

CANADIAN PAPERBACK GUIDE

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The Birthing of the Harlequin 1949-1954

The Company

In the nearly seventy years since publishing *The Manatee* in May 1949 Harlequin has shipped approximately 6.7 billion books and is the global leader in series romance with 10 imprints encompassing over 50 different series. When Richard Bonnycastle started the company in 1949 he couldn't have imagined this success. Bonnycastle was the manager and part-owner of Winnipeg's Advocate Printers, owned by Bryant Press of Toronto, both of whom printed the White Circle Pocket Library imprint for Wm. Collins Sons & Co. Canada Ltd. Bonnycastle saw an opportunity to use excess capacity at Advocate and suggested to investors that they start a paperback publisher. In late 1949 or early 1950 Bonnycastle hired Jack Palmer, then Sales Director at Collins, as Managing Director. He became responsible for choosing the books, arranging for cover art and marketing. Ruth Palmour, Bonnycastle's secretary at Advocate, dealt "with Palmer [in Toronto] by letter and phone, getting the books printed and delivered to the wholesale distributors." A few years into the new venture Palmer died and his shares were transferred to Bonnycastle.

It isn't surprising that Bonnycastle had the idea to start a paperback company in mid-1949. That year some 12 to 15 million paperbacks were sold in Canada through 9,000 to 10,000 outlets by American, British and large Canadian publishers such as Harlequin, Collins and Export Publishing Enterprises Ltd. with their News Stand Library imprint. There were also short-lived companies such as Alval Publishing's Crow imprint (started the same month as Harlequin, May 1949), Derby Publishing (last half of 1949) and Arrow Publishing (November 1949). All were trying to gain traction in the paperback market after the war during what has been described by Piet Schreuders as the "sex war" period. By mid-1952 the News Stands, White Circles, Crows and others were gone leaving Harlequin as the only Canadian paperback publisher.

The Books

From May 1949 until the end of 1954 Harlequin published 322 books. The number of books in the first full five years averaged approximately 60, from a low of 56 in 1952 to a high of 65 in 1950. Eight of the 322 were reprints of earlier Harlequins leaving 314 titles, of which only 14 were PBOs. During these early years all genres were published with 41% crime/thriller, 20% western, 12% romance, 22% other (primarily historical) and 5% non-fiction. In the first five and half years 210 different authors were published, 163 (77%) with a single title, 29 (14%) with two titles and 18 (8%) with three or more titles. James Hadley Chase had the most books with 13.

Another way to look at the variety in this period is the cover art. There were at least 15 signed cover artists and many unsigned ones, all of whom provided provocative covers with strong primary colours.

The Romancing of the Harlequin, 1955-1959

The Company

After Palmer died Bonnycastle's wife became editor, approving books that Palmour found through corresponding with publishers. Bonnycastle's wife disliked crime/thriller books and we can see the effect of this change in editorial focus as romances went from 11% of the titles in 1954 to 40% in 1955. There was also a business reason for the move to romance as it became clear it sold better than the other genres. In 1957 Harlequin contacted the English publishing firm Mills & Boon which specialized in romance fiction and secured the rights to reprint their books in Canada. Harlequin's first Mills & Boon book was 407, *The Hospital in Buwando* by Anne Vinton, in late 1957. Three romances later in early 1958 the first book with "A Harlequin Romance" on the cover appears, *Doctor Lucy* by Barbara Allen (416).

The Books

In 1955 the number of books published dropped to 25, less than half the average of the previous five years. The next three years numbers increased slowly to 38 in 1958 and then 55 in 1959.

The shift to romance is clear when looking at the statistics from these years. Of the 179 books published 12 were reprints leaving 167 titles (four PBOs), 53% of which were romances, 27% crime/thriller, 7% western and 13% non-fiction and other fiction. The last western was published in 1958 and the last crime/thriller in 1959. In 1959, for the first time, more than half of the books were romances, 38 of 55 (69%), 34 of which were by Mills & Boons authors.

During these five years 77 different authors were published, 51 (66%) with a single title, 6 (8%) with two titles and 20 (26%) with three or more titles. Edgar Wallace was the most published author with 17 titles but the shift to romance is also evident here as fifteen of the authors with three or more books wrote romances. The number of cover artists also dropped to half-a-dozen or so who signed their work. The Harlequin cover "look" also evolved quickly during this period as romances dominated. The covers now were much tamer with duller colouring and design.

The Taming of the Harlequin 1960

The Company

In 1960 Bonnycastle's family took control of the company, owning 75% of the shares with Palmour the other 25%. Bonnycastle died in 1968. His son moved the company from Winnipeg to Toronto and took the company public in 1969. Harlequin purchased Mills & Boon in 1972. In late 1975 the Canadian media company Torstar took control of Harlequin and in 1981 Harlequin became a wholly owned division of Torstar. In 1984 Harlequin purchased its rival Silhouette Books from Simon & Schuster. These changes along with aggressive expansion outside of North America and focus on the books as branded consumer goods marketed and distributed in non-traditional ways resulted in a ten-fold increase in sales from 19 million books in 1970 to 202 million in 1988. However, sales growth then flattened and peaked at 205 million books in 1992 dropping every year to 144 million in 2003 and 130 million each year 2004 through 2008. In 2014 Harlequin was bought by HarperCollins, a division in Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. Sales figures are no longer published.

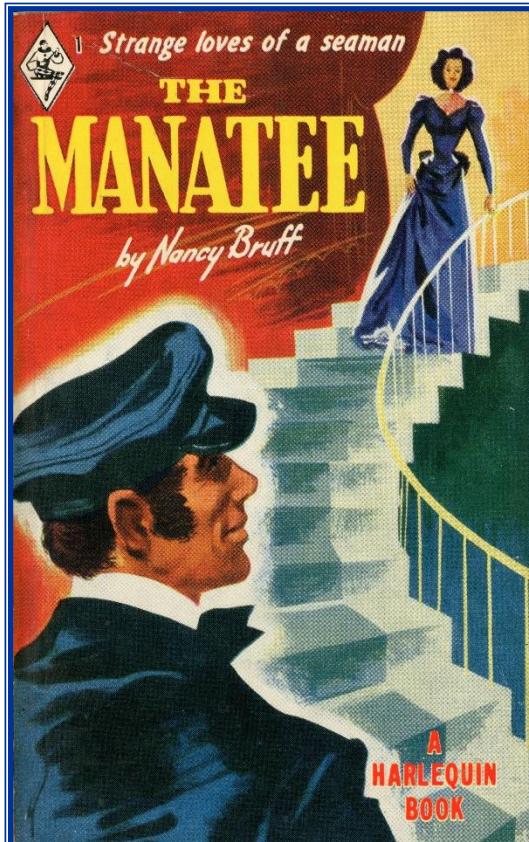
The Books

Nine (of 283) non-romance books were published from 1960 to 1963 with 768, *Never a Day so Bright* by Kate Aitken the last. The only PBO was published in 1962. All

but of a handful of the romances during these four years were Mills & Boons and starting in 1964 Harlequin published only traditional "mild" Mills & Boon books. Racier Mills & Boons were not published in Canada until mid-1973 when Harlequin began a more contemporary "sexy" series, Harlequin Presents. Over the next forty-five years imprints have come and gone. Science fiction, action/adventure and mystery imprints failed leaving the many varieties of romance that is Harlequin today. By the late eighties photographic covers had largely replaced illustrated.

Harlequin's evolution into a single genre publisher is unique among early paperback publishers in any country. Without the shift, Harlequin almost certainly would not have survived the fifties and would be a footnote in Canadian book history. Some statistics illustrate this success. In 1950, the first full year of operation, sales were \$1.2 million, exclusively in Canada. Today Harlequin publishes over 110 titles a month (5% of sales in Canada) with Harlequins published in over 30 languages and sold in 150+ international markets.

HARLEQUIN BOOKS Issues 1 – 50



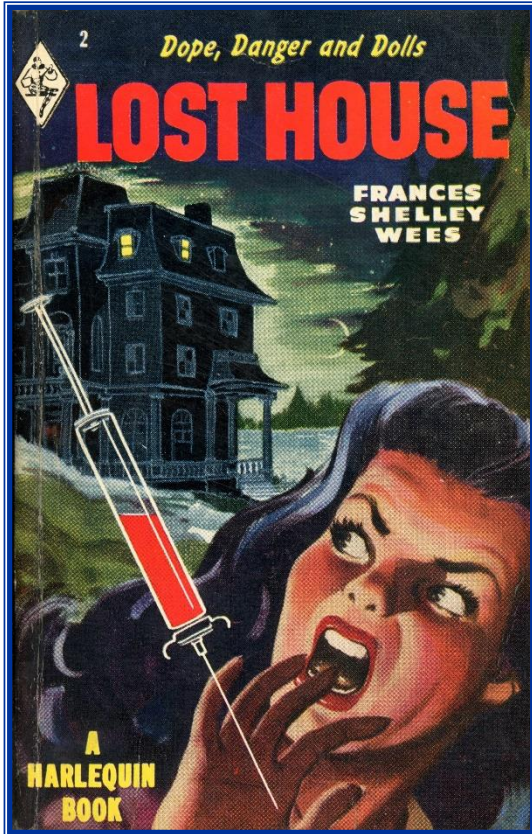
1 The Manatee

The Manatee | by | NANCY BRUFF | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

THIS HARLEQUIN BOOK | edition is published by arrangement with | E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc. New York | Harlequin Edition Published | May 1949 | Printed in Canada

[1-4] 5-192

Note: First published New York: E.P. Hutton 1945.



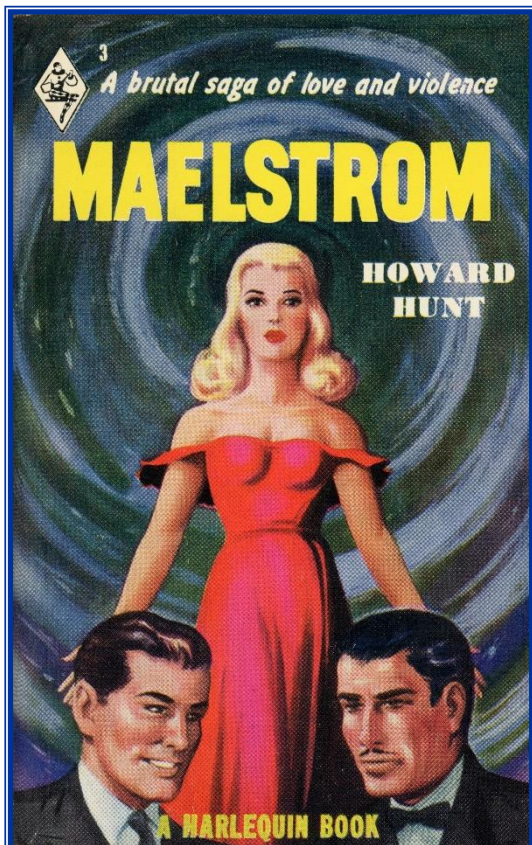
2 Lost House

Lost House | by | FRANCES SHELLEY WEES | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

THIS HARLEQUIN BOOK | edition is published by arrangement with | Macrae-Smith-Company Philadelphia | Harlequin Edition Published | May 1949 | Printed in Canada

[1-4] 5-192

Note: First published Philadelphia: Macrae Smith 1938. Signed art by D. Rickard.



