

An American Grotesque

In the first 11 chapter, a length greater than that of Inquest, Kirkwood hasn't finished impaneling the jury.

It is the self-important, self-centered gossip old lady of a young man who dominates, not his hero or his villain. It is a New Orleans book by a non-New Orleanian, written in the manner of New Orleans social life, which may or may not have been Kirkwood's prior to his Great Days. It is overflowing with kindness to all his many benefactors, including the over-rich/bitch lady who subsidized him and many of her cronies, as well as Shaw's; to all of those with whom he ate and drank (not excluding what they ate where and how each held his drink); to his quarters-irrelevancies. I don't think I can remember another overlong book made more overlong by the most inconsequential trivia - a real limpwrister. Kirkwood's interests and attention are on the flutters of his eyes and to this point light-weight mind, not his story. To this point there is an enormous accumulation of breathlessly-detailed crap and remarkably little else except stage-setting.

He is not satisfied to display his own prejudice, his preconceived belief, nor to be instinctively anti-Garrison. Partly because I had heard he is homosexual, I guess, I had my preconception about his, furthered by his Esquire piece and the obscenity in it about Shaw the homosexual not raping Marilyn Tate. (In the book he goes to even greater length not to tell a non-secret, that Shaw stayed with her, yet he includes here in several pages of credits and thanks at the end.) So, I got the feeling that this was one homosexual springing to the defense of another in an esprit de corps motivation for which he lacked the masculinity and manhood.

Yet it is unintendedly revealing in a number of minor ways. I'd know the paranoia of the Garrison side. I did not know, as Kirkwood without so intending discloses, that the other side also was. Like his references to Garrison's "spies". They not only didn't exist, but there were none capable of it. Shaw had them all, including most of the press.

The departure from their touted postures by the press is one of his more interesting unintended disclosures. If to this point he says less that I heard and knew about some, he still says more than I think can leave them any comfort. Meanwhile, the case that could easily be made against Garrison isn't, and that case is reduced to the expression of K's preconceptions, likes and dislikes, not a persuasive one to the questioning mind.

He is to the selection of the 10th juror and has been raving about the defense lawyers without telling the key thing about those lawyers, that the one for whom he has only casual mention and for who he has but minor credit is the one who did all the really massive pre-trial work or why, which would have been more interesting than all his chitchat to this point and would have said more about Garrison than he has tried to.

Even the things he has tried to go into he doesn't understand and doesn't try to. From those with whom he associated he should have been able to learn what really happened in judge Halleck's court when the first hearing on the autopsy materials was held. He could have gotten a fair notion of what happened from newspaper clippings alone. But he missed what could have advanced his thesis more than anything in this vast verbosity. In short, he doesn't really understand what he is talking about and below the level of consciousness hides it in wasteful words.

Even the editing is punk, and he had plenty of them-bamed. There are some characters introduced over and over again with the same descriptions, the same parenthetical interjections, others not introduced at all.

Every restaurant in which he was is named, to no point. The one value I've found to this point is in his blabbing, about Sheridan (without mention of Townley), the Gurviches (no comment on the pre-switch dick, no opinion on his morals or ethics) and the real press, of whom he was not one. The sheriff's prejudices also, as I had known.

I don't recall anything in which the bias is more pervasive. He even hated the judge before anything happened and ridicules him because he is neat in appearance and controlled his alcoholism before the trial began and for its length.

His attempt at reporting is bad and he eliminates all unfavorable to his side, like Sheridan getting caught in the courtroom wired with an FM transmitter and the activism of the pro-Shaw press corps before the trial began. In his pretended completeness, he fails to say ~~whether~~ whether the defense had any hired professional investigators. Awful drivvel.