



C S Forester Society Newsletter
Special Edition: 15 October 2011
Guest Editor: Colin Blogg, President of the Society

The Pursued

How the novel came to be written – and lost, and found again

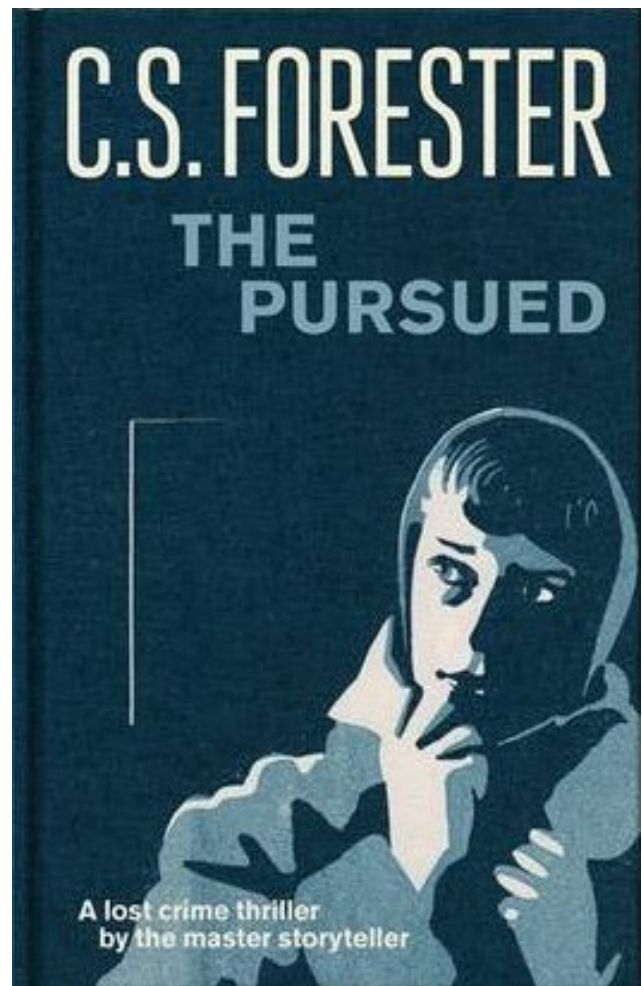
Breaking news!!

Hollywood 1935: the young C S Forester had been offered a contract to write a film script. He had previously come across some late 18th century volumes of the *Naval Chronicle* and after the Hollywood contract, these accompanied him on his sea-journey back to England via Central America. The result was the first Hornblower novel.

Forester had missed England during his stay in California. Not foreseeing the pressure that would grow on him to write more Hornblowers, he now wrote a classic London thriller about murder, sex and revenge, *The Pursued*. In his personal notes, Forester refers to it as 'the lost novel... It was written, sent to London and Boston, accepted and made the subject of signed agreements'.

But the Spanish Civil War intervened. Forester now went to Spain and the Peninsula War of 140 years previously, stirred his interest. With a new sense of excitement he realised that this could be a second Hornblower novel.

In *Long Before Forty* Forester wrote 'It would not be fitting for *The Pursued* to be published between these two [Hornblower] books'. After 'a long and solemn telegram from Boston', publication was delayed. 'The lost novel was really lost. It is just possible that a typescript still exists, forgotten and gathering dust in a rarely used storeroom in Boston or Bloomsbury.'



In 2003 the text of *The Pursued* appeared for sale in a small auction in London. Lawrie Brewer and colleagues in the C S Forester Society have now arranged publication of this great crime thriller from a great British author at the peak of his powers.

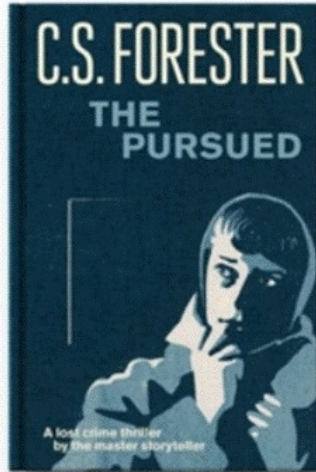
Colin Blogg, President of the Society

P E N G U I N



C L A S S I C S

PRESS RELEASE



The Pursued

by C.S. Forester

Will be published for the first time, November 3rd 2011, by Penguin Classics in hardback £14.99

Marjorie had never seen a dead body until she got home one tranquil summer evening and found her sister Dot lying on the kitchen floor in a pretty dress, with her head in the oven. She looked peaceful, as if she was asleep. Their mother suspects, however, that Dot's death was far from natural. What's more, she knows who the killer is - and she is determined to make him suffer. So slowly and meticulously, she plots her revenge. After all, who would suspect a neatly dressed, grey-haired widow of anything? And what could possibly go wrong?