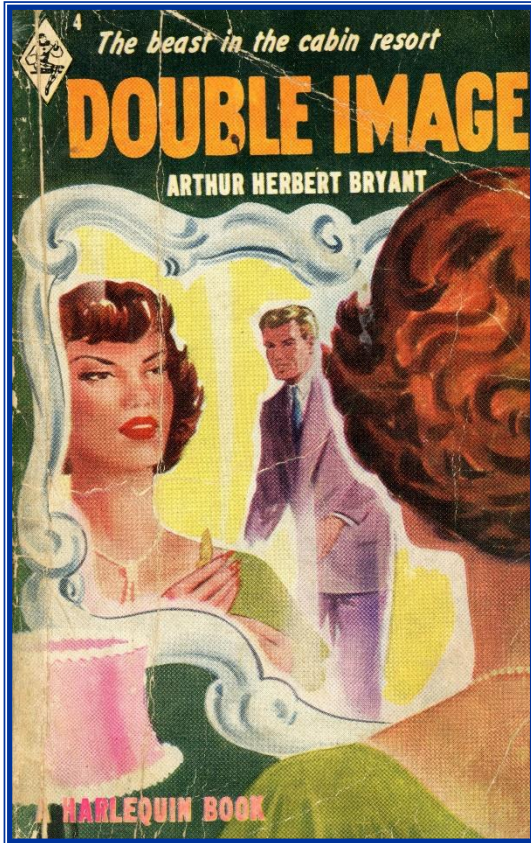
3 Maelstrom

Maelstrom | by | HOWARD HUNT | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

THIS HARLEQUIN BOOK | edition is published by arrangement with | Farrar, Straus and Company New York. | Harlequin Edition Published | June 1949 | Printed in Canada

[1-8] 9-192

Note: First published New York: Farrar, Straus 1948. Unsigned art by D. Rickard.



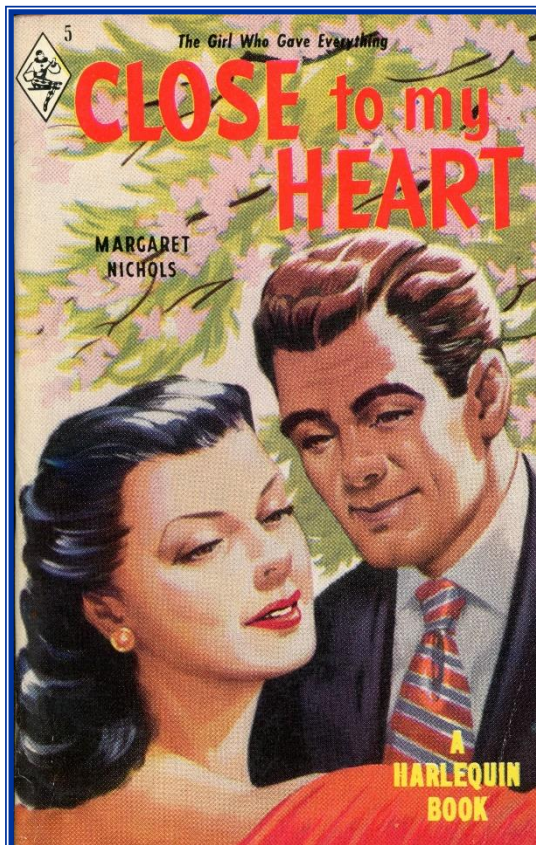
4 Double Image

Double Image | by | ARTHUR HERBERT BRYANT | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-4] 5-191 [192]

Note: First published New York: Farrar, Straus 1947. Unsigned art by D. Rickard.



5 Close to My Heart

Close to My Heart | by | MARGARET NICHOLS | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

THIS HARLEQUIN BOOK | edition is published by arrangement with | Macrae-Smith Company - Philadelphia | Harlequin Edition Published | June 1949 | Printed in Canada

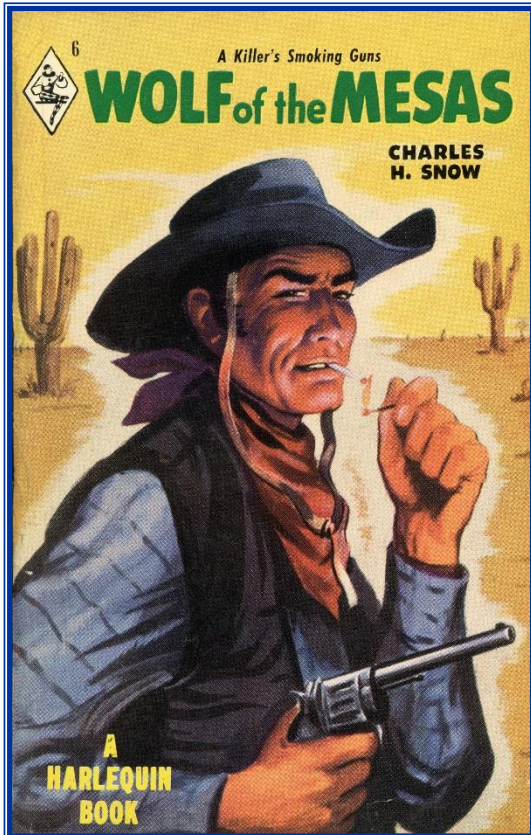
[1-6] 7-192

Note: First published Philadelphia: Macrae Smith 1946.

second printing

[same title page]

THIS HARLEQUIN BOOK | edition is published by arrangement with | Macrae-Smith Company - Philadelphia | Harlequin Edition Published | July 1949 | Printed in Canada



6 Wolf of the Mesas

Wolf of the Mesas | by | CHARLES H. SNOW
| [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

THIS HARLEQUIN BOOK | edition is published by arrangement with | Macrae-Smith Company - Philadelphia | Harlequin Edition Published | June 1949 | Printed in Canada

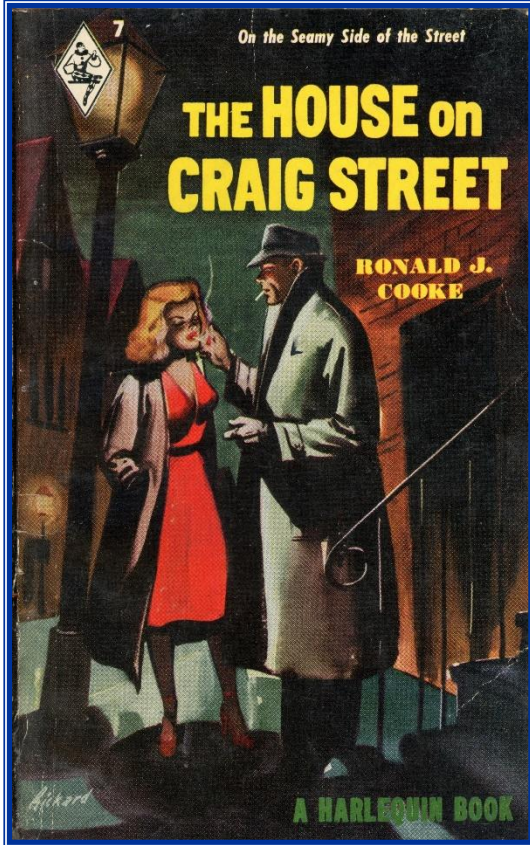
[1-6] 7-192

Note: First published Philadelphia: Macrae Smith 1941. Unsigned art by D. Rickard.

second printing

[same title page]

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7 The House on Craig Street

The House on | Craig Street | by | RONALD J. COOKE | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

Harlequin Edition Published | August 1949 | Printed in Canada

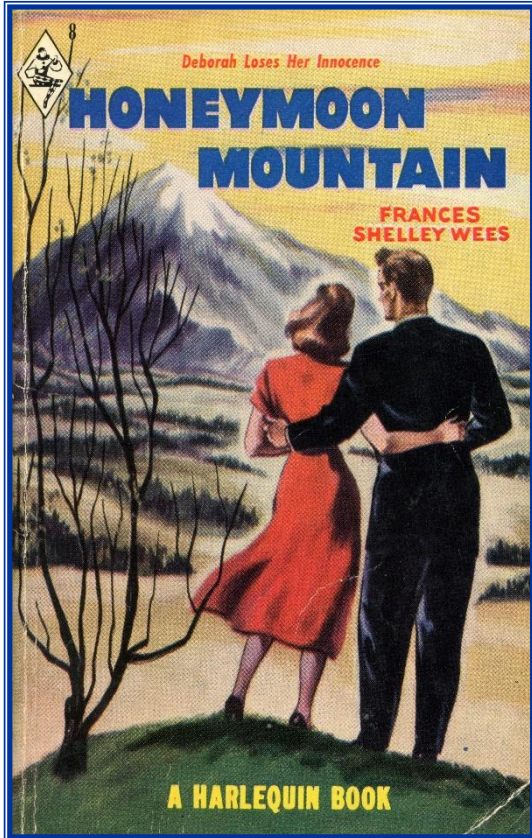
[1-10] 11-190 [191-192]

Note: Paperback original. Signed art by D. Rickard.

second printing

[same title page]

Harlequin Editions Published | August 1949 | September 1949 | Printed in Canada



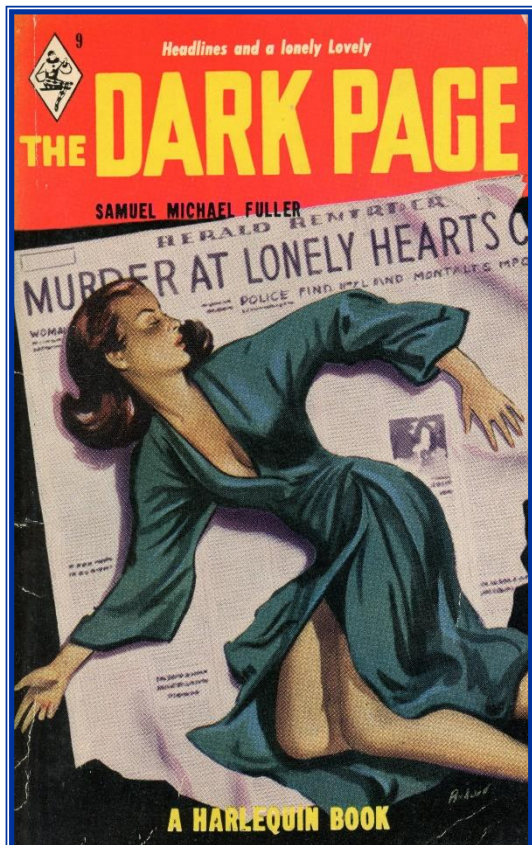
8 Honeymoon Mountain

Honeymoon Mountain | by | FRANCES SHELLEY WEES | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

Harlequin Edition Published | August 1949 | Printed in Canada

[1-2] 3-192

Note: First published Philadelphia: Macrae Smith 1934.



