

Now Read On

A guide to contemporary
popular fiction

Mandy Hicken
Ray Prytherch

Gower

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INTRODUCTION

This book is not, nor is it intended to be, an exhaustive guide to fiction. It is, rather, a guide to the work of popular contemporary authors, who write in a specific genre. Many of the novelists who have been chosen are very well-known, and in their case the book will serve as a reminder of published titles; others are less well-established, and the relevant entries will provide new sources of reading material for devotees of a particular genre. All the authors write in the English language, and are, for the most part, British, though American, Australian and African novelists also appear. With very few exceptions, the authors mentioned are still writing regularly; those who are not have died within the last few years.

The purpose of the book is to answer the question so often put to staff in public libraries and bookshops: 'I've read all Catherine Cookson's or Wilbur Smith's books. Does anyone else write like them?' The information given has been tested on a sample of public library users, and should prove to be a valuable tool for libraries, in answering readers' enquiries, and in training library staff in fiction selection. It will also, it is hoped, have a place in the bookshop, and may well attract the attention of those members of the public who wish to widen their reading of contemporary fiction. The details of each author's publications are up to date to the end of 1989, and it is intended to produce regular revisions of the book as new titles and new authors emerge.

The book contains information about nineteen different genres in fiction. Some, like Detective Stories and Police Work, and Fantasies and Science Fiction, overlap to a great extent, but have their own individual characteristics and exponents. Some authors write in more than one genre, and frequent cross-references have been made in this case. Some major exponents of a genre, for instance Agatha Christie and Dorothy L. Sayers in Detective Stories, have been mentioned as a comparison, but have no entry of their own, simply because they are so well-known as to need no further discussion, and because they are no longer writing.

There are significant omissions from the book. No mention has been made of writers of Westerns, or light romantic novels. The 'literary' novel has also been excluded, since it is always extensively reviewed in the media, and is, in any case, rather outside the scope of this particular book. In listing Science Fiction, a genre which has been exhaustively surveyed, attention has been focussed on comparative newcomers to this field, with a mention of the seminal figures.

Introduction

The choice of authors is essentially a personal one, but based on a survey of popular material read by public library users. Readers of this guide may well have other choices, and comments, critical or otherwise, on the contents would be gratefully received.

The book is arranged alphabetically by genre, then alphabetically by author within each genre. Each author's entry contains biographical details, comments about the content, style and quality of the novels, and a complete list of publications, with bibliographical details. It then lists the names of other authors who write in a similar style.

There are two indexes. The first lists every author mentioned in the text, and includes pseudonyms where they have been used. The second lists series and recurring characters in an author's work. There is also an appendix which lists the winners of prizes awarded for specific genres.

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ADVENTURE STORIES

These are identified with fast-moving plots, exotic settings, and larger-than-life main characters. Their authors are mainly concerned with holding the reader's interest by involving their hero (for there are few women as main characters in this type of novel) in hair-raising adventures which demand tough action, escapes and chases, and ingenious solutions to seemingly unsurmountable problems. The tradition was established by writers like Rider Haggard, John Buchan and Dornford Yates, and is continued by a number of extremely popular, best-selling authors such as Hammond Innes and Alistair MacLean, who have dominated the scene for many years. Recently, a new generation has emerged, whose plots are equally fast-moving, but whose characterisation and analysis of situations have much greater depth.

This is essentially a type of fiction for picking up at airports and station bookstalls, and is an integral part of the stock of standard fiction in public libraries. Collins have always been a leading publisher of this genre.

Bagley, Desmond

Born in England in 1923, he worked in the British Aircraft Industry during 1940–6. He then travelled overland to Africa, where he worked in Uganda, Kenya and Rhodesia, before going to South Africa in 1950. He became a freelance journalist in 1956, and a professional novelist in 1962. His major hobby was travel, and his books are almost invariably set in foreign locations, ranging from the jungles of South America to the interior of Iceland. He lived latterly in Guernsey, and died in 1983. His last two books were not of the same standard as the earlier ones, but were still enjoyable and enthusiastically received by his readers.

All his books were published by Collins, and most are still available in a standard edition.

