror* (1940)  
*The Awful Egg* (1940)  
*The Flying Goblin* (1940)  
*Tunnel Terror* (1940)  
*The Purple Dragon* (1940)  
*Devils of the Deep* (1940)  
*The Awful Dynasty* (1940)  
*The Men Vanished* (1940)  
*The Devil's Playground* (1941)  
*Bequest of Evil* (1941)  
*The All-White Elf* (1941)  
*The Golden Man* (1941)  
*The Pink Lady* (1941)  
*The Headless Men* (1941)  
*The Green Eagle* (1941)  
*Mystery Island* (1941)  
*The Mindless Monsters* (1941)  
*Birds of Death* (1941)  
*The Invisible-Box Murders* (1941)  
*Peril in the North* (1941)  
*The Rustling Death* (1942)  
*Men of Fear* (1942)  
*The Too-Wise Owl* (1942)  
*The Magic Forest* (1942)  
*Pirate Isle* (1942)  
*The Speaking Stone* (1942)  
*The Men Who Fell Up* (1942)  
*The Three Wild Men* (1942)  
*The Fiery Menace* (1942)  
*The Laugh of Death* (1942)  
*They Died Twice* (1942)  
*The Devil's Black Rock* (1942)  
*The Time Terror* (1943)  
*Waves of Death* (1943)  
*The Black, Black Witch* (1943)  
*The King of Terror* (1943)  
*The Talking Devil* (1943)  
*The Running Skeletons* (1943)  
*Mystery on Happy Bones* (1943)  
*The Mental Monster* (1943)  
*Hell Below* (1943)  
*The Goblins* (1943)  
*The Secret of the Su* (1943)  
*The Spook of Grandpa Eben* (1943)  
*The One-Eyed Mystic* (1944)  
*Death Had Yellow Eyes* (1944)  
*The Derelict of Skull Shoal* (1944)  
*The Whisker of Hercules* (1944)  
*The Three Devils* (1944)  
*The Pharoah's Ghost* (1944)  
*The Man Who Was Scared* (1944)  
*The Shape of Terror* (1944)  
*Weird Valley* (1944)  
*Jiu San* (1944)  
*Satan Black* (1944)  
*The Lost Giant* (1944)  
*Violent Night* (1945)  
*Strange Fish* (1945)  
*The Ten Ton Snakes* (1945)  
*Cargo Unknown* (1945)  
*Rock Sinister* (1945)  
*The Terrible Stork* (1945)  
*King Joe Cay* (1945)  
*The Wee Ones* (1945)  
*Terror Takes 7* (1945)  
*The Thing That Pursued* (1945)  
*Trouble on Parade* (1945)  
*The Screaming Man* (1945)  
*Measures for a Coffin* (1946)  
*Se-Pah-Poo* (1946)  
*Terror and the Lonely Widow* (1946)  
*Five Fathoms Dead* (1946)  
*Death Is a Round Black Spot* (1946)  
*Colors for Murder* (1946)  
*Fire and Ice* (1946)  
*Three Times a Corpse* (1946)  
*The Exploding Lake* (1946)  
*Death in Little Houses* (1946)  
*The Devil Is Jones* (1946)  
*The Disappearing Lady* (1946)  
*Target for Death* (1947)  
*The Death Lady* (1947)  
*Danger Lies East* (1947)  
*No Light to Die By* (1947)  
*The Monkey Suit* (1947)  
*Let's Kill Ames* (1947)

*Once Over Lightly* (1947)  
*I Died Yesterday* (1948)  
*The Pure Evil* (1948)  
*Terror Wears No Shoes* (1948)  
*The Angry Canary* (1948)  
*The Swooning Lady* (1948)  
*The Green Master* (1949)  
*Return from Comorral* (1949)  
*Up from Earth's Center* (1949)  
*The Red Spider* (1979)  
*Python Isle* (1991)  
*White Eyes* (1992)  
*The Frightened Fish* (1992)  
*The Jade Ogre* (1992)  
*Flight into Fear* (1993)  
*The Whistling Wraith* (1993)  
*The Forgotten Realm* (1993)  
 Philip José Farmer also wrote a Doc Savage novel,  
     *Escape from Loki* (1991)

