

HW: re The Coven.

3 February 1974

First and immediate reaction is to the selection of the surname of the hero, Gault. The exceptional rather than the usual spelling is typical Hunt, and if selection of this name represents what we all feel is his fondness for and emphasis on names, it could point toward some relationship with another case in which this name was selected. Without going back and reviewing all the rather mixed up details of that other case it would be dangerous, to generalize further. It may be interesting that the copyright date on the original hardcover of The Coven is supposed to have been 1967, before the other case came along.

In many respects Senator Vare appears to represent a synthesis of JFK and EMK, but there are several differences, such as Sen. Vare's pale complexion and his habit of flying his own plane. On the whole, however, Vare is so vaguely delineated that he really doesn't come alive. On the other hand, Cathy Vare appears to be copied pretty much from Jackie, with elements of Joan ( blonde ) thrown in along with hints of Pat Lawford and/or Eunice Shriver (tallness, arrogance). Poor Ethel seems to have been neglected. Cathy pushes no one into any swimming pool, and Cathy's three children match the three Jackie had rather than the nine or so Ethel produced (I've lost count).

It seems to me that if the Kennedy family is targeted in the book, it's in the sense of being intimately tied up with hippies, junkies, the youth revolution in general and even with witchcraft -- in other words, with all that is evil and anti-establishment. You can't trust a liberal, no matter how rich he is.

I'm unable to get much more from the book, however, because of the skimpy motivation of most of the characters, the slap-dash stringing together of various episodes, and the abysmally corny writing. Perhaps my chief impression is that for some reason Hunt seems to have been determined to write a book based on witchcraft. This could be important, depending on how he acquired or had to acquire his knowledge of it. He may just have been fascinated with a whole new realm of colorful detail with which to background another of his fantasies, but for some reason one is left with the impression that there somehow was more to it than that. If the 1967 date for the original copyright is correct, it's interesting that Chappaquiddick didn't come along until July, 1969.

jdw

Hunt/Writing/The Coven: Glad you got and read and particularly glad your view and interpretations coincide with mine.

Because I am not enamored of her or her philosophy I have never read Ayn Rynd, but I found myself wondering if this was behind his selection of Gault as this name for self. Hunt could have had and enjoyed multiple reasons.

Vare as synthesis we agree. The man who first spoke to me about this regarded it as intended to reflect JFK only. Glad of support of what I think is only possible view, as I think it impossible he had only JFK, Jackie in mind. What interests me is absence Bobby in the characterization except as it was intended to encompass all Kennedys.

My now you know this is not his only work on witchcraft. I think he had a combination of motives. For one, it had become camp, that kind of writing. Now the movie. For another to give him a new chance to blacken his enemies, a new way. He could believe the symbolism, that his enemies were devil-worshippers. Liberalism is devil to him.

Where you refer to how he acquired the knowledge, I think this should be considered with what he uses in the other witching books, hypnosis and medications. Then your point has, I think, more point, and only one probable answer. I would go farther than you where you question whether this could be merely another of his fantasies and believe he has specific spook stuff in mind. They have been heavy on this kind of stuff. Even OSS was.

(My last assignment - we had multiple chores usually - was part of a team to write texts for the coming occupation of Japan. That is, last assignment as soldier. Rehired as civilian. One of the things we had to read and believe was learned treatises on the Japanese and their alleged hangups. Of these the one that sticks in my mind was some farout stuff from a Harvard or Yale expert on Japanese beliefs about eliminating body wastes. I am sure that in SEAsia and Congo, for example, CIA went in heavily for native belief and special interpretations of what they mean.)