



Jerry Tracy, Celebrity Reporter (Black Mask)

Theodore A. Tinsley, Keith Alan Deutsch (Editor), Boris Dralyuk (Introduction)

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Manhattan's sharpest gossip columnist tangles with brawlers, triggermen, and dames

The most important people in the world come to Broadway—to eat in restaurants, dance in nightclubs, and die in rain-slicked back alleys. Whatever the big names are doing, Jerry Tracy hears about it—and tells the world in his infamous *Daily Planet* column. As quick with his typewriter as he is with a .45, Tracy can break a nose as easily as he breaks a news story. But beneath his hard exterior, this columnist has a kind heart, and a sense of justice that will make him do crazy things for a woman in trouble, or a friend with a murder rap hanging over his head.

Featuring every Jerry Tracy story ever published in *Black Mask*, this collection is an invaluable compendium of one of early noir's most original heroes. Written in machine gun prose that would make Damon Runyon proud, these stories describe a man whose words are tough—and whose fists are even tougher.

This ebook features an introduction by Boris Dralyuk.

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From Reader Review Jerry Tracy, Celebrity Reporter (Black Mask) for online ebook

Pop Bop says

An Eye-Opening, Rewarding Treat

Start with the Introduction by Boris Dralyuk. It gives you a nice biographical snapshot of Theodore Tinsley and sets the Jerry Tracy stories within Tinsley's larger body of work, and that work in its historical context. If you aren't already revved up the intro will certainly get you jazzed to follow Tracy as he drinks, brawls, loves and reports his way into and back out of the rotten core of the Big Apple.

This is the real stuff, published between 1932 and 1940. This is not pretend noir or nouveau noir or a noir "homage". I tip my hat to modern authors who honor that work, but you have to read some of the original work if you want to understand and appreciate the modern version, and you should read the original work anyway just for the shear joy of it. This is high octane, muscular, rat-a-tat, caffeinated and twitchy urban noir at its best. And, not only do you get atmosphere, banter, sharp dialogue and a look at a long vanished American past - you get a hero with substance and a sophisticated code of conduct as complex, dark and yet honorable as any comparable American tough guy hero. In many ways Jerry Tracy is the template that many later authors would follow and on which they would elaborate and improvise. (Anyway, Tracy worked as a columnist for the "Daily Planet" six years before Superman was even a gleam in Jor-El's eye. That counts for something.)

Please note that I received a free copy of this book in exchange for a candid review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to the rights holder or the publisher of this book.

Evan Lewis says

Theodore Tinsley's Jerry Tracy was a regular in *Black Mask*, rubbing elbows with characters like Frederick Nebel's MacBride and Kennedy, George Harmon Coxe's Flash Casey and Paul Cain's Gerry Kells. He starred in 25 stories between 1932 and 1940, and every one of them - in chronological order - appears in this massive eBook. Best of all, these are great stories, hardboiled and tough, but packed with wit and humor.

Prior to this, I knew Theodore Tinsley only as the author of several Shadow novels, written as "Maxwell Grant" while Walter Gibson was out to lunch. This collection is a real eye-opener, showing Tinsley to be an extremely gifted storyteller - with a unique and quirky style.

Our hero, Jerry Tracy, is a columnist who dishes the dirt on Broadway for his newspaper the *Daily Planet*. Yep, the *Daily Planet*, and this series began in 1932, six years before the first appearance of Superman.

Though the Jerry Tracy stories are told in third person, this is *extremely close* third person, so we're often privy to Tracy's thoughts. It was a shocker for me to discover that Tracy's thoughts read like a cross between the narration of Robert Leslie Bellem's Dan Turner and Richard Sale's Daffy Dill. Now that's entertainment. Jerry Tracy displays his quirky personality in his spoken dialogue, too, addressing everyone as "Bum," employing the universal greeting "Hawzit," and being generally inventive with the English language.

The dialogue makes the stories fun, but it's the stories themselves that pack the real punch. While Bellem's Dan Turner stories are all style and no substance, these Tracy tales are the real deal. I haven't had time to read all the stories in this book, but those I've finished have heart and meaning, and even manage to comment on the human condition. In mystery stories from the thirties, that's saying a lot - even for stories that appeared in *Black Mask*.

