

DAMNATION - A thrilling opener to a compelling series

DAMNATION, written by Swiss author Peter Beck and published by Oneworld's imprint Point Blank, is a gripping international thriller with breathtaking action and a fascinating new hero.

Read an interview with Peter about his debut in English and how he came up with his hero Tom Winter.

It's often said that the Swiss are a bit boring. How come you wrote such an action-packed, fast-paced thriller?

Still waters run deep... Personally, I've been reading thrillers in English for years and so I write what I like reading myself. For me good entertainment needs a cool hero, speed and cliffhangers. The readers should have bloody fingernails.

So how did you create the character of Tom Winter?

It was an evolutionary process. Ten years ago the character came to life like a clay-mation figure. I'd sculpted and squashed him again and again. I wanted a new kind of hero, not just another police inspector or private eye.

Winter is head of security at a Swiss private bank. To my knowledge, this role is unique in the world of crime writing.

In this role, Winter has a lot of freedom, so as an author I can send him all over the world. That's fun to write. So, Tom Winter is both Swiss and cosmopolitan.

And as we know, there are great villains in the banking world. Behind the picture-perfect scenes, they often do business brutally.

Is Winter based on a real person?

No, Winter's pure fiction. But it's been amazing to see how the German-speaking readers have identified with him. Maybe that's because he's not a glorified hero. Winter is just a regular guy with a bit of a past. Like the rest of us, he has his faults and makes mistakes.

He doesn't say much, cracks dry jokes and secretly longs for intimacy and peace. But he's a man of considered action: he observes carefully, weighs up his options and then acts decisively.

I picked the name "Winter" deliberately. It suits his character, goes with the Swiss mountains and works well in both German and English.

Is there anything of yourself in Winter?

Tricky question. Two things come to mind. My judo experience is quite helpful for writing the close combat scenes.

And working in the corporate world - I was an executive board member of a big company and sat on non-executive boards - I experienced first-hand the power struggles Winter has to contend with at work.

I've certainly come across managers who, well, let's just say that their behaviour and ethics were sometimes in the grey zones.

You're also a psychologist. How is that reflected in your thrillers?

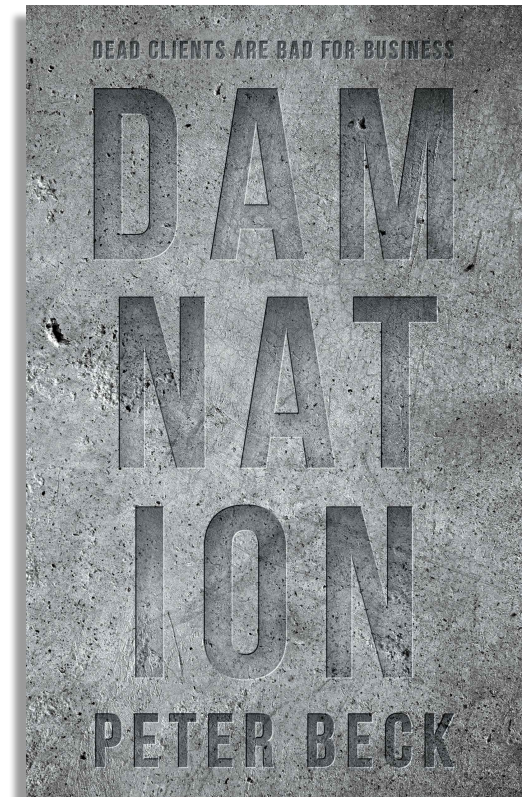
I guess it helps me describe what goes on within my characters, to shape their personalities, their motives.

For example, it's really important for me that Winter has strong values. He always tries to do the right thing, despite the bank's boss, who's only interested in making the biggest profit possible.

A hero grows with his dilemmas, when he's caught between a rock and a hard place. We all face these quandaries at one time or another, albeit usually on a smaller scale.

DAMNATION is an international thriller, set in Egypt, Norway, Switzerland and the USA. How did you pick these locations?

Money moves fast and doesn't respect national borders. DAMNATION is a hunt through the jungle of globalisation.



I've been to all the places, which is important for the atmosphere.

Winter meets Fatima in Cairo and there's immediately a chemistry between him and the successful businesswoman. Norway's fjords are dramatic and Boston is just a great city. And being Swiss, I had to have some action in our beautiful mountains.

What do you hope readers will get from DAMNATION?

For me it's all about good entertainment. I write for readers looking to switch off and immerse themselves in a gripping story.

I'll be happy if your next flight goes by faster because of DAMNATION. When I read in the bath, the water sometimes goes cold because I just *have* to finish an exciting book.

Which books do you read then yourself? What authors have influenced your career as a writer, and why?

The short answer is: many. I devour a book a week. If I had to choose only one, it would have to be John le Carré. I admire him for very cleverly connecting the world's turmoil with Smiley's destiny.



But you'd find all the usual suspects on my bookshelves, from John Grisham to Stig Larsson. There's a lot of Tartan Noir, be it Ian Rankin or Denise Mina. I love Tana French from Ireland and the Norwegian Jo Nesbø with his Harry Hole.

I've also read all the Lee Child books. Not unlike Winter, Jack Reacher roams freely, but always finds himself in situations where he has to intervene.

And I'm addicted to series. I've read all the Bernie Gunther novels by Philip Kerr. His outrageous metaphors make me smile.

Why did you go with Oneworld?

It was more the other way around. They picked me, and I immediately felt comfortable with Oneworld and the team from their imprint Point Blank.

Peter Beck comes from Bern, Switzerland, where he studied Psychology and Economics and gained a doctorate. He went on to do an MBA in the UK at Manchester Business School. He has a black belt in judo, was an executive board member of a large Swiss company and sat on several non-executive boards.

Today he is his own boss and divides his time between writing the Tom Winter thrillers and supporting businesses in shaping their corporate culture. He is a member of the International Thriller Writers and the German-speaking crime writers' association, Syndikat. He is fluent in English.

DAMNATION - The first thriller of the series with Tom Winter

A charred Arab in the Swiss Alps. Dead clients are bad for business, especially for a discreet Swiss private bank. Since the sheik's clan is invested in nuclear plants in the USA and Egypt, his death triggers alarm bells on several continents.

Taciturn Tom Winter, the bank's head of security, not only loses a client in the helicopter crash but, with Anne, also his deputy. The former special forces commander follows the money trail through a jungle of intrigue to Cairo, Bergen, Boston and back to the mountains in the Bernese Oberland, closely watched by the NSA and others.

Together with the mysterious Egyptian businesswomen, Fatima, he discovers an explosive speculation with staggering odds, endangering the lives of thousands. A breathtaking international thriller with a fascinating new hero.

And as you probably know they won the Man Booker prize, twice! So it's a great honour to be in such company.

Was there anything new you discovered, when your thriller was translated from German into English?

First, I was worried that my characters wouldn't be true after the translation. But now, for me, DAMNATION reads better in English.

Thanks to Jamie Bulloch, who translated the complicated German sentences into a really elegant read, my baby has kind of grown up,

Will there be a sequel? A second thriller with Tom Winter?

I really hope so. Oneworld has an option for the second thriller.

KORROSION came out in 2017 in German. This time Winter finds himself entangled in a horrifying net of abuse, exploitation and revenge.

And at the moment, I'm polishing the third manuscript with Winter. So, one way or another the next winter is approaching.

DAMNATION (spring 2018)

Peter Beck's thriller, published by Point Blank, an imprint of two-time Man Booker Prize winner Oneworld.

Hardcover, paperback and e-book.

www.peter-beck.net/english