

Notes on Where Murder Waits
reissued 10/73)

HW 3/24/74 E. Howard Hunt, 1965^(May) Orig. Paperback (Fawcett-

The novel, written during Hunt's dog-house days, is consistent with his others in not hiding that he is a man dominated by bitterness and hatred.

In its literary quality it is, as JW noted, better than the devil-worship series.

It is the only one he wrote under the Gordon Davis name that I have read.

In it is the same egocentricity of the David St. John writing and what I did not expect to find, disillusionment with emigre Cubans and contempt for the CIA.

With publication before the middle of 1965, I presume it was conceived and completed toward the end of 1964, or in the period of the Warren Commission, in which anti-Castro Cubans did figure. Therefore I find it more interesting that there is no anti-JFK crack in the book in which there is no end of anti-US Government cracks. Especially on what is so large in Give Us This Day, the alleged backdown on air cover, never agreed to by JFK.

Except for the girl, there is no untainted Cuban or Cuban outfit, even the exile committee (for all the world as though there were but a single one then). The committee is shot with self-seekers and crooks. All his country leaders (Panama and Brazil) are crooks and murderers or playboys and irresponsible. His former anti-Castro hero, El Machete, is the murderer who murders in stealing exile funds. Not what one would expect of Eduardo. Nor the honesty in the incompetence and cowardice in the air drops or that in reporting how minute the anti-Castro bands were.

There seems also to be the typical Hunt drawing on real characters in his hasty writing. Sergio Arcacha Smith was a crook and did steal exile funds as well as those of the Batista government when he worked for it. The committee leader with the spectacles is a clear copy. And some of the names are suggestive of Hunt's own experiences in the Agency. He is Conroy, also Patricio Martinez. (I do not suggest connection with Layton Patrick Mattens, Arcacha's second in N.O. when Martens was but a boy nor was WG Martinez, who may or may not have been known to Hunt in Miami.) Conroy is half Cuban, as were many of the exile figures, others like Ricardo Davis and Douglas Lethbridge. In fact, save for having himself, as under David St. John, a Washington lawyer, his career as Conroy exactly duplicates that of Lethbridge, who was raised on a Cuban ranch, was and was on the outs with CIA and was captured at the Bay of Pigs. Barros (murdered exile leader) may be a real Spanish name but I have never heard it. In Hunt's past there was one similar. He used to go to the Madrillon, from one of his taped conversations, with I think Cushman. I knew this restaurant and its owners well. The first part-owner/chef was a Loyalist Spaniard, Peter Borrás. Vowels reversed. (His widow was later Scoop Russell's secretary at NBC's Washington headquarters and I wonder is its local station's food expert is their daughter.) Manuel Castillo, exile girl-chaser and irresponsible in Rio, whose wife is in Spain, parallels a real one, Samuel Manuel Fernando Castillo, Trujillo's colonel-military attache in Washington whose wife was in Ciudad Trujillo and woman-chased. (When he died recently I wrote Vivian, his wife, who did not answer. I knew her when they could not get married but lived together. Nando seems to have handled the Venezuelan end of the Guatemalan overthrow of which Hunt was part for CIA.)

I find myself wondering who Finis Farr is from the dedication, "For Finis Farr: Gentleman, scholar, ~~and~~ friend." Would such a "scholar" be in Who's Who?

The bitterness and the lack of anti-JFK sentiment are perhaps more interesting when it is recalled that Hunt seems to have been in domestic operations at the time he wrote this. He had been clipped and he was bitter, his true genius not being appreciated. Maybe the assassination deterred nastiness against JFK. It would not have been welcome then.

In sending me this book, Ed Kabak commented that "The salespeople in the bookstores here (NYC) advise that Hunt's books just don't sell at all! Surprised?" That they do not

sell well is indicated by the fact that each one I have is an original reprint and all were acquired only recently. Or, they had but one reprinting. They are not good books and do not deserve good sales or good reviews, of which there were many because of his appearance in the news.

The publishers attempted to exploit the publicity he got. But it was all bad publicity. He was not heroic. He was villainous. "egative publicity sometimes is commercially valuable, but unless it was first-person writing, there seems to be no reason for people to have any special interest in Hunt.

What is surprising is that Fawcett reprinted this book as late as 10/73, more than a year after Hunt figured in the news. Perhaps it was keyed to or triggered by his Ervin committee appearance.

It is my estimate that his first-person book on the Bay of Pigs was not financially successful and I am surprised that Putnam has given as much as it has for his WG book when he can't say much in it that has not been published without jeopardizing himself. (Six-figure advance reported with similar for paperback rights. Coming this late- and the reporting is this month's - when none of the other WG books has done well, I think it is unusual. It is a larger advance than Woodward and Bernstein got.)

When Hunt's legal problems have not been resolved, any writing seems unwise unless he is absolutely certain of his situation. He can't write other than he has sworn to and it would seem to be unwise to report what the official bodies ignored. Besides, it is not possible to read his public testimony without realizing that it is not and can't be a faithful account of what happened at The Watergate. Like the foolishness about a double agent and his lying about Baldwin while covering Barker's ineptness and his own in permitting the operation to go forward after he knew the door-taping had been detected. (Barker in not using communications equipment he had with him.)

In addition, the many WG cases will be in the courts for years. Every written word will be examined with great care by prosecution and all the defense teams. Any careless word can hurt Hunt. If his willingness to write about WG can be taken as a sign that he has sworn only truthfully, it can also be taken as ego overriding common sense or as a lust for more money that he has already snaffled from the CREEPs.

I suppose this book is what he referred to in writing me about his current constructive efforts. He claimed they kept him so busy he had no time to read what was written about him by TadSzulc.