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NEWTON PRIZE SUBMISSION 2017

"HOLLYWEIRD: CULT CLASSIC NONFICTION ABOUT THE  
SEEDY SIDE OF THE DREAM FACTORY"

## ON THE COLLECTION:

I am, and have always been, gloriously in love with the tawdry side of Hollywood. My fascination started with the splashy star biographies and memoirs I would pick up at the local used bookstore. I would pay a few dollars for a cheap old paperback, then run home and read all about Lana Turner and the murder of Johnny Stompanato or Evelyn Keyes and her bedroom antics with John Huston. The interest was partially the shine, but really and truly the dark possibilities of scandal.

Hopefully, my interest in such mass-market printings has become somewhat elevated in nature over the years, though I still contain the same desire to uncover the possible truths about the making and manufacture of collective dreams (LA's main export). The collection I have today combines original runs of mass-market prints and selected critical non-fiction about the developing world of Los Angeles in the sixties. Though the books look slightly scattershot at first glance, several themes develop. The first and most obvious is crime or sexual scandal. For instance, Lana Turner is not of much interest before her daughter kills her boyfriend, Jean Harlow until her husband dies mysteriously, Elizabeth Taylor until she gets excommunicated for being too damn desirable. I am interested in these works not only for their tawdry appeal, but the significance behind them: written mostly in the sixties and seventies after the fall of the studio system, writers were finally able to recast stars and reveal new personas devised by the public and not the publicity office.

Valentino is backed by a pulsing rainbow on the cover of the 1968 *Valentino*, recast entirely to engage in a dialectic with the times. And what were those times? That's where the rest of this collection comes in. My fascination with Los Angeles centers upon the radical changes that the cultural revolution of the sixties brought to an already wild town. With the fall of the studio factory line and the rise of the auteur, Hollywood was being taken over by a younger, wilder generation. This generation wanted violence on screen, wanted movies like the bloody *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Easy Rider*. This generation wanted to sleep with their idols, the rock gods who performed on the Sunset Strip, and did. This generation wanted loud music made by electric guitars. They wanted gratification. And the result was radical: Hollywood, already a location of cult activity, escapism, and sexual scandal, became even weirder and more dangerous.

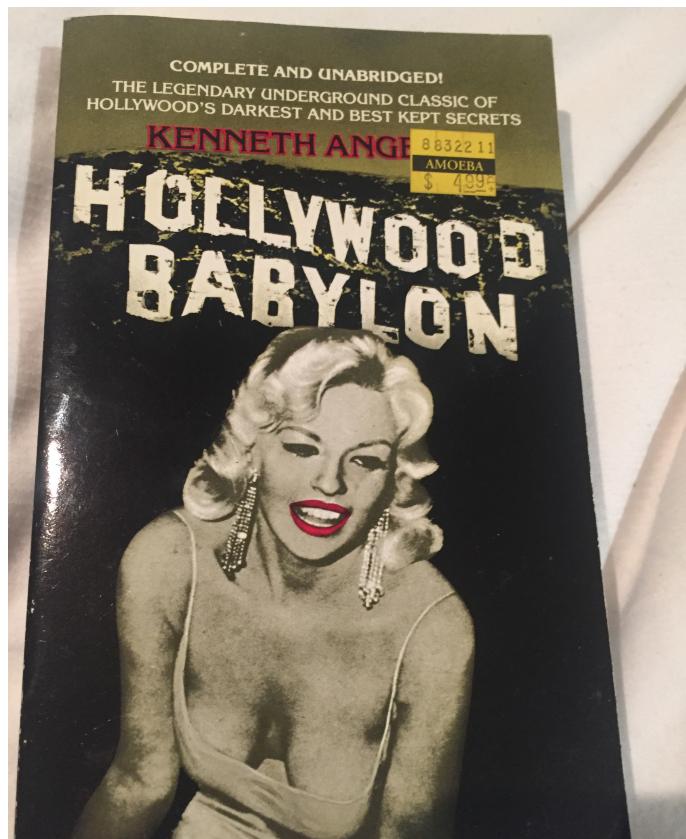
These volumes either explicate this transition, or bear the marks of the revisionist history of the period. Suddenly all the dirty secrets of tinseltown could be bought for a dollar at the corner store, not unlike the glossy and hyper-managed images of pin-ups twenty years before. Publishers like Pyramid and Bantam printed all the star-scandal they could find, finding that now that writers were allowed to smear the stars without consequence, the public had an appetite for the darkness beneath the glossy pictures.

And who could blame them? After the hyper-saccharine marketed dream of the 1950s, Americans wanted the inverse. Kenneth Anger, whose Hollywood Babylon appears below, started making queer and satanic films. Charlie Manson gathered up a pack of misfits and led them to commit crimes that fascinated the nation. Warren Beatty and Dennis Hopper blew stuff up on film and fascinated audiences. Jim Morrison got a bunch of blowjobs.

As for America, we still devour James Ellroy's dark past and crime fiction, continue to theorize over the Black Dahlia case, and probably can recite a few of Liz Taylor husbands. In collecting these editions, I have tried to understand this phenomenon within myself and in the public at large. This collection represents my search to understand the dark side of dreamland, and why I am fascinated by such a genre at all.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

(a note on the bibliography below: as the paperback cover designs are such a huge part of why some of these works are collectible, I have included visuals as well as text to hopefully convey the breadth and joy of the collection)



Anger, Kenneth. *Hollywood Babylon*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1981. Print.

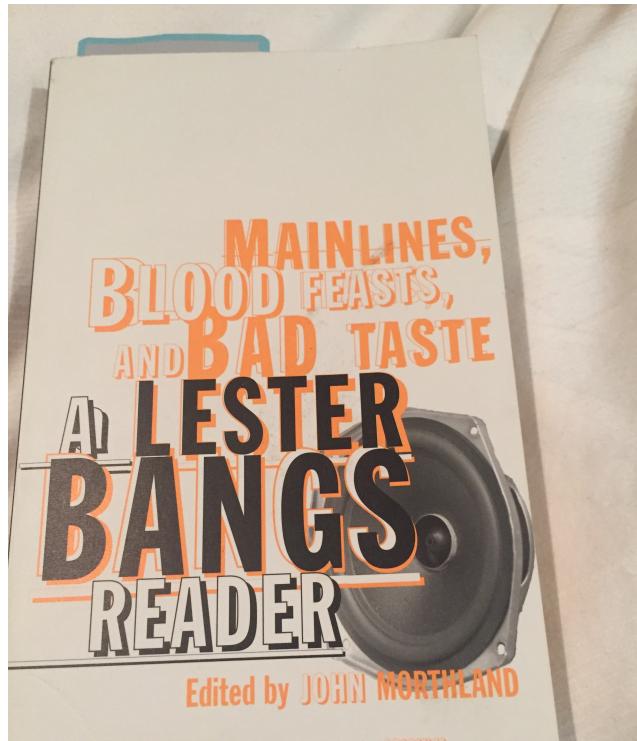
Kenneth Anger's *Hollywood Babylon* is known as the original Hollywood tell-all. Notorious for its grandiose and unsupported claims, as well as the disturbing photographs within, the book was a smash underground hit. Anger initiated the rumor that Lupe Velez died face-down in the toilet in this very volume, as well as substantiating rape claims against Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle which are widely believed to be false. *Hollywood Babylon* was dashed off for some extra cash, as Anger is an experimental filmmaker who featured members of the Rolling Stones (note their presence in later volumes within the collection) and Manson Family member Bobby Beausoliel in satanic and homoerotic media. This book is a reprint acquired at Amoeba Records in San Francisco.