Publications

The golden keel 1963
High citadel 1965
Wyatt's hurricane 1966
Landslide 1967
The Vivero letter 1968
The spoilers 1969
Running blind 1970
The freedom trap 1971
The tightrope men 1973
The snow tiger 1975
The enemy 1977
Flyaway 1978
Bahama crisis 1980
Windfall 1982
The plutonium factor 1982
Juggernaut 1985 (published posthumously)

Now read

Hammond Innes, Geoffrey Jenkins, Alistair MacLean, Duncan Kyle, Ken Follett, Wilbur Smith, Clive Cussler, Bob Langley.

Driscoll, Peter

British, born in London in 1942. His parents moved to South Africa when he was a child, and he was educated there. He took a degree at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg in 1967, and became a journalist in Johannesburg after serving in the South African army. He moved to London to work as a script-writer and sub-editor on Independent Television News from 1969 to 1973, then decided to devote all his time to writing. He now lives in Ireland.

Peter Driscoll has been compared to John Buchan and Eric Ambler in his choice of plot and setting. He believes that a good thriller should have the depth and insight of a 'straight' novel, within the limitations of the genre, and says that he 'tries his hardest to communicate authenticity, atmosphere, and – an elusive but essential ingredient – the quality of fear'.

His plots are set in countries which are undergoing socio-political problems, in which his heroes become inadvertently involved. The books are researched in depth, giving real authenticity, and the atmosphere of tension is carefully built up. Driscoll does not gloss over the brutalities of the regimes in the countries in which he places his books. Whether writing about South Africa, in *The Wilby conspiracy*, or Northern Ireland in *In connection with Kilshaw*, he brings realism to the plot.

Publications

The white lie assignment Macdonald 1971
The Wilby conspiracy Macdonald 1973
In connection with Kilshaw Macdonald 1974
The Barboza credentials Macdonald 1976
Pangolin Macdonald 1979
Heritage Granada 1983
Spearhead Bantam 1988

Now read

Ken Follett, Colin Forbes, Jack Higgins, Bob Langley, Ken Royce, Wilbur Smith, Craig Thomas.

Follett, Ken

British, born in Cardiff in 1949. Took a degree in philosophy at University College, London, and made journalism his career. He wrote his first novel to pay a car repair bill, and sold it as a serial to the *London Evening News*, for whom he was working. He achieved real success with his tenth novel, *Storm Island*, and has written best-sellers ever since. He specialises in the sort of fast-moving action stories popularised by Alistair MacLean. Some

of his books could also be categorised as spy stories, since many of them have a political background, or war stories, since the action takes place in a Second World War setting. The backgrounds are well-researched, and the characters have depth. His latest novel is an historical saga.

Publications

- The bear raid Harwood, Smart 1976
- Shakeout Harwood, Smart 1977
- Storm Island H. Hamilton 1978
(later retitled and filmed as *The eye of the needle*)
- Triple H. Hamilton 1979
- The key to Rebecca H. Hamilton 1981
- The man from St Petersburg H. Hamilton 1982
- On wings of eagles Collins 1983
- Lie down with lions Collins 1985
- Pillars of the earth Macmillan 1989

Now read

Colin Forbes, Jack Higgins, Alistair MacLean, Craig Thomas.

Forbes, Colin

British. He served in the Mediterranean during the Second World War, and then went into business, where he had various occupations before deciding to become a writer. He is one of the authors who add authenticity and depth of character to an exciting plot. His books are stories of high adventure, sometimes in a wartime setting, or in espionage.

He started writing in the late 1960s, and achieved his first success in 1969 with *Tramp in armour*.

Publications

- Tramp in armour 1969
- The heights of Zervos 1970
- Palermo ambush 1972
- Target five 1973
- The stone leopard 1975
- Avalanche express 1977
- The Stockholm syndicate 1981
- Double jeopardy 1982
- The leader and the damned 1983
- The year of the golden ape 1983
- Terminal 1984
- Cover story 1985

Adventure stories

The Janus man 1986
Deadlock 1987
The Greek key 1988
(All published by Collins.)
Shockwave Pan 1989

Now read

Peter Driscoll, Alistair MacLean, Jack Higgins, Wilbur Smith, Craig Thomas.