Jerry Tracy, Celebrity Reporter may seem high-priced for an eBook, but it's actually a bargain. If this were a print volume, it would run over 1000 pages, and this is quality stuff. The 25 stories are presented in chronological order, following Tracy's eight-year run from start to finish. Outside of dishing out thousands for the original magazines, there's no way we'd ever be able to read this series. Thank you Mysterious Press, Open Road and Keith Deutsch!

Col says

Synopsis/blurb.....

Manhattan's sharpest gossip columnist tangles with brawlers, triggermen, and dames

The most important people in the world come to Broadway—to eat in restaurants, dance in nightclubs, and die in rain-slicked back alleys. Whatever the big names are doing, Jerry Tracy hears about it—and tells the world in his infamous Daily Planet column. As quick with his typewriter as he is with a .45, Tracy can break a nose as easily as he breaks a news story. But beneath his hard exterior, this columnist has a kind heart, and a sense of justice that will make him do crazy things for a woman in trouble, or a friend with a murder rap hanging over his head.

Featuring every Jerry Tracy story ever published in *Black Mask*, this collection is an invaluable compendium of one of early noir's most original heroes. Written in machine gun prose that would make Damon Runyon proud, these stories describe a man whose words are tough—and whose fists are even tougher.

My take.....

Wow, well I took my time that's for sure. All 25 Jerry Tracy stories originally published in *Black Mask* Magazine between 1932 and 1940. The first 7 or 8 stories were all shortish affairs at 20-odd pages each. The remainder weighed in at around 40-50 pages each. A decent introduction providing a background on the author and the character as well as the magazine, bumped the whole publication up to a page count of 1008.

My reading mojo was kind of thrown off by the sheer magnitude of the task and initially I approached the stories as a reading chore as opposed to being a pleasure. I read the first 3 or 4 at a rate of one per day. Turned away from the tome for a month or so, and then re-applied myself to the task....one a day until finito, missing the odd day here or there as circumstances dictated.

Initially, it was a struggle with the language as Tracy encountered.....darbs, flatties and jaspers.....whilst....the yarn dicked.....someone.....moxed the mope.....and apparently we also metthe pasty phiz..... and had a Booshwah moment! A translation guide would have been useful at this point!

A bit further in and it all clicked for me, the meanings became apparent fairly quickly and I ended up enjoying this collection a lot more than I expected to. Some of the language used is of its time. Jerry has a

Chinese househelp called McNulty, ancestral name Mei-Now-Lee; McNulty describes some of his actions when Tracy was away from his luxury penthouse....."Make plenty calls" and "Hab bleakfast. Make plenty-four. Where hell you go? You dlunk?"

Typically our man Tracy, the hottest gossip columnist on Broadway has his ear to ground and is clued in on what's happening in the Big Apple. He knows the big-shots, he knows the cops, knows who's running the rackets. He's friends with all and gets the juicy news from the street when he encounters bell-hops, doormen, cab drivers, club owners, barmen and chorus line girls.

Tracy's scrapes involve thwarting blackmail, solving murder, rescuing dames and occasionally running the bad guys out of town; all achieved while penning the juiciest column in town and dodging bullets from the toughs. Nimble on his feet, Jerry allows his fists to do his talking when he needs to. It says a lot for Tinsley's skills as a writer that no two stories in the collection felt the same.

I was invited to read this collection by Emma of Black Mask/MysteriousPress.com/Open Road via Net Galley.

Open Road have been busy re-issuing other Black Mask authors in e-book format lately, including Steve Fisher, Norbert Davis and Frank Gruber amongst others.

Overall 4 from 5

Nancy Oakes says

my e-copy from netgalley, at the invitation of the publishers. Thank you so much!

In just a few days from now, Open Road Media plans to release an ebook collection of stories called Jerry Tracy, Celebrity Reporter: Smashing Detective Stories by Theodore A. Tinsley. This particular ebook is just the beginning of a series planned by Open Road Media/Mysterious Press, an homage of sorts to the old Black Mask crime magazine. Along with Tinsley, upcoming authors in the series are Paul Cain, Norbert Davis, and Steve Fisher. Now that my appetite has been whetted by Jerry Tracy, I foresee much more Black Mask noir in my near future.

