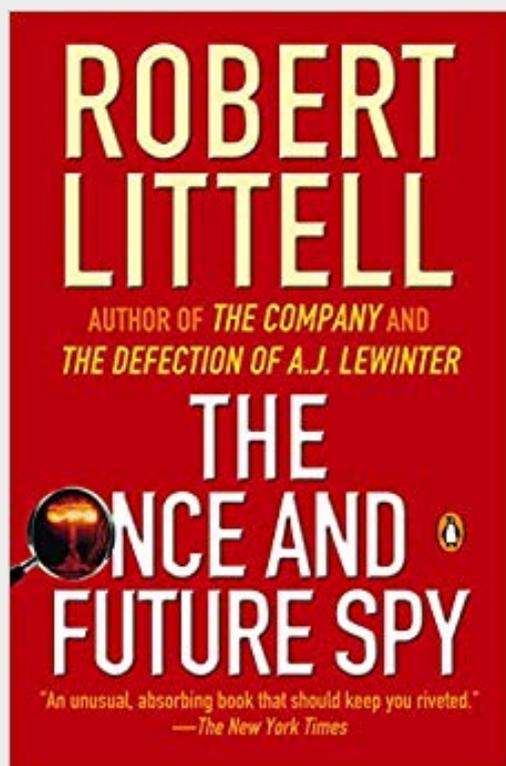


The Once and Future Spy by Robert Littell



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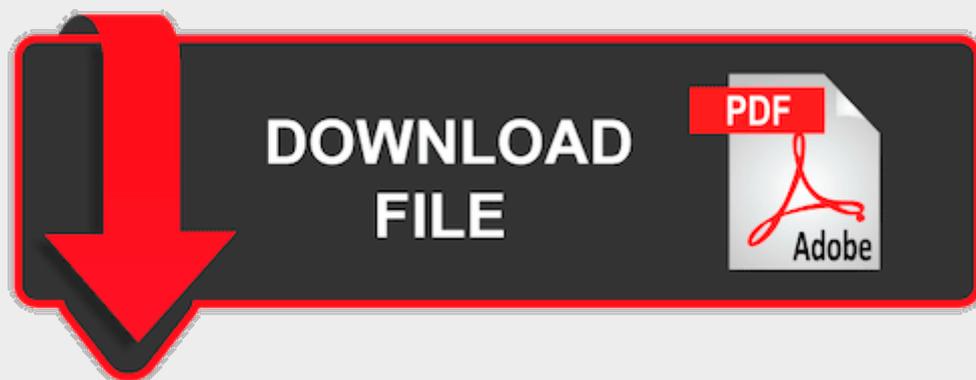
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Robert Littell is a master storyteller of the highest caliber in the ranks of John le Carré, Len Deighton, and Graham Greene. **The Once and Future Spy** is a tale of espionage and counterespionage that reveals the dirty tricks and dangerous secrets of the subjects Littell knows best—the CIA and American history. When “the Weeder,” an operative at work on a highly sensitive project for “the Company,” encounters an elite group of specialists within the innermost core of the CIA protecting a clandestine plan, the present confronts the past and disturbing moral choices are weighed against a shining patriotic dream. Inventive, imaginative, and relentlessly gripping, **The Once and Future Spy** is Robert Littell at his most original.



Reviews of the **The Once and Future Spy** by Robert Littell

1. Hirah

Wanamaker ran a highly secret hidden Agency subgroup that devised a plot to neutralize the Iranian nuclear threat. Someone was tuned in to the scheme and wanted to stop it. They kept sending messages to Wanamaker letting him know the idea had been exposed. Was it the Russians? Wanamaker brought in Rear Admiral Toothacher (retired) to backtrack and find the leak. Turns out the leak came from a computer whiz, Weeder, who also worked for The Agency and had devised a very sophisticated program that allowed telephones sitting innocently in their cradles to give off impulses that provided key words that he could decipher. All he needed was the phone number to activate the program. Weeder had attended Yale at the same time as Wanamaker and carried a deep grudge against him. When he figured out the plot against Iran he wanted to stop it. From two perspectives (a) he hated Wanamaker (b) his conscience didn't want the CIA plot to work since innocent civilians would die. As a side plot, The Weeder was passionate about Nathan Hale and considered himself almost to be a modern day version. So there's a lot of back and forth between the present and revolutionary days in the story. I've previously read five books by the author *An Agent In Place*, *Legends*, *The DeBriefing*, *The Sisters*, *Walking Back The Cat*. My favorite was *The Sisters*. This was quite good in places. But parts were a bit unbelievable. Particularly towards the end when Weeder's female friend Snow got involved trying to save him. Still an interesting fairly quick read.

2. Domarivip

How could the author of so great a book as "The Company" draft such a mediocre cliché-ridden effort as this. One reason, I submit, is that he couldn't make up his mind if he wanted to write a historical novel or a spy novel. He had a similar dilemma in "An Agent in Place" where he couldn't decide whether he wanted to write a love story or a spy story. "The Company" was a whole dimension above most spy novels. "The Once and Future Spy," sadly, is simply a uninspired work. The plot was highly improbable, the characters lacked credibility, and Littell resorted to too many cheap plot tricks to speed the book along, at the cost of believability. Even the whole theme of "whose truth?" also is not all that unique. Don't want to give the ending away so I won't say any more about that except that, personally, I found the ending to be highly unsatisfying. I

still have a few more Littell books to read and I am hoping that I will get from them the deep pleasure I got from "The Company." Littell's capable of much much better work than reflected in this novel.

3. Kigabar

This is a good story with a few small twists common to Littell. The revolution story mixed with the present is a nice touch.

4. blodrayne

Littell is one of my favorite authors. This wasn't one of my favorite of his books. However, he is still one of the best.

5. Agrainel

Fascinating; Littell's writing and storytelling are up there with the espionage genre best

6. catterpillar

I'm a big fan of Littell and it takes no further look than at TOAFS to see why.

Essentially, the book is a parallel exposition of a secret operation by clandestine CIA operatives directed at a foreign power and also a look back at a historical figure we all know, Nathan Hale. The connection to Hale is because of the obsession one of the operatives has with the Hale story.

Littell is a huge fan of the "What you think is true is just a surface impression and not at all what is really there: school of writing. Another book of his, *The Defection of A.J. Lewinter* took that tactic to a dizzying level, and *TOAFS* is not too far behind. Fake-outs, games within games, and victims walking happily into traps of their own construction are at work throughout this fine work.

What makes this a 5 star book is the way Littell tells the Hale story in way never heard before, offering a completely different perspective that causes us to challenge our view of history and what history even is. At the end of the novel, the reader realizes that he did the same thing with the contemporary story.

As with *TDOFAJL*, there's a nice romance in here as well.

People who have watched a lot of James Bond movies may think there is nowhere else for the spy story genre to go. Littell proves them dead wrong with this book.

HIGHLY recommended.

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