

# The Works and Workings of E. Howard Hunt

By SOL YURICK

Some years ago, when we were all more innocent, I read a novel whose name and author I cannot remember. A Kennedy-type liberal uncovers a plot to assassinate the President. He tries to warn the President, fails, is almost killed himself, goes underground to fight this right-wing coup.

In the fifties I read this science-fiction story in which there were these Vietnamese in submarines, see, all over the world. Vietnamese! Who were they?

Conan Doyle's "The Valley of Fear" is not merely a detective novel, it is about the Molly Maguires. The "victim" Sherlock Holmes helps is the man who penetrated and destroyed the Molly Maguires, portrayed as a bunch of demented religious fanatics and hoodlums. What is the suggestive effect on one's attitudes if the reader doesn't perceive this covert political dimension?

The left wing of the C.I.A. found it useful to fund the Congress for Cultural Freedom. To what purpose?

The biggest room in the C.I.A. is the spy-fiction library. The K.G.B. is similarly afflicted. Fictions have not been neglected in the vast struggle against Atheistic Communism. For some agents this has been a two-front struggle, abroad and at home. The struggle has been subterranean, which is to say both objectively covert and in people's unconscious.

All of which brings me by a "commodius vicus" to the newest literary cult hero, E. Howard Hunt. Two of his books, "The Coven" and "Diabolus" were written under the code-name, David St. John. On the surface these books seem to be about devil worship, strange rites, exotic customs, sacrifices, ritual murders. The stories are simple, subliterate, National Enquirer stuff between covers. In "Diabolus" there is a murder on a Haiti-like island. A C.I.A. agent's vacation is interrupted. He is kicked off the island, almost murdered, senses that there is much more than voodoo involved: There are Chinese on the island. He comes home, gets assigned to protect a French Minister who is to visit America, uncovers a satanic ring in Paris which

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is being run by a highly placed French Maoist. Behind it all are the Chicoms (preferred usage in securityese: consult various content-analysis dictionaries of the intelligence services). He saves the Minister's wife from blackmailable diabolism, breaks up the ring, saves French-American relations. . . .

In "The Coven" the murder of a black singer, wearing a strange device, having a curiously hypnotic voice (her voice takes you back to the jungle-like dawn of time; Hunt is obsessed with the dawn of time; it symbolizes the undoing of civilization as we know it; like Eden, curiously attractive), leads to the discovery of a witch-cult in Washington, in the shadow of the Capitol. Trying to solve the murder, which also means participating in various unspeakable rites, the hero is opposed by strange forces. He finds, among the powers behind these covens, a young liberal Senator and his swinging wife. The Senator is obviously a Kennedy. The Kennedys are particularly anathema; the fount of diabolical libertarianism, unleashing the forces of misrule, reversing the world. Now if the reader has been minimally in the world, he or she cannot miss the allusion. Will surmise stir in the breast. Is it possible? Can it be? Oh, wow! Memories of accusations about certain secret rites around the Polanski-Tate-Manson matrix come back. And wasn't Bobby Kennedy friends with the Polanskis? And the news itself becomes politically tinged.

These are examples of covertly political novels; propaganda. The adventure is secondary. They are designed to influence feelings about real events by evoking the unpurged portions of the unconscious. The key to understanding comes out of the right-wing of the intelligence world. (There is a left wing too; the counterthrust is "Rosemary's Baby.") It is a world full of coded mean-

ings, symbols, references, allusions, levels of ambiguity, Doppelgängers (cf. "The Sot-Weed Factor"; the role of John Smith), or double-agents. It would bring vast joy to the heart of a New Critic. The real horror is that people act on these perceptions. Disastrous consequences flow. The C.I.A. ran a witch-doctor operation in the Congo, 1964. Millions were spent to drop bales of aces of spades over Vietnam.

To the right wing, before Nixon won, there was obviously a secret, persistent Communist menace which had penetrated the highest levels of government, even to the Presidency. Twenty years of none dare call it treason. The politics of Armageddon dies hard (cf. The Book of Revelation of St. John the Divine). Obviously, liberalism is a front for this Communist menace; it stands for heightened, unregenerate, universal sexuality, atheism, anti-patriotism, softening the moral fibre of Americans, diluting the race through integration, all preparatory to Takeover. Communism is equated with diabolism; take a look at some of the satanic novels of Dennis Wheatly now enjoying a new vogue. One had to stop the spread of depravity and misrule by any means possible.

Obviously a vast domestic and international cultural struggle went on, both overtly and secretly; novel against novel, comic strip against comic strip, television play against. . . . Hunt's books are one manifestation of this struggle; cultural disinformation. Writers scribbling; agents scurrying (and sometimes murdering) outside the periphery of perception: a battle of deceit and counter-deceit.

Were the Hunts out in the cold too long? What's his mind like? His novels leave few clues. (Perhaps that's the wrong question: What's the national mind like?) Did the world come close to dissolving into a Robbe-Grillet flux? But then even "hard data" in the memory banks of intelligence computers lose meaning unless reaffirmed by ideology and acts (and perhaps Swiss bank accounts). One clings to patriotism and prevents chaos. But will the world recognize Hunt as the supreme patriot he claims to be? The story of E. Howard Hunt could be the stuff of high literature; assistant to the Grand Inquisitor (another favorite Cold War fiction), who in the name of the rule of Jesus Christ imprisoned Jesus because he was a threat to "security." ■