Francis, Dick

Born in Pembrokeshire in 1920, and became a Flying Officer in the RAF in the Second World War. He then became an amateur National Hunt jockey, and turned professional in 1948. On retiring from competitive racing he became racing correspondent for the *Sunday Express* from 1957 to 1973. After writing his autobiography in 1957, he decided to try his hand at thrillers, and the first was published in 1962. He has produced one a year since then. All his books are set in the world of horse racing, and are adventure stories in the truest sense, with fast-moving plots, chases, and heroes who succeed in spite of overwhelming odds. His knowledge of flying helps in the authenticity of detail. His success has encouraged other sportsmen to write similar material.

Publications

Dead cert 1962
Nerve 1964
For kicks 1965
Odds against 1965
Flying finish 1966
Blood sport 1967
Forfeit 1968
Enquiry 1969
Rat race 1970
Bonecrack 1971
Smokescreen 1972
Slay-ride 1973
Knock-down 1974
High stakes 1975
In the frame 1976
Risk 1977
Trial run 1978
Whip hand 1979
Reflex 1980

Twice shy 1981

Banker 1982

Danger 1983

Proof 1984

Break in 1985

Bolt 1986

Hot money 1987

The edge 1988

Straight 1989

(All published by Michael Joseph in England and Harper in the USA.)

Now read

Jon Breen, John Francome, Michael Maguire (horse racing); Ille Nastase (tennis); Keith Miles (golf); Gerald Hammond (shooting); Douglas Rutherford (motor racing); Alan Syngé, Michael Marquess (cricket).

Higgins, Jack (Harry Patterson)

British. Born in 1929 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but he was educated at Roundhay School and Beckett Park Teachers' Training College, Leeds, followed by a sociology degree at LSE. He tried various jobs in the education and clerical professions, mainly in Leeds and other areas in Yorkshire, after army service, and became a full-time writer at the age of 41. He has dual British/Irish citizenship, and now lives in Ireland. He has written under a variety of pseudonyms: Martin Fallon, James Graham, Hugh Marlowe, Harry Patterson, but most titles have been reprinted under the name of Jack Higgins.

Jack Higgins writes many different types of thriller, from the pure adventure story, like *The eagle has landed*, to the private detective novel, as Hugh Marlowe, and the spy story, as Martin Fallon. He is currently writing political thrillers, set in Northern Ireland, which feature Liam Devlin in conflict with the IRA. His novels are listed under the heading of adventure stories because many of them come into that category. Several of his books have become successful films.

Publications.

as Jack Higgins

East of desolation Hodder 1968

In the hour before midnight Hodder 1969

Night judgment at Sinos Hodder 1970

The last place God made Collins 1971

The savage day Collins 1972

A prayer for the dying Collins 1973

Adventure stories

The eagle has landed Collins 1975
Storm warning Collins 1976
Day of judgement Collins 1978
Solo (The Cretan lover in US) Collins 1980
Luciano's luck Collins 1981
Touch the devil Collins 1982
Exocet Collins 1983
Confessional Collins 1985
Night of the fox Collins 1986
A season in hell Collins 1989
Memoirs of a dance hall Romeo Collins 1989

as Harry Patterson

Sad wind from the sea 1959
Cry of the hunter 1960
The thousand faces of night 1961
Comes the dark stranger 1962
Hell is too crowded 1962
The dark side of the island 1963
(All published by John Long.)
Pay the devil Barrie & Rockcliff 1963
A phoenix in the blood Barrie & Rockcliff 1964
Thunder at noon 1964
Wrath of the lion 1964
The graveyard shift 1965
The iron tiger 1966
Brought in dead 1967
Hell is always today 1968
Toll for the brave 1971
(All published by John Long.)
The Valhalla exchange Hutchinson 1976
To catch a king Hutchinson 1979
Dillinger Hutchinson 1983

as Martin Fallon

The testament of Caspar Schultz 1962
Year of the tiger 1963
The keys of hell 1965
(All published by Abelard Schuman.)
Midnight never comes 1966
Dark side of the street 1967
A fine night for dying 1969
(All published by John Long.)

as James Graham
 A game for heroes 1970
 The wrath of God 1971
 The Khufra run 1972
 Bloody passage 1974
 (All published by Macmillan.)

as Hugh Marlowe
 Seven pillars to hell 1963
 Passage by night 1964
 A candle for the dead 1966
 (All published by Abelard Schuman, though the last was
 reissued by Hodder in 1969 as *The violent enemy*.)