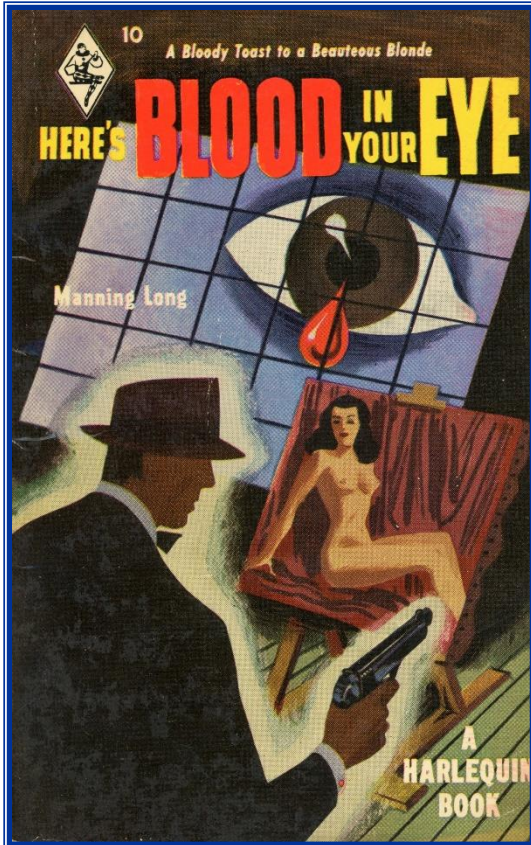
9 The Dark Page

The Dark Page | by | SAMUEL MICHAEL FULLER | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-6] 7-192

Note: First published New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce 1944. Signed art by D. Rickard.



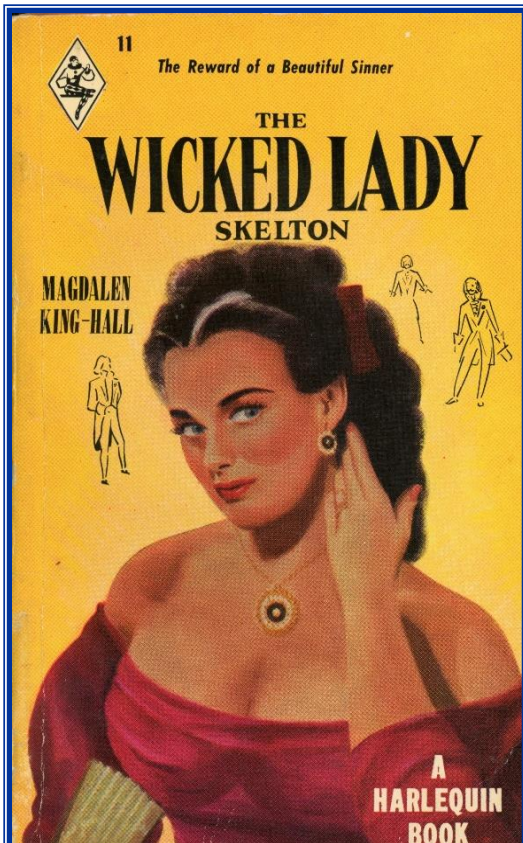
10 Here's Blood in the Eye

Here's Blood in | the Eye | by | MANNING LONG | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-6] 7-191 [192]

Note: First published New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce 1941. Unsigned art by Max Ralph.



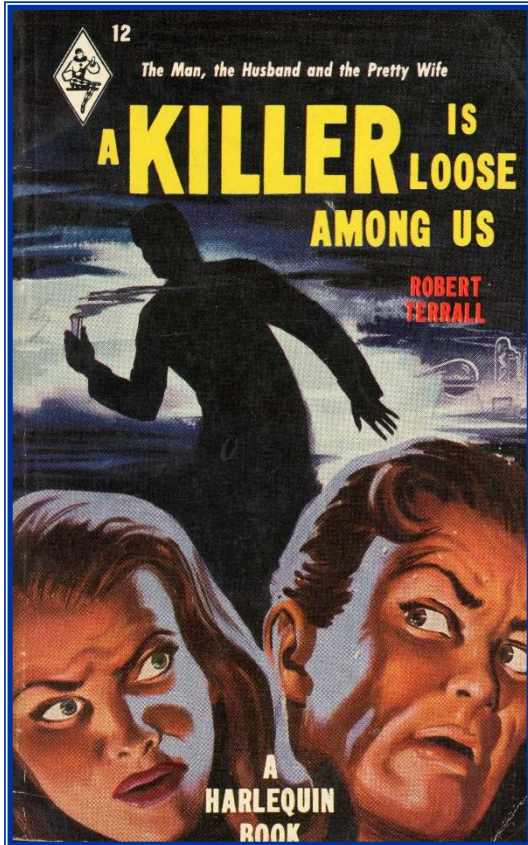
11 The Wicked Lady Skelton

The Wicked | Lady Skelton | by | MAGDALEN KING-HALL | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

THIS HARLEQUIN BOOK | edition is published by arrangement with | Pater Davies Ltd. - London, England | Copyright 1946 by *Magdalen King-Hall* | Harlequin Edition Published | September 1949 | Printed in Canada

[1-6] 7-192

Note: First published London: Peter Davies 1944 as *The Life and Times of the Wicked Lady Skelton*. Signed art by Cy Heal.



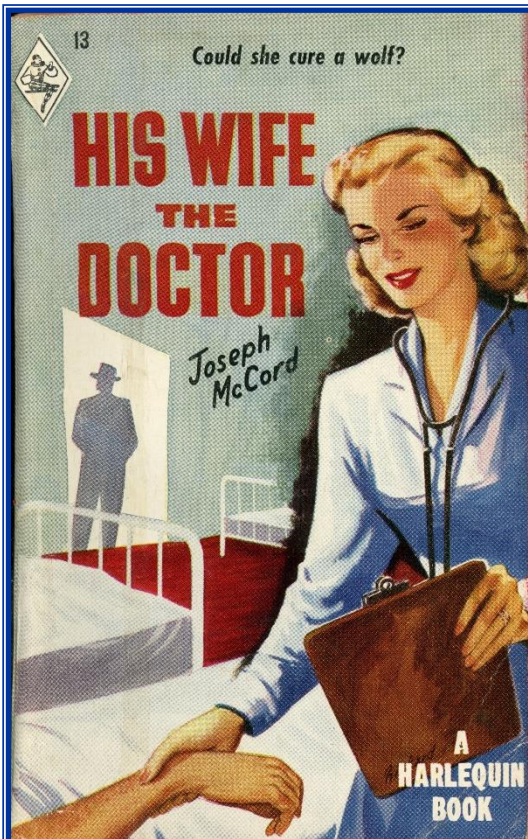
12 A Killer is Loose Among Us

A Killer is Loose | Among Us | by | ROBERT TERRALL | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-6] 7-192

Note: First published New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce 1948. Unsigned art by D. Rickard.



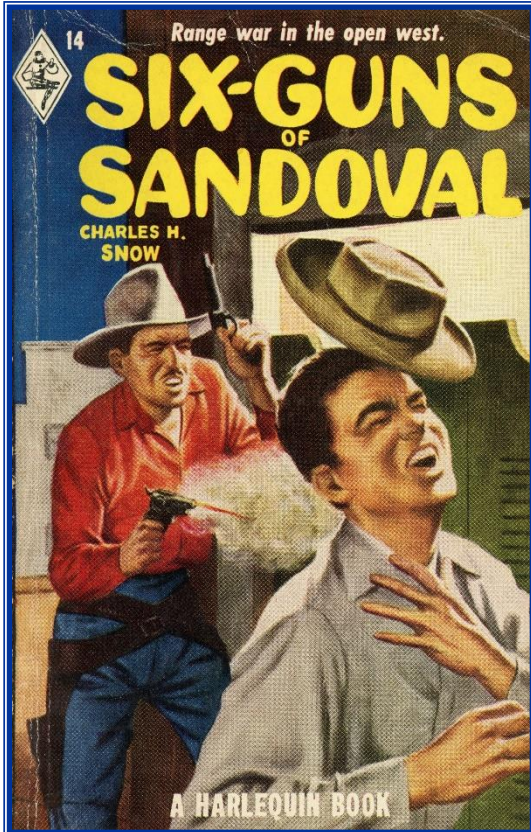
13 His Wife the Doctor

His Wife | the Doctor | by | JOSEPH McCORD | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-6] 7-191 [192]

Note: First published Philadelphia: Macrae Smith 1941. Unsigned art by D. Rickard.



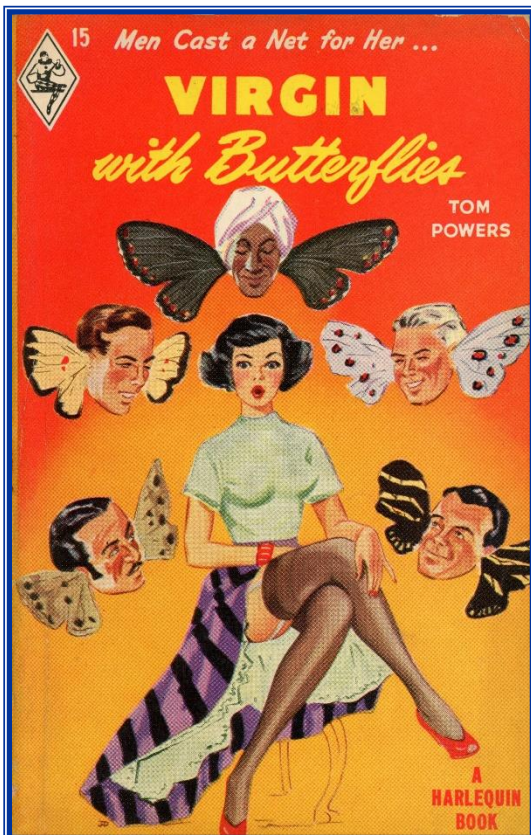
14 Six-Guns of Sandoval

Six-Guns of Sandoval | by | CHARLES H. SNOW | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-6] 7-192

Note: First published Philadelphia: Macrae Smith 1935.