Aquarian, Isis. *The Source: The Untold Story of Father Yod, Ya Ho Wa 13, and The Source Family*. London: Process, 2007. Print.

Isis Aquarian was the official historian for the Source Family, a Los Angeles cult whose organic restaurant became so famous that it was featured in a Woody Allen movie. While not running the restaurant, the cult lived in a huge LA mansion where they would enact rituals, smoke pot, and meditate. They also had a psychedelic rock band called Ya Ho Wa 13 formed by several members and their leader, Father Yod. The music produced by the cults of the sixties and seventies is notoriously bad (Charlie Manson failed to get a record contract despite at one point living with Dennis Wilson, the Children of God's gospel songs are painfully saccharine), but Ya Ho Wa 13 is still noted by psychedelia aficionados for its unique sound. The cult's aesthetic is frequently referenced by the fashion industry, and this volume furthers the image of the cult's easy LA-cool. However, it must be noted that Isis is one of Father Yod's most faithful disciples, and presents a very skewed image of life within the Source Family. I have not yet acquired this volume, but hope to for aesthetic reasons.

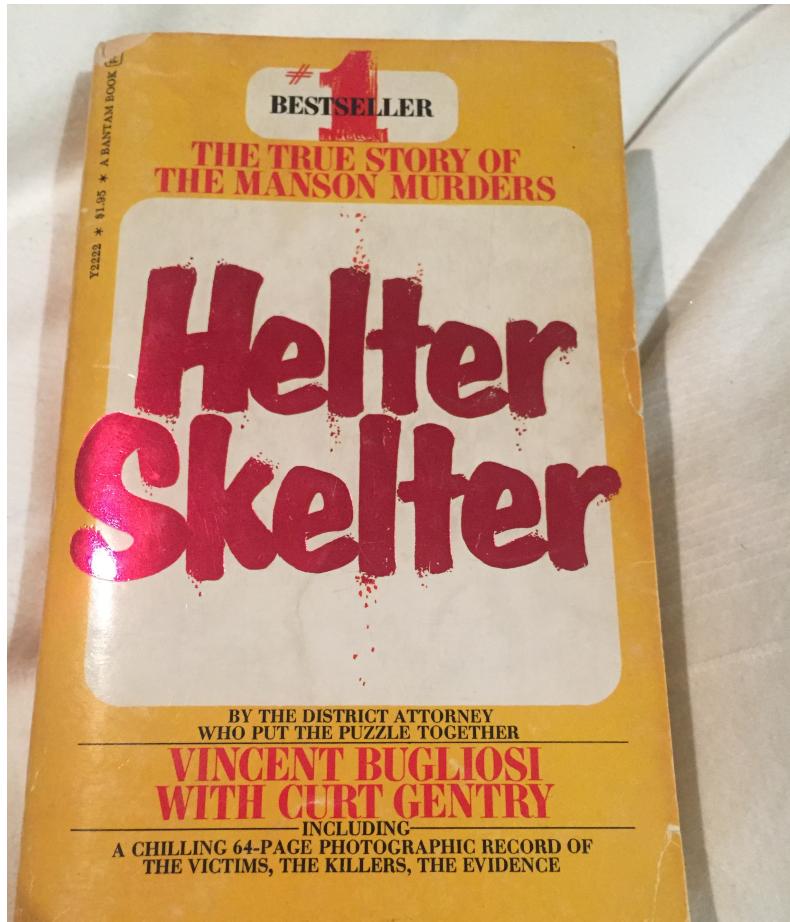
Babitz, Eve. *Eve's Hollywood*. New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 2015. Print.

I picked up *Eve's Hollywood* in the fiction section only to discover it was anything but: rather, it's Eve Babitz's memories of a wild LA youth. God-daughter to Stravinsky, lover of Jim Morrison, author in her own right, Eve Babitz takes you from the Chateau Marmont to the taco trucks in central Los Angeles, delighting in the tackiness and wonders of the city in which she was raised. The volume has a jazzy tone, taking the reader from the days of Garbo to the days of the Whisky-A-Go-Go and the Sunset Strip with ease. I can't pick a favorite sketch: from getting dressed in the locker room next to future Manson Girl Catherine Share to imagining what Janis Joplin could have done on an LA Sunday instead of killing herself, Babitz shines. While the book used to be impossibly hard to find, as it briefly went out of print, the New York Review of Books published this reprint a few years ago. I purchased the reprint at Kepler's Books in Menlo Park, California. It neatly ties together the worlds of Los Angeles, as Babitz dwells on cults, the music scene, and the movie industry. If any book in this collection could give you a taste of the whole, it's this one. Volume not pictured because I own reprint copy, not original.



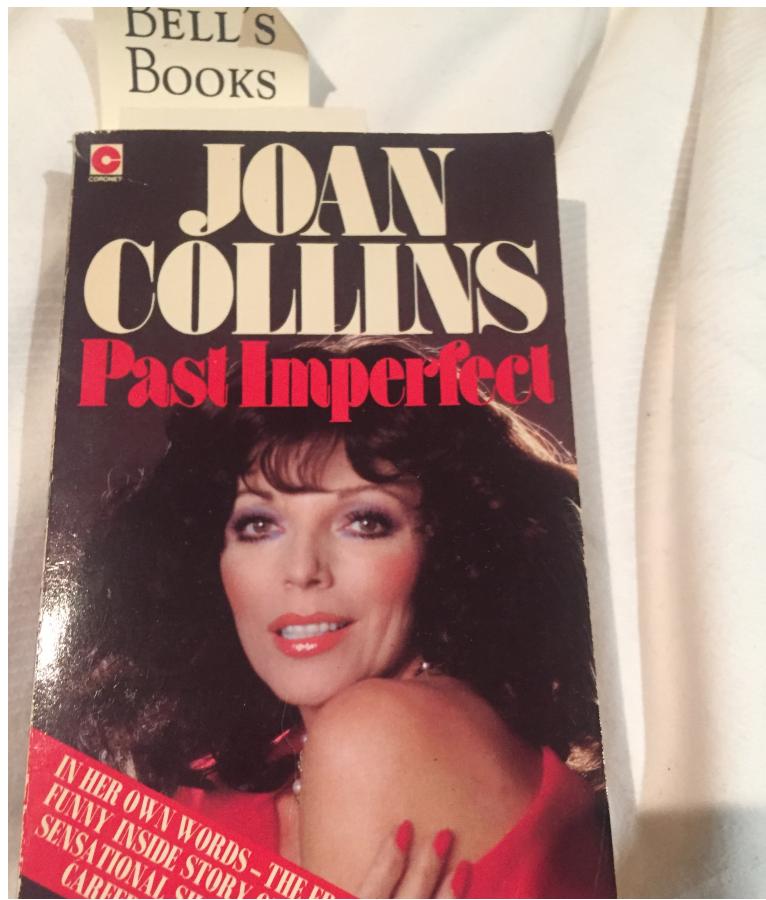
Bangs, Lester. *Mainlines, Blood Feasts, and Bad Tastes: A Lester Bangs Reader*. New York: Random House, 2003.