Now read

Ken Follett, Colin Forbes, Geoffrey Jenkins, Alistair MacLean, Craig Thomas.

Innes, Hammond

British. Born in Sussex in 1913. He was educated in Kent, and joined the staff of the *Financial News* in 1934. He served in the Royal Artillery in the Second World War, where he continued to write, and became a full-time author after the war. His hobbies are travel and ocean racing, and these are reflected in his plots. He was awarded a CBE in 1978.

Hammond Innes writes in the tradition of Buchan and Haggard. His plots, though well-researched and detailed, are full of cliff-hanging situations and daring escapades. His knowledge of the sea and of life in other countries is self-evident in the locations of his novels. The books have remained consistently popular, and Collins have reprinted most of them in a standard edition. Several have been filmed.

He has also written children's books as Ralph Hammond, and travel books. Two of his later novels, *The big footprints*, about the elephant poachers in Africa, and *The last voyage: Captain Cook's lost diary*, were not really thrillers.

Publications

Wreckers must breathe 1940
 The Trojan horse 1940
 Attack alarm 1941
 Dead and alive 1946
 Killer mine 1947
 The lonely skier 1947

Adventure stories

Maddon's Rock 1948
The blue ice 1948
The white south 1948
The angry mountain 1950
Air bridge 1951
Campbell's kingdom 1952
The strange land 1954
The Mary Deare 1956
The land God gave to Cain 1958
The doomed oasis 1960
Atlantic fury 1962
The Stode Venturer 1965
Levkas man 1971
Golden soak 1973
North star 1975
The big footprints 1977
The last voyage 1978
Solomon's seal 1980
The black tide 1982
High stand 1985
Medusa 1988
(All published by Collins.)

Now read

Desmond Bagley, Clive Cussler, James Follett, Geoffrey Jenkins, Duncan Kyle, Alistair MacLean.

Jenkins, Geoffrey

British. He is one of the generation of writers of high adventure who emerged in the 1960s, writing to a formula, with fast-moving plots and lots of action. Many of Geoffrey Jenkins' books have a naval setting. He also writes naval historical novels under the name of Patrick O'Brian, and these novels are listed under Sea Stories.

Publications

The river of diamonds 1964
A twist of sand 1966
The watering place of good peace 1969
Scend of the sea 1971
A grue of ice 1973
A cleft of stars 1973
A bridge of magpies 1974
Southtrap 1979

A ravel of waters 1981
The unripe gold 1983
Fireprint 1984
In harm's way 1986
Hold down a shadow 1988
(All published by Collins.)

Now read

Desmond Bagley, Ken Follett, Hammond Innes, Duncan Kyle, Alistair MacLean.

Kyle, Duncan

British. Born in Bradford. He worked as a journalist until 1970, when his first novel was accepted, and has been a full-time writer ever since. He now lives in deepest Suffolk. Kyle is another writer in the tradition of Buchan and his successors, with action-filled plots and dashing heroes.

Publications

A cage of ice 1970
Flight into fear 1971
A raft of swords 1973
Terror's cradle 1974
In deep 1976
Whiteout 1977
Black Camelot 1978
Green River high 1979
Stalking point 1981
The King's commissar 1983
The dancing men 1985
(All published by Collins.)

Now read

Desmond Bagley, Ken Follett, Hammond Innes, Geoffrey Jenkins, Alistair MacLean.

Langley, Bob

British. Born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He joined the BBC as a news presenter in 1969, working on both regional and national programmes. He presented 'Pebble Mill at One' and 'Saturday Night at the Mill' before leaving to become a freelance presenter and author. He lives in the Lake District, where his great hobby is fell-walking.