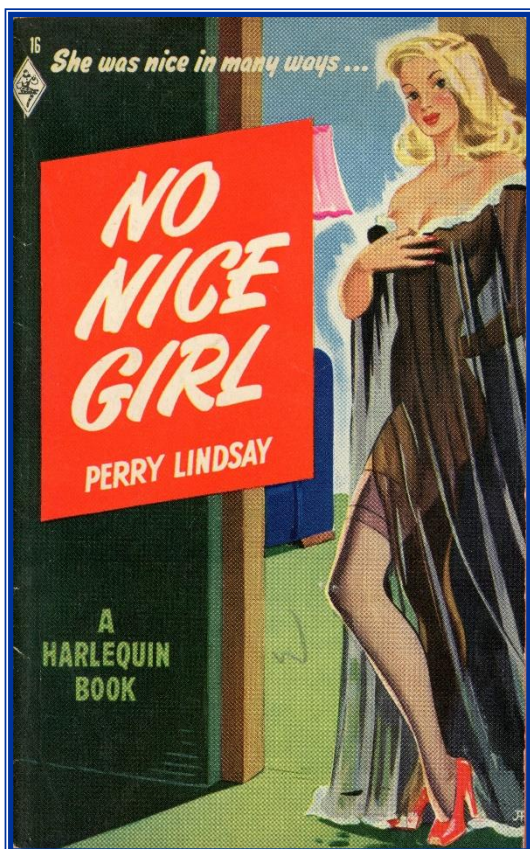
15 Virgin with Butterflies

Virgin with Butterflies | by | TOM POWERS | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

THIS HARLEQUIN BOOK | edition is published by arrangement with | Bobbs-Merrill Company | Indianapolis - New York | Copyright 1945 Tom Powers | Harlequin Edition Published | October 1949 | Printed in Canada

[1-6] 7-191 [192]

Note: First published New York: Bobs-Merrill 1945. Signed art by JP.



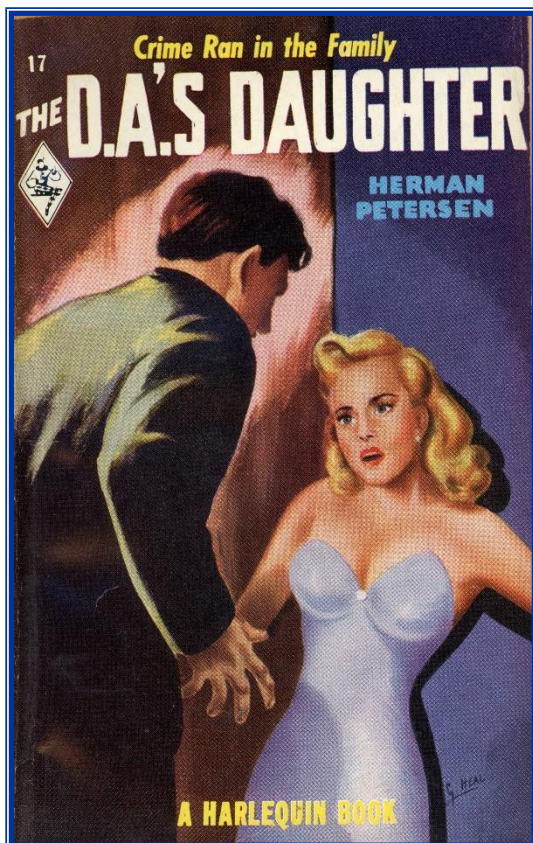
16 No Nice Girl

No Nice Girl | by | PERRY LINDSAY | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-6] 7-192

Note: First published New York: Phoenix Press 1946. Signed art by JP.



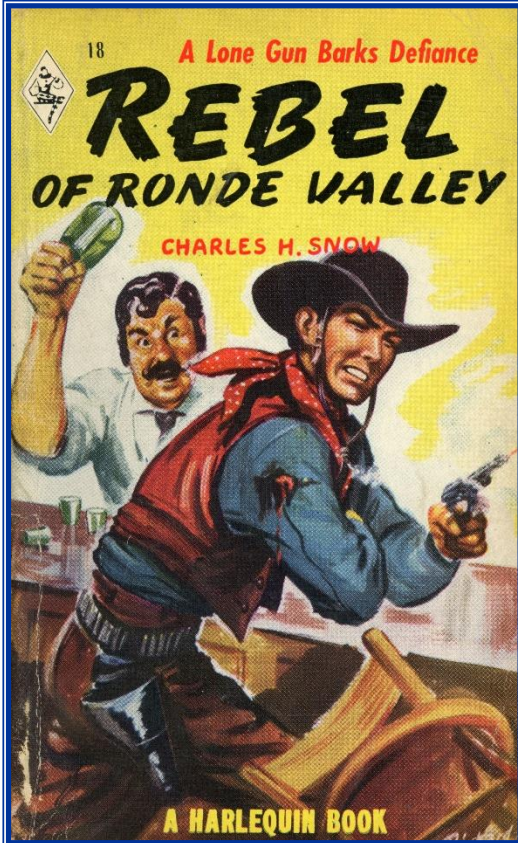
17 The D. A.'s Daughter

The D. A.'s Daughter | by | HERMAN PETERSEN | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-6] 7-192

Note: First published New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce 1948. Signed art by Cy Heal.



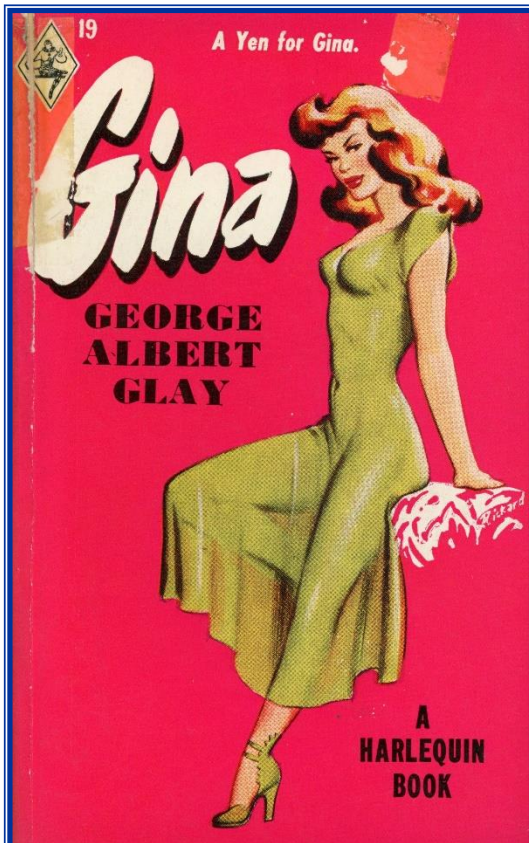
18 Rebel of Ronde Valley

Rebel of | Ronde Valley | by | CHARLES H. SNOW | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-4] 5-192

Note: First published Philadelphia: Macrae Smith 1943. Signed art by D. Rickard.



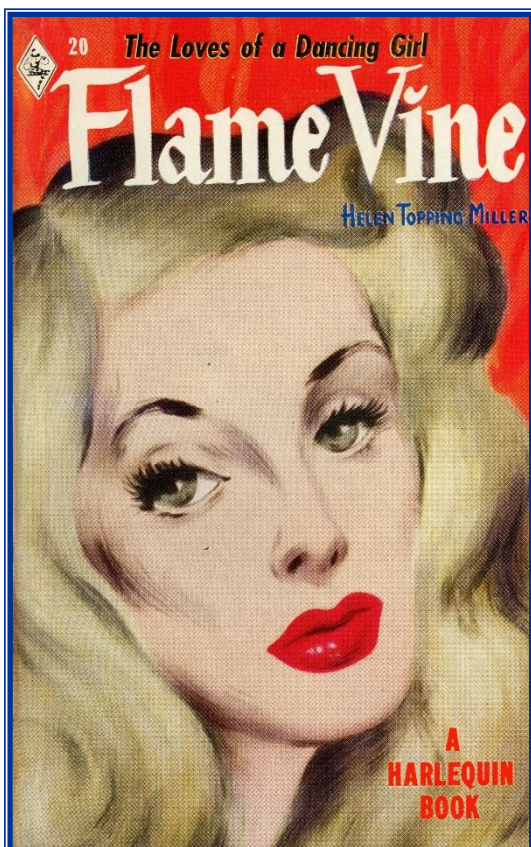
19 Gina

Gina | by | GEORGE ALBERT GLAY | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-6] 7-255 [256]

Note: First published New York: Pellegrini and Cudahy 1948. Signed art by D. Rickard.



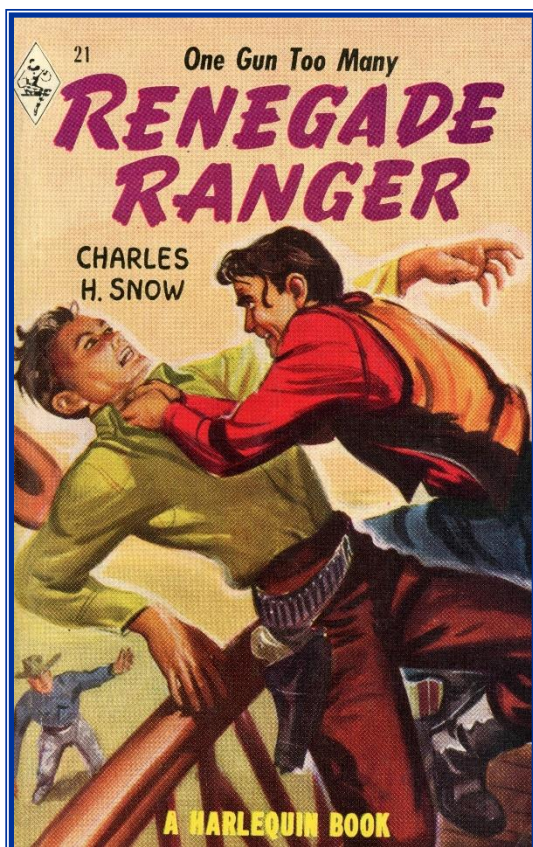
20 Flame Vine

Flame Vine | by | HELEN TOPPING MILLER |
[logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN
BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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1948, by | Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc. |
Harlequin Edition Published | November
1949 | Printed in Canada

[1-2] 3-192

Note: First published New York: Appleton-
Century-Crofts 1948.



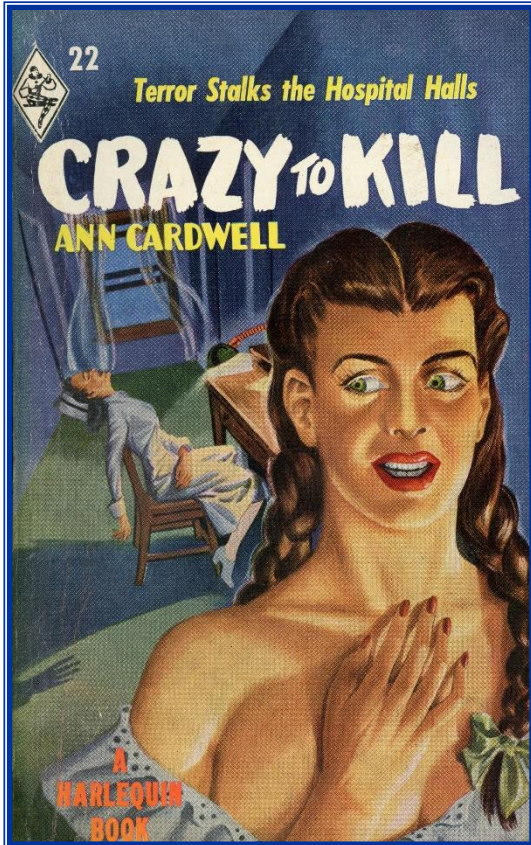
21 Renegade Ranger

Renegade Ranger | by | CHARLES H. SNOW
| [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN
BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-4] 5-192

Note: First published Philadelphia: Macrae
Smith 1943. Unsigned art by D. Rickard.