Lester Bangs is now immortalized in the Cameron Crowe film *Almost Famous* as an eccentric mentor who preached the virtues of being uncool, but in life he was a little grittier at the core. Fired by *Rolling Stone*, Bangs dominated an industry from the outside, writing cutting and insightful pieces about the nature of the rock'n'roll game. This volume contains the best of his cultural and musical musings from his tenure at *Creem Magazine* and elsewhere. His essay on punk is included, which speaks not only to punk but a specific brand of LA gumption. “I invented punk, everybody knows that. But I stole it from...James Dean, who stole it from Marlon Brando...who stole it from Napoleon, who stole it from Voltaire...who stole it from an anonymous wino whose pocket he picked while the man was lying comatose in the Paris gutter...the wino stole it from his mother, a toothless hag who turned tricks until she got too old and ugly whereupon she became a seamstress except that she wasn’t very good...her dresses would fall off of elegant Parisian women in the middle of the street. Which is how Lady Godiva happened. She was a punk too, she stole it from the hag to get revenge.” (Bangs, “The Scorn Papers”). In one paragraph, Bangs gives punk a genealogy, and he did the same for the world of the Sunset Strip and the LA rock scene. Bangs is the ultimate bard of the band. I purchased this book at BookBuyers in Mountain View, a used bookstore where I worked the summer after my freshman year.



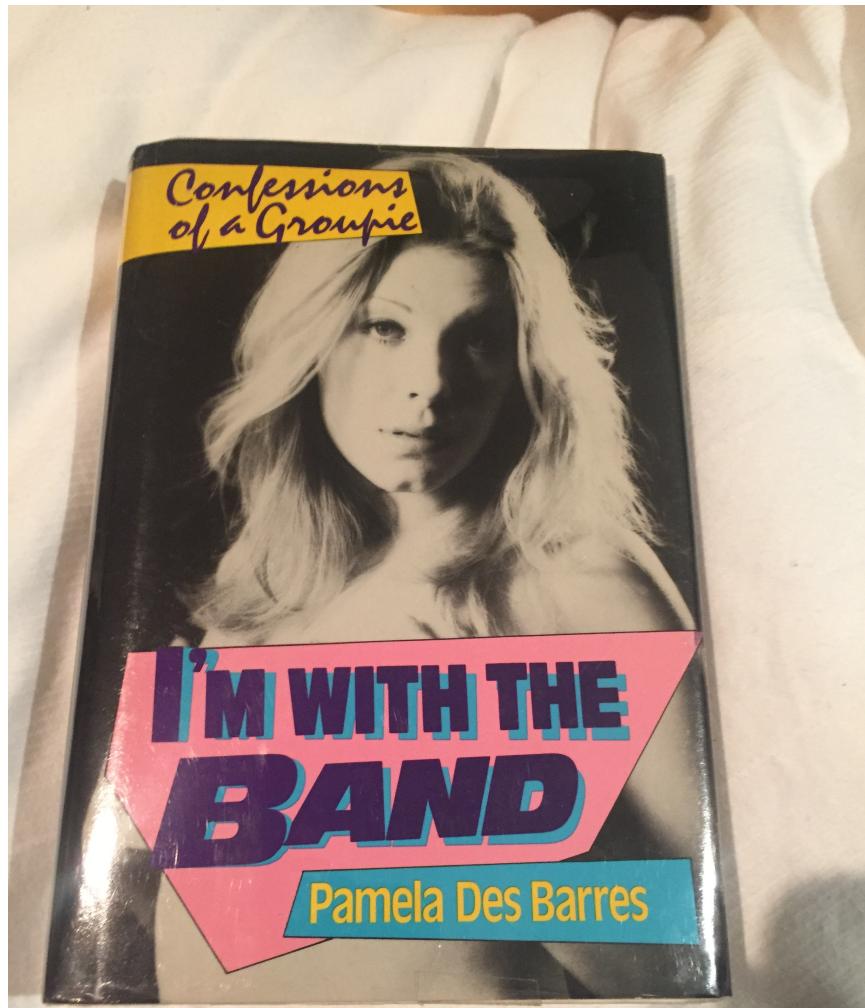
Bugliosi, Vincent, and Curt Gentry. *Helter Skelter*. New York: Bantam Books, 1974.

This copy of *Helter Skelter* is from the original 1974 paperback print run. Note the yellow cover, as most future editions would juxtapose the red text with black backgrounds, emphasizing the bloody letters. It also lacks the updated epilogue from Bugliosi, but other than that the text stays the same throughout editions. The sensational book is an account of the crimes of the Manson Family from the perspective of the prosecutor from the Manson murder trials, Vincent Bugliosi. Buglioisi's exhaustive research in prosecuting the case makes the book fascinating not only as a true-crime account, but also an example of the possible efficacy of the justice system. This paperback is a cult classic and hallmark of bookshelves in the seventies, and I purchased it used at BookBuyers Used Books while I worked there. I was particularly happy to find an original run edition, as we would get many copies in the black-and-red fashion but few like this. The Manson Family's life and crimes is a crucial part of LA history: The Family killed a movie star, lived with a pop star, and embodied the shifting vibe of the Hollywood scene after the fall of the studio system in the sixties. The souring of the hippy era is a distinct turning point in LA lore.



