favorisée» (p. 303). On comprend ici tout le poids symbolique du livre, lieu d’évasion, d’identification nationale, de repli sur soi. Le dernier chapitre de cette très bonne partie souligne les efforts déployés par les bibliothécaires pour mettre les collections à l’abri lors des bombardements qui ont accompagné la Libération. Ces efforts n’ont pas toujours été couronnés de succès ; de nombreuses bibliothèques ont alors été détruites.

La dernière partie de l’ouvrage aborde la période qui a suivi la Libération et le difficile travail de reconstitution des bibliothèques spoliées et de restitution des livres à leurs propriétaires. Martine Poulain termine son livre par un plaidoyer en faveur d’une réactivation de cette mémoire dans une volonté de réconciliation : « La haine du livre du nazisme impose aux gens du livre un devoir de mémoire » (p. 395). Le poids symbolique de la bibliothèque, biographie d’un peuple, mérite autant d’attention que l’œuvre d’art.

Martine Poulain a construit sa démonstration autour de quatre grands thèmes qui suivent aussi la chronologie : pillage, collaboration, lecture (la section la mieux réussie) et reconstruction. Ce choix est particulièrement judicieux ; il permet de bien saisir les grands enjeux de chaque période. On pourrait reprocher à madame Poulain son parti pris manifeste envers ceux qui ont utilisé divers moyens pour marquer leur refus de collaborer, mais est-il possible, dans cette histoire, de faire preuve de partialité ? Cette histoire des bibliothèques françaises sous l’Occupation comprend donc des bons (Jean Laran) et des méchants (Bernard Faÿ), mais l’œuvre de mémoire semble ici plus importante que la quête d’objectivité. Une livre à lire pour mieux comprendre le poids exercé par l’idéologie nazie sur la culture française durant les années d’Occupation et la force de la résistance de plusieurs Français, bibliothécaires ou lecteurs.

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A couple of years ago I reviewed in these pages the predecessor of this volume (The Dark Page, Oak Knoll Press 2007 [Papers/Cahiers 46, no 2
(Fall 2008)), and expressed a degree of frustration at what I felt were its shortcomings. Since this second volume is more or less identical to the first, my reaction is much as before. First let me describe the somewhat strange project of these books. The stated purpose is to present a large number of individual books that were adapted for the screen as something that we would now call “film noir.” In oversized coffee-table format, we have over a hundred individual titles laid out in facing-page fashion: on the upper half of the left page, there is a description of the book both as a literary work and as a bibliophilic artefact, and on the lower half, credits and description of the movie; on the right, a gorgeous full-page colour photograph of the book in an excellent-condition first edition. My great puzzlement as to why the first volume confined itself to the decade from 1940 to 1949 is now removed, for the rest of the original noir period (and more) is now covered by this second volume.

The information about the books and the films is almost entirely lifted or paraphrased from existing accounts. Critical entries on books often concentrate on the author’s biography and career history, while entries on the films veer wildly between critical overviews, some reviewerish details on the acting, script or visual style, and, quite often, chatty gossip about the production. In very many entries, there is only the vaguest information in the “book” comments about the plot or even the basic subject matter. By contrast, the bookseller’s descriptions of the volumes pictured show where the professional knowledge really lies here. Sometimes the “movie” comments are almost completely detached from the film itself. So, for example, the entry on Russell Rouse’s 1955 film New York Confidential talks exclusively about the general differences in tone between 1930s gangster movies and the 1950s variety. More typical is the entry on Hitchcock’s Strangers on a Train (1951), which consists of tidbits from the director’s book-long interview with François Truffaut, first talking about how he didn’t get along with scriptwriter Raymond Chandler and then moving off into the completely irrelevant topic of David O. Selznick’s frustration that he couldn’t re-edit the director’s footage. (Strangers is not a Selznick production.) Although the information about subject matter and story is very sketchy, the book still manages to cram in quite a lot of plot spoilers. As with the first volume, there is no evidence that Johnson or anyone else associated with the book has read any of the books or seen any of the movies.

