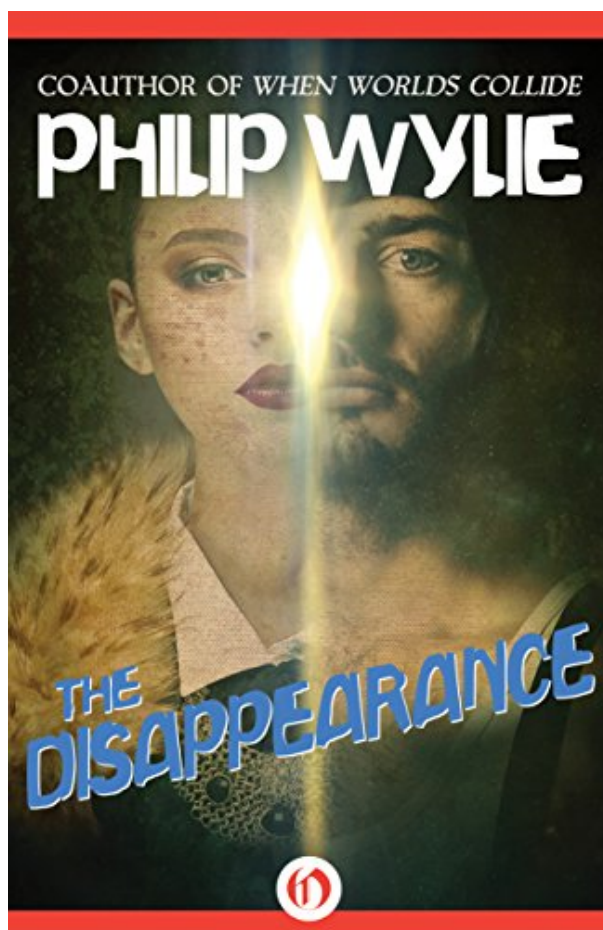
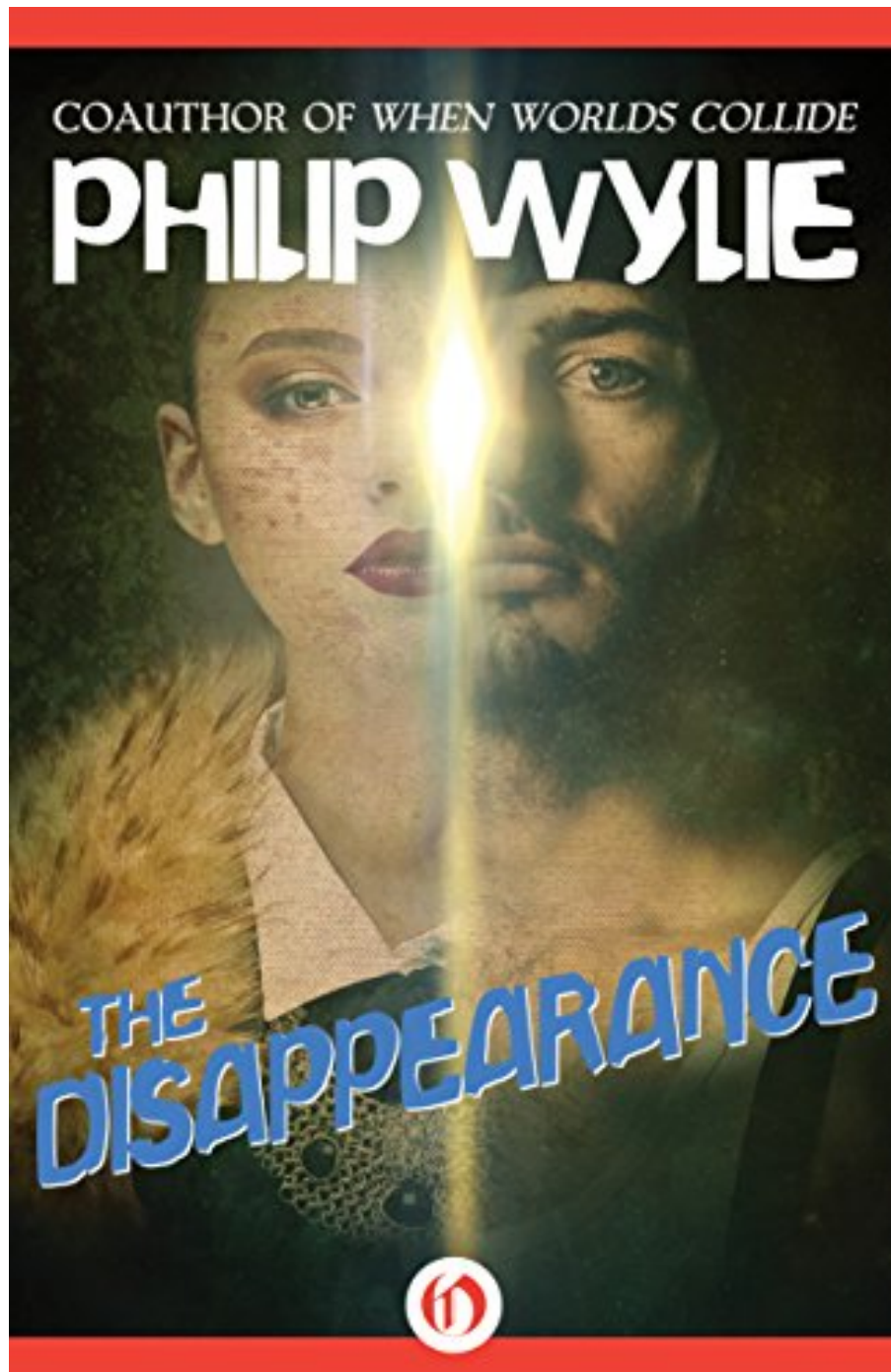


THE DISAPPEARANCE BY PHILIP WYLIE



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Review

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From the Inside Flap

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Written over a half century ago yet brimming with insight and unsettling in its relevance today, *The Disappearance* is a masterpiece of modern speculative fiction. Philip Wylie (1902–71) is the author of *Gladiator* and the coauthor of *When Worlds Collide*, both available in Bison Books editions. Acclaimed science-fiction writer Robert Silverberg is the recipient of many awards, including the prestigious Hugo and Nebula awards, and the Grand Master designation from the Science Fiction Writers of America, the highest science-fiction honor available. He is the author of *Lord Valentine's Castle*.