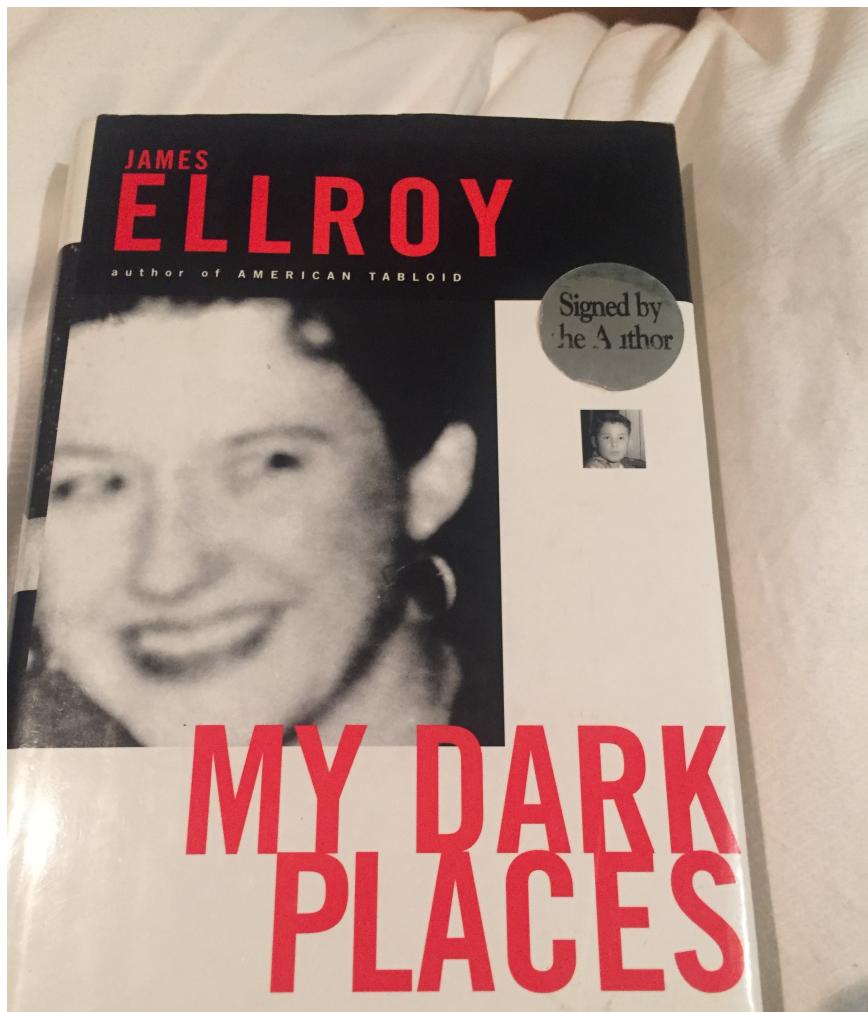
Collins, Joan. *Joan Collins: Past Imperfect*. London: W.H. Allen & Co Ltd, 1979. Print.

Joan Collins isn't as famous as many of her Old Hollywood counterparts, but the woman knows how to dish. This memoir is delightfully trashy, as Collins details her own vanities (she claims to have been the English Elizabeth Taylor), and her exploits with her lovers. Particularly notable are her opinions on her romance with the then little-known Warren Beatty. Beatty was a known womanizer, who would go on to make the brilliant and gory *Bonnie and Clyde* (a film cited by critic Karina Longworth as having an eerie similarity to the real-life gore of the Manson killings, along with Hopper's *Easy Rider*). She connects the era of Taylor, her supposed counterpart, with the mayhem of the sixties and seventies. I acquired this book at Bells Books in Palo Alto, California, another used store that keeps a paperback memoir section.



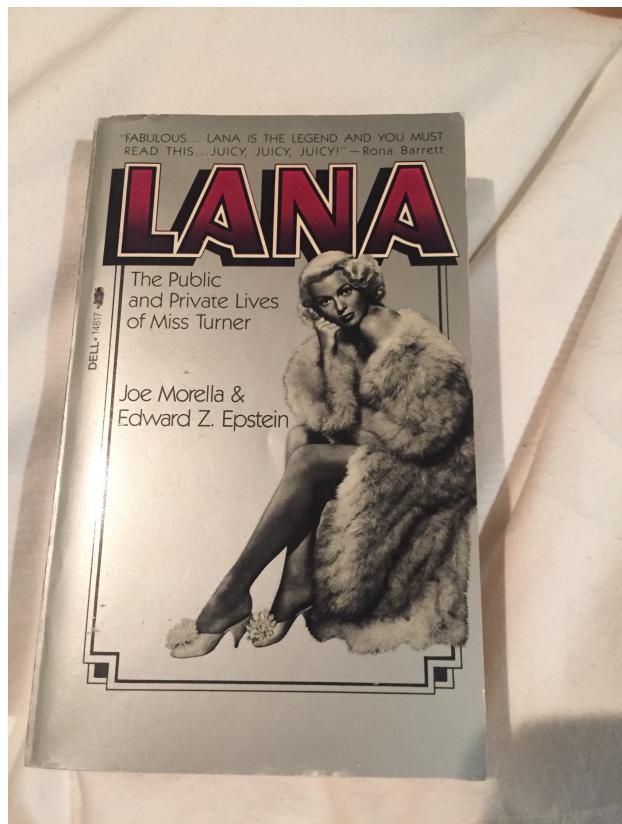
Des Barres, Pamela. *I'm With the Band*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1987. Print.

Famous for being known as the original groupie, Des Barres parlayed her infamy into profit with this purple-prosed volume. While it can get a little flowery describing how it felt to sleep with Mick Jagger, Jim Morrison, and the like, it's undeniable that the book is a who's who of the Sunset Strip and an amazing glimpse into the peak of rock and roll. This is an original print edition of the book in hardcover. I personally find the cover design very bold and fun if a bit eighties, but much better than the reprint cover. It's a collector's item and also a privilege to get my hands on this piece of rock history. Des Barres was originally one of Vito Paulekas' disciples before running off to live with Frank Zappa and his family. The exploits of Paulekas are detailed in *Eve's Hollywood*, the groupies of the strip haunt the work of Bangs, and Des Barres even includes a brief run in with a Manson Family member in San Francisco. Purchased through Amazon.



Ellroy, James. *My Dark Places*. New York: Alfred A. Knoff, Inc, 1996.

The ultimate in LA crime. James Ellroy, acclaimed author, pens a volume about the brutal murder of his mother that sent him down the dark path of writing crime fiction. The book is so searching and well done that it transcends the sensationalism of its subject matter, but it cannot be denied that Ellroy constructs a rich niche for himself within Hollywood's dark side. He riffs on Rita Hayworth, the Black Dahlia, and the LAPD in this search for the truth about what happened to his mother. This copy was purchased used at BookBuyers, and is signed by Ellroy. It was an excellent bargain particularly with my employee discount! Ellroy's fiction is so intricate and in tune with seedy LA, and this memoir helps you understand how he constructs the world of the past to his liking.



Epstein, Edward Z, and Joe Morella. *Lana: The Public and Private Lives of Miss Turner*. New York: Dell, 1971. Print.