#### **ROHMER, SAX**

*The Insidious Dr. Fu-Manchu* (1913, also published as  
     *The Mystery of Fu-Manchu*)  
*The Return of Dr. Fu Manchu* (1916, also published  
     as *The Devil Doctor*)  
*The Hand of Fu Manchu* (1917, also published as *The*  
     *Si-Fan Mysteries*)  
*Brood of the Witch Queen* (1918)  
*Tales of Secret Egypt* (1918)  
*The Golden Scorpion* (1919)  
*Quest of the Sacred Slipper* (1919)  
*The Green Eyes of Bast* (1920)  
*Grey Face* (1924)  
*The Daughter of Fu Manchu* (1931)  
*The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932)  
*The Bride of Fu Manchu* (1933, also published as *Fu*  
     *Manchu's Bride*)  
*The Trail of Fu Manchu* (1934)  
*The Bat Flies Low* (1935)  
*President Fu Manchu* (1936)  
*The Drums of Fu Manchu* (1939)  
*The Island of Fu Manchu* (1941)  
*Shadow of Fu Manchu* (1948)  
*The Sins of Sumuru* (1950, also published as *Nude in*  
     *Mink*)  
*The Slaves of Sumuru* (1951, also published as *Sumuru*)  
*The Fire Goddess* (1952, also published as *Virgin in*  
     *Flames*)  
*Return of Sumuru* (1954, also published as *Sand and*  
     *Satin*)

*Sinister Madonna* (1956)  
*Re-Enter Fu Manchu* (1957)  
*Emperor Fu Manchu* (1959)  
*The Wrath of Fu Manchu* (1973)

#### **ROLLINS, JAMES**

*Subterranean* (1999)  
*Excavation* (2000)  
*Deep Fathom* (2001)  
*Amazonia* (2002)  
*Ice Hunt* (2003)  
*Sandstorm* (2004)  
*Map of Bones* (2005)  
*Black Order* (2006)  
*The Judas Strain* (2007)  
*The Last Oracle* (2008)

#### **SABATINI, RAFAEL**

*St Martin's Summer* (1909, also published as *The*  
     *King's Messenger*)  
*The Sea Hawk* (1915)  
*Scaramouche* (1921)  
*Captain Blood* (1922)  
*The Stalking Horse* (1930)  
*Captain Blood Returns* (1931, also published as *The*  
     *Chronicles of Captain Blood*)  
*Scaramouche the Kingmaker* (1931)  
*The Black Swan* (1932)  
*The Fortunes of Captain Blood* (1936)

#### **SCOTT, SIR WALTER**

*Ivanhoe* (1819)  
*The Pirate* (1822)  
*Quentin Durward* (1823)

#### **SLADE, MICHAEL**

*Headhunter* (1984)  
*Ghoul* (1987)  
*Cutthroat* (1992)  
*Ripper* (1994)  
*Evil Eye* (1996, also published as *Zombie*)  
*Primal Scream* (1998, also published as *Shrink*)  
*Ripper* (1994)  
*Burnt Bones* (1999)  
*Hangman* (2000)  
*Death's Door* (2001)  
*Bed of Nails* (2003)  
*Swastika* (2005)  
*Kamikaze* (2006)  
*Crucified* (2008)

**SMITH, WILBUR**

*When the Lion Feeds* (1964)  
*The Dark of the Sun* (1965)  
*The Sound of Thunder* (1966)  
*Shout at the Devil* (1968)  
*Gold Mine* (1970, also published as *Gold*)  
*The Diamond Hunters* (1971)  
*The Sunbird* (1972)  
*Eagle in the Sky* (1974)  
*The Eye of the Tiger* (1975)  
*Cry Wolf* (1976)  
*A Sparrow Falls* (1977)  
*Hungry As the Sea* (1978)  
*Wild Justice* (1979, also published as *The Delta Decision*)  
*The Burning Shore* (1985)  
*Power of the Sword* (1986)  
*Rage* (1987)  
*A Time to Die* (1989)  
*Golden Fox* (1990)  
*Elephant Song* (1991)  
*River God* (1993)  
*The Seventh Scroll* (1997)  
*Birds of Prey* (1997)  
*Monsoon* (1999)  
*Warlock* (2001)  
*Blue Horizon* (2003)  
*The Triumph of the Sun* (2005)  
*The Quest* (2007)

**STEINBECK, JOHN**

*Cup of Gold* (1929)  
*The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* (1976)

**STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS**

*Treasure Island* (1883)  
*The Black Arrow* (1883)  
*Kidnapped* (1886)  
*The Master of Ballantrae* (1889)  
*The Wrong Box* (1889, written with Lloyd Osbourne)

**STEWART, MARY**

*Madam, Will You Talk?* (1955)  
*Wildfire at Midnight* (1956)  
*Thunder on the Right* (1957)  
*Nine Coaches Waiting* (1958)  
*My Brother Michael* (1959)  
*The Ivy Tree* (1961)  
*The Moon-Spinners* (1962)