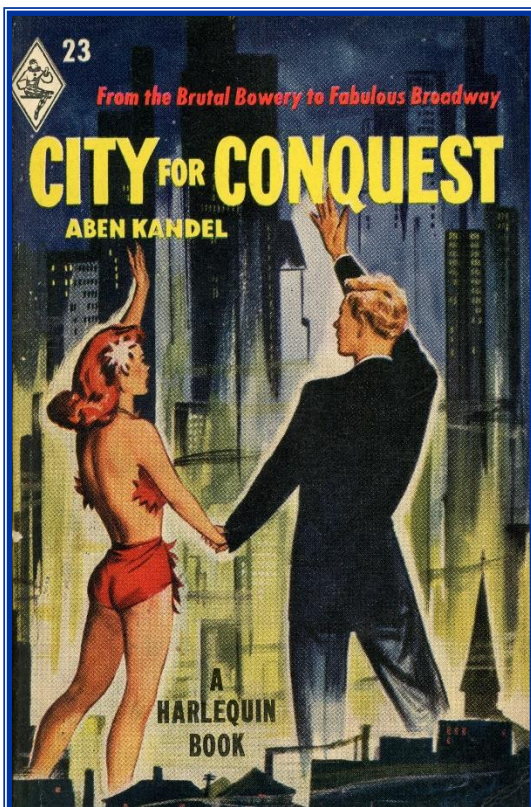
22 Crazy to Kill

Crazy to Kill | by | ANN CARDWELL | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-6] 7-191 [192]

Note: First published New York: Mystery House 1941.



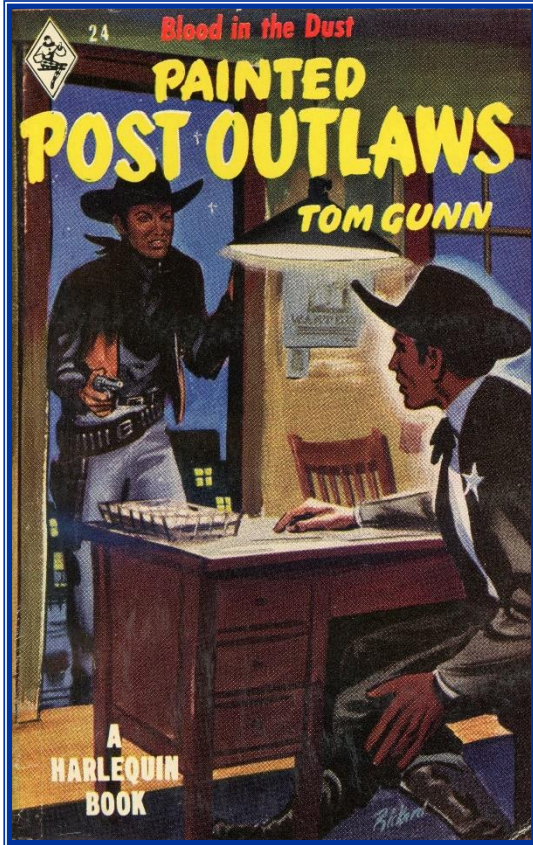
23 City for Conquest

City for Conquest | by | ABEN KANDEL | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-2] 3-256

Note: First published New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce 1936. Signed art by D. Rickard.



24 Painted Post Outlaws

Painted Post | *Outlaws* | by | TOM GUNN |
 [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN
 BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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 Messner, Inc. - New York | Copyright 1939
 by Syl. MacDowell | Harlequin Edition
 Published | December 1949 | Printed in
 Canada

[1-4] 5-192

Note: First published New York: Julian
 Messner 1939. Signed art by D. Rickard.



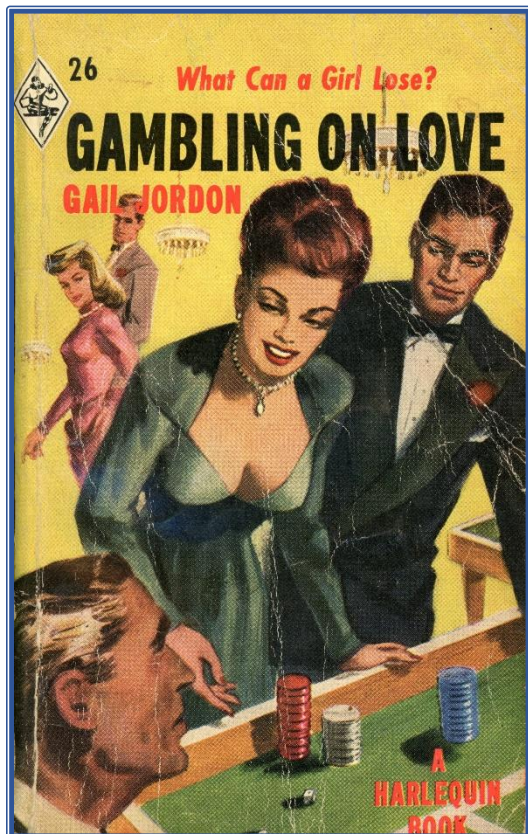
25 Blondes Don't Cry

Blonds Don't Cry | by | MERLDA MACE |
 [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN
 BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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 by Merlda Mace | Harlequin Edition Published
 | December 1949 | Printed in Canada

[1-6] 7-192

Note: First published New York: Julian
 Messner 1945. Signed art by D. Rickard.



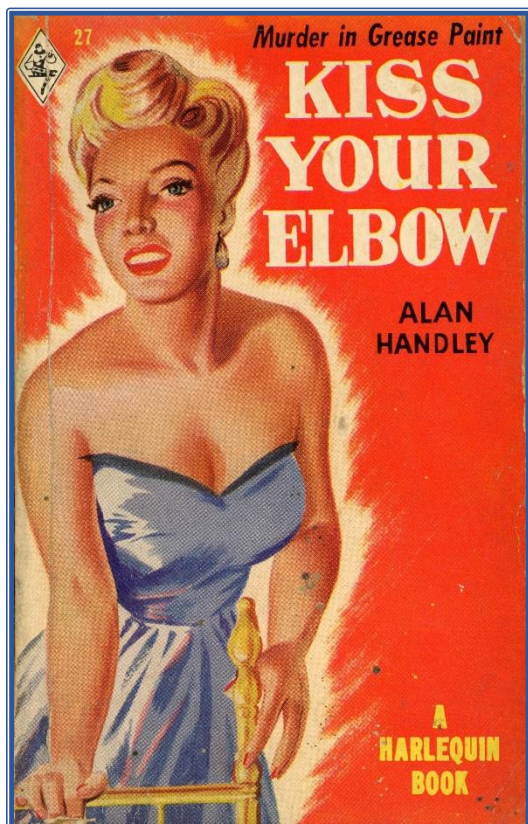
26 Gambling on Love

Gambling on Love | by | GAIL JORDAN |
[logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN
BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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published by arrangement with | PHOENIX
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December 1949 | Printed in Canada

[1-4] 5-192

Note: First published New York: Phoenix
Press 1947. Unsigned art by D. Rickard.



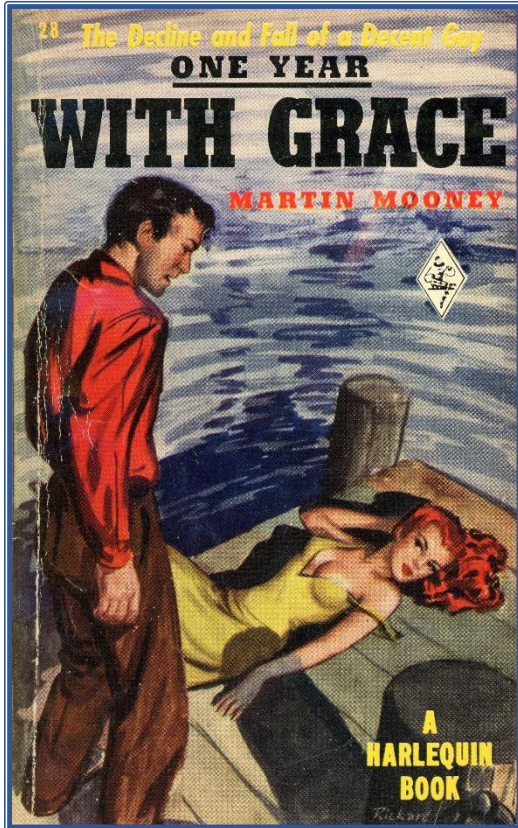
27 Kiss Your Elbow

Kiss Your Elbow | by | ALAN HANDLEY |
[logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN
BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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and Brandt, - New York | Copyright 1948, by
Alan Handley | Harlequin Edition Published |
January 1950 | Printed in Canada

[1-4] 5-192

Note: First published New York: David McKay
1948.



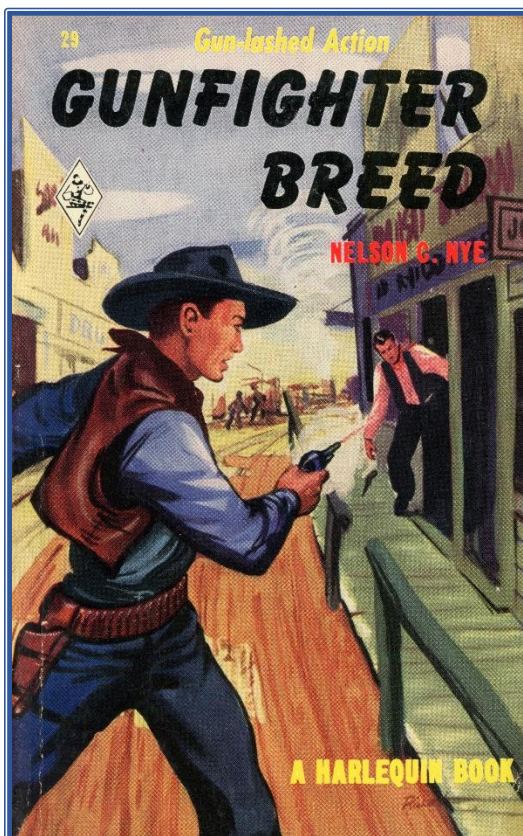
28 One Year with Grace

One Year With | Grace | by | MARTIN MOONEY | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-4] 5-191 [192]

Note: First published New York: Johnathan Swift 1942. Signed art by D. Rickard.