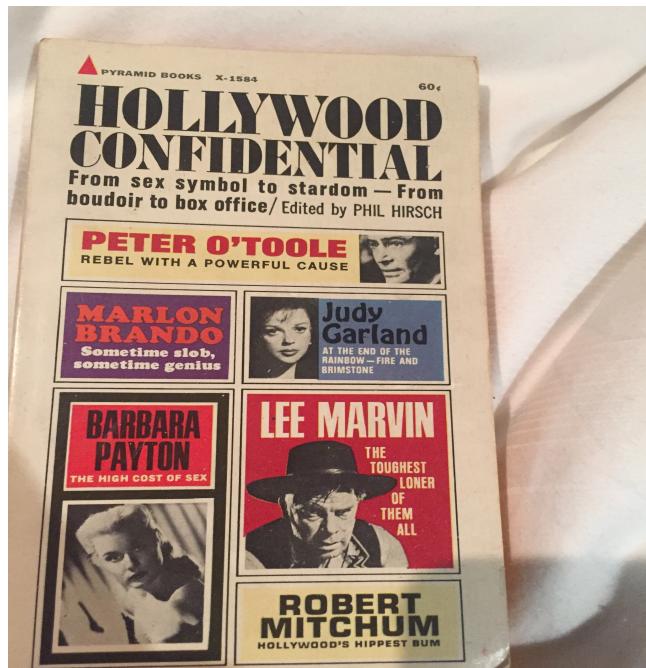
A splendid piece of unauthorized trash with a sultry cover, this biography of Lana Turner is obsessive and strange. While it obviously treats themes such as Lana's boyfriend Johnny Stompanato's murder by her daughter Cheryl Crane, the book also fixates on Lana's presentation and costuming to the point of hilarity. Lana is examined from every angle on and off-screen, finally declared a nymphomaniac, and then the authors squabble about to figure out which man Lana loved most. While the cover is not as visually stunning as other Old Hollywood gossip rags in my collection, it packs a satisfyingly messy and glamorous punch when read. This book was also purchased out of the memoir section at Bells Books in Palo Alto, CA.

Hodel, Steve. *The Black Dahlia Avenger*. New York: Arcade Publishing: 2003. Print.

The story of the Hodel family is a chilling and astounding tale. The Los Angeles community knew that Steve Hodel's father George Hodel went to trial for sleeping with his daughter, Steve's half sister Tamar Hodel. What they did not know was that George Hodel was under investigation for the murder of the Black Dahlia. Steve Hodel somehow escaped the hedonism and corruption of his youth to become an LA cop, and in looking over files discovered the truth about his father. This book is his treatise on why his father committed the Black Dahlia murder, complete with phone transcripts, photos, and handwriting comparisons. Hodel's theory is credited by experts as the likely solution to the unsolved case, but it's hard to convict a dead man. Interestingly enough, the Hodel's LA mansion is featured briefly in the film *LA Confidential* based on the James Ellroy book of the same name. There is evidence of human remains buried in the back yard. I have not yet acquired any addition of this volume, but will soon.

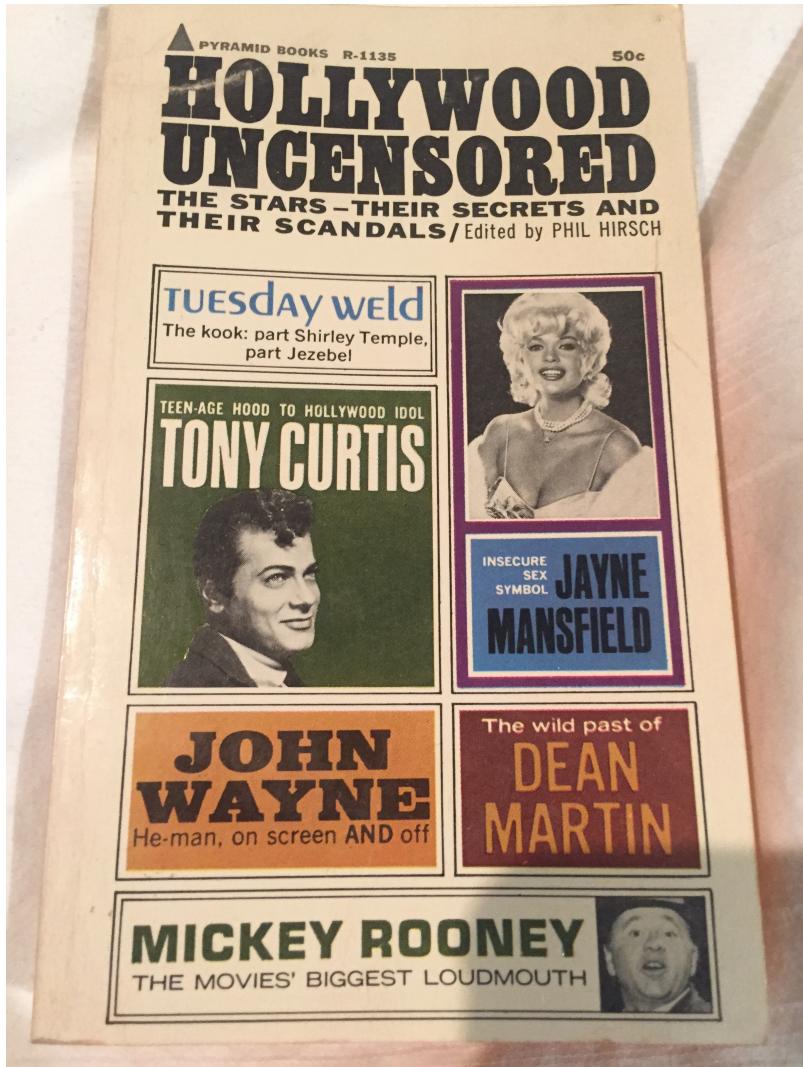
Hodel, Fauna. *One Day She'll Darken*. Outskirts Press, 2008. Print.

Fauna Hodel is one of the three daughters of Tamar Hodel. It is unclear whether Fauna was a product of incest or Tamar's teenage tryst with a black musician, and this possible racial identity leads George Hodel (possible Black Dahlia killer) to foist the child off on a black maid. Growing up with her adoptive mother, Fauna must come to terms with her history, and finally the possibility that her grandfather was the Black Dahlia killer. I have not yet obtained this volume. It's self-published, but there was also a TV movie special made from the same material a long time ago. I hope to purchase Fauna's book soon.



