

A Murder of Quality

White Mischief: The Murder of Lord Erroll. By James Fox. 299 pages. Random House. \$15.95.

PASSIONATE PEER GETS HIS. So read one headline after one of the most sensational murders in modern British history. On Jan. 24, 1941, Josslyn Hay, the 22nd Earl of Erroll, hereditary high constable of Scotland and Military Secretary of Kenya, was found shot to death in his Buick several miles outside Nairobi. Thirty-nine, an old Etonian, he was impudent, elegant and handsome. A notoriously prodigal playboy, he indulged his sybaritic appetites by chasing women who were wealthy, mysterious and—just for the sport of it—married. At the time of his death he was chasing Diana Broughton. Her husband, Sir John Broughton, was tried for Hay's murder, but acquitted.

There, for 25 years, the matter stood. Then, in 1969, Cyril Connolly, the British essayist, began to investigate the case for *The London Sunday Times Magazine*. Writing under deadline, Connolly and his collaborator, James Fox, a young reporter and East Africa specialist, failed to solve the mystery—in part because there were too many people who had plausible motives for killing Lord Erroll. The publication of their article, however, opened a number of new leads. After Connolly's death in 1974, Fox inherited the older man's obsessively detailed notebooks on the case. Carrying on the quest, Fox returned to Kenya, where the murder is still a topic of gossip and debate.

Jigsaw: His elegantly written book consists of two parts. In the first, a narrative of the events leading up to the murder is "put together like a jigsaw." In the second, Fox plays Watson to Connolly's Holmes, until he strikes out on his own—and manages to solve, after a lot of suspenseful sleuth work, the mystery of who killed Lord Erroll.

Bridging the two parts is a cast of characters that seems borrowed from some exotic potboiler. There's Diana Broughton, cool, aloof, remembered by jealous rivals for "the peculiar 'red' of her lipstick on the hunting field, which was thought a little 'too much'." There's Sir John, a meek and passive cuckold but also, on the sly, a black-mailer and conniver of various frauds to cover his enormous gambling debts. The minor players are, if anything, odder. Alice de Trafford, an heiress to a meatpacking fortune and one of Lord Erroll's many bed-mates, had a mania for animals and could be seen on vacation in Nice "walking her black

panther, in its white collar, up and down the Promenade des Anglais." Lady Delamere, the mayor of Nairobi, had a mad knack for roughhousing. At one supper party she pelted the Prince of Wales with hunks of bread, then tipped over his chair and rolled him around on the floor.

Intensely snobbish, blithely prejudiced, these shiftless socialites had migrated to Kenya's "White Highlands" in the years before World War II. There they became, in the disparaging local argot, "veranda farmers"—"good-timers" who swilled cocktails and shot morphine and copulated and quarreled and bossed servants about with an air of serene entitlement, caring not a whit about the consequences. Kenya's other white settlers had good cause for alarm: Lord Erroll's murder, by exposing a decadent elite, brought disrepute on the whole colony and hastened the end of British rule.



Diana Broughton, Erroll: Colonial hanky-panky

James Fox sympathetically sketches the personalities involved in this glamorous murder mystery. The second half of his book is a whodunit to set on the shelf beside Agatha Christie. And as a case study of colonialism gone rotten, there is nothing else quite like it.

JIM MILLER

Born-Again Music

All American Music: Composition in the Late Twentieth Century. By John Rockwell. 286 pages. Knopf. \$15.95.

One evening in 1973, John Rockwell, a music critic for *The New York Times*, attended a concert in a lower Manhattan loft by the then little-known composer Philip Glass. Rockwell fondly recalls how Glass's "minimalist" music with "its motoric rhythms, burbling, highly amplified figura-