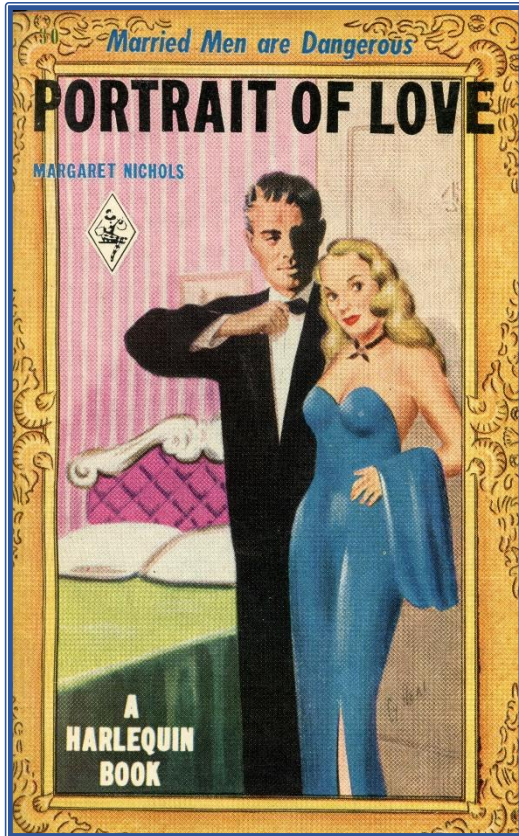
29 Gunfighter Breed

Gunfighter Breed | by | NELSON C. NYE | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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[1-4] 5-192

Note: First published New York: Macmillan 1942. Signed art by D. Rickard.



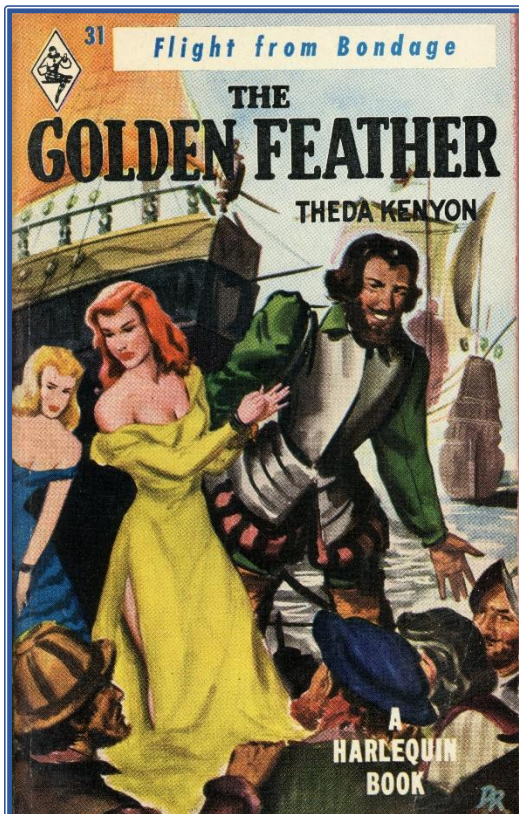
30 Portrait of Love

Portrait of Love | by | MARGARET NICHOLS |
 [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN
 BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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 Harlequin Edition Published | January 1950 |
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[1-4] 5-192

Note: First published Philadelphia, Macrae
 Smith 1944. Signed art by Cy Heal.



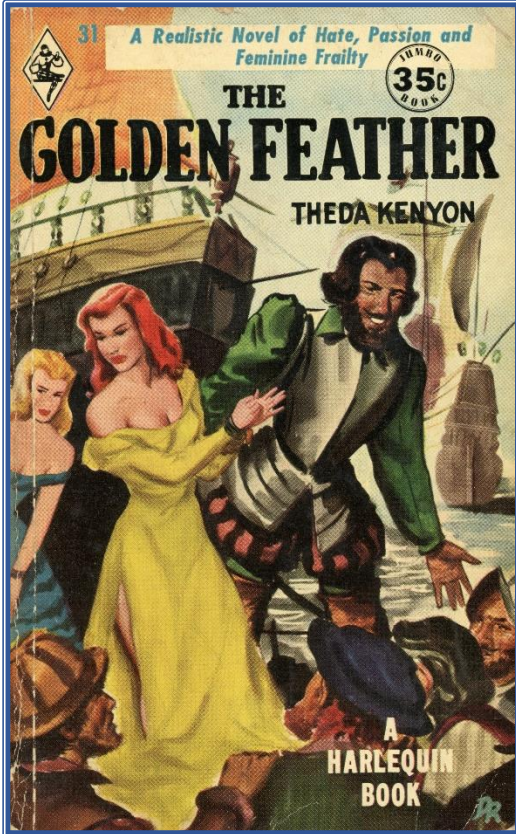
31 The Golden Feather

The Golden Feather | by | THEDA KENYON |
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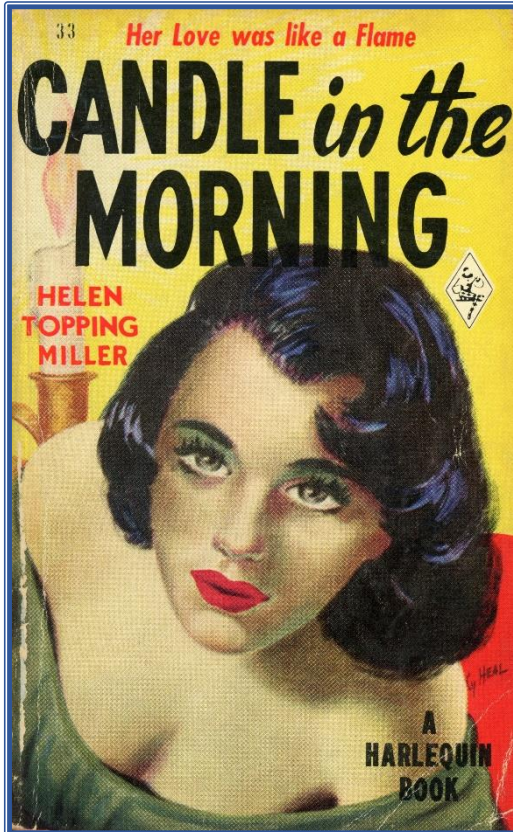
32 Hollywood Mystery

Hollywood Mystery! | by | BEN HECHT | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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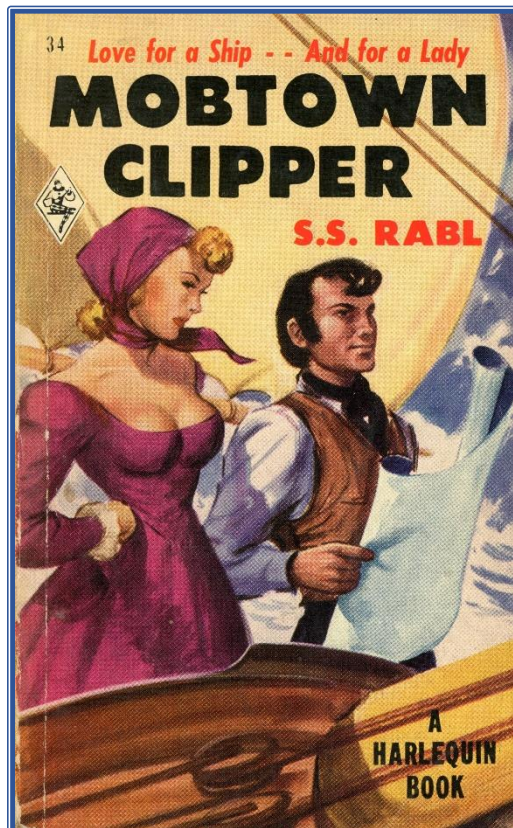
33 Candle in the Morning

CANDLE IN THE | MORNING | by | HELEN TOPPING MILLER | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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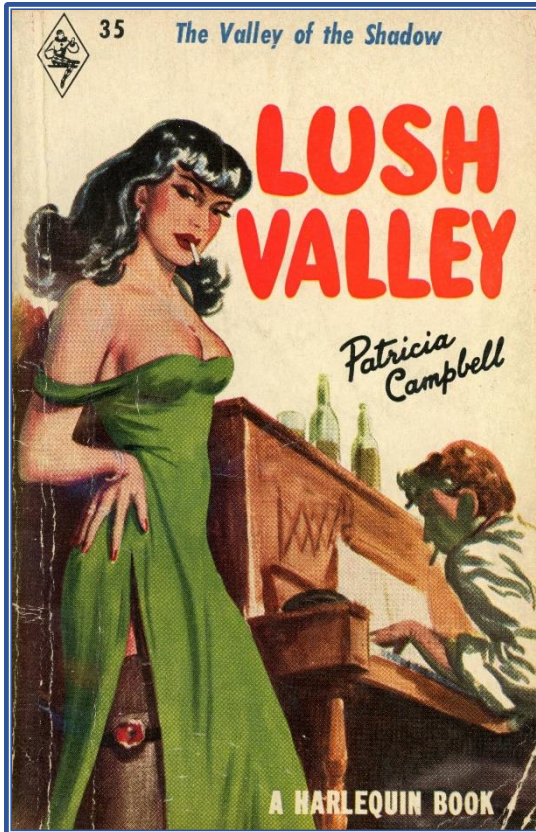
34 Mobtown Clipper

Mobtown Clipper | by | S.S. RABL | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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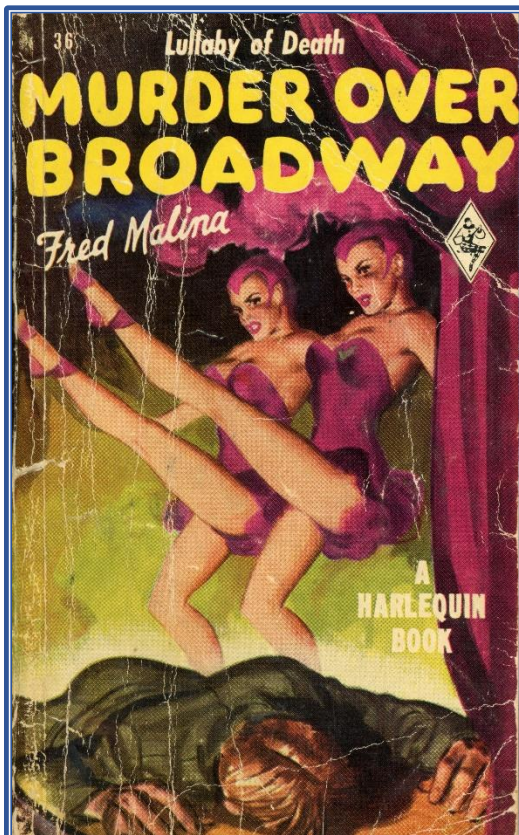
35 Lush Valley