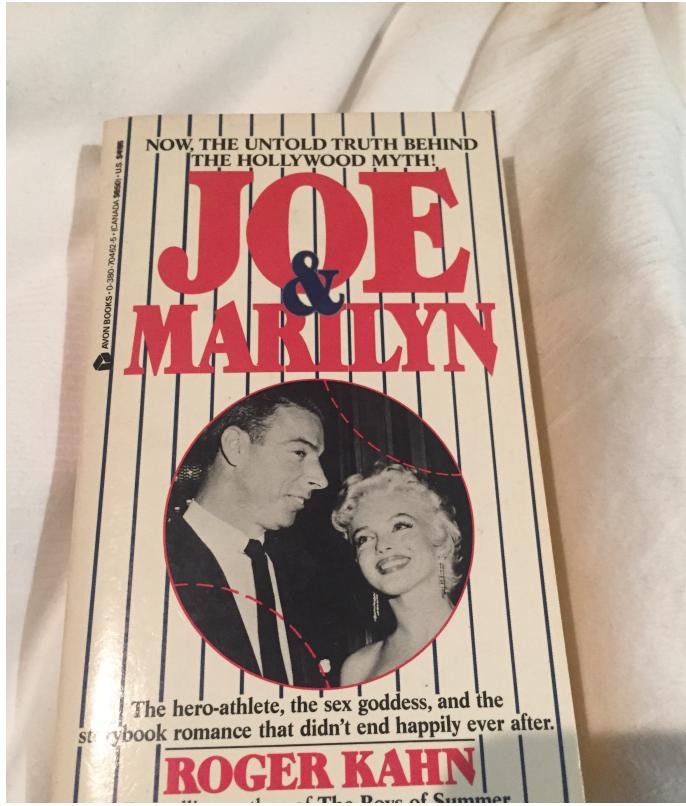
*Hollywood Confidential*. New York: Pyramid Publications, 1967. Print.

This anthologized edition of classic Hollywood gossip articles is a diamond in the rough. While it's notable for treating Robert Mitchum's attempt at image rehabilitation following an arrest for pot possession, the unquestionable star of the collection is Barbara Payton's supposedly self-penned memoir *I Am Not Ashamed*. It's highly dubious that Payton wrote the article, but it's a sensation. It details her arrival on the Hollywood scene as a hot new prospect, her affair with Joan Crawford's ex-husband, and the destructive love triangle that brought her down. By the end, Payton's on the streets selling her body for humiliating low sums of money and drinking her way to oblivion. The collection is an original anthology from the sixties, part of the series that also features *Hollywood Uncensored*. I saved it from the recycling pile while working at BookBuyers and so came by it for free. It was assumed that customers would not have interest, but "I Am Not Ashamed" is a legendary Old Hollywood tale! Really a wonderful addition to the collection.



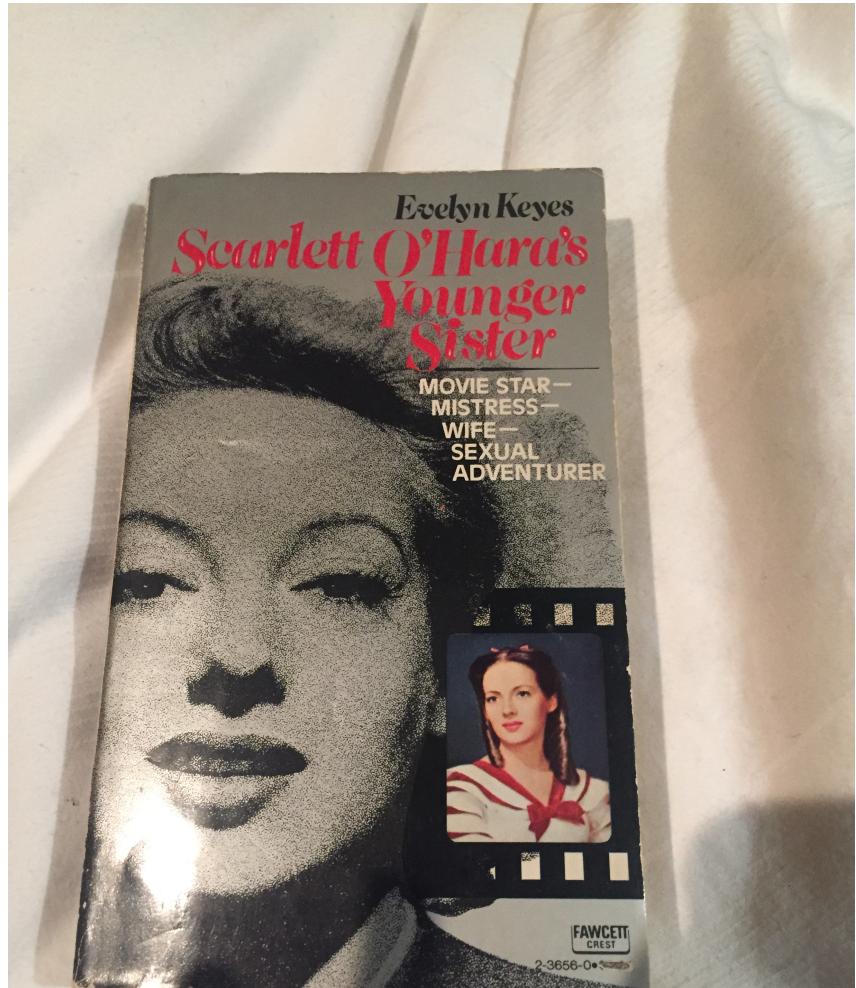
*Hollywood Uncensored.* New York: Pyramid Publications, 1965. Print.

Similarly to the above *Hollywood Confidential*, *Hollywood Uncensored* is a Pyramid Book that anthologizes gossip articles. While it has dish on Jayne Mansfield, the real interest here is the Tuesday Weld article. She's condemned for being a beatnik and sexually active, yet objectified all the same. Hollywood is struggling to adjust to the new stars and the turbulent aftermath of the studio system. Obtained at the same time as *Hollywood Confidential*.