But this time it was much clearer to me from the outset what the purpose of these volumes is, namely, to give big, mouth-watering
pictures of the books. Their almost epic agglomeration of the distinctive cover art of the period – daringly stylized for most of the hardbacks, luridly explicit for all of the paperback originals – sits in nice counterpoint with the deliciously precise itemizations of their physical characteristics. You can almost smell and feel the originals in these crisp and luscious photographs of the materials in what is usually a larger-than-life size (the several paperbacks are particularly gargantuan with respect to their original dimensions). However good the condition of the books, they look just a little too good here: I suspect some Photoshopping to smooth out any imperfections and juice up the colours. In any case it is the object-fetishism, the commodity-desire, incited by these images that makes up the essential attraction here. In short, it is a kind of biblio-pornography. Indeed in this respect it is a form of slumming, where you go to the seedier parts of town to slake your appetite, since so many of the titles are at the lower end of the cultural spectrum. These books, most of them despised by the cultural establishment of their own time, can now be reclaimed to a properly desiring bibliophilia, but there is still a little thrill of transgression in redeeming their generally profound pulpiness in this way. (This is especially true with the paperbacks, where the contrast between the connoisseur’s detached eye and the object’s vulgar sensationalism has an almost kinky quality.) Something similar has been going on for decades with the films as well, and the residue of *The Dark Page II*’s attraction does emanate from those musky precincts. This time I definitely found myself paddling around with more undiscriminating pleasure than before in the the pond of Johnson’s scattered and tangential facts and anecdotes.

There are still deep problems with the intellectual structure of the project. If film noir didn’t end in 1949 (as the first volume implied), it didn’t end in 1965 either – it had, in fact, been functionally dead for almost a decade by that time. The whole question of genre in popular cinema is notoriously imprecise, because, as with an old-fashioned vignette photograph, genres are clear in the middle but fogged to illegibility at the edges. This is especially true of film noir, which many people say is not a genre at all, but a style (Johnson says this himself, but doesn’t actually employ that criterion), or even simply an attitude. Johnson’s introduction, which attempts to be a “Film Noir for Dummies” guide, is full of outright errors, highly contentious opinions presented as cold facts, and a general sense that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. He has used as his own guides critical surveys of film noir that try with puppyish enthusiasm
to cram as many titles as possible into the genre, and which serve to reveal how noir elements can inhere in all kinds of movies that are not film noir. The present volume lists *The Manchurian Candidate, Death of a Salesman, A Place in the Sun,* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* as noir films, and this is just silly, because by whatever definition is used to include *those* films, there is hardly a dramatic film in history that *isn’t* film noir.

One delightful note: the foreword is provided by the irrepressible Guy Maddin, a filmmaker of indescribably strange and beguiling movies, who certainly does know and love the subject (he once described a film noir as “a guy, a girl, and some quicksand.”) He gives a typical whirling, poetically subjective evocation of the form here, and it’s lovely.

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Ce livre est une version remaniée à l’intention du grand public du rapport remis en mars 2009 par Hervé Gaymard, ancien ministre et député de la Savoie, à la ministre de la Culture de la République française, qui lui avait demandé d’évaluer les effets de la loi Lang d’août 1981 sur le prix unique du livre. Cette mission d’évaluation de cette loi a donné lieu à une consultation auprès d’une centaine de professionnels de l’édition, de la librairie et des bibliothèques de l’Île-de-France, de l’Aquitaine et de la région Rhône-Alpes, ainsi que de l’Allemagne et du Royaume-Uni.

Ce rapport dresse un portrait chiffré de l’industrie du livre en France. Ce secteur représente, en 2007, un chiffre d’affaires annuel de près de cinq milliards d’euros, comparativement à 1,2 milliard pour le CD et 1,5 milliard pour le DVD. En 2008, 63 700 nouveaux titres ont été publiés en France, avec 487 millions d’exemplaires vendus et un tirage moyen de 8690 exemplaires par titre. Enfin, le nombre de titres disponibles est d’environ 395 000. Le secteur du livre avec toutes ses composantes, édition, diffusion, distribution, commerce de détail et bibliothèques, compte pour plus de 80 000 emplois, soit...