*This Rough Magic* (1964)  
*Airs Above the Ground* (1965)  
*The Gabriel Hounds* (1967)  
*Touch Not the Cat* (1976)  
*Thornyhold* (1987)  
*Rose Cottage* (1997)  
*The Crystal Cave* (1970)  
*The Hollow Hills* (1973)  
*The Last Enchantment* (1979)  
*The Wicked Day* (1983)  
*The Prince and the Pilgrim* (1995)

**STOCKBRIDGE, GRANT** (Only those novels which appeared in book form are listed below.)

*The Spider Strikes* (1933)  
*The Wheel of Death* (1933)  
*Wings of the Black Death* (1933)  
*City of Flaming Shadows* (1934)  
*Satan's Death Blast* (1934)  
*The Corpse Cargo* (1934)  
*Prince of Red Looters* (1934)  
*Builders of the Black Empire* (1934)  
*Death's Crimson Juggernaut* (1934)  
*The Red Death Rain* (1934)  
*The Reign of Silver Terror* (1934)  
*The City Destroyer* (1935)  
*The Pain Emperor* (1935)  
*Hordes of the Red Butcher* (1935)  
*Master of the Death-Madness* (1935)  
*King of the Red Killers* (1935)  
*Overlord of the Damned* (1935)  
*Death Reign of the Vampire King* (1935)  
*Green Globes of Death* (1936)  
*The Coming of the Terror* (1936)  
*The Devil's Death Dwarves* (1936)  
*Dictator of the Damned* (1937)  
*Slaves of the Black Monarch* (1937)  
*The Milltown Massacres* (1937)  
*The Voyage of the Coffin Ship* (1937)  
*Master of the Flaming Horde* (1937)  
*The Devil's Pawnbroker* (1937)  
*Machine Guns Over the White House* (1937)  
*The Man Who Ruled in Hell* (1937)  
*Legions of the Accursed Light* (1938)  
*Satan's Murder Machines* (1939)  
*The Spider and the Pain Master* (1940)  
*Slaves of the Laughing Death* (1940)  
*Judgement of the Damned* (1940)  
*The Devil's Paymaster* (1941)

*Death and the Spider* (1942)  
*Secret City of Crime* (1943)

**SWARTHOUT, GLENDON**

*They Came to Cordura* (1958)  
*The Shootist* (1975)

**SWIFT, JONATHAN**

*Gulliver's Travels* (1726)

**TRAVEN, B.**

*The Death Ship* (1926)  
*Treasure of the Sierra Madre* (1927)  
*The Bridge in the Jungle* (1929)  
*March to the Monteria* (1933)  
*The Rebellion of the Hanged* (1936)

**TREECE, HENRY**

*The Savage Warriors* (1952, also published as *The Dark Island*)  
*The Rebels* (1953)  
*Legions of the Eagle* (1954)  
*Hounds of the King* (1955)  
*The Viking's Dawn* (1955)  
*The Invaders* (1956, also published as *The Golden Strangers*)  
*The Great Captains* (1956)  
*Hunter Hunted* (1957)  
*The Road to Mikalgard* (1957)  
*The Pagan Queen* (1958, also published as *Red Queen, White Queen*)  
*Men of the Hills* (1958)  
*The Return of Robinson Crusoe* (1958)  
*Ride into Danger* (1959)  
*The Bombard* (1959)  
*Wickham and the Armada* (1959)  
*The Master of Badger's Hall* (1959)  
*Viking's Sunset* (1960)  
*Jason* (1961)  
*Man With a Sword* (1962)  
*The Amber Princess* (1963)  
*The Eagle King* (1964, also published as *Oedipus*)  
*The Burning of Njal* (1964)  
*The Last Viking* (1964, also published as *The Last of the Vikings*)  
*Man with a Sword* (1964)  
*The Bronze Sword* (1965)  
*The Green Man* (1966)  
*Swords from the North* (1966)

*The Splintered Sword* (1967)  
*The Windswept City* (1967)

**TWAIN, MARK**

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876)  
*The Prince and the Pauper* (1882)  
*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)  
*A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889)  
*Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1894)

**VAN ASH, CAY**

*Ten Years Beyond Baker Street* (1984)  
*The Fires of Fu Manchu* (1987)

**VANCE, LOUIS JOSEPH**

*The Lone Wolf* (1914)  
*The False Faces* (1918)  
*Alias the Lone Wolf* (1921)  
*Red Masquerade* (1921)  
*The Lone Wolf Returns* (1923)  
*The Lone Wolf's Son* (1931)  
*Encore the Lone Wolf* (1933)  
*The Lone Wolf's Last Prowl* (1934)  
*The Lone Wolf and the Hidden Empire* (1947)