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This brilliant classic of speculative fiction imagines the aftermath of an extraordinary global occurrence that forces Earth's men and women to exist in parallel dimensions

Like every other family, the Gaunts are devastated by the unexplained phenomenon that occurs one Tuesday afternoon in February. In an instant, every female on Earth is mysteriously transported to a different plane, forced to live apart from the males, who have been left behind. Suddenly trapped in two parallel realities—with the bonds of love, trust, sex, and stability that formed the foundation of their relationship abruptly severed—Bill and Paula Gaunt must separately reexamine who they truly are and what they are capable of as existence itself becomes a struggle in one world that descends into violence and brutality, and another that is soon plagued by famine and despair.

Originally published more than half a century ago, Philip Wylie's provocative science fiction classic remains a masterful work of intelligence and imagination. *The Disappearance* is a breathtaking, thought-provoking exploration of gender roles and expectations that reveals stark truths about who we are as men and women—and as the interconnected members of a fallible human race.

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Most helpful customer reviews

39 of 40 people found the following review helpful.

FINALLY back in print

By Writerdana

One of the most remarkable novels ever written, *The Disappearance* must have caused a sensation in 1951 when it first appeared. I won't belabor the plot, because others have already recounted it. But its frank analysis of the way in which our society separates men and women, teaches children to be ashamed of their bodies, teaches men and women NOT to fulfill their potentials and destinies but to fill the paths set down by our narrowminded forebears, is every bit as poignant today as it was then.

Wylie's two protagonists -- Bill Gaunt the philosopher and his wife Paula -- a PhD in languages -- are three-dimensional and fascinating. His assessment of the world of men without women disintegrating into lawlessness is frighteningly real. His world of women discovering that very few of their number have been trained in the rudiments of running the society is sobering. And although women have come a long way in that respect since 1951, the glass ceiling still exists. The perception of the "role" of women or men in a particular situation hasn't gone away.

The whole story is told with insight and a wicked sense of humor. Just look at his picture of the wives of the government officials trying to run the government of women. Unfortunately, politicians do not always choose wives for their intelligence but for a host of other attributes and skills that do not help them to cope with the catastrophe. And the showdown between the American and Soviet women will leave you breathless and laughing.

To me, the best example of the way Wylie chose to tell this story is Chapter 13, which does not further the plot at all. Bill Gaunt is asked by the President and a committee of scientists and other thinkers to prepare an essay assessing what it all means. Chapter 13 is that essay. Even the title of the chapter lets impatient readers know that if they skip it, they will lose none of the sense of the story. DON'T SKIP IT!!

Not for the faint of heart, but DEFINITELY for the inquiring mind. Those of us who have already read this one (several times) are pleased it is back in print so we can replace the lop-eared copies we have been reading for years.

Note to Hollywood: Wouldn't this make a fascinating subject for a movie? Probably not. Its subtleties and interweaving of plots and events would go beyond Hollywood's ability to translate it without succumbing to

the temptation to mess with it. So I guess we'll just have to read it again.

One cautionary note: Be aware that the novel does have one bit of baggage that is left over from the time it was written. Its Cold War politics may seem out of place today, but it carries the story forward. Aside from that small anachronism (from our point of view), the novel could have been written yesterday.

If you've never heard of this one, give it a chance. You'll be as amazed as I was.

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

I Still Remember Almost Every Detail...

By Jane McArthur

I first read this book about 40 years ago and loved it (read it at least 10 times while I had it in my possession)...passed it along to friends who loved it as well but always had it returned to me. Somewhere along the line, it was not returned. I didn't think anything of it until I wanted to re-read it and couldn't find it anywhere. In about 1985, I managed to borrow a copy from the library (had to wait 4 weeks, they got it from somewhere far, far away and I was only allowed to keep it for a week.) I even tried to copy it at work when my boss wasn't around but got caught. The ideas of independence, self-reliance, cooperation, love and interdependence as so well illustrated that they have stuck in my mind forever. You really care about the characters. This is a book that is really ageless (oh yes, some things are a little dated) but the premise remains perhaps more timely than ever. Everyone should HAVE to read it...they should have it in the schools. If anyone finds a source, please let me know.

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Loved the book and would buy another copy if available.

By A Customer

I read this book once only about 40 years ago and had always intended to read it again. Unfortunately, my paperback fell apart after some 30 moves and four different countries and was basically beyond repair as whole chunks of pages went missing. I loved it and at the time, not being aware of the genre, didn't even know it classified as Science Fiction. The Disappearance ranks with Finley Wren, by the same author, as two of the finest books I've ever read. The issue of the separation of the sexes was novel then and remains a novel idea today. I have not seen the notion duplicated in any other novel and certainly nothing with the style of Philip Wylie. I would dearly love to buy another copy to read again. Incidentally, even though it's been some 40 years since I read it, I still remember much of the story vividly, which is more than one can say for some of the more forgettable novels around today.

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