

## Blood and Ink: An International Guide to Fact-Based Crime Literature

**Albert Borowitz**

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Writers have been turning murder into literature since Cicero documented his own work in ancient Rome as a criminal advocate. Nevertheless, *In Cold Blood* is a far cry from *The Mousetrap*. Corpses abound and killers are caught in mystery novels and true-crime books alike. The difference-and it means everything-is truth.

The stuff of some novelist's imagination, no matter how clever, simply won't do for fans of the true-crime genre, who crave blood and guts and the mayhem that spill them, as long as it's all real. That air of authenticity, of authority, is as necessary an ingredient in the thrill of true-crime reading as tomatoes in ketchup. Now the author has produced a resource capable of providing enough of those thrills to last a lifetime.

As the creator of the Kent State University Libraries' rare and priceless Borowitz True Crime Collection, the author has dedicated himself to amassing thousands of volumes on the subject dating back to 1663. A true-crime writer himself whose past books include *Innocence and Arsenic* and *The Bermondsey Horror*, here Borowitz offers capsule descriptions of the collection's contents. Bite-sized but tasty, these miniatures are satisfying in their own right.

Ranging from pulpy potboilers to gems by the likes of Margaret Atwood, V.S. Naipaul, Marcel Proust, and Gabriel García-Márquez, each is a tiny crash course in a crime or series of crimes. British and French works are unsurprisingly well-represented, but Indian, Chinese, and Japanese contributions yield compelling insights into various cultures? particular brands of misbehavior.

Not only leisure-time readers but also serious researchers and writers seeking inspiration will find this work invaluable, as handfuls of little-known and long-forgotten cases appear on every page. Purists might balk at Borowitz's decision to include works of fiction that were verifiably inspired by actual crimes: plays, films, novels such as Atwood's *Alias Grace* and Alexandre Dumas's *The Man in the Iron Mask*, and even songs. They also might note that, as true crime is one of today's fastest-growing genres, with several new titles released by major publishing houses every month, *Blood and Ink*, while new, cannot help but already be a bit out of date. Still, with nearly 400 years? worth of blood and guts glistening vividly between its covers, this hefty compendium is a reference work to be reckoned with, supporting splashiness with sturdy scholarship.

ANNELI RUFUS (May / June 2002)

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