**VERNE, JULES**

*Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1863)  
*Journey to the Center of the Earth* (1864)  
*From the Earth to the Moon* (1865, also published as *The American Gun Club*)  
*Journeys and Adventures of Captain Hatteras* (1866, also published in two volumes as *At the North Pole* and *The Field of Ice*)  
*In Search of the Castaways* (1867)  
*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (1870)  
*Around the Moon* (1870)  
*The Adventures of Three Englishmen and Three Russians in South Africa* (1872)  
*The Fur Country* (1873)  
*Around the World in Eighty Days* (1873)  
*The Mysterious Island* (1875)  
*Blockade Runners* (1876)  
*Michael Strogoff* (1876)  
*Off on a Comet* (1877, also published as *Hector Servadac*)  
*The Begum's Fortune* (1879)  
*The Steam House* (1879, also published in two volumes as *The Demon of Cawnpore* and *Tigers and Traitors*)

*Eight Hundred Leagues on the Amazon* (1881)  
*Robur the Conqueror* (1886, also published as *The Clipper of the Clouds*)  
*The Purchase of the North Pole* (1889)  
*Carpathian Castle* (1892)  
*Propellor Island* (1895)  
*For the Flag* (1896, also published as *Facing the Flag*)  
*The Sphinx of the Ice Fields* (1897)  
*The Mighty Orinoco* (1898)  
*Second Fatherland* (1900)  
*The Village in the Treetops* (1901)  
*The Master of the World* (1904)  
*The Lighthouse at the End of the World* (1908)  
*The Hunt for the Meteor* (1908, also published as *The Chase of the Golden Meteor*)  
*The Barsac Mission* (1919, also in two volumes as *Into the Niger Bend* and *The City in the Sahara*)

**WELLS, H. G.**

*The Time Machine* (1895)  
*The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896)  
*The War of the Worlds* (1898)  
*The First Men in the Moon* (1901)

**WHEATLEY, DENNIS**

*The Forbidden Territory* (1933)  
*Such Power Is Dangeorus* (1933)  
*Black August* (1934)  
*The Fabulous Valley* (1934)  
*The Devil Rides Out* (1934)  
*The Eunuch of Stamboul* (1935)  
*They Found Atlantis* (1936)  
*Contraband* (1936)  
*Uncharted Seas* (1938, also published as *The Lost Continent*)  
*The Golden Spaniard* (1938)  
*Sixty Days to Live* (1939)  
*The Quest of Julian Day* (1939)  
*The Scarlet Impostor* (1940)  
*The Black Baroness* (1940)  
*Three Inquisitive People* (1940)  
*Faked Passports* (1940)  
*The Scarlet Impostor* (1940)  
*Strange Conflict* (1941)  
*The Sword of Fate* (1941)  
*V for Vengeance* (1942)  
*The Man Who Missed the War* (1945)  
*Codeword—Golden Fleece* (1946)  
*Come into My Parlor* (1946)

*The Launching of Roger Brook* (1947)  
*The Shadow of Tyburn Tree* (1948)  
*The Haunting of Toby Jugg* (1948)  
*The Rising Storm* (1949)  
*The Second Seal* (1950)  
*The Man Who Killed the King* (1951)  
*The Star of Ill Omen* (1952)  
*To the Devil—A Daughter* (1953)  
*The Island Where Time Stands Still* (1954)  
*The Dark Secret of Josephine* (1955)  
*The Ka of Gifford Hillary* (1956)  
*The Prisoner in the Mask* (1957)  
*Traitors' Gate* (1958)  
*The Rape of Venice* (1959)  
*The Satanist* (1960)  
*Vendetta in Spain* (1961)  
*Mayhem in Greece* (1962)  
*The Sultan's Daughter* (1963)  
*They Used Dark Forces* (1964)  
*Bill for the Use of a Body* (1964)  
*Dangerous Inheritance* (1965)  
*The Wanton Princess* (1966)  
*Unholy Crusade* (1967)  
*The White Witch of the South Seas* (1968)  
*Evil in a Mask* (1969)  
*Gateway to Hell* (1970)  
*The Ravishing of Lady Mary Ware* (1971)  
*The Irish Witch* (1973)  
*Desperate Measures* (1974)

**WISTER, OWEN**

*The Virginian* (1902)

**WOOD, CHRISTOPHER**

*James Bond, The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977)  
*James Bond and Moonraker* (1979)

**WREN, P. C.**

*Beau Geste* (1924)  
*Beau Sabreur* (1926)  
*Beau Ideal* (1928)  
*Good Gestes* (1929)  
*Flawed Blades* (1933)  
*Simbad the Soldier* (1935)  
*Fort in the Jungle* (1936)  
*Stories of the Foreign Legion* (1947)

**WYSS, JOHANN DAVID**

*Swiss Family Robinson* (1812)

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- Butcher, William. *Jules Verne*. New York: Thunder's Mouth, 2006.
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