



The Silent Executioner

Marcel Allain , Pierre Souvestre , Edward Gorey (Introduction)

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Fantomas returns to strike fear into the hearts of American readers with a new, even more vicious and mystifying series of crimes, and again comes up against his arch nemesis, Inspector Juve."

The Silent Executioner Details

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Author : Marcel Allain , Pierre Souvestre , Edward Gorey (Introduction)

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From Reader Review The Silent Executioner for online ebook

Tilde Clark says

Absurd, creepy, paced like a car race, as shlocky as you expect from a Fantômas novel. Juve in particular gets more room to breathe than in the first book, it was satisfying to see him have some kind of personality. I also feel like this story has more forward motion than the first book. My main criticism is that the book could have been even more grotesque and horrible - THAT's what I read Fantômas for. A room with a torrent of sand (which is never explained further) does not sate my thirst for gruesome pulp horror.

Alicia Rice says

Fabulous read

This is a great book. I think of it as the French version of Sherlock Holmes. I will be searching out the other books on this series.

Rob Atkinson says

A more than worthy sequel to "Fantomas", this second volume in the series is if anything more colorful and outlandish than its predecessor. The redoubtable Inspector Juve, again aided by his sidekick Fandor the journalist, gets drawn into the Paris underworld by a series of mysterious crimes -- a daring robbery, a deliberate train derailment, an attempted murder in a Hospital -- and inevitably, as he pursues the disparate clues and desperate characters involved, he finds himself again drawn into the orbit of his nemesis, the fiendish, shape-shifting Fantomas. There are some head spinning plot twists and contrivances in this sequel, and ensuing revelations which this reader, at least, guessed at well before their appearance in the plot...but despite this, the feverishly paced narrative effortlessly carried me along. Then, just as it appears all has been explained, the mysteries unraveled, and the titular villain is on the verge of capture, the plot lurches into a wild denouement that is sure to raise any reader's heart rate as it races to its explosive, cliff-hanging finish.

This edition, the only unabridged one available in English, is evidently cheaply printed to order by a website publisher, and it's very rough. Typographic and punctuation errors abound. It's a testament to the original material that despite this, I glossed over these frequent hiccups as I eagerly devoured the story. One wishes, however, that the book were given the copy editing it deserves. I still applaud www.lulu.com for making this text (and several successive ones in the series) available in English, but this edition in particular loses one star for its execrable production values. My copy also features a different cover which appears to be a rather ham-fisted pastiche of Fantomas clip art, rather than the one pictured above which is much more faithful to the original jacket of "Juve Contre Fantômas".

Update, January 2015: good news! The Antipodes press has just issued the first 5 Fantomas titles in a cleanly edited and handsome edition of trade paperbacks. I might start with Penguin's "Fantomas" for its John Ashbery introduction, but certainly the Antipodes reissue is infinitely superior to any of the Lulu Press/Beltham Press editions and is your best bet for the next four volumes. (There is also another excellent option for volume 3, "The Corpse Who Kills", by Solar Books/Solar Research Archive, which includes a

nice essay on Fantomas and the Surrealists.) I've heard Antipodes may publish volumes 6 and 7 sometime in the future, and I only hope it happens soon!

Kyle Pennekamp says

My second Fantomas book in a month. I don't think obsession is too strong a word.

These books are totally insane. This one isn't as tightly plotted as the first (which wasn't exactly the Usual Suspects when it came to logic), but it has some crazier shit: rooms on elevators identical to the rooms below. Rooms that fill with sand to suffocate our heroes. Trap doors. Boa constrictors used as murder weapons. A cast of characters that include doctors, nurses, Mother Superiors, world champion boxers, gangland leaders, reporters, movie stars, prostitutes, British aristocracy.

And, of course, disguises! Lots and lots of disguises!

These are all available on Kindle... check 'em out.

Yuvraj Jha says

"I win!", cried Fantomas before he disappeared.

Nick Fagerlund says

Fantômas! You know, like the Mike Patton band?

OBVIOUSLY THIS WAS WEIRD AS HELL. I'm not convinced I didn't dream the whole thing. It's certainly dream-logic that drives it. Disguises come on and off, names change, houses have duplicate rooms, Fantômas is always lurking around the next corner. SNAKES. The thing this most reminded me of was The Man Who Was Thursday, though it drives the same effect toward an opposite destination.

Kind of curious to read more of these. This was the second out of god only knows how many, and it gives the impression that it constitutes a brief period of *becoming* before Fantômas and Juve ascend to some permanent apotheosis of unreality, becoming a sort of murderous Krazy and Ignatz on whom the changes can be rung ad infinitum. I don't know if that's actually what happens with the later books, but I hope it is.

(I'm wondering if I should just abandon the star ratings on this thing, because they really don't line up with my values about reading. This may not have been particularly "good," and a lot of it dragged, but I like having read it and thought it was fascinating.)

