

of the anarchist Ravachol, the Panama Canal scandals, and the Dreyfus case. Two collections of Bataille's reports have been translated into English and edited by Philip A. Wilkins: *Dramas of the French Courts* (London: Hutchinson, n.d.); *Inside the French Courts* (London: Hutchinson, n.d.)

B.9 Bedford, Sybille *The Trial of Dr. Adams*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1959.

■ Novelist Bedford alertly attended the 1957 trial of Dr. John Bodkin Adams for the murder of one of his patients, the wealthy eighty-two-year-old Mrs. Alice Morrell, who had willed him a small legacy. After what was billed as the longest murder trial ever held at the Old Bailey, Adams was acquitted. Bedford regarded it as “admirable” that, “ungrudged, day after day is spent dispassionately thrashing out whether there has been an intent to kill in one man’s mind, whether one woman’s span was cut some weeks before its time.” She is impelled, however, to qualify her praise for the judicial process: “But does it not strike us that our sense is intermittent and our conscience split? Can we not imagine that if our descendants were asked 150 years from now what struck them as most shocking and discrepant in our present time, they might point—provided they’ll be there to tell the tale—to the hair-splitting niceties of this trial combined with the acceptance of the H-bomb as an example of our staggering schizophrenia” (157).

B.10 Behan, Brendan “The Square Fellow.” In Cólín D. Owens and Joan N. Radner, eds. *Irish Drama 1900–1980*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1990.

■ This drama of a Dublin prison hanging is inspired by the execution of pork butcher Bernard Kirwan for the gory murder of his younger brother, Lawrence. Brendan Behan (1923–1964) was in Mountjoy jail at the time and knew Kirwan. One of the prisoners in the play describes the crime: “He bled his brother into a crock, didn’t he, that had been set aside for the pig-slaughtering and mangled the remains beyond all hope of identification.”

The real-life murderer applied his professional skill in filleting his brother’s body so expertly that identification was difficult. In 1936 Bernard Kirwan had received a seven-year sentence for armed robbery. While he was in prison, his mother died, leaving the small family farm in equal shares to her six children. Four of the beneficiaries had no interest in the property, but, with unlucky effect on his life expectancy, Lawrence Kirwan stayed on the farm. In November 1941, after Bernard was released from prison, Lawrence vanished. Six months later, his dismembered body was found in a bog a mile away from the farm.

When Kirwan went to the Mountjoy gallows, he balanced a cup of water on the back of his right hand to show that he was not nervous. What other prisoners considered bravery Brendan Behan took for madness. See Michael O’Sullivan, *Brendan Behan: A Life* (Boulder: Roberts Rinehart, 1999), 102–3.

The horrific nature of the condemned man’s crime renders the play’s attack on capital punishment absolute and uncompromising. The man who is to die is nameless and never appears onstage, but his doom is ever-present, as prisoners bet on his chances for a reprieve, his grave is dug in advance of the hanging, the executioner arrives, and prison life

(if it can be called that) is resumed after the hanging. Behan's spokesman is the humane Warden Regan, who continually assaults the cruelty of the death penalty and of a complicit society that tolerates it. He sermonizes, for example, to the Chief Warden: "I was reared among people that drank at a death or prayed. Some did both. You think the law makes this man's death somehow different, not like anyone else's. . . . [But] no one is going to jump on you in the morning and throttle the life out of you" (Act 3, scene 1).

B.11 Bell, Neal *Two Small Bodies*. New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1980.

- This two-character play is based on the controversial case of cocktail waitress Alice Crimmins, convicted of the 1965 murder of her two small children. See Albert Borowitz, "The Medea of Kew Gardens Hills," in Jonathan Goodman, ed., *The Lady Killers* (New York: Citadel Press, 1991), 55–73.

In Bell's strong drama, Lt. Brann, a police detective investigating the disappearance of two small children, becomes sexually obsessed with their mother, continuing his visits to her apartment even after the murders of the children have been confessed to by a male maniac. Perhaps Bell intends Brann to be motivated by the same prurient interest that Alice Crimmins's prosecutors showed in her highly active sex life, a preoccupation that led them to the dubious theory that she disposed of her children to make her home more accessible to male callers.

B.12 Belloc Lowndes, Marie *The Chink in the Armour*. New York: Longmans Green, 1937.

- Belloc Lowndes's novel adapts a Monte Carlo murder case of 1907. Marie ("Lady") Vere Goold and her third husband bludgeoned and stabbed to death the widow Emma Erika Levin when she inconveniently sought repayment of a loan she had made to them; they deposited her body in a trunk and departed for Marseilles with this interesting addition to their luggage. A goods clerk at the Marseilles station noticed blood oozing from the noisome trunk and alerted the police. After their conviction, the Vere Goolds were imprisoned at Cayenne, where Marie died of typhoid and her husband committed suicide.

The Chink in the Armour is set in a French gaming village, smaller than Monte Carlo, where murderers may move at ease among the odd assemblage of visitors. Madame Wachner and her husband, Fritz, serial killers, have a trunk awaiting their intended victim, Sylvia Bailey, but their murder plan is foiled by the widow's admirer, a French nobleman, Comte Paul de Virieu, who is suspicious of the couple after having observed them before at other casinos. The unsophisticated Bailey only begins to realize the danger when, upon looking into the Wachners' kitchen, "to her surprise she saw that a large trunk, corded and even labelled, stood in the middle of the floor. Close to the trunk was a large piece of sacking—and by it another coil of thick rope." Although previously warned of peril in a visit to a psychic, and repeatedly cautioned by several friends that the gambling resort attracted people willing to do anything for money, Bailey had trusted the Wachners as a sociable and harmless bourgeois couple.

Belloc Lowndes has created a setting where social life obscures danger. The novel's epigraph explains the title and the author's theme: "But there is one chink in the chain