

David Saunders' **pulpartists.com**

LAWRENCE STERNE STEVENS: FROM MUCHA TO DOYLE

Lawrence Sterne Stevens was born December 4, 1884 in Pontiac, Michigan. His father was the Reverend Lawrence Sterne Stevens, M.A., Rector of the Zion Protestant Episcopal Church, a passionate visionary leader, whose portrait still hangs in the church. The father was sixty-two at the time of his birth. The mother, Kate, was thirty-eight, and had previously given birth to six children. Lawrence Sterne Stevens was the youngest.

By 1900 he and his parents lived in Pontiac at 147 West Pike Street, along with his brother Willard's wife and a three-year-old daughter.

In 1905 at age twenty-one he moved to Minneapolis, to work as a newspaper pressman and cartoonist for *The Minneapolis Journal*. He attended night classes at the

Minneapolis School of Fine Arts on the top floor of the public library, at Hennepin and 10th Streets. He studied under the German born artist, Robert Koehler. Koehler was the most outstanding artist in Minneapolis at that time. He had studied at the Royal Academy in Munich and taught at a private art school, where the young Alphonse Mucha had been his pupil. Mucha went on to become a leader of the popular Art Nouveau movement. He visited the U.S. from 1906 to 1910. In 1907 Mucha earned a regular income teaching at art schools in New York and Chicago. While traveling by train between these cities, Mucha stopped in Minneapolis and visited his former teacher and met his star pupil, Lawrence Stevens.

With the encouragement of Koehler and Mucha, Lawrence Stevens moved to Belgium in 1910 to study at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. While in Belgium he became friendly with the famous writer, Arthur Canon Doyle [the creator of Sherlock Holmes].

In 1914 the German Army invaded Belgium and the British declared war. As an American citizen, Stevens was forced to flee to England, where he joined the U. S. Navy. His language skills and four years of residence in Belgium was a value asset to the Office of Naval Intelligence. He soon held the rank of Lieutenant and was sent into the front lines. He served as a cartographer and was captured by the Germans and accused of spying. After having been forced to dig his own grave, he was rescued by advancing troops only minutes before facing the firing squad.

After the war he returned to Belgium to study art at the Academie Royale des Beaux Arts Bruxelles.

In 1919 he married a Welsh beauty named Myvanwy (pronounced mih-VAN-wee), age twenty-six. She was also an artist and had studied in Paris. When the birth of their first child was expected they returned to her family home in Wales. There they had a son, Peter Stevens, who was also to become a pulp artist.

From 1925 to 1937 Lawrence Stevens worked as a designer and illustrator for the General Motors Company in Brussels and Antwerp.

In 1939 the German army invaded Poland and war was declared. As an ex-patriot American he moved his family in 1940 to New York City. They lived at 116 Waverly Place in Greenwich Village.

In 1941 he began his career as a freelance illustrator in NYC. Lawrence Sterne Stevens and his father the Reverend had the exact same name, so to protect his father's good name, the artist preferred to publish illustrations under a pseudonym. He signed his work with only his first name, "Lawrence."

In April 25, 1942 he reported for his draft registration and was recorded to have brown eyes, gray hair, and a light complexion.

In 1943 he drew interior story illustrations for *Argosy*. Remarkably, at that same time his son, Peter Stevens, age twenty-three, was also selling freelance cover paintings to that same magazine.

1948 to 1953 he painted covers for *Amazing*, *A. Merritt's Fantasy Magazine*, *Famous Fantastic Mysteries*, and *Fantas-*

tic Novels.

In 1950 at age 66 he and Myvanwy moved out of their Greenwich Village apartment and moved to a South Norwalk, Connecticut, to live with his son's family.

In 1953 at age sixty-nine

he retired from professional illustration. That same year the entire family moved to a farm in Lewisboro, NY, which is only ten miles north of Norwalk, CT.

Lawrence Stevens died at age seventy-six at the Norwalk Hospital in 1960.

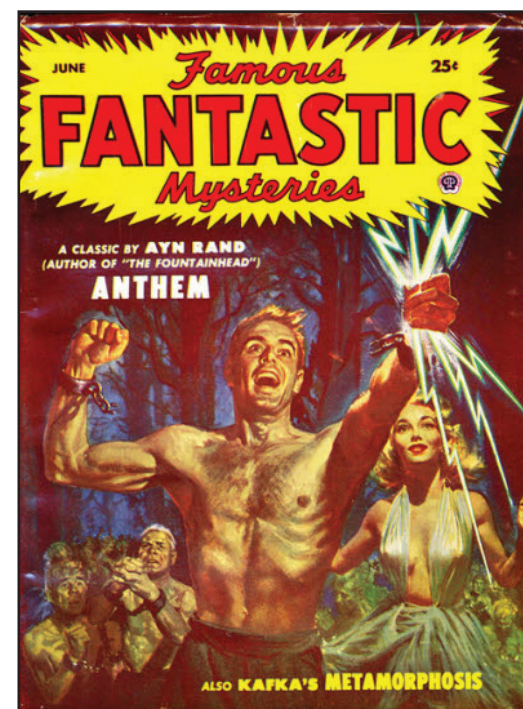
© David Saunders 2009



(1884-1960)



Famous Fantastic Mysteries and Fantastic Novels reprinted fantasy and science fiction stories from earlier decades. — Unless otherwise specified, images accompanying this article are from PulpArtists.com



