

The Other Typist

Those Rollicking 1920s



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Interested in all the hoopla surrounding *The Great Gatsby*? If this new flick has spurned your interest in 1920s New York, *The Other Typist* is the book for you. Talk about unreliable narrators. Rose Baker, a former orphan & Catholic schoolgirl, has joined the new wave of women working where men only used to work?big city police stations.

And even though she is still doing women?s work?stenography & typing--she?s listening to risqué and bad language-spiced stories from speakeasy gangsters and murderers including one serial killer who offs several wives in a row for their money. They each end up drowned in the bathtub, yet he keeps convincing juries that he is innocent.

Strong and stoic as Rose is, she soon becomes mesmerized by the new (somewhat incompetent) typist, Odalie, who is beautiful, rich, and ever so modern. She bobs her hair, wears the new slinky dresses with long beads, and is not afraid to make her own way in the world, including visiting the aforementioned speakeasies. But where does Odalie get her money? And is the daddy who pays her rent really her daddy?

Soon Odalie invites Rose to share her glamorous two bedroom hotel room and takes her out on the town. At first, Rose, who always followed the rules her entire life, resists doing anything illegal, for instance, drinking. But her attraction and admiration for Odalie is so strong, that soon she starts resisting the rules herself. And as she quickly discovers, once you break one rule, it?s easy to ignore all the other ones. This presents a powerful conundrum for her. She is terrified that the Sergeant or Lieutenant (who appears to be sweet on Rose) will find them in an illegal bar or party some night.

Meanwhile, Rose has had it with the serial killer. When he comes to the precinct to be ?interviewed? (not even the Sargent dares use the word ?investigation?), Odalie slyly advises Rose to just type up what she is certain has happened, that he has killed another innocent woman?this time a girlfriend not yet his wife. So Rose does and things spiral downhill.

Reviewers have called this first novel a black-humored cross between an Alfred Hitchcock and Patricia Highsmith book with a little *Gatsby* thrown in. In any case, it?s thoroughly absorbing, full of believable and flawed characters. It also throbs with energy and captures New York life in that roaring epoch so many decades ago when the world really changed.

For other compelling books about the rollicking world of the 20s, try Kaye Gibbons? *Divining Women* and Patricia Highsmith?s *The Talented Mr. Ripley*.

Posted by Dory L. on August 1, 2013

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