

## Chandler (2)

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1888	b. Chicago
1895–1905	lives in England, goes to Dulwich College (fancy)
1912	returns to US, becomes accountant in LA
1920–32	works for Dabney Oil Syndicate, becomes VP, fired
1933	“Blackmailers Don’t Shoot,” <i>Black Mask</i> 16, no. 10
1934–37	more pulp publications
1939	<i>The Big Sleep</i> (New York: Knopf)
1940	<i>Farewell, My Lovely</i> (Knopf)
1942	<i>The High Window</i> (Knopf)
1943	<i>The Lady in the Lake</i> (Knopf)
1944	<i>Double Indemnity</i> (dir. Wilder, screenplay)
1944	“Simple Art of Murder,” <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>
1946	<i>The Big Sleep</i> (dir. Hawks)
1959	d.

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Wandering up and down the Pacific Coast in an automobile, I began to read pulp magazines, because they were cheap enough to throw away and because I never had at any time any taste for the kind of thing which is known as women’s magazines. This was in the great days of the *Black Mask* (if I may call them great days) and it struck me that some of the writing was pretty forceful and honest, even though it had its crude aspect. I decided that this might be a good way to try to learn to write fiction and get paid a small amount of money at the same time.

Letter to Hamish Hamilton [his British publisher], November 10, 1950, in *Raymond Chandler Speaking*, ed. Dorothy Gardiner and Kathrine Sorley Walker (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 26, [ACLS Humanities EBook](#).

I learned to write a novelette on one of yours....I made an extremely detailed synopsis of your story and from that rewrote it and then compared what I had with yours, and then went back and rewrote it some more, and so on.

Letter to Erle Stanley Gardner [the best-selling mystery writer], May 5, 1939, in *ibid.*, 73.

I had to learn American just like a foreign language. To use it I had to study it and analyze it. As a result, when I use slang, colloquialisms, snide talk or any kind of off-beat language I do it deliberately. The literary use of slang is a study in itself. I've found that there are only two kinds that are any good: slang that has established itself in the language, and slang that you make up yourself. Everything else is apt to be passé before it gets into print.

Letter to Alex Barris, March 18, 1949, in *ibid.*, 80.

In her introduction to the first *Omnibus of Crime*, Dorothy Sayers wrote: "It [the detective story] does not, and by hypothesis never can, attain the loftiest level of literary achievement." And the reason, as she suggested somewhere else, is that it is a "literature of escape" and not "a literature of expression." I do not know what the loftiest level of literary achievement is: neither did Aeschylus or Shakespeare; neither does Miss Sayers....It is always a matter of who writes the stuff, and what he has in him to write it with....

I think that what was really gnawing at Miss Sayers's mind was the slow realization that her kind of detective story was an arid formula which could not even satisfy its own implications. It was second-grade literature because it was not about the things that could make first-grade literature. If it started out to be about real people (and she could write about them—her minor characters show that), they must very soon do unreal things in order to form the artificial pattern required by the plot. When they did unreal things, they ceased to be real themselves. They became puppets and cardboard lovers and papier-mâché villains and detectives of exquisite and impossible gentility.

Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," 56–57.