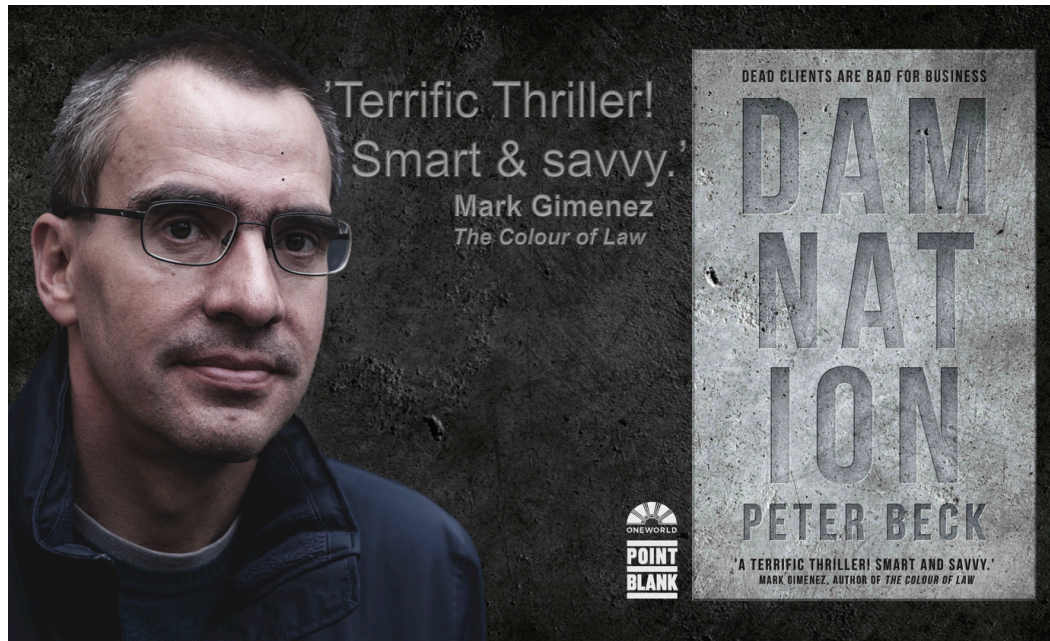


CRIMINALLY GOOD: interview with author Peter Beck

On 20th April 2018 · By [Lucy Hay](#) · With [0 Comments](#)



1) So, who are you & what have you written?

Hi there, I'm [Peter Beck](#), the author of *DAMNATION*, an international, high-octane thriller. **Mark Gimenez** (author of *The Colour of Law*) says *DAMNATION* is 'A terrific thriller! Smart and savvy.' It's published by PointBlank, an imprint of Oneworld, twice winner of the Man Booker Prize. You can find me on Twitter as [@peterbeckbooks](#) and you can [LIKE my Facebook page, here](#).

When I was 20, I did my military service as a cyclist in the Swiss Army and was trained to destroy enemy tanks using rocket launchers (in the meantime, the army has come to its senses and has abolished this branch). I also have a black belt in judo, which comes in useful when I'm writing close combat scenes.

After my military service, I went to university to study Psychology, Philosophy and Economics, and stayed on to do a doctorate in Psychology. This still helps me describe what's going on within my characters and shape their personalities, their motives, etc. For example, it's really important for me that my hero, Tom Winter, has strong values. He's head of security at a Swiss private bank and always tries to do the right thing, despite the bank's boss only being interested in making the biggest profit possible.

Since I couldn't find a decent job in psychology, I came to the UK to do an MBA at Manchester Business School and then went back to Switzerland to become an executive board member of a large Swiss company.

Today I'm self-employed and divide my time between writing the Tom Winter thrillers and supporting businesses in shaping their corporate culture.

I'm a member of the International Thriller Writers and the German-speaking crime writers' association, Syndikat. My mother tongue is Swiss German, an Alemannic dialect which has no written form; I learnt to speak, read and write High German in primary school. My French isn't great but I'm fluent in English, thanks not least to my Mancunian girlfriend.

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DAMNATION, the first in the Tom Winter series, was initially published in 2013 in German by emons Verlag and is translated into English by Jamie Bulloch.

Its international story starts with a dead client, which is really bad for business. A helicopter explodes in the Swiss mountains, leaving behind the charred bodies not only of an incredibly wealthy Arab investing in nuclear plants, but also a close colleague of Winter.

Winter teams up with Fatima, a mysterious Egyptian businesswoman, and together they follow the money trail around the world and back into the Swiss mountains, the NSA watching their every move. When taciturn Winter, a former special forces commander, closes in on the truth, they turn from being the hunters to the hunted and realize they are in a deadly, high-stakes race against the clock.

2) Why do you write crime fiction?

This question could be answered on so many levels. Do I want to explore my dark side? Was there a childhood experience priming me to write? At the end of the day, I don't know.

What I do know is that I've been reading thrillers for years and so I write what I like to read myself. For me, good entertainment needs a cool hero, a fast pace and cliffhangers. By the end, the readers should have bloody fingernails.

3) What informs your crime writing?

My travels. I combine them with research for my writing, taking a lot of photos at exciting locations. My hero is head of security of a Swiss bank with clients all over the world, so as an author I can send Tom Winter wherever I like.

I've spent time in Cairo, Boston and Norway, so in DAMNATION Winter goes there, too. And of course, there are lots of scenes in Switzerland, not just in the cities but also up in the Alps and the vineyards sloping down to Lake Geneva. In the next installment, there are scenes in Manchester (where I lived for two years), in the Azores (where I had a fantastic holiday) and in Nuremberg (where I attended the annual get-together of the German-speaking crime writers' association).

Another aspect of my writing is the big fault lines in society like alienation, exploitation, nationalism and prejudices in general. I'm very much interested in understanding these in depth and exploring them in my writing.

Writing helps me to think and thinking helps me to write. Describing a complex phenomenon helps me to understand it a little bit better. In DAMNATION, for example, I try to explore the implications of rich Arabs from the Middle East buying into critical infrastructure, like nuclear plants in the USA or server farms deep in the Swiss mountains.

4) What's your usual writing routine?

I usually have too many ideas, but since writing a thriller with 400 pages is like running a marathon, it's actually 99% sweat and only 1% inspiration. So I try to be disciplined and use my energy wisely.

On writing days, I sit in front of my computer from 8 to 12 and, after lunch and a power nap, from 2 to 4. At the beginning of day, I usually go over the pages I wrote the day before, streamlining the text and deleting the bits I'm not happy with. In order to follow my progress and keep on track, I have an Excel spreadsheet which breaks down my writing goals on a daily basis and shows me green figures when I'm ahead of schedule and red when I'm behind.

5) Which crime book do you wish YOU'D written, and why?

When I was sixteen or so, I read my dad's copy of *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* by John Le Carré and I was hooked. Somehow it opened up another world for me. I'm still fascinated by Le Carré's mastery, by how