The Pursued, C. S. Forester's dark, twisted tale of murder, lust and retribution, was written in 1935, but its typescript manuscript was lost. More than seven decades later, it has now been rediscovered and is published for the first time. It is a novel years ahead of its time; rewriting the traditions of crime fiction to create a gripping psychological portrayal of obsession, jealousy, torment and the grim underside of suburban London life.

Cecil Scott Forester was the pen name of Cecil Louis Troughton Smith (27 August 1899 - 2 April 1966), who rose to fame with the 11-book Horatio Hornblower series, depicting a Royal Navy officer during the Napoleonic era, and *The African Queen* (1935; filmed in 1951 by John Huston). His novels *A Ship of the Line* and *Flying Colours* were jointly awarded the 1938 James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction. He began his career with the crime novels *Payment Deferred* and *Plain Murder*, now reissued in Penguin Modern Classics along with *The Pursued*.



ADVANCE COMMENT

on *The Pursued*

"*The Pursued* is a fascinating novel. It is unmoralising, unsentimental, and posing many sly challenges to the conventions of its genre. Forester has a great eye for grubby domestic detail, and a subtle understanding of the dangerous passions lurking just beneath the surface of everyday life. A riveting read."

Sarah Waters

"*The Pursued* is a wonderful, almost miraculous discovery: a hitherto unknown crime novel by the unsung godfather of English noir."

Andrew Taylor

"The discovery of a CS Forester novel lost for 75 years is tremendously exciting."

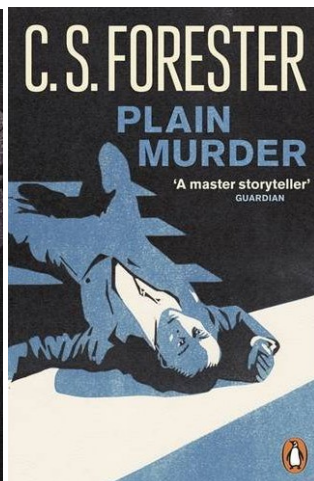
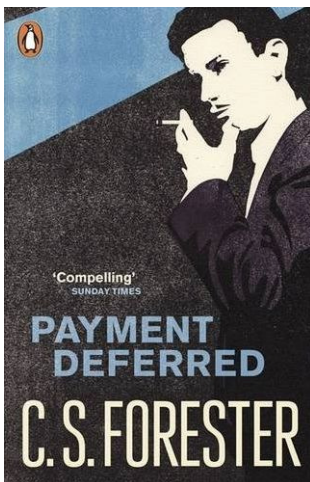
Boris Johnson

Buy *The Pursued* as Penguin Modern Classic Hardback from November 3rd at <http://penguin.com> or at your local book store



FORESTER'S CRIME RE-PRINTED

Penguin are also reprinting two other crime novels by C S Forester, *Payment Deferred* (1926) and *Plain Murder* (1930). All three are now available with new matching cover designs by Nick Morley (<http://www.nickmorley.co.uk/>)



ABOUT THE TYPESCRIPT

The Pursued typescript was put up for auction anonymously. Attempts to find out who the vendor was failed. His identity has been specifically withheld.

As you know, the background is that it was written in the wake of the first Hornblower and prior to CSF and his publishers realising what a success Hornblower would prove to be. CSF moved from USA to England, to Spain, back to England and then returned to USA. He finally moved house to USA in 1939/40. He worked as part of the British war-effort - something of a career change, too. Around this time also, his first marriage was deteriorating.

In all this change and confusion, and with the Spanish civil war succeeded by WW2, one may surmise that the typescript was simply lost. It was probably left behind in a London house, or maybe at a typist's office. The pages are in order and numbered, but differ; some are original typing on (American) typing paper, some sheets are carbons, some are roneos. There are a very few pencil corrections (word spacing, grammar) and a few pages are hole-punched. Some text is very faded. See page 2 of the typescript below.