I'd never heard of either Theodore (Ted) Tinsley or Jerry Tracy before I was invited to request this book from netgalley, but it didn't take long after starting this book of 25 stories (the last few reaching novella length) before I realized that I was in my crime fiction happy zone. Reading these little gems is about as inwardly satisfying as stretching out on my sofa and watching old black and white noir films late at night, one of my all-time favorite pastimes. Not only are the stories good, but behind all of the crime, Tinsley introduces his modern-day readers to a Depression-era New York. He sends his hero all over the city -- into the seedy tenements of the poor and the high-rise penthouse apartments of the wealthy (or their "luscious" mistresses), into gimmicky night clubs and streets run by the kingpins of the criminal world,

"...past the black carcasses of department stores and furniture warehouses. Over towards the Hudson, towards the strings of rickety and condemned tenements that only a cycle of depression years had saved from the pick axes and rubbish chutes of the house wreckers."

It's also a New York where a wrong word in a newspaper gossip column can ruin careers or individuals and can serve as a motive for murder -- or at least payback.

Jerry Tracy works as a columnist at New York's Daily Planet. In the book's introduction, Boris Dralyuk notes that Tracy is a fictional counterpart to Walter Winchell. Tracy "packs a mean punch and can handle a Remington pistol as skillfully as he can a Remington typewriter." He writes out of an office overlooking "the helter and skelter of Times Square," and although the country is in the thick of the Depression, he earns a "princely salary" to keep the dirt flowing for the million Planet customers who would stop buying without his column. He lives in a penthouse with a Chinese servant named McNulty, his "butler, major-domo, conscience and guide," and has a big-lug sidekick named Butch. Tracy wears other hats as well -- over the years, the police have profited from his keen detective skills, as he often passed along info good enough to give him an in with Inspector Fitzgerald, the "Gruff Guy in Centre Street." He is tough on crime and feels that parole is too easy, the product of "an easy-going system that got sentimental and forgiving as the years rolled by." Tracy is tough as nails on the outside and can deal with the worst crooks and the toughest dames on the New York streets, but inside he can be as soft as a marshmallow when his sense of injustice is piqued -- especially when it comes to old friends or women in distress. He knows everyone from hotel desk clerks to elevator operators, from taxi drivers to the owners of swank clubs with names like "The Pom-Pom," "Club Espa?ol," or "Club Humpty Dumpty", many of whom are his friends and help him out with information from time to time.

There are way too many cases in this book to discuss separately, and while they're all good, my favorites involve:

- 1) an old man from the South looking for his missing granddaughter
- 2) an invitation for Jerry to attend a dinner party at the home of strangers that no one remembers sending to our illustrious hero
- 3) a mysterious theater ticket for a particular seat that a lot of people seem interested in
- 4) a five-dollar bill that some people would kill for
- 5) the World's Fair and a "fake scandal photo" taken by a rival columnist that just might put our hero out of business

Something bound to pop up in readers' minds while reading is the author's use of racial slurs or, as in the case of Tracy's manservant McNulty, ridiculous pidgin English and stereotypical Charlie-Chan type "me-likee" kind of language. Let me just say that while modern readers may be offended, or as in my case very much taken aback, these stories were written a very long time ago and this sort of stuff was part of the everyday vernacular. Try not to judge these parts too harshly -- things were very different 80 years ago.

Overall, though, Tinsley's story telling, the New York setting and Jerry Tracy himself make for hours of excellent reading -- this is probably a book where you want to read a few stories at a time, put down your reader and come back to the stories later in small bits so you can savor every second. Highly, highly recommended for people who enjoy classic crime fiction and want to discover a new author -- or for people starting to cut their teeth on pulp or noir crime. Super duper good and a real treasure.

*afterthought:

I did a bit of digging, and found an old (black-and-white of course!) movie based on Tinsley's hero: "Murder is News." I'll definitely be watching!