Roland says

The writing in this one isn't as good as the previous book, but it's still a fun crime story with some delicious

ridiculousness thrown in. I particularly liked the stuff with the boa constrictor and the cliffhanger ending.

Phil says

The Fantomas novels are totally the literary equivalent of those weekly cliffhanger movie serials in which at the end of each episode the hero - or the hero's girlfriend - would be tied to a railway track or a conveyor belt leading towards a plank-cutting giant circular saw with absolutely no possibility of escape.

The writing is breakneck paced, there's absolutely no time given to the finer elements of plot or character or tying up loose ends. These books were written buy two authors, each writing alternate chapters and published at an incredible speed - 32 of them were published in 3 years!

In this one we have a house in which a fake study is taken down in an elevator and fills with choking sand, the Simplon Orient Express train used as a weapon, fake mother superiors, exploding country houses, an american prize fighter, a british upper class heiress, death by boa constrictor and people in burning barrels of brandy.

It's breathtakingly fast-paced, Fantomas himself has no character, he's just pure evil, with none of the characterisation or moral dilemmas that you get in the Arsene Lupin stories. All that Allain and Souvestre are concerned with is what new, weird and wonderful ways they can get Fantomas to extort, murder, kidnap and blackmail - there's no "why", just "how".

Great fun - but the sheer lack of literary skill dictates that it gets no more than 3 stars.

Travis says

A wonderful book full of so many many plots, schemes and double crosses that your head will spin. The resolution of the murders and the mysterious house are the kind of stuff that you could never get away with nowadays, but since I hate most modern crime fiction, I thought it was brilliant. The Fantomas books are an odd mix of Agatha Christie mystery and cliffhanger serial. Very little effort is made to ever explain what makes Fantomas tick, but despite the fact that he's basically pure evil, he's a fascinating character and you find yourself worrying when it looks like he's going to get caught.

Anelia Korueva says

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Julian says

I am a great fan of Louis Feuillade's film serial 'Fantomas', so, naturally, coming across this book, it couldn't

resist the opportunity to read it.

That was my first mistake.

There's something deeply wrong with this book. The first three quarters are a good example of the utter mystery variety of detective story - not who dun it, because we know that, but rather *how* did they do it? A complex web is built up, promising all kinds of exciting denouement. But then, something happens, the pace changes, and we get a cursory conclusion in which everything is explained and nothing, characters suddenly die or get killed off for no obvious reason, and, out of the blue, suddenly Fantomas appears and starts killing everyone with boa constrictors. One scene, which in the film takes up a long, tense scene, where Fantomas hides from pursuit down a well, using a broken bottle to breathe from beneath the surface of the water, here is thrown away in five lines. Did the authors suddenly realise they were running out of space?

What's really peculiar is the way that characters just vanish. The 'heroine' (sort of) has been gradually developing from a bad girl to a woman with a sense of ethics, who has a fascinating developing relationship with an American boxer, in which both are too nice (in the other sense of the term, as in 'nice and accurate') to simply leap into bed. And then . . . we are informed that she is a prostitute really, the boxer sets her up as his official mistress, and the snake gets her. That's it. Both characters, who promised much more, vanish from view.

So I was disappointed. Very disappointed. So I think, and this would be my advice to you all, I will stick to Feuillade, whose genius kept tension at the highest level.

Alan says

The 2nd book in the Fantomas series, Juve encounters a criminal gang that he believes is headed by Fantomas, believed to be dead by the rest of France. Juve risks life and reputation as he tries to bring Fantomas to heel.

This book employs more mechanical trickery than the first, with some gadgets and some intricate mechanical traps. The story moves quickly, in multiple directions that slowly coalesce into a single thread.

Multiple versions of this novel are available on Libriox.

Sloweducation says

I had been looking for this book for several years now, though admittedly not very hard. How can anyone who loves crime not be intrigued by the cult of Fantomas? He is evil, a sociopath, a brutal killer and a master of disguise. His crimes are ingenious and a bit surreal, his motives murky at best. He is more than a little like a comic book villain. The book is very entertaining, but I suppose given the hyperbolic praise often accorded Fantomas that I was expecting a crime fiction Maldoror, and while Fantomas is a bit more extreme than most of his contemporaries, he is rooted firmly in the pulp story tradition.

Eddie Watkins says

Fantomas has helped inject elements of fantasy, imagination, intrigue, breadth, mystery, and atmosphere to the squalid, degenerate, and unrepentently vicious drug-related shootings in my area.

Of course those guys are living their own dramatic fantasies...

The Wire served a similar purpose.

But as I say - Imagination is everything.

Until you're shot?

Michael says

A lot of ridiculous stuff going on...but pretty great 3 hour read. Also most of it happens around the handful of streets I know best which made it particularly evocative. The translation makes it feel more modern than it is until you are reminded that there were no police cars in 1911, that elevators, film cameras and electric lights were objects of terror and confusion and that you could instantly judge a person by the hat they are wearing (guess you can still do this with people who wear baseball hats).