Two of Your Editor's favorite Lawrence covers. LEFT: This 1948 issue reprinted Nordenholt's Million, a 1923 novel of a scientist assembling the top million brains on the planet to stop a plague. The allegorical cover shows that the plague will be halted. RIGHT: This 1953 issue (the last published for this title) carried the short novel Anthem, Ayn Rand's 1930s story of one individual who broke free from the chains of selfless collectivism, and escaped a world where the word "I" was unknown. — Both from philsp.com



Lawrence's painting for Earth's Last Citadel (which Your Editor read many years ago), written by the wife/husband team of C. L. Moore and Henry Kuttner. — Imaged by, and courtesy of, Heritage Auctions, HA.com

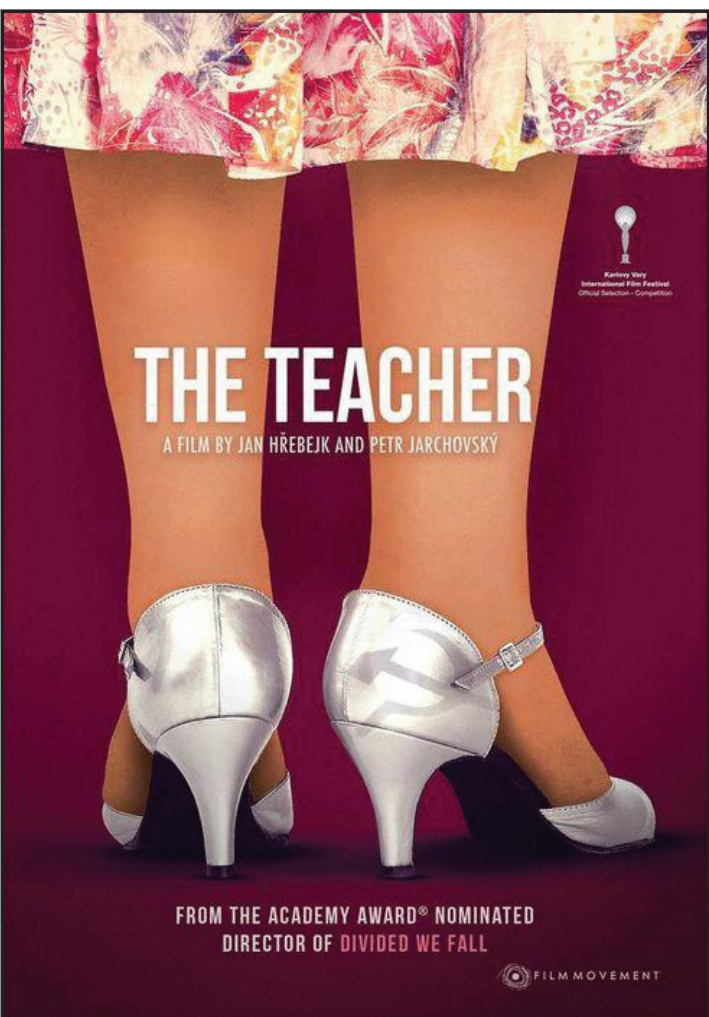


Cover illustration for The Secret People, by John Benyon. — Imaged by, and courtesy of, Heritage Auctions, HA.com





LEFT: The Teacher puts pressure on the father of one of her students. RIGHT: Some of the victimized students recognize and resent the injustice inflicted upon them by The Teacher. One thing I learned about people of 1980s Czechoslovakia: they loved bold wallpaper! (Or maybe it was chosen by the all-wise State Planners?) – All film images, this page, from IMDB.com



– From Barnes & Noble, BN.com

The Teacher

“But you can’t have a free society without brave people who have the courage to take a stand against injustice. This was just as true back then as it is today.”

Petr Jarchovský, Screenwriter, The Teacher

The Teacher, released in 2016, takes place in Czechoslovakia in 1983. At that time, the country was controlled by the Soviet Union.

On the first day of class, the teacher asks each student to stand, give his or her name, and tell what his or her parents do for a living. The teacher takes careful notes.

The students and their parents soon receive “friendly requests” from the teacher to assist her. She has kids cleaning her apartment; parents with mechanical ability fixing her appliances.

Now, wait. Why would they submit to such “requests”? Why wouldn’t they tell her she’s out of line?

Because she is a high-ranking official in the communist party.

And of course, comrades in a worker’s paradise are treated equally, right? Or, maybe, some people are more equal than others... sometimes?

The parents gather to discuss what they can do about the teacher. There are those who completely support the teacher; their kids are getting good grades (though learning nothing). Other parents, who receive demands to do illegal things, and whose children are suffering humiliation from the teacher, believe this injustice ought to be confronted.

The children are also carefully considering what can be done. In fact, one student’s action is very satisfying.

Many home video sets have plenty of extras: making-of documentaries or interviews with actors. After viewing the film, I wanted to know more, and would have gladly listened to a director’s commentary for further insight. There is none. So

I found several interviews online with people who made the film. I learned that the story had a basis in actual events.

IMDB.com has three trailers for this film.

Production values are excellent. Acting, sets, dialogue, story, are all of the highest quality.

And the theme? It is priceless, universally relevant.

“When I think of The Teacher, I see it as a carefully organised and engrossing analysis of how a society can slowly grow numb and browbeaten to the point of losing hope of effecting any change at all. It is a film about how collective lethargy can lead to tragedy. And a film about the hope contained in refusing to stand idly by, about overcoming one’s own fears. This is something that I find extraordinarily topical, and if it is well filmed, it always will be!”

Jan Hřebejk, Director, The Teacher

