

THE FUGITIVE [1993]

by

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The Fugitive (1993). Directed by Andrew Davis. Story by David Twohy. Screenplay by Jeb Stuart and David Twohy. Production designed by Dennis Washington.

The story of a fugitive from justice is a very primal one. Most real criminals attempt to flee, but we rarely find this involving. Fictional criminal, however, are another (filmic) story – *Bonnie and Clyde* [1967], for example.

We become emotionally transfixed, however, if the criminal is wrongly accused. What was once a very primal story of simple survival is now layered with moral outrage – and, of course, identification. While few of us see ourselves as criminals, we can easily fantasize being wrongly accused of a crime (Hitchcock depended on this trope for most of his career.). Few of us lack childhood memories of having been unjustly accused by parents or teachers of having done something that, no matter what the evidence and past track record, for once we actually did *not* do. Now in *The Fugitive*, these memories come back to haunt us.

We can trace this primal survival/moral outrage story of *The Fugitive* through three historical phases and watch its evolution. First, of course, is the most famous novelization of the man unjustly accused and relentlessly hunted by an unfeeling father figure – Victor Hugo’s *Les Misérables*. While there is much more to Hugo’s 1862 classic than this, it is the spiritual grandfather of our current filmic incarnation: Jean Valjean’s offense was petty – stealing a loaf of bread – yet his subsequent punishment and persecution commanding. And, as in *The Fugitive*, he stops along his interminable flight to perform acts of moral goodness. Politically, this story can be summed up as follows: The police are insensitive and there is no possibility of doing anything corrective, all one can do is run. We can do nothing when faced with what Hugo calls “the black vein of destiny.”

The next incarnation of the “running man” motif appeared on September 17, 1963, on television. *The Fugitive* became a very popular TV series that ran successfully for four seasons. It’s dependence on *Les Misérables* can be seen in the name of the policeman pursuing the innocent Richard Kimble: Lieutenant Gerard (Gerard being first cousin in name to Javere, the doggedly persistent policeman of *Les Misérables*). But the