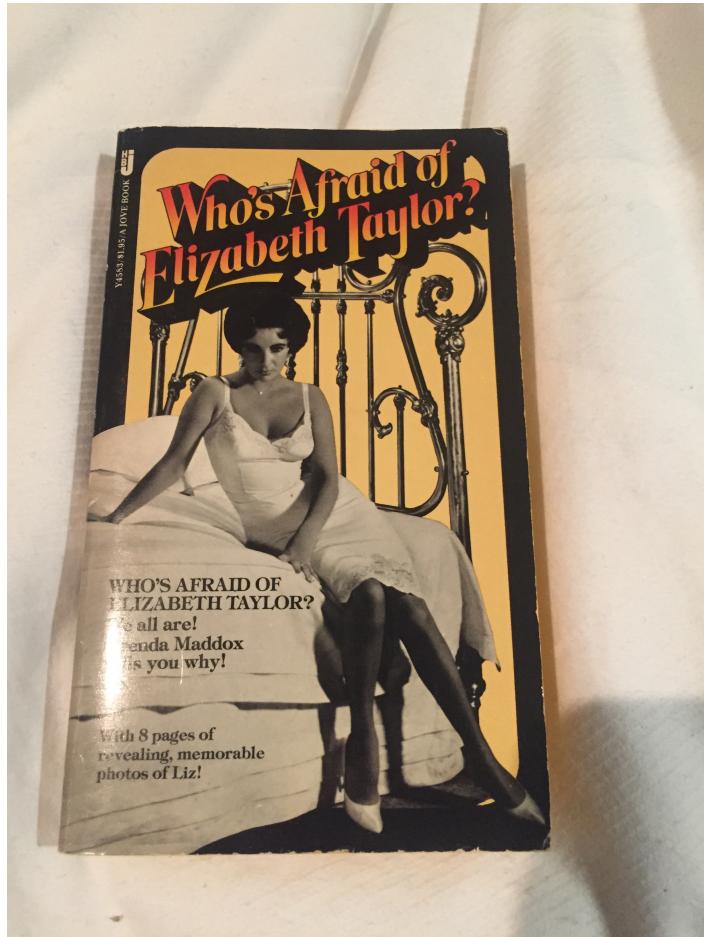
Kahn, Roger. *Now, the Untold Truth Behind the Hollywood Myth: Joe and Marilyn*. New York: Avon Books, 1988.

The ballplayer and the super-star are reunited on the fun cover of this original printing copy. While Kahn doesn't exactly tell us anything new about either partner in this marriage, he frames the myth in obvious terms and allows for us to deconstruct its component parts. Honestly, the campy cover and obvious cultural manipulations are the best part about this book. Purchased at BookBuyers a year after I left their employ.



Keyes, Evelyn. *Scarlett O'Hara's Younger Sister: Movie Star—Wife---Sexual Adventuress*. New York: Fawcett Crest Books, 1977. Print.

You might think this book treats *Gone With the Wind*. Nope. It mostly talks about sex with director John Huston, and a surprising number of strange encounters with animals, particularly one where a chimpanzee raids the bedroom. Fed up, Keyes tells Huston: “It’s the monkey or me!” Huston responds, “Honey, it’s you,” and they split. Keyes is a sharp writer, or at least she hired a good ghostwriter, and even when outlandish you’re with her. An example of what a good trashy memoir ought to look like! Purchased from Bells Books in Palo Alto, CA.

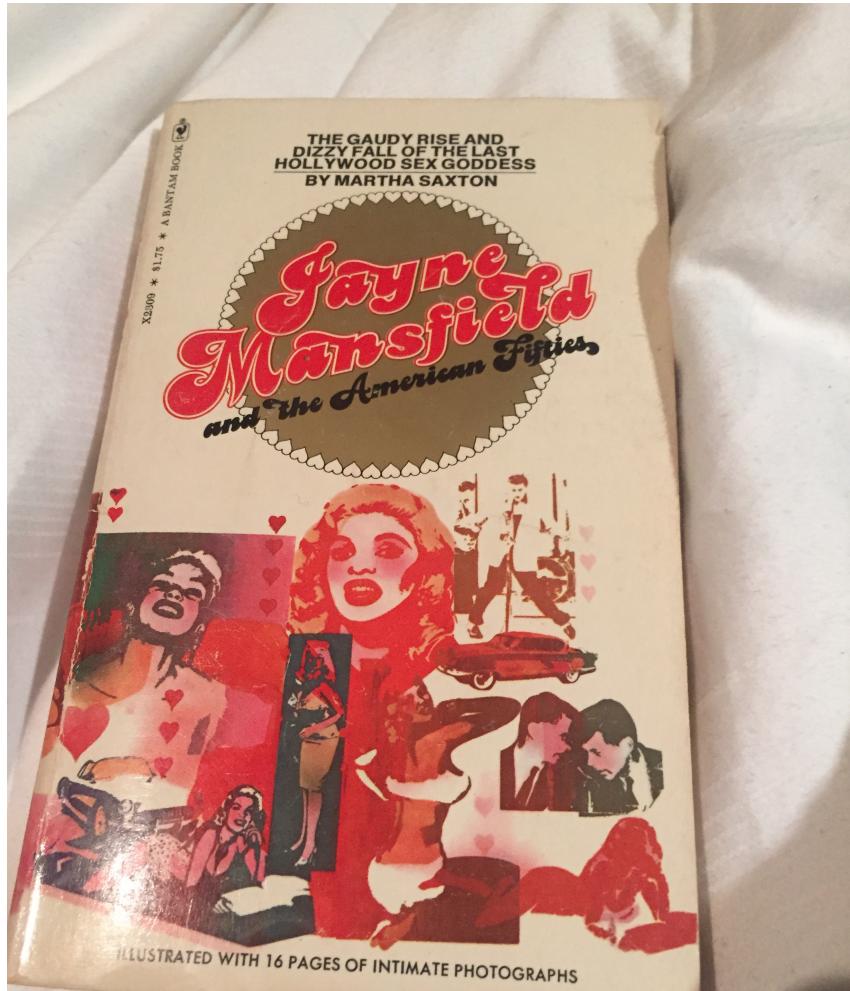


Maddox, Brenda. *Who's Afraid of Elizabeth Taylor?* New York: First Jove, 1978. Print.

The actual content of this biography is a little strange due to Maddox's belief that she is as beautiful as Taylor, and they are aligned in some sort of cosmic parallel, but what a cover! Here we see the imagery of Liz Taylor collide: while the title pulls from her later career and work in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, the image of her in the nightgown is surely pulled from *Butterfield 8*, for which she won an academy award. The cover's confusion mimics the text within, but it's a fascinating example of the revision that stars underwent in the media after the fall of the studio system. Taylor came up at MGM and had her image managed all her life until the Fisher and Burton fiascos, and Maddox engages with all images of Taylor in a strange portrait that does not glorify so much as worship. It is an example of how the genre of celebrity biography shifts with the times. I purchased this at BookBuyers before it closed for good.

