

The Author of THAT Book

By ARTHUR GREENSPAN

The mysterious Henry Sutton is a mystery no more.

Sutton is the novelist whose forthcoming "The Exhibitionist" caused five partners in the publishing house of Bernard Geis Associates to quit.

Today the New York Post learned he is a 32-year-old magna cum laude graduate of Yale, David R. Slavitt: sometime poet, sometime Newsweek movie critic, sometime Herald-Tribune book reviewer, sometime playwright—and full-time unknown to the general public.

Linkletter, Marx Quit

When the drumbeaters are through Slavitt will be both well-known and rich — rich enough to have the "tax problem" publisher Geis suggested when he asked him to write the book two years ago.

"I've already made a killing," Slavitt conceded in Hollywood. "The paperback rights have been sold to Fawcett for six figures."

"Well over \$100,000," a publisher's spokesman elaborated.

The Geis firm had hoped to keep author Slavitt's identity under wraps, at least until "The Exhibitionist" got to the stores. But the news reports that the five partners — including Art Linkletter and Groucho Marx — had quit because they objected to the kind of books Geis is now publishing cited the Sutton book as a case in point, along

with the earlier "Valley of the Dolls" and "The King

The so-called "Geis technique" — characters resembling famous personalities, involved in sexual escapades — also has cost the firm its distribution contract with Random House.

Bennett Cerf, president of that firm, is reported to have remarked of "The Exhibitionist" that he "wouldn't touch it with a 40-foot pole."

Contacted in Hollywood, Slavitt was asked why he was using a pen name.

"There is the very simple obvious reason," he said. "John Dixon Carr, the mystery writer, also writes under the name Carter Dixon. He is simply so prolific and does more books in a year than any one publisher can handle. So he writes under his own name, and Carter Dixon too."

Slavitt pointed out that his novel "Rochelle," was published last Wednesday by Delacorte Press, which will publish another Slavitt novel, "Feel Free," next March.

About a Star

"It seemed to me that having two books in bookstores at the same time with the name of David Slavitt would be too much, particularly since I'm an unknown quantity. Bookdealers aren't knocking themselves out to get a David Slavitt," he said.

They are for a Henry Sutton. "The Exhibitionist" has an advance printing of 75,000 copies

plus that whopping paperback advance. "Rochelle," by contrast, had a press run of 5,000, and no one is clamoring for paperback rights. "Rochelle has longer words," says Slavitt.

Geis' promotion for "The Exhibitionist" describes it as the story of the daughter of an actor—herself a movie star—who "finds a man who takes her to new depths of degradation."

Besides these two books and the new one next spring, there is Slavitt's forthcoming Broadway "The Cardinal Sin," which Frederick Brisson will produce.

With these credentials, how did Slavitt come to write "The Exhibitionist"?

"I was reviewing books for Book Week in the old Herald-Tribune," Slavitt said. "I got this letter from Geis, he had liked a review and he thought I could write a novel, and if I would like a tax problem I could write for him."

"I wrote back and said, 'You're out of your mind. I'm not that kind of an author. My books don't sell to anybody. I'm lucky if my mother buys one.' Geis wrote back he was still interested, and would I lunch with him when I was in New York."

"So we went to lunch, a big wild meal. I thought about it and, at the very worst, I could try and fail, and what the hell, the first part of the advance was not returnable. As it turned out, I was able to do it."

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9/8/67 p. 4