Lush Valley | by | PATRICIA CAMPBELL |
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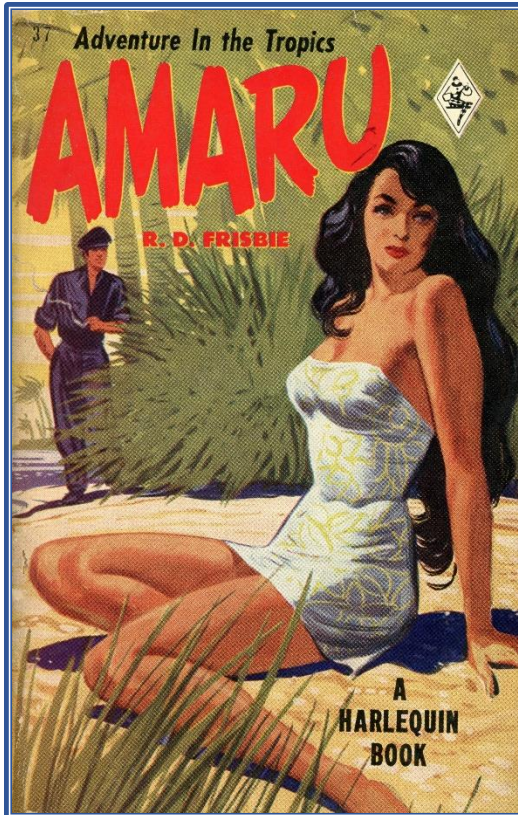
36 Murder Over Broadway

MURDER OVER | BROADWAY | by | FRED
 MALINA | [logo: harlequin in diamond] |
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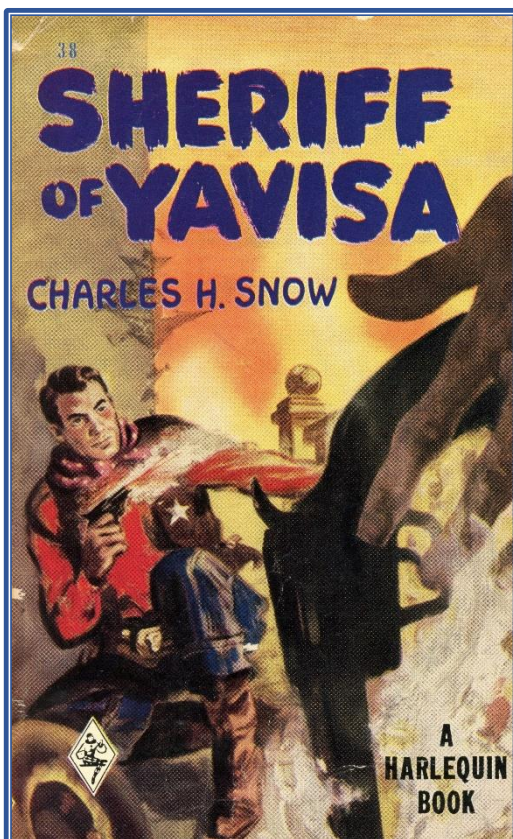
37 Amaru

Amaru | by | ROBERT DEAN FRISBIE | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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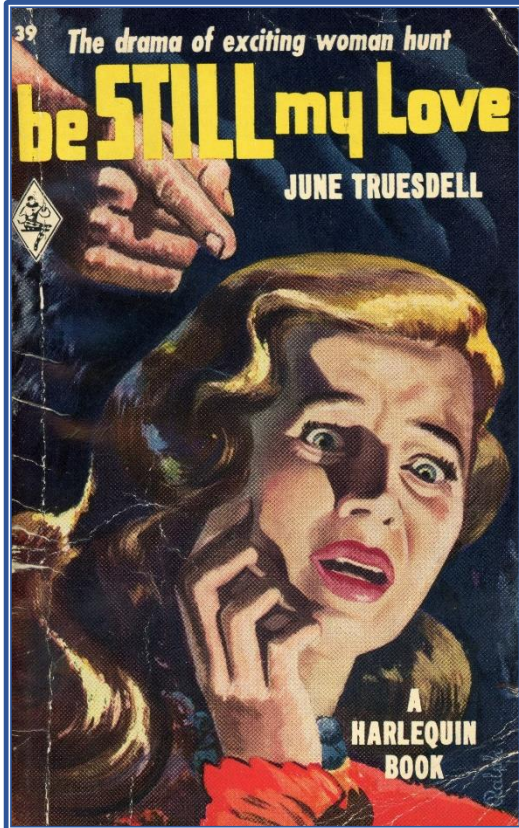
38 Sheriff of Yavisa

SHERIFF OF | YAVISA | by | CHARLES H. SNOW | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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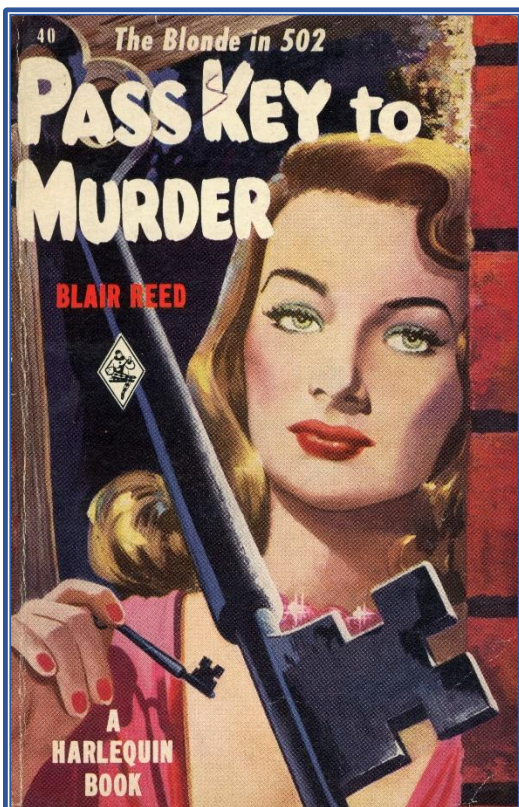
39 Be Still, My Love

BE STILL, | MY LOVE | *by* | JUNE TRUESDELL
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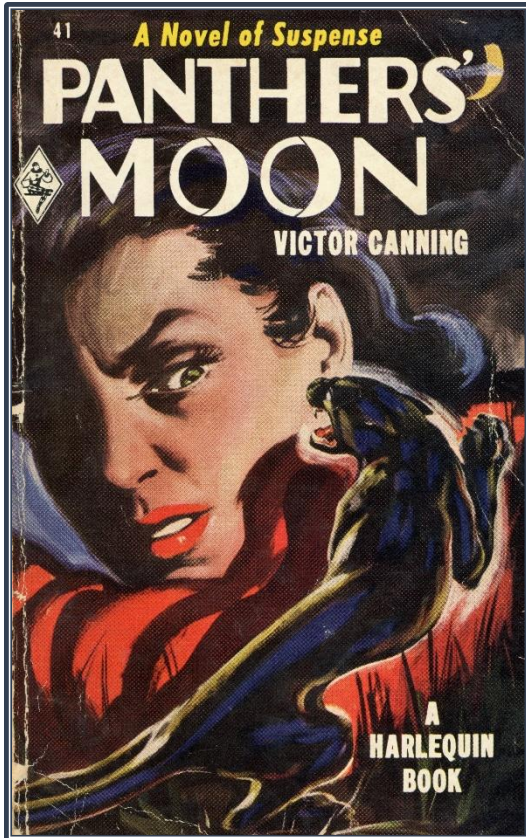
40 Pass Key to Murder

PASS KEY TO | MURDER | *by* | BLAIR REED |
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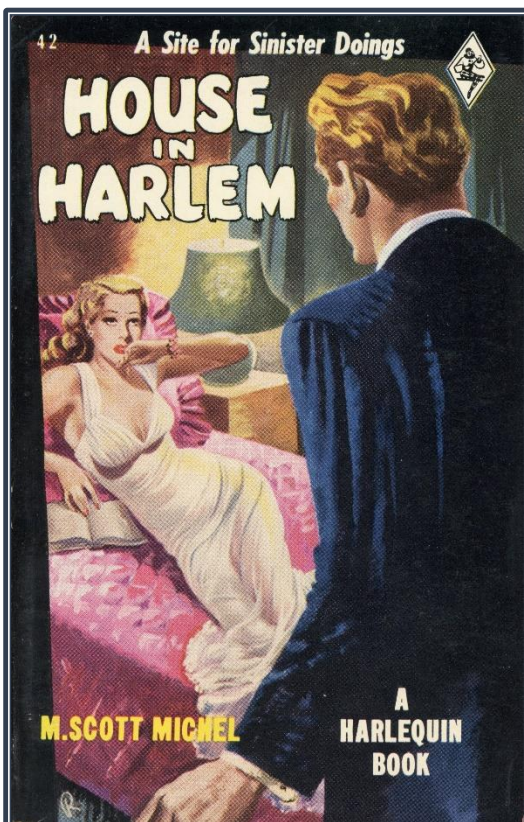
41 Panthers' Moon

PANTHERS' MOON | by | VICTOR CANNING |
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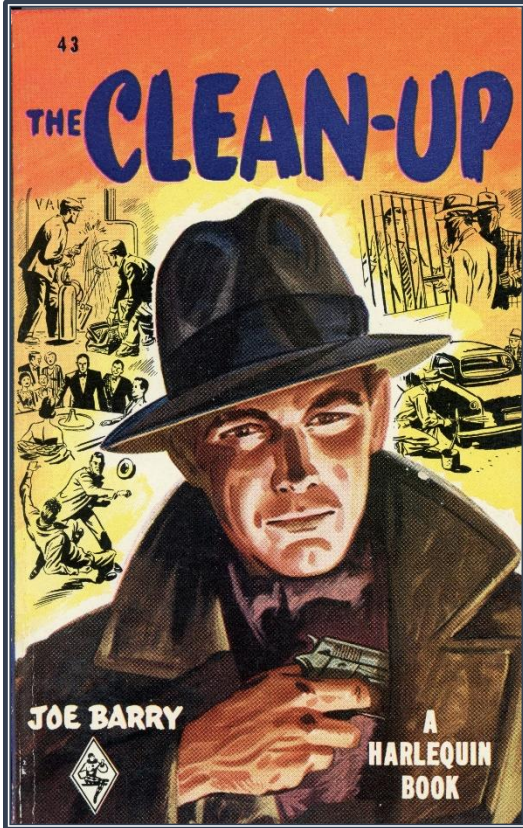
42 House in Harlem

