

Marketing Murder

The literary market is booming in assassination stories. To the *danse macabre* of free lance authors, always eager to cash in on national tragedies, something new has been added—the participation of defense attorneys in strange contingency fees for murder facts.

In the trial that never was of James Earl Ray, a half-dozen books are being prepared about the killer and his victim, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ray's first attorney, Arthur J. Hanes, received a fee split under a contract between William Bradford Huie and the assassin. Ray's second attorney, Percy Foreman, now has become a collaborator and business associate of Huie, who bought the "sights" to the assassin's story.

In the trial of Sirhan B. Sirhan, another peculiar book contract is reported to exist between a free lance, Robert B. Kaiser, and the defense attorneys. Under it the lawyers, who get no compensation for their work, would receive a percentage of the proceeds from the manuscript's sale. The potential conflicts of interest in such a partnership to profit from telling the untold story in a trial still under way raise serious questions for the legal profession and the judicial process.

Attorneys are generally regarded as officers of the court. Their added role as scribes by proxy under such arrangements requires examination under the canons of the bar.