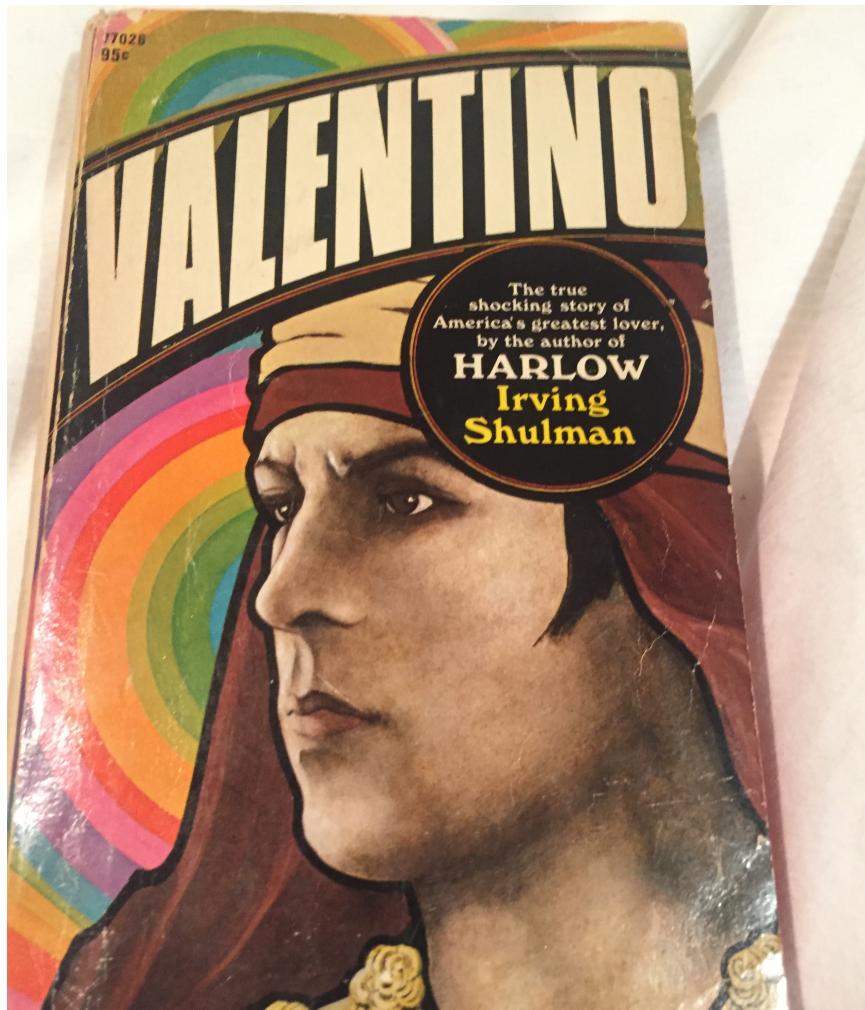
McGowan, David. *Weird Scenes Inside the Canyon: Laurel Canyon, Covert Ops & the Dark Heart of the Hippie Dream*. London: Headpress, 2014.

I've read McGowan's internet musings, and can't wait to lay hands on his book. McGowan takes the cult activity at Spahn Ranch and in the canyons of Los Angeles as well as the music scene and mines this territory for evidence of federal operations within the scene. I'm not sure I'm convinced, but McGowan has a way of linking all LA industry and crime in a web of intrigue, and his sources are good. If given my existing collection, McGowan would cut the whole thing up and paste it into a flowchart of corruption, sex and crime. Then find evidence of federal interference. He's a thorough scholar even if he jumps to conclusions, and I've seen my collection differently through his eyes.



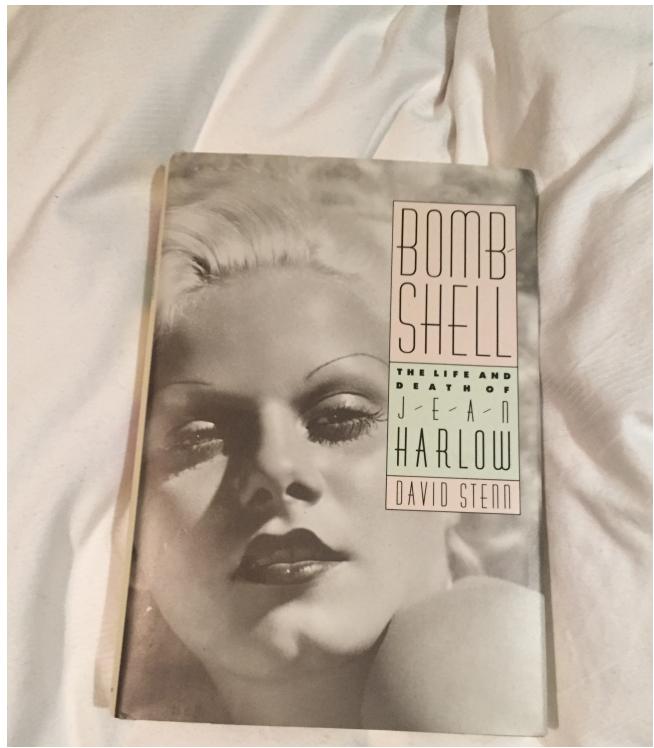
Saxon, Martha. *Jayne Mansfield and the American Fifties*. New York: Bantam, 1965.  
Print.

Most Mansfield biographies fixate on her death and possible decapitation, but Saxon's work predates Mansfield's death by two years and thus if forced to focus on her star-image, making for more interesting reading. This edition is the first print edition. The cover details clarify the contradictions of Mansfield: girly and pink (the woman had a pink mansion and bathed in a heart shaped bath tub) but the ultimate sex idol. Note that the bottom promises "16 pages of intimate photographs," and delivers. Though since Jayne posed for playboy and did a nude scene in *Promises, Promises*, it's not as thrilling at it might be otherwise. Jayne was a different cultural phenomenon than Monroe, who she is often accused of mimicking, and Saxon's volume begins to carve out an alternate legacy. Purchased at BookBuyers.



Shulman, Irving. *Valentino*. New York: Trident Press, 1968. Print.

This cover is perhaps my favorite of the entire collection. This is a fist edition from the sixties, which is why silent star Valentino gets a rainbow splash in the background instead of something more fitting. Perhaps the rainbow is somewhat on point, however, as the biography works with the gendered discrimination that ultimately led to Valentino's death. Accused of wearing makeup and being effete, he participated in a boxing match that ended up killing him. Like the Taylor bio, it's an interesting snapshot of how the post-studio area could reframe the stars of the past in the context of a new cultural environment, and how that revision shapes our knowledge today.



Stenn, David. *Bombshell*. New York: Lightning Bug Press, 2000. Print.

I first saw this edition of the Stenn biography of Harlow in a picture of New York party girl Cat Marnell's apartment. Marnell might be just as blonde and just as addicted to substances as Harlow was to booze, but the similarities stop there. Stenn's work is an elegant and considered evaluation of the star, who really longed for love and conventionality over all else. The most significant section to the other works in this collection is the investigation of Harlow's second husband Paul Bern's suspicious death. The home that Bern allegedly killed himself in was later home to Sharon Tate while she dated hairstylist Jay Sebring. Tate would later be a victim of the Manson Family. Stenn does well, however, to isolate the incident to a few chapters and explore Jean Harlow in a way that gives her life context as opposed to revising the matter. A higher class of star biography, I found this book online through a collector. The cover image is the most stunning picture of Harlow I've ever seen.