HOUSE IN HARLEM | by | M. Scott Michel |
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Note: First published New York: Coward
McCann 1943 as *Sweet Murder*. Signed art
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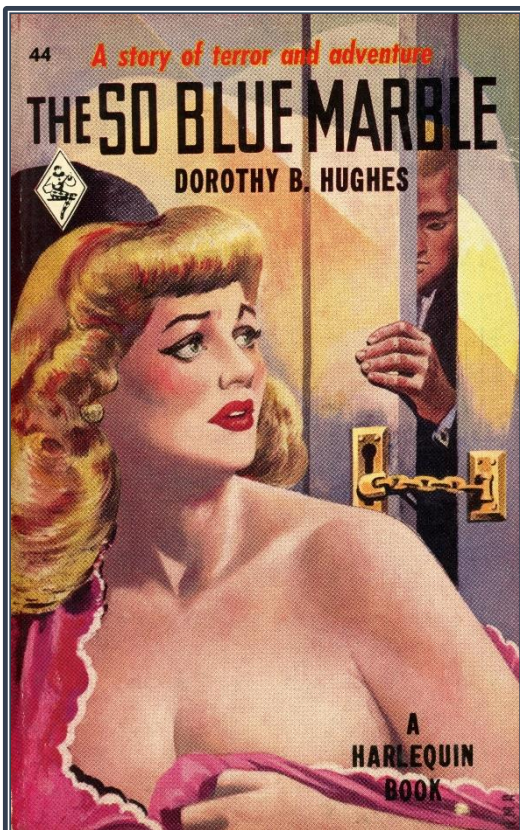
43 The Clean-Up

THE | CLEAN-UP | by | JOE BARRY | [logo: harlequin in diamond] | HARLEQUIN BOOKS | WINNIPEG

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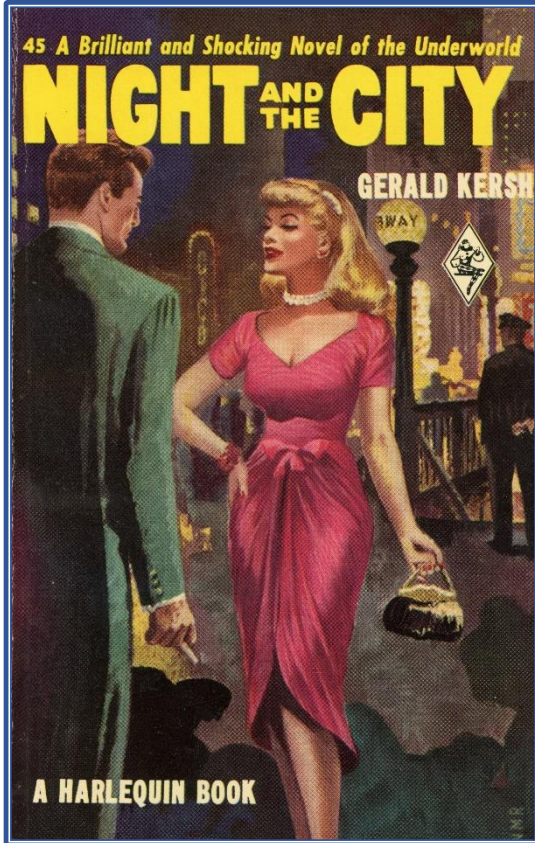
44 The So Blue Marble

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45 Night and the City

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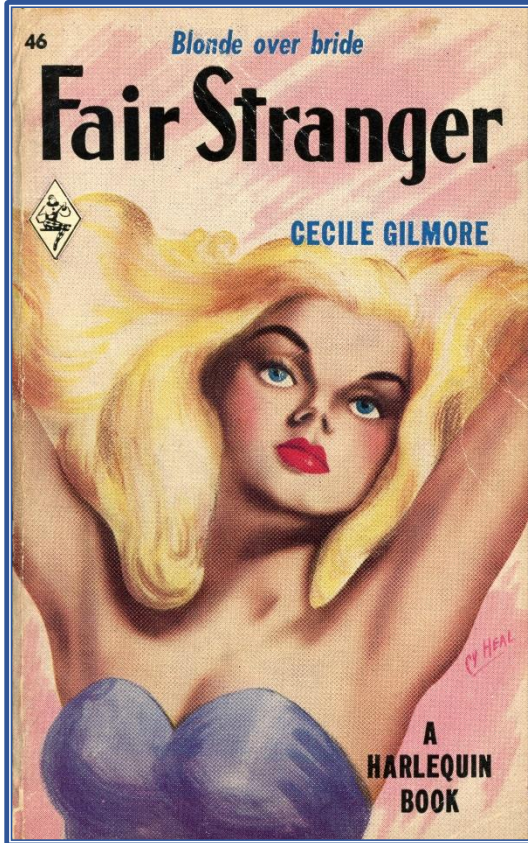
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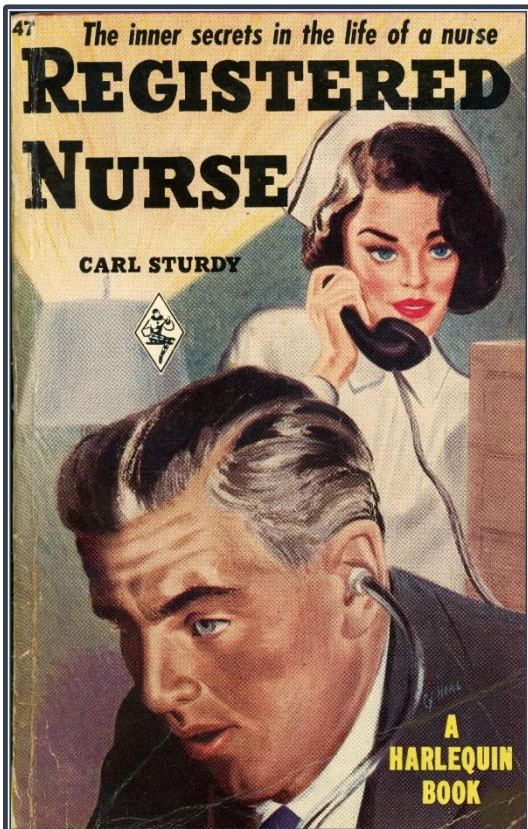
46 Fair Stranger

FAIR | STRANGER | *by* | CECILE GILMORE |
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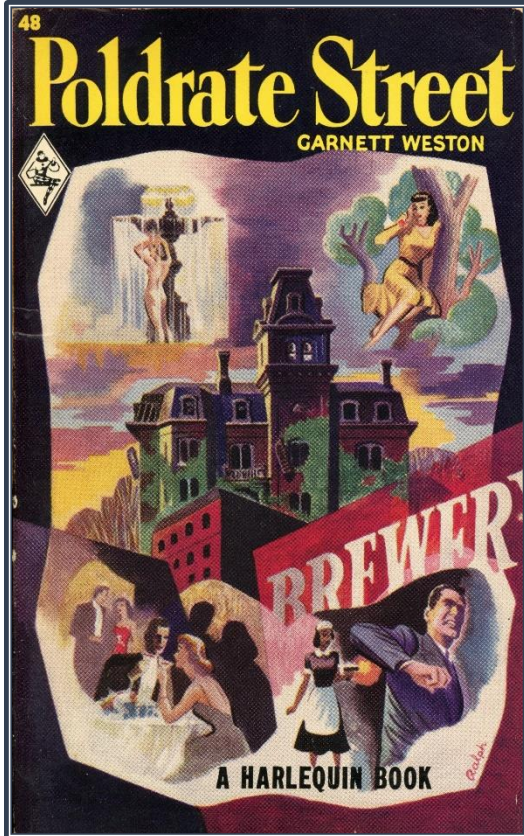
47 Registered Nurse

REGISTERED | NURSE | *by* | CARL STURDY |
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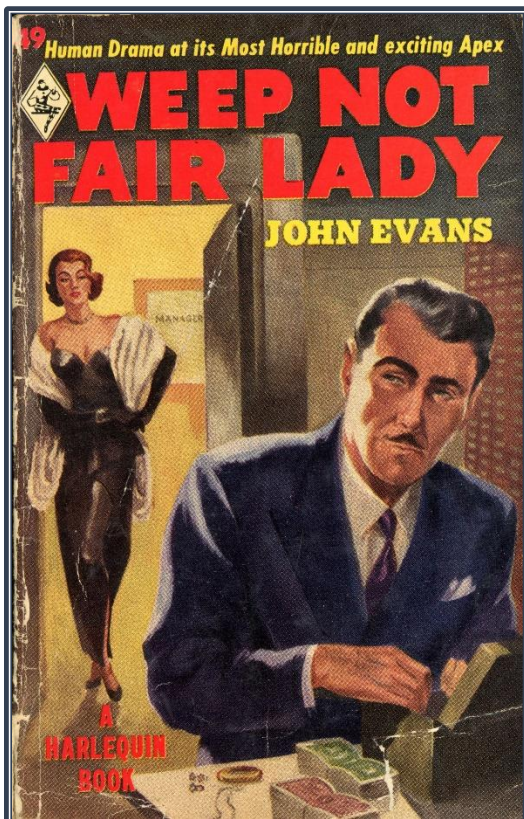
48 Poldrate Street

POLDRATE | STREET | by | Garnett Weston |
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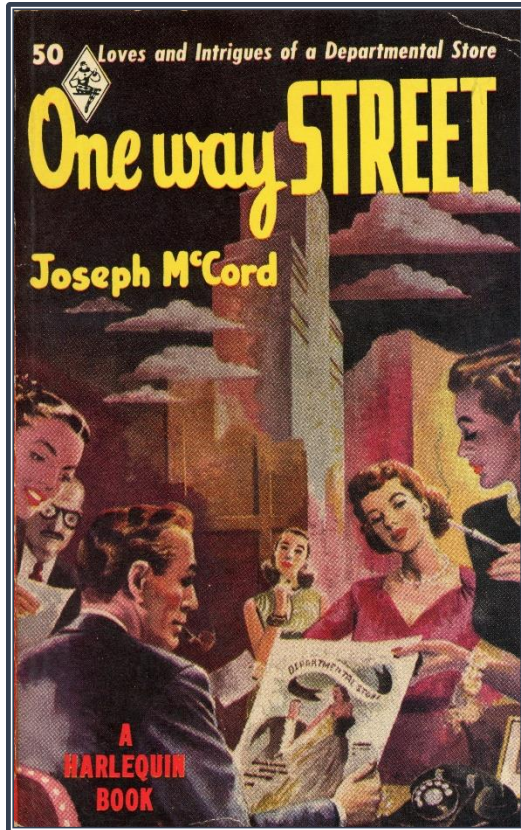
49 Weep Not Fair Lady

WEEP NOT | FAIR LADY | by | JOHN EVANS |
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[1-4] 5-191 [192]

Note: First published New York: Samuel Curl
1947 as *If You Have Tears*.



50 One Way Street

ONE WAY | STREET | by | JOSEPH McCORD
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