-2-

her off and go to bed. Marjorie opened the door with her key and said 'Coo-ee' gently, as was her way. There was no reply, and then, as she passed the threshold, Marjorie smelt gas. The hall reeked with it; when she hesitated at the foot of the stairs she distinctly heard the hissing of escaping gas.

Marjorie sprang to the kitchen door, dropping her handbag. The kitchen was in darkness, and when Marjorie opened the door the stench of gas seemed to strike her in the face. She reached for the switch. Her head was sufficiently clear for her to wonder for a second whether it was dangerous to turn on a light in that atmosphere, and then to reassure herself that it was only matches or candles which would cause an explosion. The light revealed the kitchen with its blue and white paper; and it revealed, too, Dot in her pretty summer frock lying on the floor with her head inside the open gas oven.

Marjorie gave a little scream, and as she did so her lungs revolted at the rush of gas into them. She forced herself to recover, holding her breath. Rushing across to the oven, she turned off the tap; still holding her breath, she flung open the kitchen window and then stooped to lift Dot. But she could hold her breath no longer. A sudden gasp brought more gas into her lungs, and she felt her head swim. She could not lift Dot yet. It called for all her strength to totter out into the hall where the reek of gas was not too strong to breathe. Gasping, she pulled open the front door and stood on the front step. The cool night air was like water when she was thirsty. The little wind

THE PURSUED by C S FORESTER

A COMMENTARY

This is a powerful murder story. The events are simple to tell, but C S Forester enthralls the reader as he relates the primeval pursuit of justice.

Forester's technique is to make the first murder and its consequences stand out in horrid relief against the sparse pattern of English life in the 1930s. This is an England where every penny counts; of course when Dot dies, mother must replace her rent payments. Here, the only diversion is a couple of hours' wireless in the evening. The suburban roads lack any individuality and the drab high streets are limited to draper, grocer, ironmonger.

It is this paucity of background that allows *The Pursued's* characters to stand out in such brilliant relief. Marjorie "*resettles her hair, which had been disarranged by putting on her frock [which] made her look fresh and cool...at the back of her mind, a mental picture of herself; cool and leisurely and soignée, walking gracefully out to the motor car to be borne away to the seaside*".

Mother "*in her black coat and hat, neat and brisk and trim as she always was, with the quickness of movement natural to a tiny person like her*". Thick-lipped Ted's "*ideal existence [is] the life of a lord... a complete absence of anything to do, no work to do, no odd jobs. There must also be absent the urge to do anything... A good dinner... the desire for a drink coming at the exact identical moment when further doing nothing might become tedious*".

The murder of Ted is terrifying, an outburst of sound and colour in the suburban home; later Marjorie begs "*Mother, what happened to his other eye?*"

Forester is master of the English landscape too, both physical and social: "*It was mid-august now, and that early hour of the morning bore with it the faint hint of approaching autumn, only just noticeable and yet sweepingly comprehensive, calling up to the memory all Autumn in a single breath – morning fog, and changing colours, and the bonfires of Saturday afternoon gardeners; laying the first fires ready*

for the first chilly evening; roly-poly pudding instead of tapioca for dinner; and she must look out her winter coat to see that it really would last another winter".

He achieves a delightful lyricism as he leads the 21st century reader back to a decade which contrasts starkly with today's frenetic jungle of choice. He reminds us that while a car was once a £20 luxury, the clamour of love and desire are eternal.

The underlying theme is 'the man alone' as the author comes later to describe his interest in the subsequent Hornblower novels. In *The Pursued*, rather than a naval captain in mid-ocean with 750 men in his charge and no news from home for months on end, we see the mother in isolation, her family trapped in a maelstrom of emotion and desire. In *The Pursued* it is the mother "walking swiftly along, her bright eyes searching every bye-road" who patrols the enemy and pursues her campaign.

The enigmatic, understated ending of *The Pursued* leaves the reader with the lonely surviving figures merging once more into their monochrome backgrounds. The horrors of seduction, suicide, hatchet-murder and vicious pursuit are gone now. We are left with the neighbours who will recount the drama over and over again, and with Marjorie's little children who will have grown up to see a London changed - in so many ways, infinitely for the better. But they will come to learn about the baptism of which they were scarcely aware, and Forester had been warning us that they too will play out their lines in the great human struggle in London.

Lawrie Brewer

Become a member and read

Reflections

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CS Forester Society website:

<http://csforester.eu>